The International Churchill Society

The International Churchill Society is dedicated to preserving and promoting the historic legacy of Sir Winston Churchill. For the benefit of scholars, students, and Churchillians, the Society's activities, publications, and programs will be conducted through the joint resources of the National Churchill Library & Center at The George Washington University in Washington, D.C., and the National Churchill Museum at Westminster College in Fulton, Missouri.
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On the Cover

Sarah Churchill in California or Mexico in the 1940s or 1950s. Story on page 22
Source: Churchill Archives Centre, Papers of Sarah Churchill, SCHL 6/2/18
The Churchill Women

Winston Churchill was surrounded by strong women all his life, from the day he was born until the day he died. This can easily be overlooked, given that his professional career took place at a time when politics was all but exclusively the realm of men. Yet Churchill absolutely required the nurturing, the example, and the strength of mind that the women in his life provided. In this issue we look at some of the key women in the life of the Greatest Briton.

Churchill’s story begins with his mother Jennie Jerome. Bright and beautiful, Jennie was frustratingly constrained by the conventions of her time. Anne Sebba examines how Jennie attempted to be an independent woman. Constrained himself as a child by the customs for raising the children of the well-to-do in Victorian Britain, Churchill received the attention he desperately needed from his beloved nanny. Katherine Barnett tells the story of the blessed Mrs. Everest.

As a young man, Churchill’s first efforts at finding a wife did not meet with success. In Pamela Plowden, however, he did find a lifelong friend, as Fred Glueckstein explains, and one who could still be counted on to support both Winston and Clementine during the darkest times, as Timothy Riley discovered.

The most important Churchill woman of them all, though, was of course Clementine née Hozier. How her remarkable marriage to Winston came to be is related by Sonia Purnell. Not surprisingly, two such strong-willed people had an equally strong-willed daughter. The recent opening of the Sarah Churchill Papers has enabled Catherine Katz to begin taking a fresh look at the child her parents nicknamed the “mule.”

The remarkable record on the distaff side of the Churchill line continued with his grandchildren. Edwina Sandys, an accomplished professional artist and sculptor, recalls a day spent at Chartwell last year that brought back beautiful memories of her experiences there as a child.

Born during the reign of Queen Victoria, Churchill lived to serve as the first prime minister of Queen Elizabeth II. Roddy MacKenzie looks at the remarkable pairing of the aging premier and the last woman of great importance in his life.

Finally, beginning with this issue, Finest Hour will include a regular department in which objects or papers from the collection of the National Churchill Museum in Fulton, Missouri—or from other private collections—will be published and shared for the education and enjoyment of our readers.

David Freeman, January 2017
**Finest Hour 174**

**Getting the Bearings**

HAMPSTEAD—The description of the armorial bearings of the Royal College of Defence Studies on page 21 is unspecific about which elements represent the branches of the armed forces. Could you please elucidate?
—Paul H. Courtenay

*Dr. Stewart obliges:*

OXFORD—I am happy to provide the expanded version of the text describing the “Beast” or “the Great Beast,” as the bearings are affectionately known, which features in the College’s updated history that I completed last month:

The trident represents the Royal Navy, the lion the Army, and the wings of the lion the Royal Air Force. In 1955 a silver chain was added around the neck to denote the civilian members in attendance at Seaford House; the laurel wreath replaced this after consultation with the Foreign and Commonwealth Office. In 1974 it was finally agreed that formal armorial bearings would be acquired, and the funding for this was shared between the three services. These incorporated the Beast and existing motto with the basic feature of a shield showing the Royal Crown—a special privilege—above which is a book referencing the College’s instructional activities with a green background representing the distinctive onyx decoration within the building. The supporters are also particularly noteworthy, with the inclusion of the wolf from [Sir Maurice] Hankey’s personal arms and the lion from those of Churchill in recognition of their role in the original establishment.
—Andrew Stewart

**The General Speaks**

WASHINGTON, D.C.—It was a special privilege “to walk point” as the first speaker [at the new National Churchill Library and Museum] and as a huge admirer of the man rightly described as the Last Lion and to be in a place inspired by him. Congratulations on all you have done.
—Gen. David Petraeus

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**GRAND CULTURAL TOURS**

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**FINEST HOUR 175/ 5**
A few years after she was married, Jennie Jerome wrote to her mother Clara trying to close off a conversation: “Money is such a hateful subject to me just now…don’t let us talk about it.” She was explaining why she could not attend as many balls as she wished and why her expenses were so great. From the day she married Lord Randolph Churchill on 15 April 1875 in Paris, money (or the lack of it) dogged her life. The wedding could only take place the day after the money forming her marriage settlement had arrived. Leonard Jerome was finally prevailed upon to agree to a capital sum of £50,000, yielding approximately £2,000, a year of which Jennie was allowed to keep half as “pin money” and Randolph the other half. Without it, there would have been no wedding.

Born in 1854, Jennie’s upbringing and education had all been geared towards fulfilling her destiny, which, for a young girl of social standing, meant making a good marriage, preferably to a British aristocrat. Jennie was a highly talented pianist and extremely well read, as well as strikingly beautiful. Yet these attributes were merely accomplishments, not a means of earning a living. Nonetheless, Lord Randolph’s career as a Member of Parliament (and a second son) earned him nothing, and although he was briefly appointed to the Cabinet in 1886—a paid appointment—he resigned after six months on a matter of principle, believing he would be called back. But he never was and died in 1895.

Married at twenty, widowed by forty, Jennie now had to think to the future. And so, five years after Randolph’s death, she remarried. Although her marriage to the young and handsome George Cornwallis-West was a partnership which only increased her worries about money, arguably her precarious financial situation also fired a deep creative spark as she refused to give up on style, moved to an exquisitely romantic sixteenth century house less than an hour north of London, and set about trying to establish a reputation as a writer.

Entirely self-taught, Jennie worked first with Winston on a luxury magazine they called the Anglo-Saxon Review [see FH 174]. But this proved a drain on income so, once publication ceased, Jennie’s main attempt at generating money focused on her own ability to write. Curbing expenditure was always a nettle too sharp to grasp. Winston proffered stylistic advice when she sent him work in progress and was good at chivvying her on because he, too, was self-taught. He told her how to group her ideas, to make up her mind as to exactly what was her intention in
each paragraph before she started, and to be prepared for constant rewriting.

At the same time, both her sons, Winston and Jack, constantly warned of the dangers of her extravagance, to which she responded not by cutting back but by trying to find ways to fund the spendthrift ways which their income did not begin to match. George, not without his own profligacies, wrote later that in money matters Jennie was without any sense of proportion. “The value of money meant nothing to her: what counted with her were the things she got for money, not the amount she had to pay for them.” Four years into this new marriage, Winston told his mother that he looked with very grave anxiety into the future. Heeding these warnings, Jennie made new efforts to fund her life. She was a natural communicator and by 1907 was writing in earnest, being pressed by her publishers to deliver a memoir, a book if gossipy enough, that Edwardian society was drooling to read. The Reminiscences of Lady Randolph Churchill, published in 1908 by Edward Arnold in England and Century in the US, was politely reviewed, considered a pleasant if somewhat superficial insight into society, and went through several editions. It was dedicated to Winston and Jack, but, as she made clear in the preface, “there may be some to whom these Reminiscences will be interesting chiefly in virtue of what is left unsaid.” It failed to relieve her financial worries.

Nonetheless Jennie ploughed on and, according to George, it was her idea to have Mrs Patrick Campbell, the most celebrated actress of her day, not only produce it but take the leading role. She was eleven or so years younger than Jennie, beautiful and witty with a talent for playing complex and fascinating women. Mrs. Pat (as she was known) may have been attracted to the idea of producing it herself partly because she knew that high society and royalty would take a close interest. But, long before opening day, in spite of the professional cast, multiple weaknesses were all too apparent.

His Borrowed Plumes,—or as some of the cast had taken to calling it “His Sorrowful Blooms”—was a highly autobiographical play within a play. Fabia Sumner, the heroine, was an authoress who led a busy social life and needed to write to make money. Her husband, Major Percival Sumner, was jealous of her success and began an affair. In the play everything ends happily with Fabia and her husband declaring undying love. In life, however, George was “seriously attracted” to Mrs. Pat and everything did not end happily.

The play opened at the Hicks Theatre (later The Globe, now The Gielgud) in Shaftesbury Avenue to a full house packed with a glittering mixture of celebrities and aristocrats. Winston sat in a box with his mother and stepfather looking, apparently, profoundly nervous. Despite the excitement surrounding the gala opening, it survived two weeks. It was not a bad play, in fact it was quite amusing, as the critics concurred. Max Beerbohm even described it as “very good entertainment....” Plays challenging traditional views of marriage and divorce and even female sexuality, however, had been around for a decade or so, and, compared with the scandalous reactions to Henrik Ibsen dramas, His Borrowed Plumes seemed rather tame.

George later remarked, “had the original intention been adhered to and only four matinees given these would have paid for the whole cost of production as people flocked to see a play written by one brilliant woman and produced by another. But it was kept on and, alas, being an indifferent play, it was another instance of an unsuccessful enterprise” (author’s italics).

Brush up Your Shakespeare

Slowly, as it dawned on Jennie that writing plays, however much fun, caused yet another drain on her resources, she conceived her most grandiose scheme, the project that best defined her identity as a lov-
JENNIE JEROME

“Like everything she did in her life, the leaving of it was highly charged and dramatic.”

er of English culture and history yet perhaps could only have been driven by an American. That she rose above the drama in her private life to create a magnificent public pageant drawing on English history and literature is a tribute to her enormous personal courage as well as her love for her adopted land. Financially, it was a spectacular failure.

In May 1910, Edward VII died, and, in the weeks before the Coronation of George V, Jennie was working frantically to organise a Shakespearean Ball. This was part of an appeal she was helping to launch to raise at least £10,000 to go towards buying a site opposite the Victoria and Albert Museum in Kensington, South London to build a National Theatre where high-quality productions, not necessarily dependent on box office popularity, could be mounted. Several noted hostesses were giving balls to welcome the new era, but none was so original or magnificent as Jennie’s, nor with such a purpose. Jennie had persuaded Edwin Lutyens to transform the Albert Hall into a beguiling Elizabethan-Italianate garden, where six hundred or so guests—dressed in Shakespearean costumes—could dance until dawn. Jennie went as Olivia and George as Sebastian from *Twelfth Night*. She understood how crucial it was to have the Royal Family on her side and succeeded in persuading King George V and Queen Mary to grace the occasion, forty-eight hours before their Coronation.

Like everything Jennie did, no expense was spared to make the event compellingly authentic. The Albert Hall, under a fake blue sky replacing the dark red brick Victorian roof, became a faithful reincarnation of Tudor England. There was clipped yew in the shape of topiary birds, twirling grapevine on the marble terrace and a balcony where supper was served. The night was a dramatic success. But it was only one night. Soon Jennie was dreaming up something on a far greater scale with much wider appeal but with the same goal of promoting a Shakespeare Memorial and a National Theatre. She had in mind an ambitious scheme to stage an enormous exhibition at Earl’s Court, a generally derelict area of West London, which boasted a large stadium but little else, to be called “Shakespeare’s England.” Again she engaged Edwin Lutyens, this time to rebuild Earl’s Court “into a wonderful OLD London of the Elizabethan period with the picturesque wooden houses of the time, the same quaint old streets—some of them only a few feet wide—and the same curious old world atmosphere of that epoch of chivalry and romance.” Once again, she hoped it might be financially profitable for her personally as well as an important gift to posterity.

Jennie set about arranging for an Organising Committee as well as an Executive Committee, but all she wanted of the two Committees was their cooperation and goodwill while running the whole thing herself. She maintained that since she had originated the scheme, she was entitled to ten percent of the profits and not less than £500 in case of failure, believing that a premium should be put on her creativity in initiating the idea and her ability, through her contacts, to see it through.

As the tercentenary of Shakespeare’s death was approaching in 1916, various rival committees were being set up, each favouring their own pet scheme, which would serve as a suitable memorial. Some proposed the erection of a statue, others an ill-defined Shakespeare temple. Jennie was not the first to recognise the need for a National Theatre building in the capital linked to the country’s greatest dramatist—there had been one at Stratford, the Bard’s birthplace in Warwickshire, since 1879. But in those days, that was a rural outpost and far from London. It was Jennie’s brilliantly imaginative idea to create an event that would last several months and cater for the general public at popular prices to raise funds for a National Memorial Theatre, a modern-day theme park.

But although some of her friends kept restraining her, reminding her she must get estimates for the building works as well as for wages of the employees and performers, others led Jennie to believe that there was potential to make a lot of money, especially if the exhibition travelled to America with Jennie retaining an interest in it. Taking it to America was a step beyond Jennie’s immediate thoughts. For the moment she needed to raise some £55,000 to build replicas of Tudor houses, the Globe Theatre, and the Mermaid Tavern, all designed by Lutyens. She approached wealthy friends and her own bank, Cox and Co, who, after serious investigations, agreed to back the project up to £35,000.
The exhibition opened with great élan and advertising; the side shows were interesting, the restaurants good, the sixteenth century dancing lively, and the orchestral concerts, under the conductorship of Sir Henry Wood, authentic. The Banqueting Hall, where “Queen Elizabeth” could be seen dining in state with her favourites and lovers, was imaginative and amusing. Yet in spite of all this, “Shakespeare’s England” flopped.

The highlight of the exhibition was a re-enactment of a medieval tournament held in the big hall, now laid out as a courtyard of a medieval castle. The jousting and revels were promised to rival the famous Eglington Tournament of 1839, while the costumes and armour of the competitors and the trappings of their horses would be historically accurate in the minutest detail. The entire scene was advertised as outdoing in splendour and magnificence the Field of the Cloth of Gold described in Henry VIII.

The newspapers all gave the tournament extensive coverage, but that event alone, hugely expensive to stage, could not prevent the exhibition losing money overall. It won her plaudits but no financial rewards and, finally, lost Jennie a husband. George, feeling excluded, maintained that far too much money had been lavished on the project, resulting in inevitable financial failure. Immediately after “Shakespeare’s England,” he gave up the marriage for good. Jennie, fifty-eight, told him she had “courage enough to fight my own battles in life,” and filed for divorce.

