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# FINEST HOUR

**FALL 2017 • NUMBER 178**

## Chartwell

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## On the Cover

Churchill’s study in Chartwell
*Image courtesy of the National Trust*
FROM THE EDITOR

Churchill and Chartwell

“A day away from Chartwell is a day wasted.” Speaking thirty years ago in Dallas at the fourth International Churchill Conference, these were the words that Grace Hamblin, Lady Churchill’s former secretary and Chartwell’s first Administrator, remembered Sir Winston having said many times. He called it his “factory,” but it was so much more than that: it was his dream house, his refuge, his chief pleasure, his pride, and his muse.

In this issue, we look at the Chartwell story from its acquisition by Churchill to current plans of the National Trust for future development. David Lough, the leading authority on Churchill’s finances, starts us off with the story of how Churchill came to purchase his “blessed plot” and the constant monetary strains that went with it.

Life at Chartwell has been described by many. We are pleased to present here recollections from two voices new to the record. Leo Amery was a lifelong friend of Churchill’s. Published here for the first time are extracts from Amery’s diary recording some of his visits to Chartwell. Jonathan Dudley was only a boy when he visited with the Churchill family. He now draws upon his recently published memoir to give us a boy’s-eye view of the Churchills at home.

Chartwell was more than the home of the Churchill family. It was also the residence of countless animals. For Churchill was an animal lover of the deepest hue. His last pet out of many was an orange tabby cat named Jock. Knowing that his home would become a museum open to the public, Churchill wished for there always to be such a cat in residence. So it is that Jock VI, the current office holder, tells us the story of the animals of Chartwell.

Some of the Chartwell animals were immortalized by Churchill in oil paintings that he did at his beloved estate. Several examples help illustrate this issue. The house itself, however, also served as a muse for the artist-owner. Barry Phipps explains the impression that Chartwell made on Churchill’s mind and how impressionism influenced the way he painted it.

For more than fifty years now, Chartwell has been open to the public as a National Trust Property. Katherine Carter traces the history of this “jewel in the crown” and explains how the presentation has and must evolve. And from Sweden, Svante Janson tells the story behind one of the most interesting objects on display at Chartwell: Churchill’s Nobel Prize.

Major theatrical films about Winston Churchill are few and far between. Darkest Hour, starring Gary Oldman in a towering performance, deserves special attention. Michael F. Bishop reviews the film and Michael McMenamin the related book.

David Freeman, November 2017
2017 Conference

KENT—Congratulations to all on another splendid conference. Getting Lisa Daftari to introduce Lord Dobbs as the Keynote Speaker was a true zinger. It took Dobbs five minutes to rise from the canvass! —Randolph Churchill

FOLSOM, CA—Thank you all for the hard work you did on the Churchill Conference in New York. The program was topnotch with the speakers and events. My favorites included touring the Green-Wood cemetery and seeing the Jerome mausoleum, seeing the movie Darkest Hour at the Museum of Modern Art, and listening to the discussion between Celia Sandys and Lady Williams. I enjoyed all the speakers and especially Andrew Roberts. I can hardly wait until the publication of his Churchill biography next year. —Beth Krzywicki

LOS ANGELES—I very much enjoyed Lew Lehrman’s talk on “Churchill, Roosevelt & Company.” For me, it was the highlight of the conference. During the presentation, he made what appeared to be an off-the-cuff comment that I found most intriguing saying that history is defined as being “the sum of all things.” I thought that was absolutely brilliant, and I have thought about it since. —Michael Schwartz

Mr. Lehrman responds:

NEW YORK—Dear Mr. Schwartz, I was most gratified by your letter. You may remember that when I defined history as being “the sum of all things,” I mentioned that it was Isaiah Berlin who summed up Churchill’s view of history in this way.

I confess I agree with Berlin and wish I had invented the phrase myself. I am not certain that Berlin was the first to use this expression, in referring to Churchill’s view of history, but I well remember that he did use it.

Andrew Roberts himself has said that he is gratified to be an historian because the greatest man of our era considered himself an historian (namely, Churchill). —Lewis Lehrman

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Coming in Finest Hour 179:
Churchill at the Movies

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Join New York Times best-seller Alex Kershaw, National WWII Museum President Emeritus Gordon H. “Nick” Mueller, PhD, and National WWII Museum Samuel Zemurray Stone Senior Historian Robert M. Citino, PhD, aboard this all-new cruise experience from Valetta, Malta, to Florence, Italy, aboard the five-star small cruise ship Sea Cloud II. Kershaw’s book, *The Liberator*, traces the remarkable battlefield journey of maverick US Army officer Felix Sparks through the Allied liberation of Europe—from the first landing in Italy to the final death throes of the Third Reich. At each port of call, guests will learn of one WWII soldier’s 500-day odyssey from the beaches of Sicily to the gates of Dachau, exploring in-depth the actions that took place throughout the Italian peninsula. Extend your stay in Florence with an optional two-night post-tour of this magnificent ancient city. Extend your stay in Florence with an optional two-night post-tour of this magnificent ancient city.
Was it the rolling acres of Blenheim or the chicken and rabbits of Banstead? Something in Winston Churchill's childhood kept propelling him toward the dream of his own house in the country, surrounded by land and animals. It lay beyond reach until the First World War, when property prices had fallen far enough by 1915 for the two Churchill brothers to lease a small estate where their young families could spend the summer together. It was the land around Hoe Farm rather than its fifteenth-century house that appealed: "It really is a delightful valley and the garden gleams with summer jewellery," Churchill wrote to Jack.1

The lease lasted just one summer, but his wife Clementine was equally smitten; that winter while Churchill fought in the trenches she wrote of her own longing for "a little country basket."2 Churchill found on his return that he could earn much more than he expected by writing articles for newspapers, so the hunt was soon on for what he described to Sir Archibald Sinclair, a large landlord himself, as a permanent "country seat." "I wish to find a place to end my days amid trees & upon grass of my own!" he wrote his former companion in the trenches. “Freed from the penury of office these consolations become possible.”3

First Efforts

Estate agents guided him to a property some thirty miles south of London that was available for £4,500.4 Stefan Buczacki, chronicler of Churchill's homes, describes Lullenden as "a decrepit mediaeval farmhouse with no modern amenities" at the time, surrounded by a “67-acre farm in a run-down state.”5 Nonetheless the family loved Lullenden from the start; it had what estate agents call "potential." So while the Churchills paid for the basics such as a connection to the public water supply, they planned future luxuries such as a tennis court.

Churchill's newspaper fees dried up, however, after only six months at Lullenden, when he rejoined the government as Minister for Munitions in July 1917. He tried all sorts of schemes to hold onto the property in the months that followed, but the numbers simply did not add up. By the spring of 1919 he had to bow to the inevitable and sell. He was lucky to find the independently wealthy wife of an old army friend as the buyer. "It's the sort of romantic place I long to have," Lady Hamilton confided to her diary. "It's a snuggy place with rocks, pools, trees and streams."6

Still Churchill's dream refused to die. Even as Lullenden slipped away in August 1919, he promised his friend Sir Howard Frank (chairman of estate agents Knight, Frank & Rutley) that he would visit a farm for sale in Buckinghamshire. At the same time he mentioned that he would be keen to acquire a 500 or 600 acre fruit farm in Kent. Yet money remained the barrier until January 1921 when a train crash in Wales removed it. The accident killed a distant Londonderry cousin with whom Churchill shared a great-grandmother, the marchioness of Londonderry. Her Irish estate unexpectedly fell into his hands and, even after death taxes, it was worth the life-transforming sum of £55,000.

Churchill instructed Knight Frank to resume the search for a country seat. In July 1921 they came up with Chartwell, an estate of seventy acres commanding fine views over the Kentish weald. The local priest had lived in it, employing more than thirty staff before the war to look after the house, its garden and farm. Now all three were run-down.

It was Chartwell's elevated position above the weald that captivated Churchill on his visit. He urged Clementine to go too while she was staying nearby, but she was wary. Any country house, she warned, must be "a rest & joy, not a fresh pre-occupation."7 She changed her mind after seeing it. “My darling, I can think of nothing but that
heavenly tree-crowned Hill,” she told her husband. “It is rather like a view from an aeroplane up there. I do hope we shall get it.”

Chartwell reached the auction rooms a week later, yet there is no evidence that the Churchills lodged a bid, and the property was withdrawn from sale after failing to reach its reserve price. Five weeks later the Churchills’ youngest child Marigold died and Chartwell receded to the back of their minds.