**Old Curiosity Shops**

There was one final approach to money-making which worked; she capitalised on her natural good taste and style to become what today would be called an interior decorator. Much of her advice was dispensed free to friends as she was still trying to earn money as a writer. But as she admitted to her nephew Shane, “I am disappointed that my contract with Harpers came to an end. It meant a good deal to me.” She sent him a collection of her recent articles written for Pearson’s Weekly, appealingly confusing her title “Great Talks on Small Subjects—no, Small Talks on Great Subjects.” And in 1916 Pearson’s also published Women’s War Work, a book that she edited and for which she wrote the preface.

In February 1921, Jennie managed to sell for £35,000 a house she had bought in Berkeley Square: “a clear profit of £15,000,” as Winston told Clemmie with undisguised relief. “She has already taken a little house in Charles Street. No need to go abroad. All is well. I am so glad.” And so, in the spring of 1921, as Montagu Porch, a Nigerian-based civil servant who became her third husband in 1918, returned to Nigeria to explore investment opportunities there, Jennie went off to spend the profit from the sale of the house, staying with her old friend Vittoria Colonna, Duchess of Sermoneta, in Rome. The Palazzo Caetani, where Jennie had often stayed before the First World War, was being refurbished and Jennie was giving her friend advice on interior decoration. The two women enjoyed going to balls and shopping together: “we ransacked all the old curiosity shops and Jennie bought profusely; her zest in spending money was one of her charms.”

Among the items Jennie bought were some dainty slippers from the best Roman shoemakers—she always prized her slim ankles and kept her skirts short enough to display them. But wearing the new shoes (probably before her maid had scored the slippery soles) on a visit to her friend Lady Katharine Horner at Mells in Somerset, she fell down the staircase. What began as a sprained ankle quickly developed into gangrene, followed by amputation. On 29 June 1921, aged sixty-seven, Jennie died suddenly following a haemorrhage. Like everything she did in her life, the leaving of it was highly charged and dramatic. Unprepared to the last, she died intestate.

Sir Winston Churchill is often said to have had an emotionally deprived childhood, with his distant mother and scolding father. It is an easy picture to paint, but to do so ignores the role played by the woman who became his closest companion, Mrs. Elizabeth Everest. Known to Winston by a variety of names including “Woomany” and “Oom” (from his infantile efforts to pronounce “woman”), she was the person with whom he formed the strongest emotional attachment of his childhood and into adulthood became his “dearest and most intimate friend.”
Winston was a very affectionate boy, and letters to Mrs. Everest are signed off with “100 000 kisses,” whilst those to his parents are filled with doubly-underlined requests for his nanny to come visit and telling stories of the adventures they had together. When Winston was just eight years old, a letter to his father recalls a day walking with Mrs. Everest when they saw a snake crawling in the grass. Winston had wanted to kill it, but Mrs. Everest would not allow it and encouraged Winston to let the snake carry on about its day.

To understand the strength of their connection, an example presents itself in March 1886. Winston was eleven and had contracted pneumonia with a temperature of 104.3°, firmly putting his fever in the “dangerous” bracket. He showed signs of delirium and exhaustion, with an alarmingly quick pulse. The doctor wrote to Churchill’s mother, saying that his right lung was struggling and his left lung was starting to feel the strain of the extra work. He was watched by nurses around the clock, and concerns were so grave that the doctor wrote to Lady Randolph Churchill, saying that Winston needed to rest and expressed concern that, should Mrs. Everest visit, Winston’s excitement at seeing her would be so great that it might do harm and worsen his condition. At the time, Mrs. Everest was far away but was anxiously waiting for word as to when she might be able to visit. We know from Winston’s own letters to her at this time that he was desperately unhappy, saying, “I am feeling very weak. I feel as if I could cry at everything.” It is telling that during his illness the person he most desperately wanted to see was Mrs. Everest, and saddening that she was the only person who, on medical advice, was not permitted to see him.

Close Bond

It is unsurprising that the pair formed such a close bond. Everest had been with the Churchills since Winston’s infancy and travelled to Dublin with the family when Winston’s grandfather, the seventh Duke of Marlborough, was appointed Viceroy of Ireland, with Lord Randolph as his private secretary. She stayed with the Churchills on their return to England. As well as offering early instruction in reading and writing before a governess was hired, she would accompany Winston and his brother Jack on their childhood adventures, collecting flowers, chasing butterflies, and basking in the sunshine. It was probably during these summer days that Everest rhapsodised about the county of Kent in England, where she herself was born and spent her childhood years. This planted seed blossomed years later when Churchill purchased his much-loved home Chartwell, where his own children could grow up. Upon first sight, the house was an ivy-clad, derelict building with a leaking roof and reportedly little charm. Churchill, however, could see beyond this, and it was the panoramic views over the rolling Weald of Kent that captured his heart, harking back to Mrs. Everest’s own love of the county. Kent became his primary home for the rest of his life, and his Butterfly House—standing on the grounds to this day—undoubtedly brought back wonderful childhood memories.

Despite their closeness, adolescence naturally had an impact on their relationship. Mrs. Everest became more critical of Winston’s spending, which became the only subject the pair ever disagreed about. On one occasion, Everest intercepted a letter Winston had written to his mother asking for money, and added notes to Lady Randolph saying, “I do not think it wise to give him money to throw away.” This was one of a chain of correspondences between Winston and his mother about money that carried on well into adulthood, as both regularly experienced difficulties with finances. In one letter to her he remarked: “It seems just as suicidal to me when you spend £200 on a ball dress as it does to you when I purchase a new polo pony for £100. And yet I feel that you ought to have the dress & I the polo pony.” Everest continued to offer her “humble opinion” about his spending, including one instance where she chastised him for wanting to use his money to buy a bulldog instead of repairing his broken bicycle: “What on earth is the good of you having a bull dog [sic], unless it is to keep us all in terror of our lives…besides, His Lordship gave you the bicycle and he would not like you to part with it.” In the end, the bicycle was duly repaired, and the bulldog never appeared. These early references to Winston’s frivolous expenditure went on to echo throughout his life.

Meanwhile Winston began to show signs of breaking away from Everest, wanting to see his friends without her accompanying them, out of fear that his friends would see her presence as “babyish.” This coincides with his start at Harrow, undoubtedly with a growing sense of self-confidence following his excellent results in the entrance examinations, including coming first in History, English, Algebra, and Ancient History, as well as second in Geography and Arithmetic. Despite
Winston’s keenness to impress his school friends, his affection for Mrs. Everest never diminished. On one Speech Day at Harrow, when neither of his parents was able to attend, it was Everest who went to support the schoolboy. In turn, Winston was so delighted to see her that he reportedly walked arm in arm with her around the town. The other boys sniggered at the pair, but Winston was deaf to the mockery and overjoyed that she had been able to join him on such an important day. Their friendship remained strong on both sides, with letters from Everest to Winston at this time referring to him as “my precious darling.”

Due Gratitude

Sadly, as always happens, the children eventually outgrew the need for a nanny, and, just before his seventeenth birthday, Winston learned that Mrs. Everest was to leave the family’s employ. He was outraged at the treatment of someone who had served them so loyally, and, following his protestations, arrangements were made for her to be made housekeeper at the house of his grandmother, Duchess Fanny, allowing both Winston and Jack to see her still. The pair remained close, but the solution was short-lived, and after two years it became apparent that Everest was surplus to requirements and would likely be dismissed from Duchess Fanny’s service also. Upon hearing this news, Winston wrote a letter out of “common decency” to his mother pleading with her to intervene. The emotion he pours into this letter is very telling. Whilst fearful of his mother’s reaction, he does not refrain from describing Everest’s proposed dismissal as being “cut adrift” and declaring that, at her age, for her to have to start again was “cruel and rather mean.” His efforts, however, were fruitless, and Mrs. Everest was dismissed—by letter.

Despite no longer having an official capacity in the Churchill family’s lives, Everest remained a loyal friend to Winston. She moved to Crouch End in North London, but he continued to support her from his own income. Sadly, less than two years after her departure, her health deteriorated to the extent that a telegram was sent to Winston’s barracks, saying that her condition was “critical.” He dashed to see her and was by her side until the end when, at 2:15 on the morning of 3 July 1895, she passed away. Winston and Jack arranged the funeral and erected the headstone on her grave.

Mrs. Everest had brought warmth, affection, and joy into Winston’s childhood, and she remained a close companion through adolescence and into adulthood. If you visit Chartwell today and go to the study, the beating heart of Churchill’s literary and political output, look closely at the photos on the shelf by his desk. Alongside those of his wife and children, there is a small red-framed photograph of a middle-aged, rather plump woman looking very noble and dressed in black. The woman is, of course, Mrs. Everest, and it is very telling that all those years later, she still featured so firmly amongst those he loved most.

In My Early Life Churchill recalled reading the autobiography of Edward Gibbon, an historian whom he admired enormously. When recalling his own childhood nurse, Gibbon wrote: “If there be any, as I trust there are some, who rejoice that I live, to that dear and excellent woman their gratitude is due.” On reading this, Churchill immediately thought of Mrs. Everest, declaring that it would be her epitaph. As someone who does indeed rejoice that Sir Winston Churchill lived, I think it only fair that we all pay a huge debt of gratitude to Mrs. Elizabeth Everest, whose love and affection for the boy in her care undoubtedly made him the man that he was, and ultimately changed the course of history for the better.

Katherine Barnett is House and Collections Manager at Chartwell. Except where noted, all quotations in this article are taken from the Churchill papers, Churchill Archives Centre, Cambridge.
Churchill’s First Great Love: Pamela Plowden | By Fred Glueckstein

In Winston and Clementine: The Personal Letters of the Churchills (1999), Mary Soames wrote of her father: “Winston was never a ‘ladies’ man,’ yet he greatly admired beautiful, spirited women, and over these last years formed several attachments. His first great love was Pamela Plowden, daughter of the Resident at Hyderabad, whom he had met as a young subaltern in India.” Although he proposed marriage to her that she did not accept, Churchill’s friendship with Pamela Plowden, later Countess of Lytton, continued for the rest of his life.

As a junior officer with the Fourth Hussars stationed in Bangalore, Churchill first met the India-born Pamela Frances Audrey Plowden in November 1896. Her father was the diplomatic representative of the British government in Hyderabad.

On 26 October 1896, Churchill wrote his mother, who knew the Plowden family, that Pamela had visited Bangalore. He told his mother that although he had the opportunity to meet Pamela for the first time, he did not, since he had not been introduced to her in England. Churchill did take the opportunity to meet her the following week, however, when he went to Secunderabad, ten miles from Hyderabad, for a polo tournament.

Captivated

On 3 November 1896, Churchill wrote his mother: “I was introduced yesterday to Miss Pamela Plowden—who lives here. I must say that she is the most beautiful girl that I have ever seen—‘Bar none’ as the Duchess [of Marlborough] Lily says. We are going to try and do the City of Hyderabad together—on an elephant. You dare not walk or the natives spit at Europeans—which provokes retaliation leading to riots.”

Bangalore. He told his mother that although he had the opportunity to meet Pamela for the first time, he did not, since he had not been introduced to her in England. Churchill did take the opportunity to meet her the following week, however, when he went to Secunderabad, ten miles from Hyderabad, for a polo tournament.
Following the successful ride through Hyderabad with Pamela, Churchill wrote his mother on 12 November 1896: “She is very beautiful and clever.”

He also dined with the Plowdens and was in high spirits seeing Pamela, and enjoying a change of diet after eating Army food for nearly three months.

On 28 November 1898, Churchill wrote Pamela that he was leaving Egypt for India on Friday. Churchill told her that his book, *The River War*, “is getting on magnificently and I am quite satisfied with what is thus far completed.” And on a delicate matter she had raised in a letter to him, he wrote: “One thing I take exception to in your letter. Why do you say I am incapable of affection? Perish the thought. I love one above all others. And I shall be constant. I am no fickle gallant capriciously following the fancy of the hour. My love is deep and strong. Nothing will ever change it….”

When Churchill finished the manuscript of *The River War*, he shared copies of chapters with Pamela. On 3 May 1899, he noted: “Miss P. has been vy impressed with the Proofs of the first two chapters of *The River War.*”

During the Boer War in South Africa, Churchill, helping to defend an armoured train, was captured, and imprisoned. While in the States Model School prison in Pretoria, Churchill wrote Pamela on 18 November 1899:

> Pamela, Not a vy satisfactory address to write from. I expect to be released as I was taken quite unarmed and with my full credentials as a correspondent. But I write you this line to tell you that among new and vivid scenes I think often of you. Yours always, Winston S. Churchill.

After his arguments to be released as a non-combatant were rejected by the Boers, Churchill decided to escape, which he did on the evening of 12 December 1899. After British troops entered Pretoria, Churchill wrote his mother on 9 June 1900: “I propose to come home. Politics, Pamela, finances and books all need my attention.”

**Estrangement**

Shortly before returning from South Africa, Lady Randolph wrote him: “Pamela is devoted to you and if yr love has grown as hers—I have no doubt it is only a question of time for you 2 to marry.”

By October 1900, however, there was common talk in London society that Churchill had “put off” with Pamela.

What may have been closer to the truth was the explanation given by Sir John Colville, Churchill’s Private Secretary and later intimate friend. In Colville’s book *The Churchillians*, he wrote: “… he fell head over heels in love with Pamela Plowden. For her no trouble was too great or too time-consuming. He proposed to her in a punt on the river while they were both staying at Warwick Castle.” Colville wrote that she refused his marriage proposal.

In December 1900, Churchill spent Christmas in Ottawa as the guest of Lord and Lady Minto at Government House. “By good fortune or good management,” wrote Churchill’s son Randolph, “Miss Plowden was there.”

Lord Minto later wrote Lady Churchill that in observing both Winston and Pamela: “Everything seemed to me… platonic.”

Yet, Churchill’s feelings for Pamela were evident in a letter from Churchill to his mother from Ottawa. He wrote: “Pamela was there and apparently quite happy. We had no painful discussions, but there is no doubt in my mind that she is the only woman I could ever live happily with.”

On 1 February 1902, *The New York Times* reported from London: “Miss Pamela Plowden, one of London’s most beautiful women, is now reported to be engaged to Lord Lytton. Miss Plowden frequently has been said to have been engaged, but, as *The Daily Chronicle* says: ‘She now makes an alliance that was well worth waiting for.’”

**Countess of Lytton**

Two months later, on 3 April 1902, Pamela Plowden married the Earl of Lytton at St. Margaret’s Church, Westminster. It was reported that the wedding presents were numerous and included a diamond bird-of-paradise from the King and Queen.

The Lyttons lived in Knebworth House, a picturesque estate in Hertfordshire. They had two sons and two daughters. At the time of their marriage, Lord Lytton was a Member of Parliament.

On 13 December 1905, Churchill was named Under-Secretary of State for the Colonies by Prime Minister Sir Henry Campbell-Bannerman. Churchill asked Edward Marsh, a Colonial Office clerk, if he
would be his Private Secretary. Unsure if he could work with Churchill, Marsh went to see Lady Lytton before making a decision. She told Marsh: “The first time you meet Winston, you see all his faults, and the rest of your life you spend in discovering his virtues.” Marsh accepted the position and faithfully served Churchill many years.

On 11 August 1908, Churchill asked Clementine Hozier to marry him, and she accepted. Before it was made public, Churchill informed his family, closest friends, Cabinet colleagues, and other important public figures of his engagement. To Pamela, he wrote: “I am to marry Clementine & I say to you as you said to me when you married Victor—you must always be our best friend.”

In the years that followed, Pamela and Churchill remained close friends. When the Churchills’ youngest daughter Marigold died at age two in 1921, Pamela wrote on hearing the news: “What torture for a parent’s heart. I can only pray that as time passes, many precious things will come to you, to help your wound to heal.”

Tragically, Pamela and Lord Lytton lost their son Edward, at the age of twenty-nine. Edward Lytton was killed in the crash of a Hawker Hart, a two-seater biplane light bomber at Hendon on 1 May 1933, while serving with the Auxiliary Air Force.

When Churchill became Prime Minister in 1940, Pamela was one of many friends who celebrated: “All your life I have known you would become PM, ever since the Hansom Cab days. Yet, now that you are, the news sets one’s heart beating like a sudden surprise. Your task is stupendous.” Churchill replied by telegram: “Thank you so much dear Pamela.”

During the war, tragedy again struck Pamela and her husband when their son Alexander was killed at the Second Battle of El Alamein in October 1942. After the war, Churchill sent Pamela a copy of the yet unpublished first volume of his memoirs: “…it may amuse you,” he wrote, “to keep these galley proofs.”

“Do let us meet again soon.”

In the postwar years, Churchill and Pamela maintained their friendship, as seen in his Engagement Calendar for January 1950. Despite feeling ill and seeing his doctor on 24 January and with the General Election forthcoming, Churchill maintained an active social calendar. The Engagement Calendar for 27 January reads: “8:00 Lady Lytton to dinner.”

In October 1950, Lady Lytton wrote Churchill to remind him that fifty years had passed since he had proposed marriage to her. He responded in his own hand from Chartwell: “My dearest Pamela, I put yr lovely letter of October 2 on one side for me to answer above all. Alas the precaution failed. It got among other letters. I have had (as you may guess) an awful time lately—exciting, exhausting, absorbing—and it is not till now that I can tell you how much I cherish yr signal across the years, from the days when I was a freak—always that—but much hated & ruled out, but there was one who saw some qualities, & it is to you that I am most deeply grateful.”

Churchill continued: “Do let us meet again soon. The Parl. will be sitting in November & perhaps you wd. come & lunch one day. Clemmie will telephone a plan. Fifty years!—how stunning! But after all it is better than a hundred. Then there wd not be memory. With my deepest thoughts & love. From Winston.”

In March 1951 Churchill was again affected by illness and was advised to rest for a few days. He wrote Pamela and mentioned his health: “I am laid up with an unexpectedly violent reaction to a penicillin injection which I took. I had a dreadful night with pain and a swollen face.”

In August 1951, Churchill made plans to meet Clementine in France. He wrote Pamela of his travel plans: “for I hope to paint as well as toil at the Book—Volume V now going into final print!” Churchill also referred to their courtship years ago: “I am sure you are happy at Knebworth, but the world is grim, & I am
glad we had our lives when we did. I shd be vy doubtful about beginning all over again. Poor India—a hard fate lies before her. Not yr fault or mine anyhow.  

In the spring of 1953, Churchill accepted the Queen’s request that he become a Knight of the Garter. In answer to a letter of congratulations from Pamela, he confided to his old friend: “I took it because it was the Queen’s wish. I think she is splendid.”

In his letter, Churchill also recognized his receiving the Queen’s tribute would bring back sad memories to Pamela of her husband and son. “I am sorry that the Garter stirs poignant memories in yr mind of dear Victor [Pamela’s husband had died 25 October 1947 and had been a Knight of the Garter] and valiant Antony. You have indeed had fearful blows to bear in life. Still courage and beauty have conquered all…. With my best love, Yours devotedly W.”

“…one of his most favoured guests.”

In the years that followed, Pamela came to lunch and spent weekends with Winston and Clementine at Chartwell. On occasion, Churchill invited guests, including Pamela, when Clementine was away. In August 1956, he wrote Clementine: “Violet [Asquith/Bonham Carter] is coming to spend the night of Bank Holiday with me, and thereafter I have Juliet [Lady Juliet Duff]. I propose to ask Pamela for the following week.” When Churchill was abroad, Clementine would see Pamela at Knebworth.

John Colville described Countess of Lytton in her later years: “Gentle in manner but quick of wit, and still beautiful in her old age, she remained on affectionate terms with her former suitor and one of his most favoured guests.”

Colville, who was close to the Churchill family, described Clementine’s feelings about Pamela: “Clementine Churchill, by no means predisposed to like or approve of her husband’s friends, whether male or female, made an enthusiastic exception in the case of Lady Lytton, whose presence was always welcomed. She did, however, admit to feeling just a touch of jealousy when she saw Winston and Pamela together, although she knew well that in her husband’s eyes no woman came within distant range of her.”

Six years after Churchill’s passing, Pamela, Countess of Lytton died in 1971 at the age of ninety-six. Known for her beauty, charm, and cleverness, as well as a successful socialite, wife, and mother, Pamela Plowden will also be remembered as Winston Churchill’s first great love and close lifetime friend.

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Endnotes

3. Ibid., p. 425.
4. Ibid., p. 297.
12. Ibid.
21. Ibid., p. 506.
22. Ibid., p. 562.
23. Ibid., p. 597.
24. Ibid., p. 630.
25. Ibid.
26. Ibid., p. 824.
27. Colville, p. 112.
28. Ibid.
Winston Churchill was not at all the sort of husband that Lady Blanche Hozier had had in mind for her unusual daughter Clementine. He had no small talk and was not—to be frank—conventionally good-looking or athletic. He also lacked a title, a stately residence, and, above all, a suitably aristocratic pot of money. Lady Blanche came to realise, however, that despite these serious shortcomings, he was a practically perfect match.

Lady Blanche had given birth in some haste to Clementine Ogilvy Hozier on the drawing room floor of her London townhouse in Grosvenor Street on 1 April 1885 (eleven years after Churchill’s equally precocious arrival at Blenheim Palace). Clementine was her second daughter, and the grand-daughter of a Scottish earl, and was apparently blessed with the usual trappings of her blue-blooded lineage. But all was not as it seemed in the Hozier household or Clementine’s young life generally.

Lady Blanche’s anxious parents (the tenth Earl and Countess of Airlie) had married off their willful child in 1878 to one Colonel Henry Hozier—an autocrat from a brewing family, who was cold to his wife, serially unfaithful, and dead set against having children. In the absence of an obliging husband, the sexy, bored, and lonely Lady Blanche decided to shop around, reputedly entertaining up to ten lovers at a time in search of a suitable mate. One of her favourite amours, the first Lord (“Bertie”) Re-
desdale, most likely fathered Clementine (and possibly also her siblings Kitty, Bill, and Nellie).

That is where matters got complicated. Bertie—who was to become grandfather to the famous Mitford sisters—was married to Lady Blanche’s sister Lady Clementine, with whom he had nine other children. Thus the industrious Bertie (who was also said to have sired yet more offspring by a Japanese geisha) was probably Clementine’s father and certainly her uncle. It is likely that she was named in honour of the forbearance and generosity of her aunt Clementine.

The cuckolded Colonel Hozier, unsurprisingly, was not keen on this arrangement, and he sued Lady Blanche for divorce when Clementine was just six. She and her elder sister Kitty became helpless hostages in a bitter battle over custody and financial support. They were quickly wrested from their mother to live with Henry and his sister, the spinster Aunt Mary, who believed that children benefited greatly from being whipped.

Hozier soon tired of the responsibility, however, and so he parceled out his young charges to the care of a governess in the Hertfordshire town of Berkhamsted, just north of London. Here Clementine lived a very modest life, in which she was expected to help in the housework for hours every day and never had quite enough to eat. It was the start of a life lesson in the hardships endured by those outside the charmed circles of the landed upper classes. Her experiences at a young age—so different from the opulent splendour of Winston’s childhood at Blenheim—were to give both of them an invaluable political insight into the minds of the masses. She was not, of course, to know that at the time and just felt deeply unhappy.

Although the girls were eventually returned to their mother—after another stint in a “horrible, severe” boarding school—even then Clementine’s problems had really only just begun.

Tight Money

Lady Blanche had her young family all together, but Hozier was refusing to help financially, and money was extremely tight. Over the next eight years, the family of five moved from one set of furnished lodgings to another every few months. In part this was out of financial necessity—and the need to stay one step ahead of the creditors—but the constant roaming also suited Lady Blanche’s capricious nature.

It did not suit Clementine. By now a tearful, fearful little girl, she craved security and constancy and was granted neither. Lady Blanche continued to entertain her men-friends, and on the rare occasions when she was at home made her preference for the pretty and puckish Kitty all too obvious. Clementine, so often red-eyed with tears, was dismissed by her mother as plain, dull, and not even particularly bright. She slipped into the role of supporter and counselor to the star act Kitty; perhaps for a long time only the girls themselves realised that it was really Clementine that possessed the inner steel.

The first inkling for most came when the family moved to Dieppe in northern France to live even more cheaply and away from the moral judgements made by Lady Blanche’s compatriots of her overtly promiscuous ways. She had by now been excluded from virtually every smart salon in London and was widely considered to be “mad.” Clementine was beginning to excel at her studies (Lady Blanche was unusually progressive in viewing female education as essential, with the glaring exception of “unladylike” maths), but found it humiliating to ask for credit when she was sent out to the market for food, particularly when Lady Blanche, seen as an eccentric “milady” by the locals, was frequently losing what little money they had at the town’s casino. Clementine longed for respectability and loathed the fact that her mother was also having an affair with the artist Walter Sickert. Sickert (a man of questionable morals and recently even thought by some to be the murderous Jack the Ripper) was also carrying on with the queen of the Dieppe fish market, one Madame Villain. The two women would vent their anger at each other in plain view on the streets—with the fishwife throwing things at her rival in a jealous temper—an indignity that Clementine found difficult to bear.

Colonel Hozier Returns

Now Hozier was changing his mind about the teenaged Clementine, perceiving from afar that she was emerging as clever, graceful, and accomplished, if still apparently unnecessarily timid. He decided to visit her in Dieppe and invited her to lunch at the Hotel Royal. Lady Blanche bid her reluctant daughter to attend, although their trusty maid Justine would accompany her there and back.

Little was said between Clementine and her forbidding putative father over lunch of omelette and larks-
en-brochette until Hozier broke the dreaded news that he intended to take his daughter back to England with him to live with the whip-happy aunt Mary once again. Faced with this unthinkable prospect, Clementine’s shyness surrendered to a hitherto undetected determination and courage. While surreptitiously slipping on her gloves under the table, she announced calmly that her mother would refuse to allow her to leave Dieppe. The moment Justine returned, she rose from her chair and politely but firmly bade Hozier goodbye.

In a fury, Hozier suddenly barred his daughter’s way, thrusting a cold coin into Justine’s hand and pushing her violently out of the door. Clementine was now trapped and alone with this unpredictable man once more, but when he moved to fetch a cigar, she valiantly seized her chance. She flung the door open and ran full pelt towards Justine, who was waiting uncertainly outside. The two girls scrambled away as fast as they could on the icy pavements with Hozier, swearing angrily, in pursuit. Only once they neared the safety of the house where Clementine and her family were living did he finally give up on them and turn back.

The captain of the Dieppe-Newhaven steamer later confirmed that Hozier had been planning to kidnap Clementine and take her back to England that very afternoon. Her quick thinking had saved her. As her future husband Winston later put it, Lady Blanche’s once timorous daughter had displayed an exceptional ability to “rise to the level of events.” Indeed, the greater the challenge, the more impressive Clementine became. Hardships in her early life equipped her well for her future role at her husband’s side at the centre of two world wars. Gradually she would reinvent herself as a formidable figure, no longer scared of anyone, not her father, her husband, and much later not de Gaulle, FDR, Stalin, or Hitler either. That day with her father started the process in earnest.

Runaway Bride

Her next great challenge back then, however, came soon afterwards when her beloved Kitty died suddenly from typhoid. Never had Clementine felt so alone, now fending almost entirely for herself. The family returned to England, where she was sent to a grammar school—again hardly the typical environment for an earl’s grand-daughter. Yet it was here that an inspired headmistress, Miss Beatrice Harris, finally saw the potential in Clementine. She en-
couraged her to be confident, self-reliant, curious about the world and great events; to champion women’s rights, including the female vote (something she would eventually convince Winston to support); to help improve the lot of the poor; and above all to stretch her mind way beyond the then normal domestic concerns of most women to politics and beyond. Clementine exulted in the respect and admiration she received at school. She thrilled in the intellectual rigour of her studies and the expectations laid at the feet of such a star pupil. She even threw herself into studying maths—albeit in secret so that her mother did not try to stop her. She laid out her textbooks on the gravestones and did her homework in a local churchyard, away from Lady Blanche’s prying eyes. Nothing would stop her achieving the highest grades.

Miss Harris knew she had university material on her hands. Few women then studied for a degree but she recognised that Clementine was special. That, however, was a step too far for Lady Blanche. For Clementine had also now emerged as a stunningly beautiful young woman, attracting admiring glances from a bevy of rich and titled men. Here now surely was a chance of financial security and the social standing that Lady Blanche had long since lost. Clementine’s sapphire eyes, slender figure and dazzling white-toothed smile would be the route for both women back into wealthy society where they rightly belonged.

All talk of university was banned. Clementine would be launched on the London circuit. Eligible suitors began to form an orderly queue. Clementine’s younger sister Nellie kept a fat file of Clementine’s offers of marriage under Rejected, Pending, and even Accepted. Indeed, Clementine was engaged three times—twice to the same man—but each time she broke it off to her own distress and to that of the gentlemen in question.