**Financing**

It came to the forefront again when Sir Howard contacted Churchill in May 1922 to tell him that it would return to the auction room later that summer. By now Clementine, pregnant once again, had taken against the house: it was too close to the road and faced the wrong way. She suggested they should buy on the Essex coast instead, at Frinton where she would spend the summer holidays with the children while her husband was in southern France. She found two suitable houses for sale but Churchill remained non-committal until he visited the town for the final days of August, when he clearly decided against.

Back in London in September, he first pursued a small estate near Edinburgh in Scotland. Then on 14 September Sir Howard got back in touch, offering first refusal on Chartwell at a price of £5,500 before it went to auction ten days later. Churchill faced a decision at an awkward moment: Clementine was about to give birth and government business was pressing, as Turkish forces encircled a detachment of British soldiers south of the Dardanelles. Deciding not to disturb his wife, he offered £4,800 for Chartwell the next day, justifying his lower bid on the grounds that it would have to be “very largely rebuilt.”

Negotiations followed in Churchill’s government offices until a price of £5,000 was agreed on 20 September. After the birth of their daughter Mary, it is unclear how soon Churchill broke the news of his purchase to Clementine. All we know is that Mary wrote years later that it was the only matter “over which Clementine felt Winston had acted with less than candour towards her.”

Nor was Churchill entirely straightforward with the older children whom he took down to see Chartwell the following weekend. “He told us on the way that the purpose of this journey was to inspect a house that he thought of buying in Kent, and he wanted our opinion,” recounts his daughter Sarah. “Chartwell was wildly overgrown and untidy, and contained all the mystery of houses that had
not been lived in for many years.” The children urged him to buy; not until they had reached London did their father confess that he had already done the deal.

He planned to find £2,000 of the purchase price from his own money and to borrow the remaining £3,000 from the trustees of his marriage settlement. His bank, he hoped, would then lend the £8,000 that he expected the building work to cost. He planned to repay both loans from his royalties for *The World Crisis*, the account of the First World War that he was then writing.12

It was Churchill's cousin the Duke of Marlborough, a trustee of the marriage settlement, who scuppered the plan. “The sovereign is deflating,” the duke stated presciently, while declining to lend as much as Churchill wanted.13 Appendicitis then put Churchill out of action until just before he was due to pay for Chartwell on 11 November. As a result, he had to sell some of his inheritance and reduce his long-term indebtedness before asking his bankers, Cox & Co., to re-lend him £5,000 for the purchase until he found a different family settlement to take over the loan. The trust that he had in mind was his father’s will trust, where his brother Jack was the other trustee.14

**Improvements**

Before he fell ill, Churchill had already appointed an architect for Chartwell. Edwin Lutyens, who knew the family well and had designed many country houses of the era, was unavailable because he left in November each year for India to oversee the construction of the government’s new buildings in Delhi. Churchill was in too much of a hurry to wait for his return in March and instead chose Philip Tilden, a less experienced and more flighty architect who had worked for David Lloyd George and Sir Philip Sassoon.

Tilden saw a challenge in Chartwell’s "drabness of Victorian umbrageousness"; and “so embovering were the giant trees,” he wrote, “so encroaching was the verdure that the red bricks of the house were slimed with green.”15 Tilden was equally green as an architect. His work at Chartwell would end up costing Churchill three times as much as his first forecast of £8,000.

Yet to Tilden goes the credit for the transformation of Chartwell achieved by turning the front of the house through 180 degrees so that it faces the glorious views to the south rather than the road to the north. Inside, the Churchills wanted larger bedrooms and reception rooms, extra bathrooms, a new kitchen, a library, and a large study. New windows, electric lighting, and modernized systems for heating and plumbing were also on the list. The work required was extensive; yet Churchill was in a hurry to start as soon as the house changed hands on 11 November. He demanded plans and estimates, yet would not pay for the scale model that Tilden wanted to build; work began without any master-plan.

**Frustrations**

Lloyd George had left Tilden largely alone, but the architect soon found that Churchill was cast from a different mould; no client, he later wrote carefully, had taken a closer interest in proceedings. Churchill employed a local joiner, William Wallace, to carry out some work in parallel to the efforts of the builders engaged by Tilden: it would prove a recipe for mutual blame and recrimination later when things started to go wrong.