The problem was that these men were plain wrong for her—too comfortable and too compromising. They promised a life of indolence but also of stultifying restraint. One was Sidney Cornwallis Peel. The younger son of a viscount (and grandson of former Prime Minister Sir Robert), he was constant, fifteen years her senior, and rich. He took her to the theatre and sent her white violets every day. Lady Blanche thought her job was done. But Clementine knew there was more—or should be—to life. Poor Sidney was simply not exciting; his letters veered from pleading to peevish and were generally, as he conceded himself, rather dull. He offered security, money, respectability, and status. But she knew there was no passion; she was not in love. There was no intellectual spark, and without that she could not be happy. She parted from him a second and final time and began her search again.

She then agreed to marry another wealthy and older man, but again she knew he did not offer an exciting life of experience and adventure in the wider world. In short, he too was simply not clever enough. Now acquiring a reputation for inconstancy, Clementine began to think she would never marry at all.

Enter Winston

Meanwhile Winston Churchill was in hot pursuit of a wife. He was already a global celebrity—thanks to his escapades in India and Africa—and a rising political star. What he lacked in money, he more than made up for with brio, swagger, and prospects. By rights he should have made quite a catch for a woman already in possession of a fortune and he began to cast his eye round for contenders.

Churchill even devised a scheme to assess their suitability for marriage. If he judged a woman’s face to be beautiful enough to launch a thousand ships, then clearly she would qualify. If merely worthy of two hundred ships, then she might have to do, but only if absolutely necessary. If, though, her looks would justify launching, at most, a small gunboat, then clearly she would be out of the question. There was, however, a problem with this approach. It did not take into account whether these women had anything in common with him. Indeed, when he proposed to a string of “thousand ships” women they one by one turned him down, sensing the incompatibility.

They wanted luxury—he could not guarantee it; they wanted parties, balls, and gossip—he found them boring; he wanted to talk day and night about his political career—they found the subject baffling and even tedious, preferring his undivided energies to be devoted to them. If only he could find a thousand-ships woman who shared his love of affairs of state, of the cut and thrust of politics, of ideas, policies, and politicians. If only he could find a woman not just unfazed by his intellectual prowess but dazzled by it, a woman who understood his potential for greatness and would help guide him towards it, a woman whose mind was alive to the realm beyond the domestic and who was not afraid to spar with him intellectually. In short, if only he could
find a woman who would be his partner not only in life but also in politics, who would use her own talents to enhance his. But did such a woman exist?

In the spring of 1908 Winston Churchill was lingering in his bath one evening at home in Mayfair. He was grumpy about the prospect of a dinner party he fully expected to be a “bore.” His private secretary Eddie Marsh tactfully reminded him of the many kindnesses of Lady St. Helier, the grand society hostess who had invited him, and, after making more fuss, he rose from his bathwater to dress.

He arrived late when the other guests were already eating their main course of chicken. Amongst them was Clementine, who had been invited at the last minute to make up the numbers after another woman had fallen ill. She had been reluctant to accept, feeling tired after a day earning her living teaching French and was also worried about having nothing suitable to wear. The only spare seat at table was the one next to her, and so Churchill sat down rather grumpily at her side.

Soon, however, the pair were deep in animated conversation. They explored the current ructions and rifts in politics and the issues and characters involved. They debated the then novel ideas about establishing a proper welfare state to help the poor. They shared thoughts and observations on France, a country they both loved with a passion. They discussed history, biography, and philosophy and yet always there was more to say. Soon, the rest of the table seemed to fade away as they had only eyes and ears for each other. The other diners looked on in amazement. Churchill was ignoring all the (male) dignitaries present to talk exclusively to Miss Hozier, who looked as if she were in raptures. Much later Clementine would be asked if she thought Churchill handsome that night. She replied tactfully—but tellingly—that she had found him very “interesting.” Looks counted for little with her. Here at last was a man who led an exciting life on the public stage, one that she was excluded from on her own account because of her gender. But if she could help him perhaps she could still be a part of it too. Perhaps she too could make a difference.

Emotionally, too, there was an instant connection. Both had endured largely loveless childhoods—Winston’s mother Jennie had also often been absent and, like Lady Blanche, engaged in a life of frantic sexual intrigue at the expense of her children. Both had had cold and distant fathers. Both had become adept at hiding their consequent insecurities behind a façade—his behind apparent unfailing self-belief, hers behind a carefully maintained distance. They were both in search of comfort as well as excitement; both had endured hardships and heartache and yet were ready for great challenges in life. Six months later, they were married, and Lady Blanche was canny enough to realise that Clementine might not be destined for a rich and easy life. But she had nevertheless finally found her perfect match. ☺

Winston and Clemmie during the Second World War

Sonia Purnell is the author of First Lady: The Life and Wars of Clementine Churchill (2015). All quotations in this article are taken from the book.
Sarah Churchill was the essence of the modern woman living in an era that was not yet ready for her.

Judged in her day as a “Bolshie Deb,” a runaway bride, a rising star of London’s West End, and “the one that’s always in trouble,” she was in her own words endlessly “written up, written down and always written about” as “a woman who happened to be a daughter of one of the ‘greats’ of history.”

To describe Sarah merely as Winston Churchill’s daughter would be to tell only half her story. While Sarah was certainly her father’s daughter in both fact and temperament, restricting our understanding of her to this narrow lens belies her fierce independence, depth, intelligence, professional success, and personal impact on the lives of some of the most extraordinary figures of her era.

Though a tabloid fixture in her own times, Sarah Churchill is little known today. Amongst modern audiences who are familiar with her story, her life is often condensed into a few short and unjustly unforgiving biographical lines: Sarah Millicent Hermione, the third child of Winston and Clementine Churchill, was born in October 1914, two months after the First World War commenced. She became a moderately successful actress on the stage and screen, was thrice married (with two of her husbands being entirely unsuitable), and at times grappled tragically with alcoholism and financial difficulties, particularly towards the end of her life.

Though a tabloid fixture in her own times, Sarah Churchill is little known today. Amongst modern audiences who are familiar with her story, her life is often condensed into a few short and unjustly unforgiving biographical lines: Sarah Millicent Hermione, the third child of Winston and Clementine Churchill, was born in October 1914, two months after the First World War commenced. She became a moderately successful actress on the stage and screen, was thrice married (with two of her husbands being entirely unsuitable), and at times grappled tragically with alcoholism and financial difficulties, particularly towards the end of her life.

In spite of this limited understanding of Sarah Churchill today, contemporaries describe this complex woman differently. A journalist who knew her recalled: “More than anybody I have ever interviewed, she was a life enhancer, who made everything seem rosier, more entertaining, more glamorous. At the same time she was vulnerable. She wanted you to like her and was touched if you did.”

Reading Sarah’s own words brings the color and vitality of her life into focus. From adolescence, Sarah struggled between upholding the expectations that her position as a Churchill wrought and establishing her name and her career beyond the scope of her family. Though she could easily have lived in comfort in her father’s aura until the end of her days, Sarah sought to be the sovereign of her own life, and in doing so became the most independently successful member of her family after Winston himself.

As a young woman, Sarah rejected the life expected of an aristocratic debutante. Lovingly nicknamed the “Mule” by her family because of her stubborn nature, she fought for a career of her own on the stage and marriage in 1936 to Austrian-born Jewish comedian and actor Vic Oliver. Though this marriage was not to last, her stage career blossomed. She starred in several popular productions prior to the outbreak of war but interrupted her career to join the Women’s Auxiliary Air Force and serve her country as a WAAF. Returning to the dramatic arts after the war, Sarah made the leap from stage to screen, from London’s West End to Hollywood. After eloping with society photographer Anthony Beauchamp in 1949, the pinnacle of her film career came in 1951 when she acted and danced opposite Fred Astaire in the film *Royal Wedding*. The pinnacle of personal happiness arrived in 1962 with her third marriage, this time to Lord Audley, the love of her life. His death, just fifteen months after their wedding, left Sarah devastated. And though her later years bore significant challenges, she authored six books, including poetry collections, a loving tribute to her father in *A Thread in the Tapestry* (1966), and her own memoir *Keep on Dancing* (1981).

While dancing with Fred Astaire is enough to make for a memorable life, it was the war that gave Sarah—much like her father—the opportunity to be her best. The necessities imposed by war broke down some of the barriers that had constrained her personally and professionally, giving this modern woman the chance to contribute and flourish. In doing so, she proved her true Churchillian character, succeeding as a natural-born ambassador for her country.

In a sense, life began anew for Sarah in 1940. After four years of marriage to Vic Oliver, she had grown and matured into a determined woman. While their respective careers and his philandering had stressed their relationship, the war brought on their inevitable
separation. Oliver had become an American citizen in 1936—in part to marry Sarah—and when war erupted between Britain and Germany, the US government required all American citizens in England to return home or else lose their citizenship.

Sarah faced a crucial choice. She could return to America with her husband, or she could say goodbye. In a June 1940 letter to her mother, she explained her weighty predicament, concluding, “When I think of leaving England now—of going away from you all—at this critical hour—I can’t tell you what it does to me.”

Sarah chose to stay, both to do her bit for her country and to discover what life held in store as her own master.

Though determinedly independent in her career, Sarah wrote in her memoir, “I think the only time I asked my father to exert his influence on my behalf was, ironically, to get me out of the theater.” She spoke to her father and—less than forty-eight hours later—became a WAAF.

Initially, her WAAF commanding officers offered her an administrative position, assuming easy office work and quick promotion would be most appropriate for the Prime Minister’s daughter. Sarah was intent, however, on filling an intellectually challenging position, where she could make a meaningful contribution towards material results. She told her mother: “I do not mind the discomforts; I only want to find something I can do well.” Resolved, she interviewed for and was accepted into the Photographic Interpretation Unit of the RAF Intelligence Branch at Medmenham. In another letter to Clementine (in which she added two exclamation points beside her name, rank and serial number), Sarah elatedly wrote, “I must say one feels ridiculously proud of one’s uniform and all it stands for.”

As a Section Officer in the Photographic Interpretation Unit, which analyzed aerial reconnaissance photos for European and North African operations, Sarah scrutinized images to identify critical targets for Allied bombers. The work was demanding, with twelve-hour overnight shifts and eye exams every eight weeks. Perhaps the most challenging, yet gratifying phase of her work came in advance of Operation Torch, during which Sarah’s unit worked in conjunction with ground intelligence to prepare for the Allied invasion of North Africa in 1942.

While Sarah found the independence and sense of purpose she craved at RAF Medmenham, the fact that
she was the Prime Minister’s daughter required her to play a role unlike that of any of her fellow WAAFs. As a result of her unique position, she became a participant in several of the most politically charged moments in twentieth-century history. Winston and Clementine had decided that a member of the family should accompany the Prime Minister on his international travels as a trusted supporter and protector. Mary Churchill attended the Quebec and Potsdam Conferences, while Sarah joined her father as his aide-de-camp at the meetings between the “Big Three” at Cairo, Tehran, and Yalta. Sarah’s letters to her mother provide some of the most intimate commentary on these events that shaped the decades that followed.

In November 1943, Sarah travelled with her father to Cairo in HMS Renown to discuss Pacific theatre strategy with Franklin Roosevelt and Chinese President Chiang Kai-Shek. From there, they continued on to Tehran to meet Joseph Stalin and outline the strategy for a second front against Germany. Sarah—dressed proudly in her WAAF uniform—was the only female member of the delegation.

Stopping in Malta en route to Cairo, the RAF flew several members of the group in Mosquito bombers over Sicily. Looking at the ground beneath her, Sarah felt as if she had been there before: having analyzed photos of the Italian peninsula for months on end, she did not need a map to know exactly where she was. She wrote to her mother, “The only unfamiliar thing of course was the color. I knew it all in black and white—and it was pink.”

The group arrived in Cairo on 22 November. While meetings between the heads of government transpired, Sarah waited in an antechamber with the Chinese aides. Suddenly, she was summoned to join the discussion inside. “We sat in a circle with two interpreters and had about 15 minutes conversation,” she told her mother, “Papa with Chiang and me with Madame Chiang,” who, Sarah noted, was suffering from “pink eye!”

Despite her ailment, the Chinese First Lady was a striking and intelligent individual: “Papa was impressed by her—and there is no doubt that she is far and away the best interpreter.”

With the imposing figure of Madame Chiang fresh in Sarah’s mind, the delegation moved on to Tehran on 28 November. After long days in Cairo and a grueling flight, Winston Churchill was exhausted and suffered from laryngitis. Sarah wrote, “Uncle Joe was already there and Papa wanted to start right there and then.” As her father’s guardian, she knew that meeting with Stalin in such a reduced state would not put her father in a strong position to negotiate. Sarah and Lord Moran, Churchill’s doctor, tried to persuade him to delay “and got [their] heads bitten off.” Ultimately he agreed to wait until he had rested, a decision that proved advantageous.

The Prime Minister’s sixty-ninth birthday fell on the third day of the conference, which Sarah reported was the highlight of the trip, “not only because of all the ‘great’ that were gathered, but because of why they were gathered, and most of all—because of how they really get along….There was a great roar of laughter, the kind of laughter that is only heard among friends.” “Whatever follows,” she continued, “one couldn’t help but feel that a genuine desire for friendship was sown that night.”

The Big Three gathered next in February 1945 to discuss European postwar organization at Yalta. After landing in Saki on the Crimean Peninsula, the delegations endured a harrowing six-hour drive over rough, ransacked Russian terrain, finally arriving at Vorontsov Palace—the only accommodation left standing. Tension and suspicion replaced the ebullient atmosphere at Tehran, with each of the leaders advocating a different vision for Europe’s future. After long sessions throughout the afternoon and evening, Sarah stayed up half the night discussing strategy and the fate of Poland with her father and Foreign Secretary Anthony Eden.
Sarah had impressed Roosevelt at Tehran, prompting him to bring his own daughter Anna to Yalta as his aide-de-camp. Averell Harriman, the American Ambassador to the USSR, similarly brought his daughter Kathleen. Between conference sessions, the three women ventured out to Sevastopol, where they beheld the scars of war. Every house was "shattered," and Romanian prisoners queued for their meager rations. Sarah told Clementine, “One has seen similar queues of hopeless stunned humans on the films—but in reality it is too terrible.” That night, when she reported what she had seen, her father solemnly told her, “Tonight the sun goes down on more suffering than ever before in the world.”

While the Yalta Conference made Sarah a witness to war’s utter devastation, it also made her party to the harbingers of geopolitical change for Britain in the postwar world. At Tehran, Sarah had written to her mother of the admiration she felt for President Roosevelt and the genuine compassion and understanding she felt existed between the American leader and his British counterparts; at Yalta, however, FDR’s obvious effort to placate the Soviet Union ahead of Britain smacked of betrayal. During a conversation with Anna Roosevelt, Sarah learned that the President intended to leave Yalta to meet with Saudi Arabian leader Ibn Saud before all parties were satisfied with the plans for peace in postwar Europe. Disgusted, Sarah told Lord Moran, “As if…the conference isn’t so much more important than anything else.” The next day, Roosevelt departed promptly, and Stalin, “like some genie, just disappeared.”

The Second World War gave Sarah Churchill an independent life befitting her talents and ambitions, while simultaneously reinforcing her identity as Winston Churchill’s daughter. It allowed this modern woman to surpass the expectations she held for herself, and those that others held for her. As her father’s aide-de-camp, Sarah became an intimate witness to and actor in the crucial events that shaped history in a way that few women did during the Second World War. Her abilities and composure earned her the respect of the leaders of her time, prompting them to open doors for the women in their own lives to follow Sarah’s example.

The independence and confidence Sarah gained during the war fuelled her career in its aftermath. Though she never sought fame on the screen, preferring to act in live performances on stage, she boldly appeared in one of the first Italian films made in the war’s aftermath and moved to America as a single woman to pursue intriguing career opportunities that Hollywood provided.

But perhaps what brought her the most personal happiness was that her wartime role created a new closeness between Sarah and her parents—her father in particular. After all they had witnessed together at Tehran and Yalta, Winston turned to Sarah in times of difficulty throughout the rest of his life. With the end of war in sight, Sarah wrote to her mother on 7 April 1945, reflecting on all that had transpired: “The real happiness of these last years has been getting to know both you and Papa—I have always loved you, but not always known you, and this sudden discovery of you both is like stumbling on a goldmine!” And when it was all over, she wrote to her father, “All my love to you and Mummie—you’re terrific—both of you—wow, wow, and re-wow forever.”

Catherine Katz earned degrees in history at Harvard and Cambridge. She is working on a biography of Sarah Churchill.

Endnotes
5. Letter #1 to Clementine Churchill, 28 October 1941, SCHL 1/1/6; Letter #2 to Clementine Churchill, 28 October 1941, SCHL 1/1/6.
9. Ibid.
I visited Chartwell last June with my sister Celia Sandys to commemorate the fiftieth anniversary of the opening of the house to the public. It was a typical English afternoon, not quite sunny, not quite rainy. Tea was in a large tent on the lawn near the house. Many of our cousins, Soames and Churchill, were there, as well as friends of the family. I was very pleased to meet for the first time David Coombs, author of the comprehensive catalogue of Winston Churchill paintings.
Afters a few “Hellos” and “How are yous?” I had a strange feeling that we were sitting having tea and cakes on what had in earlier days been the croquet lawn. Before that it had been a tennis court. I had never known it as a tennis court but had heard of my grandmother’s prowess as a fine and graceful tennis player, who also played in tournaments. The Croquet Lawn was very much part of my Chartwell days. Although I never saw Grandpapa playing croquet, I played many games with Grandmama and Field Marshal Montgomery. Monty was a frequent visitor and, although known for being a stern and formidable soldier, was very kind and even interested in talking to a young, shy, teenager like me. In those days, in the English countryside, croquet was quite a different game from the one played today in the United States, where it is taken very seriously, competitively as well as sartorially—everyone in white dresses or flannels.

I slipped away down “memory lane” to the early 1950s. First stop was the goldfish pool, where Grandpapa would spend many hours sitting on a wooden chair throwing worms from a can into the water, delighting at the sudden flashes of orange that leapt to the surface as if from nowhere.

Then to the swimming pool—a great favourite with all the children. Pools were a rarity and an amazing treat. After lunch, although you were meant to wait at least one hour after a meal before swimming to avoid cramps, we would race down the hill and jump into the circular pool, which was part of the landscaping that Grandpapa had not only ordained but also worked on himself. The whole family would swim. This was where I dared to do my first dive. I wore a navy woolen school regulation swimming suit and a tight rubber swim hat. Grandmama wore a much more attractive bathing dress and a voluminous bath cap. We swam breaststroke or a splashy and unpopular crawl. Grandmama glided by with an elegant sidestroke.

From the swimming pool, I looked down at the lakes, where the rare black swans nested. Grandpapa was very proud of these, which were a gift from his friend Sir Robert Menzies, Prime Minister of Australia. Grandpapa would feed the swans bread right into their beaks, but we children had to stay clear, as they were very fierce and, raising their wings in an arc, would come out of the water and chase us up the grassy bank.

Over to the studio, where Grandpapa spent so many happy hours and where I saw with delight about a hundred of his paintings still hanging there. One of my earliest memories is of standing behind Grandpapa as he was painting. I imagined I could still smell the oil paint and turpentine. So many canvasses with Grandpapa’s personality stamped on them all—his flourish with the brush, the excitement, the tension, the rush of adrenaline, the impatience to get it all on canvas but still to hold back like collecting a feisty horse about to jump a fence.

Back up the hill to the gardens now to the Rose Garden. This garden was planted entirely with fifty yellow rose bushes to celebrate my grandparents’ Golden Wedding Anniversary. Their happy marriage was a fortuitous one for Great Britain and the whole world. If Grandpapa had not married the right woman, history would surely have taken another turn.

I walked into the house by the front door. On the left is the oak table on which the visitors’ book still resides. Every visitor, even family, always signed. It is a wonderful record. I remember once while I was signing, Bernard Baruch gave me what he called “candy” and we called “sweets.” A great treat as even after the War, sugar and butter and many other foods were rationed—maybe a blessing in disguise!

The room on the right used to be Grandmama’s bedroom. After breakfast we children would knock and go in to say “Good Morning.” Frequently, she would be in her dressing room carefully sliding large hairpins from her hair, leaving a perfect design of silver curls, which she left unbrushed. I have never seen anyone, then or since, who had the nerve to do that but it gave her a very beautiful sculpted look.

Up the sturdy oak stairs to Grandpapa’s bedroom where we would give him a “Good Morning” kiss. Frequently, with his spectacles low on his nose, he would be in bed working on a speech or writing some notes.

Now to where the dining room was in my day (many of the rooms have been rearranged since the house is now open to the public.) As far as I was concerned, the Dining Room was where it was at! The dinner table at Chartwell was the Mecca to which all were attracted—always the hub of the household—frequently the hub of the world. At Christmas, there were little Soames children running around, Rufus the poodle, and Toby the green budgerigar hopping from one head to another. The guiding light throughout was Grandmama, always ready with a look or a word to make sure that everyone was happy and at ease. The
**Opposite above:** Chartwell by Edwina Sandys, 1984

**Opposite below left:** Edwina with her grandmother Clementine Churchill (photo: Toni Frissel 1951)

**Opposite below right:** Clementine plays croquet at Chartwell (photo: Lord Montgomery, 1964)

**Top:** Churchill’s studio at Chartwell

**Below left:** Goldfish Pool at Chartwell, 1932 #344

**Below right:** Black Swans at Chartwell, 1948 #384
scented room, the flowers, the scrumptious food were a magical combination of warmth and elegance. Later, when the mood had mellowed over brandy and cigars, Grandpapa would frequently hold the table spellbound as he recited poetry until tears came to his eyes. Special favorites were If, by his friend Rudyard Kipling, and Macaulay’s How Horatius Kept the Bridge in the Brave Days of Old.

After dinner we would scamper down to the basement to the cinema. This was enormously exciting for the family and dinner guests, as well as for all the staff who worked in the house. Grandpapa was fascinated with Hollywood and had installed a cinema. The films were projected from the back of the room on reels, which occasionally flew off the spool. The family sat in the front on low soft armchairs. Grandpapa would be in one of his velvet siren suits, smoking a cigar and sipping a brandy and soda. He loved all the sentimental films, even some of the old silent films and all the musicals. We were all in tears watching Grandpapa’s friend Charlie Chaplin in Limelight, the sad story of a beautiful blind flower seller. Sometimes we had films before they were released in England. One night we had Manon des Sources, and when I told the French teacher at school I had seen this film, she said I must be lying as it was not yet out. I then had the embarrassment of having to explain.

Up to the drawing room on the ground floor. People have suggested my grandmother did not really warm to Chartwell. She was certainly concerned about the cost of renovation and maintenance. However, if this was so, she certainly buckled to, and turned the rather stern house into a place of delight. She made the whole house comfortable, convenient, and charming. The drawing room was not a sterile parlor for show but a haven of relaxation and stimulation. At the drop of a hat, a card table would be opened up in the middle of the room for a game of Bezique or Gin Rummy. After dinner, Grandpapa would often go to the room opposite the drawing room, when he would work on A History of the English-Speaking Peoples with one of his private secretaries, often Anthony Montague Browne.

The drawing room and the whole house were full of Grandpapa’s paintings. Grandmama hung them in all the main rooms, but more kept coming. She dealt with them in a novel way “wall-to-wall Winstons.” The hallways and passages were lined with canvasses, stacked two or three high, like pages of postage stamps, it was effective, exciting—and very democratic really. Viewing for all ages and sizes—low enough so the smallest grandchild would not have to stand on tiptoe, high enough so the lofty General de Gaulle would not need to stoop his head. This reminds me of a story that my Nanny told me: when I was about four years old, she found me sitting on the General’s knee. He was teaching me to recite: “Vive La France Libre!” I cannot remember as far back as that so I cannot vouch for it, but Nanny never lied, so it must be true.

Just as I stepped outside the front door into the driveway, something else came to mind—a picture of Grandpapa, on horseback. I think it was on one of his birthdays. There he was in full vigor, riding maybe for the last time.

As I rejoined Celia and we drove away, I felt a warm glow. Chartwell was one of the great loves of Grandpapa’s life—a home for his family and an inspiration for his painting. Without Chartwell, he might have not been able to weather the difficulties and disappointments of the “wilderness” years. He might not have had the fortitude and strength to lead Britain to victory in the Second World War. ♫

Edwina Sandys is a painter and sculptor. A granddaughter of Sir Winston Churchill, she is the author of Winston Churchill: A Passion for Painting (2015), reviewed in FH 174. This article copyright 2017 Edwina Sandys, Artists Rights Society, NY.
Robert Courts, who helped to organize the 2015 Churchill Conference in Oxfordshire and is a frequent contributor to Finest Hour, was chosen to fill the parliamentary seat of former Prime Minister David Cameron in a by-election held last October. Robert lives in Bladon, only a stone’s throw from Sir Winston Churchill’s final resting place in St. Martin’s churchyard. As the newly seated Conservative Member of Parliament for Witney, Robert delivered his maiden speech on 30 November 2016, the 142nd anniversary of Churchill’s birth, and made note of a very personal Churchill connection that crossed party lines, as we learn from the following extracts.

Mr. Speaker, in 1945 Albert Stubbs won the seat of Cambridgeshire for the Labour party. He was a famous trade unionist, and he won his seat by a majority of 44 by getting on his motorcycle, riding around the villages of Cambridgeshire and signing up the workers to the union. He was known for his hard work for the people of that area and his interest in rural issues.

I mention Mr. Stubbs because he was my great-grandfather....I do therefore acknowledge at this stage that Mr. Stubbs would be horrified by my politics, but I hope he would at least approve of my work ethic.

I have spoken to the House of my admiration for Winston Churchill, and I thought it would be a good idea if I went back to the records to see whether there was perhaps an exchange between my hero and my forebear. I went to Hansard and I searched for an exchange, and I expected the contrast of the famous parliamentary wit and the working-class warrior. I was thinking of a combination of Pitt the Younger and Charles James Fox, and I found in the “Thanks to the Services” debate from 1945 just such an exchange.

The great man—speaking from the Opposition Bench, of course—paused in his speech, took an intervention from Mr. Stubbs, told him he was “ignorant” and went back to his speech. I do not know who was right or wrong in that exchange; I merely hope that I will manage to avoid such a rebuke in the course of my career.

The Great Hour
The relationship between Sir Winston Churchill and Queen Elizabeth II is both fascinating and important for many reasons. Among them:

—Churchill was the United Kingdom’s longest-serving Member of Parliament, while The Queen is the longest-serving monarch
—The Queen was Churchill’s sixth and final sovereign, while Churchill was the first of The Queen’s thirteen British Prime Ministers to date
—Churchill at twenty-five was elected a Member of Parliament, while Elizabeth at twenty-five became Queen (the first Queen Elizabeth was also twenty-five when she became Queen in 1558)
—Most importantly, Churchill’s expert tutoring of The Queen on the complexities of the law, practices, and politics of constitutional monarchy benefited all who live in the many countries under her sovereignty

Churchill became The Queen’s first prime minister largely by chance. After defeating Churchill in the General Elections of 1945 and 1950, Clement Attlee called a snap election on 25 October 1951. While Attlee’s Labour party won more votes, Churchill’s Conservatives won more seats, and so Churchill once again became prime minister. Just three-and-a-half months later, King George VI died, and his daughter Elizabeth became Queen.

First Impressions

Within the Churchill papers, the earliest recorded reference to the future queen is found in a letter to his wife that Churchill wrote from Balmoral Castle on 25 September 1928, in which Churchill anticipates the destiny of the future sovereign: “There is no one here at all except the Family, the Household & Queen Elizabeth—aged 2. The last is a character. She has an air of authority & reflectiveness astonishing in an infant….”

While The Queen and Churchill first met when she was a toddler, their knowledge of one another was superficial until Elizabeth became the sovereign. The Queen, as Nicholas Davies has written, “had, of course, grown up believing that Winston Churchill, Britain’s war-time Prime Minister, had saved the nation from Hitler and his mighty German military machine. She revered him as many other young people did at that time.”

After Churchill received the sad news of the death of King George VI, John Colville tried to console his boss by saying he would find the new Queen charming, attractive, intelligent, and immensely conscientious. Churchill replied through his tears: “I hardly know her, and she is only a child.” But Colville knew better. He had served as Private Secretary to Princess Elizabeth from 1947 to 1949 in between his periods of service as a Principal Private Secretary to Prime Minister Churchill.