Churchill lost his parliamentary seat at Dundee soon after building work began. As a result he decided with Clementine to take a rest in the south of France for several months early in 1923. He would return to inspect progress at Chartwell each month. Before they left, Tilden told the Churchills that the nursery wing should be ready for
the family to live in by the end of March 1923. The builders would then move on to the new east wing, which they planned to finish in August. It sounded simple.

Each time that Churchill returned from France, however, he took a picnic down to Chartwell and would add to the work he wanted completed: oak paneling for the reception rooms, for example, or a gothic style for the pattern of the windows.

The first cracks in his relationship with Tilden followed the visit in March 1923 when Churchill found that the ceiling of the new kitchen was to be only nine feet high. “Some other plans will have to be made or the cook will be unable to carry on under such conditions,” he wrote after discussing the matter with Clementine. “I have never seen a large house with a low kitchen, and its existence at Chartwell would be fatal to the whole organization of the household.” In July it was clear that Tilden had already spent his original budget and would exceed it by at least £2,500; by late August that over-run had risen to £5,000, partly in response Churchill’s insistence on a new kitchen with a higher ceiling.

Unable to move in by August as they planned, the family rented a house nearby for the summer holidays. Churchill left as usual for the south of France, from where the family to live in by the end of March 1923. The builders would then move on to the new east wing, which they planned to finish in August. It sounded simple.

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Unable to move in by August as they planned, the family rented a house nearby for the summer holidays. Churchill left as usual for the south of France, from where he tried to reconcile his unhappy wife to the dream. “My beloved I do beg you not to worry about money, or to feel insecure…. Chartwell is to be our home. It will have cost us £20,000 and will be worth at least £15,000…. Add to this my darling yr courage & goodwill and I am certain that we can make ourselves a good, permanent resting place, so far as the money side of this uncertain & transitory world is concerned. But if you set yourself against Chartwell, or lose heart, or bite your bread & butter & yr pig, then it only means further instability, recasting of plans & further expense & worry.”

**Home at Last**

Churchill’s hope that Chartwell, once finished, would be worth at least £15,000 lasted for only a week. The family lawyers insisted on a professional valuation before Lord Randolph Churchill’s will trust could lend any more money to pay for the cost over-runs. When it came, Knight Frank estimated the finished value at no higher than £12,000.

The saga of changed requirements from the Churc unless Churchill was asking for the surrounds of four brick windows to be changed from brick to fluted stone.

Two weeks later the family finally moved in, but Clementine was pointedly absent, staying with her mother in France. Churchill at least was delighted with the result. “It is majestic,” he wrote to her: “Only one thing lack these banks of green—The Pussy Cat who is their Queen.”

David Lough is author of No More Champagne: Churchill and His Money (Head of Zeus, Picador, 2015).

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**Endnotes**

4. For simplicity, all sums given in this article should be multiplied by 50 times to produce an approximate 2017 value in sterling, or by 75 times to produce an approximate 2017 value in US dollars.
6. Jean Hamilton Diary, 12 April 1919, Hamilton papers, King’s College, London.
8. CSC letter to WSC, 20 July 1921, CHAR 1/139/85.
9. WSC letter to Knight, Frank and Rutley, 15 September 1922, CHAR 1/159/25.
12. JSC letter to WSC, 18 September 1922, CHAR 1/162/66; WSC letter to William Bernau, 22 September 1922, CHAR 1/162/68.
16. WSC letter to Tilden, Buczacki, p. 128.
18. Knight, Frank and Rutley letter to WSC, 12 September 1923, CHAR 1/167/25.
19. WSC letter to CSC, 17 April 1924, CV V, Pt. 1, p. 144.
Leo Amery (1873–1955) was a lifelong friend of Winston Churchill, although politically they were often at odds with each other. They first met while at school together at Harrow—a humorous account of which Churchill immortalized in his autobiography *My Early Life*. Both men worked as war correspondents in South Africa and shared a tent together the night before Churchill’s famous armoured train encounter that led to his capture by the Boers, subsequent escape, and enough resulting notoriety to catapult him into Parliament “ten years before you!” as he later chided Amery, who had preferred to slumber in his cot.

Unlike Churchill, Amery remained a lifelong Tory and zealously championed protective tariffs, while Churchill, a supporter of free trade, left the Conservative party to join the Liberals in 1904. When Churchill returned to the Tory fold to serve as Chancellor of the Exchequer under Prime Minister Stanley Baldwin from 1924 to 1929, he found a strong antagonist in Amery, who served as Colonial Secretary in the same Government.