Churchill’s youngest daughter Mary told her own daughter Emma Soames: “The Queen very quickly captivated him, he fell under her spell. I think he felt early on her immense sense of duty, and he looked forward to his Tuesday afternoon meetings with the young monarch.” Mary also recalled Churchill’s refusal to consider Prince Philip’s suggestion that the House of Windsor be renamed the House of Edinburgh or Lord Mountbatten’s idea that it become the House of Mountbatten. No lasting damage resulted, and, on 24 April 1953, The Queen invested Churchill with the Order of the Garter.

Sacred Duty

Clementine told her husband from time to time: “You are Monarchical No. 1 and value tradition, form and ceremony.” But while Chur-
Above: Churchill greets the Queen, while Clement Attlee and his wife Violet look on

Below: Queen Elizabeth II dedicates a statue of Churchill in Paris with French President Jacques Chirac, 11 November 1998
chill admired the monarchy, he did not particularly admire the monarchs. He had his differences with King Edward VII, King George V, and even King George VI during the Second World War.

The reality, as royal biographer Philip Ziegler has observed, was that, “With the solitary exception of the abdication, it is hard to think of a single instance in which Churchill changed his views or his course of action on any important question in accordance with his perception of the wishes of the monarch of the time…. All his historical romantic instincts ensured that he would view it with profound respect or even reverence, but that was something distinct from the business of running the country.”

When it came to public respect for the monarchy, however, Churchill excelled. In his broadcast of 7 February 1952 about the death of King George VI, he waxed eloquent about the reigns of earlier queens:

Now that we have the Second Queen Elizabeth…. We understand why her gifts, and those of her husband, the Duke of Edinburgh, have stirred the only part of our Commonwealth she has yet been able to visit. She has already been acclaimed as Queen of Canada,…and tomorrow the proclamation of her sovereignty will command the loyalty of her native land and of all other parts of the British Commonwealth and Empire. I, whose youth was passed in the august, unchallenged and tranquil glories of the Victorian Era, may well feel a thrill in invoking, once more, the prayer and the Anthem, God Save The Queen!

Just days before the 1953 Coronation, Churchill addressed the Commonwealth Parliamentary Association in the Queen’s presence: “Here today we salute fifty or sixty Parliaments and one Crown. It is natural for Parliaments to talk and for the Crown to shine.” He then continued: “Well do we realize the burdens imposed by sacred duty upon the Sovereign and her family. All round we see the proofs of the unifying sentiment which makes the Crown the central link in all our modern changing life, and the one which above all others claims our allegiance to the death.”

**Tutoring the Queen**

Churchill and The Queen thoroughly enjoyed one another’s company. Jock Colville wrote that Churchill “was madly in love with the Queen…and that she got more fun out of her audiences with Churchill than with any of his successors.” The Queen’s Private Secretary Sir “Tommy” Lascelles wrote: “I could not hear what they talked about, but it was, more often than not, punctuated by peals of laughter, and Winston generally came out wiping his eyes.”

The Queen, by the time of her Coronation, “… had developed a close and unique bond with Britain’s most formidable statesman. His fondness for both of her parents, along with the shaping experience of the Second World War, gave them a reservoir of memories and a common perspective, despite their five-decade age difference. She appreciated his wisdom, experience, and eloquence, and looked to him for guidance on how she should conduct herself as monarch.”

Churchill’s note following his resignation illuminates the importance of his role as The Queen’s constitutional tutor:

I have tried throughout to keep Your Majesty squarely confronted with the grave and complex problems of our time. Very soon after taking office as First Minister I realized the comprehension with which Your Majesty entered upon the august duties of a modern Sovereign and the store of knowledge, which had already been gathering by an upbringing both wise and lively. This enabled Your Majesty to understand as it seemed by instinct the relationships and the balances of the British constitution so deeply cherished by the mass of the Nation and by the strongest and most stable forces in it. I became conscious of the Royal resolve to serve as well as rule, and indeed to rule by serving.

Mary Soames remarked, “My father knew very well what the position of constitutional monarch is vis à vis prime minister, cabinet and parliament. So it was a great advantage for her first prime minister to be somebody who really did know that.”
Evidently Churchill devoted much time to tutoring The Queen on his extraordinary mastery of the complexities of British constitutional law and custom governing relations of the Crown, the Cabinet, Parliament, and the people. No one could make better use of this knowledge than the Prime Minister’s pupil. Nicholas Davies observes that “it was left to Churchill to explain to her some of the intricacies of British party politics. He would spend hours with her, drilling her for weeks, explaining what was happening, and what had to be done. Undoubtedly, Elizabeth had much to learn from the seventy-eight-year-old Churchill who wanted to be her teacher and professor, her guide and mentor, educating her in the ways of the world.”14

Churchill’s influence over the young queen, however, extended beyond explaining constitutional matters. At the conclusion of her six-month 1954 Australasia Commonwealth tour, The Queen sailed up the Thames to London with Churchill. “One saw this dirty commercial river as one came up,” said The Queen later, “and he was describing it as the silver thread which runs through the history of Britain. He saw things in a very romantic and glittering way; perhaps one was looking at it in a rather too mundane way.”15 Welcoming The Queen home, Churchill outdid himself, saying: “I assign no limits to the reinforcement which this royal journey may have brought to the health, the wisdom, the sanity and the hopefulness of mankind.”16

**Reluctant Retirement**

Overshadowing The Queen’s relationship with Churchill were his deteriorating health and his reluctance to retire. Three weeks after her Coronation, Churchill had a stroke, which almost killed him. This was kept secret until Churchill spoke of it to a stunned House of Commons a year later. Moreover, “as his mental and physical faculties decayed, Churchill was losing the battle he had fought for so long against the ‘Black Dog’ of depression.”17

Churchill’s poor health created the other major issue—his retirement. King George VI had evidently been working on Churchill’s retirement, but his death gave Churchill “the perfect reason” to stay on.18 Churchill said he would retire on specific dates, but then he found excuses to hang on. And so it went until he finally resigned on 5 April 1955. He was eighty years old.

The admiration of Winston Churchill and Queen Elizabeth II for one another grew as their relationship deepened. In his final toast to her as Prime Minister, Churchill said:

Never have the august duties which fall upon the British monarch been discharged with more devotion than in the brilliant opening to your Majesty’s reign. We thank God for the gift he has bestowed upon us and vow ourselves anew to the sacred cause, and wise and kindly way of life of which your Majesty is the young, gleaming champion.19

In response, The Queen sent a handwritten letter to Churchill assuring him that no subsequent Prime Minister would “be able to hold the place of my first prime minister to whom both my husband and I owe so much and for whose wise guidance during the early years of my reign I shall always be so profoundly grateful.”20

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Roddy Mackenzie is a retired Canadian lawyer, enthusiastic monarchist, and lifelong Churchill admirer. This article is based on his 2016 address to the Rt Hon Sir Winston Spencer Churchill Society of British Columbia.

**Endnotes**

4. The Daily Telegraph, 1 June 2012.
6. Ibid., p. 7.
8. Ibid., pp. 483–84.
11. Ibid., p. 92.
16. Ibid.
18. Smith, pp. 94–95.
One of only two portraits of Winston Churchill known to have been signed by him has gone on public display for the first time. It was painted by artist Paul Trevillion in 1955 (see back cover).

Born in 1934, Paul was a schoolboy during the Second World War. He recalled: “My school desk faced a large poster hanging on the school wall; it had the face of Churchill and the words “LET US GO FORWARD TOGETHER” (see page 2).

“Our schoolteacher, Miss Stevens, each Monday morning would stand beside the poster and spell out the same message: ‘Remember children, you are all soldiers without uniforms. When the air-raid siren sounds, you must stand to attention and then, in an orderly fashion, march to the air-raid shelter in the playground. The front row will lead off, followed by the second row, and so on.’ This order of marching to the shelter rotated with each air-raid warning.

“Even through the bombing, I slept well at nights thinking of the reassuring smiling face of Churchill, which I had seen so many times in newspapers and newsreels. When the war ended in 1945, little did I realise that ten years later I was to meet Sir Winston Churchill.”

On Churchill’s eightieth birthday, in 1954, renowned artist Graham Sutherland painted a full-length portrait of the prime minister that Churchill famously hated and never put on display. Sutherland’s portrait is said to have been destroyed by Lady Churchill. [It was.—Ed.]

One year later, Paul decided to present Churchill with a more flattering likeness, painted to portray the Churchill the artist had found comfort in during the war. In the Trevillion portrait, the Prime Minister is smiling, eyes full of playful self-assurance.

Paul’s portrait was delivered to Churchill via Bernard Sunley, a friend of Churchill’s and a client of designer and architect Lazslo Hoenig, for whom Paul was working as a designer.

“Imagine my surprise when, a week later, sitting working in Hoenig’s studio, I was told that Sir Winston Churchill was on the phone,” said Paul.

“‘Hello,’ Churchill said, in his deep voice. ‘Is that Trevillion?’ I said, ‘Yes.’

“He said, ‘Winston here. I will be at the Bernard Sunley Buildings, Berkeley Square, on Wednesday, 10:30. Oblige.’

“I did, and when I walked into the boardroom of the Sunley Buildings to meet Sir Winston Churchill, I found him seated facing the door. He never got
up. As I shook his hand, he smiled and said, ‘When were you born?’ I said, ‘1934.’

“So you were five when war was declared? Were you evacuated?’ I said, ‘No, I didn’t get evacuated.’ Churchill nodded. ‘And where were you living?’

‘London,’ I replied. Churchill smiled, ‘So, you are a boy from the Blitz!’

‘Churchill picked up my portrait, and I said, ‘I tried to capture the confident smile that reassured me as a little boy that we would win the war.’ Still smiling, Churchill said, ‘I like this painting very much.’

‘And I heard myself saying, ‘It would be nice to have that in writing!’

‘I will do more,’ replied Churchill. ‘I will sign it.’ And he did!”

The signed portrait of Churchill is on display at the National Football Museum, Manchester.

*The original version of this article first appeared in Military History Monthly magazine issue 74 (November 2016) and online at www.military-history.org. The only other portrait of Churchill that he is known to have signed himself is “Winston Churchill at His Easel Painting the Mill at Dreux” by Paul Maze and is part of the permanent collection at the National Churchill Museum in Fulton, Missouri.*

**Opposite far left:** The artist with the framed original in 1955

**Opposite right:** Letter acknowledging receipt of the painting

**Top:** National Football Museum, Manchester, England, where the portrait is displayed and Paul Trevillion is Artist in Residence

**Right:** Artist Paul Trevillion today
Following the tragic death of their two-year-old daughter Marigold in 1921, Winston and Clementine Churchill received numerous letters of sympathy. One letter of condolence arrived from Pamela Plowden (see p. 15), to whom Winston had proposed marriage in 1899. She refused him, instead marrying Victor, Earl of Lytton, thereby herself becoming the Countess of Lytton.

Upon receipt of the letter from Pamela, Churchill replied to his first great love with this handwritten note:

Thank you so much my dear for yr kind letter. It is indeed sad & cruel to lose our beautiful baby. We had high hopes of her as she showed so much character as well as the charm of early morning. One must hope that there will be fruition elsewhere, & that it is really true that ‘whom the Gods love well die young’.

Yours affectionately
W.

At the National Churchill Museum, Director and Chief Curator Timothy Riley recently discovered a previously unknown second note, which was still inside the original envelope. The handwritten message—instructions for a telegram—is from Clementine Churchill. It reads:

Thank you dear Pamela for your sweet note of sympathy.
Clementine Churchill
Both Churchills were deeply moved by the tragic loss of Mari-gold, called the “Duckadilly” by the family.

The National Churchill Museum

Located in Fulton, Missouri, the National Churchill Museum (NCM) at Westminster College is a multifaceted historical site that contains a seventeenth-century church designed by Sir Christopher Wren (the Church of St. Mary the Virgin, Aldermanbury) and a museum dedicated to the legacy of Sir Winston Churchill. The Church of St. Mary was transported from London to Westminster College campus in the 1960s to commemorate Churchill’s visit to the college in 1946, where he delivered one of the most significant speeches of the twentieth century, to which he gave the title “The Sinews of Peace,” but which is more commonly referred to as the “Iron Curtain” speech.

In 2009 the Museum was designated by Congress as the National Churchill Museum of the United States. Today, the museum houses interactive exhibits and significant collections related to Churchill’s life and legacy. Since Churchill’s death in 1965 and the establishment of the museum in 1969, NCM has amassed more than 10,000 objects for its permanent collection and archive. In 2016 NCM formally allied with the International Churchill Society.
**125 Years Ago**

*Winter 1892 • Age 17*

“The food is very queer....”

Given the protracted battle Winston had waged with his mother to avoid spending the Christmas holidays with a French family as his Head Master had recommended (“he has bombarded me with letters cursing his fate and everyone,” Lady Randolph wrote), Winston’s letters to his mother after he left for France were decidedly more civil in tone. Upon arrival, he wrote:

> Fatigue, the passage, the strange food, the cold, homesickness, the thoughts of what was behind & what was before nearly caused me to write a letter which would have been painful to you. Now I am better & I think I will wait here my month though not one day more....The food is very queer, but there is plenty & on the whole it is good. There is beer and wine to drink. I have a room to myself but it is awfully cold. However with rugs, overcoats, dressing gowns etc. I managed to sleep....I have already made great progress in French. I begin to think in it....M. Minssen says I know far more than he thought I did. These people are very kind. Of course I would give much to return, if you wish it I will come tomorrow—but considering all things I am prepared to stay my month.

In a subsequent letter, Winston wrote:

> I will remind you of the promise you made me at Harrow of an extra week [at home] if I gave up my Christmas. A promise is a promise & as I have fulfilled my part, I rely on you my darling mummy to do the rest. I know you won’t chuck me like that.

The promise of an “extra week” at home after his exile to France involved seeking permission from Harrow to add the time onto Winston’s holiday recess. He duly wrote his father to make the request, but Lord Randolph dashed his son’s hopes, writing:

> I think I will not try and get you an extra week because really every moment is of value to you now before you go up for your examination in June....After you have got into the army, you will have many weeks for amusement and idleness should your inclinations go in that direction, but now I do pray for you my dear boy to make the most of every hour of your time so as to make your passing a certainty.

**100 Years Ago**

*Winter 1917 • Age 42*

“...brains will save blood....”

Churchill remained bitter as his first sojourn in the political wilderness continued throughout the winter of 1917. On 25 January, he wrote to Admiral Fisher: “Like you, I have seen no one political. One is quite powerless as far as the war is concerned....Our common enemies are all powerful today & friendship counts for less than nothing. I am simply existing.”

While Churchill waited during this period for the final report of the Dardanelles Commission, which he hoped would restore his political reputation, he continued to criticize the conduct of the war. In the Army Estimates debate on 5 March, he called for a Secret Session of the House so that the Government could explain its policies in greater detail than possible in a public debate and permit other members of Parliament to be more openly critical. Churchill said that the House would be “failing in its duty” if members did not “really address themselves to questions on which the life and fortunes of the country depended.” The new Prime Minister, Lloyd George, was no more inclined than his predecessor to allow such criticism and opposed Churchill’s request.

Churchill persevered. In an open House session, he used his first-hand experiences in the trenches to criticize “those dismal processes of waste and slaughter which are called attrition.” Rather, Churchill called for machines [e.g., tanks] and manoeuvre to save troops from the senseless slaughter that marked the Allied offensive on the Somme in 1916. “Machines save
life. Machine-power is a substitute for man-power, brains will save blood, manœuvre is a great diluting agent to slaughter.” He opposed launching “vast offensives of the kind we had last year” at the Somme unless the Government was certain of “an indisputable result.”

Earlier in February, Lloyd George had given Churchill a draft copy of the Dardanelles Commission Report. This led Churchill to send to the Commission notes on what he believed to be critical omissions in the report, along with a covering letter in which, as Martin Gilbert wrote in Churchill, A Life, he “set out his main grievance, that the Report had failed to set the Dardanelles campaign into the general context of the war.”

This is a failure which has been repeated time and again by critics of Churchill over the years in addressing his role in the Dardanelles. Churchill wrote that, in analyzing military operations on Gallipoli, “it should not be assumed that elsewhere throughout the theatres of war, everything has gone smoothly and well; that other plans have not miscarried; that other battles have been fought without painful incidents, confusion or mischance; that loss of life on the Gallipoli Peninsula was more deplorable and more preventable than loss of life elsewhere; that its suffering and carnage are unparalleled.”

Churchill went on to illustrate that the military incompetence and ignorance on the Western Front far exceeded anything that occurred at Gallipoli, where “the ill-supported armies struggling on the Gallipoli Peninsula…were in fact within an ace of succeeding in an enterprise which would have abridged the miseries of the World and proved the salvation of our cause.” The Somme offensive, Churchill charged, was “based upon a complete and admitted miscalculation of the German Reserves, the error amounting to nearly two millions of men.” If, instead of the slaughter on the Somme, Churchill wrote, “a fifth of the resources…vainly employed” had been used at Gallipoli, it would “have united the Balkans on our side, joined hands with Russia, and cut Turkey out of the war. The choice was open to us; we have built our own misfortune, and no one can tell what its limits will be.”

75 YEARS AGO
Winter 1942 • Age 67
“Papa is at a very low ebb.”

Churchill’s euphoria after the Japanese attack on Pearl Harbor—“So we had won after all [and I] slept the sleep of the saved and thankful”—was short-lived. By the end of winter, the British Empire in the Far East had been exposed as a hollow shell, crushed by the air, naval, and ground forces of Imperial Japan. For Churchill, it was truly the winter of his discontent.

The first crushing blow—Japanese aircraft sinking the Prince of Wales and Repulse on 10 December 1941—was entirely Churchill’s fault. He was the one who had dispatched the Prince of Wales to Asian waters without air cover, boasting to Franklin Roosevelt: “It is grand to have something that can catch and kill any Japanese ship.” He told the cabinet in a meeting on 9 December that the two great ships would “vanish into the ocean wastes and exercise a vague menace” as if they were “rogue elephants.” But Churchill was living in a romanticized past when it came to battleships. Unlike the Churchill of 1916, who urged the use of “machines and manœuvre” as a better strategy than attrition on the Western Front, the Churchill of 1941 had yet to realize that the era of the battleship had ended.

On Christmas Day, while Churchill was in Washington, Hong Kong surrendered to the Japanese. The next evening, after addressing both Houses of Congress, Churchill suffered what his doctor at first thought to be a heart attack but kept a secret from everyone—including Churchill himself. Back in London, Churchill won a vote of confidence in the Commons on 27 January 1942. Four day later, however, the German Navy altered its Enigma machine so as to make messages to its submarines unreadable to British Intelligence for the rest of the year.

On 12 February, eluding British mines, radar, and coastal guns, three German battle cruisers—the Scharnhorst, Gneisenau, and Prince Eugen—left Brest and safely made a daylight passage up the English Channel and though the Straits of Dover to their home ports in the North Sea. On 14 February, the garrison at Singapore surrendered, and more than 60,000 troops were taken prisoner by the Japanese. On 28 February, the Japanese invaded the island of Java, and their navy inflicted heavy losses on the defending British and Dutch fleets without losing a single ship of its own. Churchill’s daughter wrote in her diary for 27 and 28 February that “Papa is at a very low ebb. He is not too well physically and he is worn down by the continuous crushing pressure of events…saddened—appalled by events…desperately taxed.”

On 5 March, in a telegram to FDR, Churchill wrote: “I find it difficult to realize how gravely our British affairs have deteriorated since 7 December.” Developments only got worse. On 8 March, the island of Java surrendered, and more than 90,000 Dutch, British, Australian, and American troops were taken prisoner. That same day, the city of Rangoon in Burma fell to the Japanese, who landed 20,000 troops and took control of the Irrawaddy delta, the rice surplus from which was critical to avoiding starvation in the Indian state of Bengal.
Royal Revels

The Crown, season one, produced by Left Bank Pictures and Sony Pictures Television, distributed by Netflix, initial release date 4 November 2016.

Review by Sonia Purnell

The words exchanged at the weekly audience between the British monarch and her prime minister are meant to remain private in perpetuity. It is all part of the mystique and majesty that make the British monarchy probably the best known but least understood institution in the world.

Very occasionally the royal door is opened a little—Tony Blair was once indiscreet about an exchange he had had with Queen Elizabeth II on the subject of Princess Diana’s funeral. A predecessor described the Queen during these encounters at Buckingham Palace as “friendly” but certainly not a friend. Historians remind us that as a constitutional monarch the Queen has only three rights—to be consulted, to encourage, and to warn—and it is likely that she exercises all of them, particularly in these troubled times.

Yet even with such meagre fare, Peter Morgan offers us a credible depiction of Winston Churchill’s audiences with the Queen in the new Netflix series The Crown. Skillfully Morgan plots the transformation of a privileged, under-educated, flesh-and-blood young woman into a monarch anointed in an abbey and answerable to God—a journey of self-sacrifice and personal transformation in which Winston Churchill, her first premier, is one of her greatest guides.

The fact that a TV series aims to deal with such difficult and thought-provoking themes is admirable. That The Crown avoids both mawkish sentimentality and bodice-ripping sensationalism is even more so. But then Morgan’s talent for telling history through entertainment has been evident ever since he first launched his play The Audience onto the West End stage in London a few years ago starring Helen Mirren as the Queen.

With excellent understatement, Claire Foy shows us how the monarch’s identity is split down the middle. There is the human Elizabeth, the wife, mother, and sister; and there is Elizabeth Regina. When these come into conflict, the Crown must always win. It is Churchill’s job to remind the young Queen of this until she understands it fully herself. At that point he can lay down his burden at the age of eighty and leave his beloved Downing Street forever; the young Elizabeth was then only just embarking on the vocation that still sees her doing her royal duty at ninety.

The American actor John Lithgow, who plays Churchill, impresses with his mastery of British cadence, and does not overdo the Churchillian drawl. He perhaps exudes too much sadness in his part’s latter years—even when frail, Winston reveled in mischief and wit. Lithgow is also too tall for the role—his silhouette reminds more of Churchill’s grandson Sir Nicholas Soames than the five foot eight inches of the legendary war leader.

Harriet Walter is physically more suited to her part as Clementine, Churchill’s willowy, supportive, and long-suffering wife. For once, we get a taste of just how involved, intelligent, and inventive she was. No wonder there has been such a wave of interest in Clementine since The Crown was launched—she is the only other female character apart from the Queen who steals scene after scene.
For all Peter Morgan’s astonishing talent for handling very real issues, *The Crown* is, however, drama, not documentary. Prince Philip, portrayed here as a petulant cad, may well have been frustrated by the constraints of his position in the early days and the loss of his naval career. He certainly enjoys risqué jokes and admiring beautiful women, but he has remained a stalwart support to the Queen and ploughed his own furrow with investigations into the living conditions of factory workers and the hugely popular Duke of Edinburgh Award scheme for helping children enjoy the great outdoors and many other interests.

There also seems no foundation to the *The Crown*'s hint that the Queen may have dabbled with Lord Porchester, who shared her passion for horses and became her racing manager in 1969. Nor is there substance to the suggestion that the Queen betrayed her sister Princess Margaret by initially appearing to support the proposed marriage to the divorced Group Captain Peter Townsend, and then eventually forbidding it. Official papers reveal that the monarch actually drew up plans with Churchill’s successor Anthony Eden that would have allowed Margaret to marry, keep her royal title and allowance, but renounce her rights of succession. The fact is that Margaret and Townsend simply grew apart.

*The Crown*, then, is novelised history and an entertaining one. Yet its bold handling of real themes such as duty and heartache lift it beyond any typical, beautifully-shot period drama to a modern art form dealing with timeless truths.

sis of the Monarchy,” the wife of Edward’s private secretary recorded him saying at a dinner party, “she simply did not count one way or the other.” In his reverence for the monarchy, however, and his disdain for the King’s “cutie,” Churchill failed to appreciate that if forced into a corner, as he eventually was, Edward would choose to give up the throne before he would give up Wallis. So he was always backing a loser. As Lord Beaverbrook—for much less honourable reasons Edward’s other principal supporter—put it: “Our cock won’t fight.”

What Phillips vividly brings out, however, is the depth of suspicion and raw hostility that Churchill aroused at this time. “Winston is never so excited as when he [is] doing a ramp for his own private ends,” Leo Amery wrote in his diary. “Winston has thought this a wonderful opportunity of scuppering [Baldwin] by the help of Harmsworth and Beaverbrook. What a fool he is when it comes to any question of political judgement.” Senior Conservatives really believed that Churchill was trying to use the crisis to bring down the government. “The Conservatives will resign,” one Cabinet Minister raved, “and the premiership will be hawked about to anyone who will take it....Winston Churchill will summon a party meeting, create a new party and rule the country!”

Duff Cooper recorded a meeting of second-rank ministers taking this fantasy to still more lurid heights: “They thought a coup d’etat was not impossible. They suggested that the King might accept the Prime Minister’s resignation and send for Winston.... If he were defeated in the House of Commons he could go to the country....An attempt might even be made to upset the Parliamentary system altogether....Beaverbrook and Rothermere would work with Winston: so would the Fascists; so might some elements of the left.” Churchill as a sort of British Mussolini? This was the lowest point in his whole career: when he tried to plead in the House of Commons for delay to allow the King to reach his own decision, he was shouted down with cries of “Twister.” The idea that four years later he would become the leader of a unity government fighting for the nation’s life would at that moment have seemed impossibly far-fetched.

Adrian Phillips has written an excellent book, which sheds fresh light on events with which many will think they are already familiar.

John Campbell’s books include major biographies of F. E. Smith, Aneurin Bevan, Edward Heath, Margaret Thatcher, and most recently Roy Jenkins.

**Black Dog**


Review by Martin Garfinkle

As a psychologist and as an admirer of Winston Churchill, I found this book to be of great value to anyone who wants to understand Churchill’s lifelong struggle with depression. I may not agree with the author’s conclusion, but I do feel that the book sheds some light into Churchill’s “black dog.” Based on the research that I have done, there is for me no question that Churchill suffered from depression. I believe that the evidence points to an affective disorder (depression), and he would be diagnosed today as having what would be considered a Persistent Depressive Disorder (300.4) with atypical features.

In reading Walter Attenborough’s book, I was fascinated that he attributes to Churchill the wisdom of modern day neuroscience. In the first chapter of the book, the author highlights Churchill’s advice that the “cultivation of a hobby,” such as bricklaying and painting (among two out of several mentioned), is necessary “to restore mental functioning of mentally overstrained persons.”

Later in the book, we see that Churchill turned to painting as a way of dealing with his “black dog”—and for Churchill, painting a picture was comparable “to fighting a battle.” When engaged with activities that helped to transport him away from his anxiety and depression, Churchill was actually switching the neural networks of his brain from default mode to task-positive mode. When in default mode, Churchill was prone to think about past misgivings and future worries. This was evidenced when Churchill
was removed from the Admiralty in May 1915. When Sir William Orpen, a famous portrait painter, attempted to paint Churchill at that time, he described his subject as “sitting quietly in a chair...holding his bowed head in his hands.”

In task-positive mode, Churchill became alive and was able to work his way out of his depression by focusing on what he was doing in the moment. We again see this pattern of turning to painting when Churchill was voted out of office in 1945. Werner Vogt’s review on this page of Philip Gut’s biography of Willy Sax, manufacturer of the oil paints used by Churchill, illustrates this perfectly.

Attenborough’s own book is filled with information that is probably not well known to the average Churchillian. I was surprised to learn that Clementine Churchill had become “seriously mentally ill in the autumn of 1963.” I was reminded after reading the book that Churchill’s daughter Diana suffered from depression and in 1963 took her life by overdosing on sleeping pills. Not much attention, however, is given to Randolph Churchill, who died at fifty-seven of a sudden heart attack brought on by years of drinking and smoking. I was also disappointed that Attenborough did not speculate on what Churchill’s diagnosis would be today from the perspective of DSM-V, the diagnostic and statistical manual used by all medical and mental health professionals to arrive at a diagnosis for a patient.

Nevertheless, this good and worthwhile book is informative and easy to read if you are looking to understand Churchill from a psychological perspective. ⬤

Martin Garfinkle is a professor in the Health and Human Services Department at New York City College of Technology (CUNY) and author of The Lion’s Roar (2011).

It would not be fair to call the amity that evolved between Churchill and Sax a mere “functional” friendship. Too deep was Churchill’s appreciation for Sax, his wife and daughters, and above all for some of the fine Swiss painters, which Sax brought along on some of his visits with Churchill. One such was Cuno Amiet, one of the greatest Swiss painters of the twentieth century. When embarking on the journey to Chartwell, Amiet—an octogenarian who was not prone to strong drink—had his first whisky on the ferry to Dover just to make sure that he would be ready for the challenge if need should arise.


Review by Werner Vogt

When Winston Churchill visited Switzerland in the summer of 1946, various remarkable things happened. With his “Let Europe Arise” speech, addressed to the academic youth of the world and delivered at the University of Zurich [see FH 173], the wartime Prime Minister and then Leader of the Opposition confirmed his position as a leader of thought. On the same day, Churchill invited Willy Sax to his hotel for a drink before dinner. Here was conversation more to Churchill’s liking, for Sax was the Swiss owner of the small paint factory that supplied Churchill’s needs. Churchill recognised that Sax had not only an excellent knowledge about the composition of his paints but also about mixing and painting techniques.

Out of this informal conversation developed a friendship that lasted nearly twenty years; Sax died less than a year before Churchill. Philipp Gut, who is a deputy editor of the staunchly Conservative magazine Die Weltwoche and a historian by training, gives a detailed account of Sax’s numerous journeys to Chartwell as well as to the South of France, whither Sax was repeatedly invited when Churchill went there for painting holidays.

Gut proves to be a good raconteur of lovely anecdotes. Amiet, we learn, did not mince his words when confronted with Churchill’s paintings. When asked on one occasion in Southern France to comment on a particular canvas by Churchill, Amiet—conversing in French because Sax’s conversation- al English was insufficient—said: “C’est beau, mais c’est faux” (It’s beautiful, but wrong). Churchill took some time—and lunch—to digest the blow and eventually answered in his inimitable way: “You
are right, Mr. Amiet, my truth is wrong, and your error is right.”

Gut’s narrative is based on Sax’s diary and correspondence with Churchill still in the family archives. He was helped as well by a booklet Sax’s daughter Maya compiled twenty years ago, which contained the main facts about the Churchill-Sax relationship, albeit in an amateur narrative. The result is a beautiful tale about a friendship founded in the sunset of two men’s lives. The simple tale of the Swiss entrepreneur enjoying excellent food and drink in abundance, discussing everything from strokes (Churchill), heart attacks (Sax), politics, and—above all—art, is a beautiful story.

There is, however, a huge discrepancy in the author’s treatment of Churchill and Sax. The reader learns nothing new about Churchill’s career, but the main facts are covered in sufficient detail. Yet on Willy Sax we learn surprisingly little. There is, of course, his date of birth and the mentioning of his hobbies: Sax was a talented musician (violin, piano, accordion) who even played in the Tonhalle orchestra in Zurich—the equivalent of London’s Royal Albert Hall or St. Martin-in-the-Fields. We learn also that Sax was a keen fisherman, who caught his fair share of pike and trout in the rivers near his home.

What we do not learn about Sax from Gut’s book are answers to questions like: How did his family business develop under his leadership? Where was he educated? When, where, and how did he take on Churchill as a client? Most importantly, why did Gut not reveal that Sax was not so apolitical as claimed in Maya Sax’s booklet? Sax was in fact a National Front candidate in his hometown of Dietikon in 1934. He finished far behind the winners, but, at thirty-six, he was hardly an innocent. The National Front in Switzerland was a far-right movement, which was not so extreme or—as we now know—so dangerous as the Nazis in Germany. Nevertheless, the “Frontists,” as they were called, were by no means harmless. They were anti-Socialist, anti-liberal, and—above all—anti-Semitic. Some of their activists did condone and perpetrate political violence.

The behaviour of Sax could be explained as the foolish actions of someone with no gift for politics, but, unfortunately, this is not covered in the book. Painting the full picture of Sax’s pre-Churchill life rather than just a sketch would have made Gut’s book stronger and more honest.

Werner Vogt is the author of Winston Churchill und die Schweiz reviewed in FH 173.

Mauvais appétit


Review by Antoine Capet

The “Churchill industry” does not only operate in the Anglophone publishing world. France has seen a number of recent publications, which add little if anything to our knowledge of the great man, his entourage, and his times. See for instance my reviews of Frédéric Ferney’s Tu seras un raté, mon fils! in FH 169 and Churchill: La femme du Lion by Philippe Alexandre and Béatrix de l’Aulnoit in FH 172.

If she has such a scanty knowledge, one may ask, where did she find the material to fill 130 pages of text? Very honestly, she lists in the endnotes all the sources for the many figures and anecdotes which she gives. But then the reader can see that most of the notes refer to two books in English: Churchill: A Life by Sir Martin Gilbert and Dinner with Churchill by Cita Stelzer. The book is in fact a re-hash in French of some of the indications given in these two English-language
publications, with only passing borrowings from François Kersaudy’s standard biography in French and a couple of others. There is no original research whatsoever and no illustrations at all. The succession of *ibid.* references in the notes is the only impressive dimension of the booklet.

So *Finest Hour* readers had better go straight to Gilbert and Stelzer and keep their hard-won money, forgetting about this latest addition to the long list of negligible Churchill books. The more so as some of the translations are appallingly wrong (e.g., President of the Board of Trade becomes “président de la Chambre de commerce,” i.e., President of the Chamber of Commerce)—so even those who might have been tempted to buy it in order to brush up their French are strongly discouraged from doing so. This one is strictly for collectors who must have every publication on Churchill, good or bad, in any language.

Antoine Capet is Professor Emeritus of British Studies at the University of Rouen.

**Revisionist Redux**


Review by Mark Klobas

Daniel Todman’s *Into Battle* is the first half of an ambitious effort to encapsulate the entirety of Britain’s Second World War experience into a comprehensive narrative, one that begins in the prewar era and promises to end (in a volume scheduled to be published next year) two years after the surrender of the Axis powers. It is a revisionist assessment of the war, that is one that embraces modern perspectives on a story that has often been told in an effort to offer a better understanding of the true dimensions of the conflict.

This effort begins with Todman’s choice of 1937 as his starting point. Opening with the celebrations of the coronation of King George VI, Todman portrays a nation in its last full year free from the immediate threat of war. His focus here is on the changes that Britain was facing, both domestically and internationally, and the stresses these posed to the status quo. Todman uses this to put into context the challenge posed by Hitler’s increasingly aggressive defiance of the Versailles settlement. Drawing upon the lessons of the First World War, the governments of both Stanley Baldwin and Neville Chamberlain began a rearmament program designed to build up a modern, mechanized military without straining an economy still recovering from the Great Depression.

Todman demonstrates considerable sympathy for both Baldwin and (especially) Chamberlain and their efforts to prepare Britain for war. By contrast, Winston Churchill is treated much more critically. This is of a piece with Todman’s overall revisionist approach, as he almost self-consciously seeks to avoid buying into the many legends surrounding the war. This leads him, however, to make some disparaging assessments about Churchill’s racial attitudes (deeming him “a savage racist” even by contemporary standards) and seeing as shady characters Churchill’s close political associates like Lord Beaverbrook and Brendan Bracken. More significantly, Todman calls into question Churchill’s judgment as a military and political strategist, particularly with regard to the degree to which Churchill overvalued the “special relationship” with the United States and underappreciated how Franklin Roosevelt’s pursuit of national goals shaped his efforts to aid the British.

Todman argues for considering a wider range of factors in assessing Britain’s success in the war. Drawing upon the work of such historians as George Peden and David Edgerton, he features the fiscal and technological dimension of the war to a far greater degree than in older accounts, showing how even before the start of the war British politicians and strategists planned for a long-term struggle against the Nazi regime that would be waged by a highly mechanized force. The empire also receives great attention, as Todman rightly demonstrates the degree to which Britain’s war effort was an imperial rather than a national one. This also contributes to Todman’s effort to emphasize how the war was truly a world war to Churchill and other British leaders, in that global considerations were never far from their minds, even as German bombs rained down on British cities.
It is to Todman’s credit as well that for all of his coverage of British strategy and the economics of the war effort, he never loses sight of the people who lived through it. Here he draws heavily upon contemporary writings and the nascent efforts of Mass Observation and other public opinion assessments to gauge what civilians and soldiers alike thought about the war. This complements Todman’s overarching narrative, which shows that, while Churchill and others worked to win the war, others were more concerned with surviving it. While Todman challenges the “finest hour” mythology, his goal is less to demolish it than to add a more realistic nuance, showing that sacrifice and selfishness often coexisted among the embattled populace.

Todman concludes this volume with the Japanese attacks of December 1941 and the transformation of the conflict which this heralded. While his claim that with the merger of the European and Asian wars “a truly world war had begun” is undermined by many of his own arguments in the previous chapters, it nonetheless represents an appropriate dividing point in Todman’s labors. Once his second volume is published, he will have provided a sweeping account of Britain’s Second World War that, for all of its flaws, could become the standard overview for decades to come.

Mark Klobas teaches history at Scottsdale Community College in Arizona and hosts a podcast for the New Books Network.

BOOKS, ARTS, AND CURIOSITIES

The Noblest Roman


Review by William I. Hitchcock

Despite his enormous influence on the course of the twentieth century, George C. Marshall remains somewhat obscure to most Americans. His name resonates principally because of his leadership of the Marshall Plan, which sent some twelve billion dollars to Europe and spurred a revival of the economy in the aftermath of the Second World War. But Marshall’s contribution to American victory in the Second World War as Chief of Staff of the United States Army, as well as his role as Harry Truman’s Secretary of State and Secretary of Defense, deserve more acclaim.

The George C. Marshall Foundation has been working hard to secure Marshall’s place in history by editing and publishing Marshall’s personal papers. In conjunction with Johns Hopkins University Press, the Foundation has now completed a seven-volume set of Marshall’s papers that will stand for generations to come as a distinguished and fitting tribute to Marshall’s memory.

Volume 7 contains 626 documents, in addition to extensive and helpful footnotes and comments covering the last decade of Marshall’s life. In these years, October 1949 to October 1959, Marshall served as head of the American Red Cross and as chairman of the American Battle Monuments Commission, as well as Secretary of Defense in the terribly difficult first year of the Korean War. About a third of the volume contains material written by Marshall during his retirement until his death.

Marshall left the State Department in January 1949 because of ill-health, but he did not stay inactive for long. When the Korean War broke out in June 1950, Harry Truman decided to commit US forces to the defense of South Korea. The first months brought little but disaster for American and allied troops. Truman knew that he needed strong leaders to take the helm of the war effort. He fired his feckless and widely disliked Secretary of Defense Louis Johnson and drove from Washington to Marshall’s house in Leesburg, Virginia, on the Fourth of July, 1950, to ask Marshall if he would take the job. Marshall was reluctant, having already given so many years to public service in wartime. But as he wrote his goddaughter, “when the president motors down and sits under our oaks and tells me of his difficulties, he has me at a disadvantage” (146). Marshall accepted the appointment, but
asked to serve for only one year in light of his failing health.

A number of Republican Senators opposed the appointment. This was the era of McCarthyism, and Senator Joe McCarthy along with a few conspiracy-minded Republicans asserted that Marshall, as special envoy to China in 1945–46, had somehow had a hand in the eventual triumph of Mao’s communist forces there. Senator William Jenner of Indiana, for example, called Marshall “a living lie” and a “conspirator” against American interests. Marshall was nonetheless confirmed and sworn in on 21 September 1950.

Marshall’s principal contribution to the war effort was to mobilize US military manpower, so recently demobilized after 1945, and get it back into fighting trim. He also lent his enormous prestige to Truman, an embattled president who did not really know how to run a war. Marshall brought with him to the Pentagon as his deputy Robert A. Lovett, one of the ablest administrators of his generation.

Marshall’s biggest challenge came in dealing with the headstrong commander of allied forces in Korea, General Douglas MacArthur, who wanted to expand the war and carry it into China against the president’s wishes. In the spring of 1951, after repeated acts of defiance from MacArthur, Truman asked his senior advisers whether he should relieve MacArthur of his command. With his strong political connections among Republicans in Congress, MacArthur could make great trouble for the president if he came home disgruntled and embittered. Marshall therefore recommended against firing MacArthur but changed his mind after consulting with other senior military commanders.

What makes this volume such a treasure trove and a pleasure to peruse is that the editors have done a brilliant job of integrating helpful commentary and explanatory notes throughout the collection. The reader is drawn deeply into the complexities of an era in which great figures made history under enormous stress and strain. In these pages, one comes to appreciate the dignity and sagacity of one of America’s greatest soldier-statesmen, the man Winston Churchill—borrowing from Shakespeare—described as “the Noblest Roman,” George C. Marshall.

William I. Hitchcock is Professor of History at the University of Virginia.
common trap that people fall into is to refer to Winston Churchill’s beloved country estate in Kent as “Chartwell Manor.” Even Mary Soames in her wonderful memoir *A Daughter’s Tale* made this error.

It is true the house was informally, but only ever informally, called Chartwell Manor around the time Mary was born and her father bought the estate in 1922—simply because it was a big and imposing residence. But it was not then and never had been a manor house, and it is quite incorrect and careless to use this as its proper name. Churchill himself never appears to have referred to his house as a manor and simply used “Chartwell” on his stationery. Most of all, the National Trust, as the present owner, does not use the term “manor” because it is legally wrong.

Parts of the house are mediaeval, and down the centuries it was called Well Street or Wellstreet, or occasionally Well Place. It was renamed Chartwell by John Campbell Colquhoun, who bought the estate in the nineteenth century, and the name first appears in the 1851 Kent census. The name was taken from the spring called the Chart Well that arises on the site. The name Chart in the Old English sense of rough ground or “rough common overgrown with gorse, broom, bracken” occurs throughout the Weald and is common as a place name in Kent. The Campbell Colquhouns acquired more and more land, and, by the time Churchill bought the property in 1922, it had all become The Chartwell Estate.

There is however an entertaining adjunct to this story. In 1934, it was suggested to Churchill that he might be interested in purchasing the Manorial Rights of the adjacent property of Windmill Hill from the then owner Captain John Warde of nearby Squerryes Court. As Lord of the Manor, he would thereby acquire several ancient rights, and the land agents wrote to him saying: “In our opinion, there is a certain ‘pride of ownership’ to an owner of ‘Chartwell’ with such a beautiful house, and the acquisition of the control of the Manorial Rights must be an attraction. Possibly if you purchased, a ‘Manor of Chartwell’ might be created...” [CHAR 1/393C/377, 10 February 1934]. But Churchill did not succumb to their overtures, and it never happened. 

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**Chartwell**

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*The Chartwell Estate*

Winston Churchill’s beloved country estate in Kent

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See story on page 36.