After 1929 both men found themselves consigned to the backbenches during the appeasement years. Although Amery, like Churchill, was an outspoken critic of Hitler and an advocate of rearmament, the two men differed strongly over home rule for India, which Amery supported and Churchill opposed. Ironically, when Churchill became Prime Minister in 1940 he named Amery as his Secretary of State for India. This led to intense clashes between them in Cabinet.

Amery wrote three volumes of autobiography that covered the years up to the Second World War but died before he could complete a fourth volume describing his time serving under Churchill. He did, however, keep an extensive diary most of his life. The diaries up to 1945 were published in the late twentieth century and are an important primary source. The post–1945 diaries, however, have never been published, but along with the rest of the Amery papers are open to researchers at the Churchill Archives Centre. This then is the first appearance in print of the extracts from the Amery diaries that follow. They have been selected because they provide colorful, first-hand accounts of Churchill after the war.

**A Day at Chartwell**

This entry is from 1946. Churchill had just delivered his “Let Europe Arise!” speech (see FH 173) in Zurich on 19 September, in which he had called for “a kind of United States of Europe.” Amery and his son Julian were invited to Chartwell to meet with Churchill, along with Churchill’s son-in-law Duncan Sandys and Robert Boothby, to discuss how to build upon Churchill’s European proposal. In what follows, Amery makes reference to the efforts then being made by the Labour Government to grant independence to India, triggering Churchill’s disparaging remarks about Lord Wavell and Sir Claude Auchinleck, the Viceroy and Commander-in-Chief in India respectively.

September 30th

Drove over to Chartwell in order to discuss with Winston following up on his Zurich speech. I found him busy with a hose cleaning out one of his artificial pools and turning on a small toy waterfall. He just loves the place and is full of plans for beautifying it for the benefit of the National Trust and of all the tourists whom he expects to come in future years to see his
home. There is something delightfully boyish about his love of doing things to the place. In the house itself the ground floor is to become a sort of museum and he has made a flat upstairs.

Presently we were joined by Duncan Sandys, Boothby and Julian and sat down to a substantial lunch. Winston explained that he was all for simplifying things and against the luxury of complicated drinks and that therefore he had put nothing on the table except Pol Roger 1928 followed by port and old Drambuie, of all of which he partook with gusto.

We had a lot of talk that presently boiled down to this: that he means to bring together in London early next year a handful of continental statesmen who are to start the torch alight in their own several countries. I think he means to handle France, Belgium and Holland himself, but I daresay Duncan or I will have to visit Italy, Germany, Scandinavia etc., to collect our quota. He believes that Europe is right for a movement of that sort to sweep right through and dominate every party. Above all he is keen that whatever Germany has suffered and has still got to suffer there must be the blessed oblivion of which he spoke at Zurich.

Meanwhile an admirer of Winston’s had offered to present him with two wonderful highly trained Hungarian stallions and as he could not accept the gift had arranged to bring them down to perform in front of the house which they duly did, dancing to music and exhibiting all the points of the highly trained Spanish or circus school. They were lovely creatures, snow white and hardly seemed to touch the ground as they performed their different paces. Some of these were exactly like the horses in the Panathenaic procession and it occurred to me that the latter were really trained to do these things and not merely performing spontaneously. While this was going on Mary [Churchill] arrived in riding kit and presently rode one of the horses herself very successfully. Even Winston, who has not been on a horse for 10 years, was induced to mount and ride up and down once or twice.

I might add that Winston kept off the controversial ground of India except for a couple of minutes just as we were going down to his studio, in which he referred to that as Wavell and that traitor Auchinleck, but I refused to be drawn beyond saying that I disagreed and got him off the subject. His sketches are really very attractive and give him infinite pleasure. He says that he is quite unconscious of standing on his feet for hours once he is busy painting. It will be rather amusing if at the close of our lives we find ourselves working in unity after having been at variance almost all the time. But I still do not feel altogether confident that difference won’t arise again, if not over Europe, at any rate in other fields.

Royal Wedding

In 1947 Amery and his wife Brydie, known as “B,” attended the wedding of the heir to the throne to Prince Philip.

November 20th

Princess Elizabeth’s wedding. B and I drove down early and found our places in the Nave [of Westminster Abbey], in a block of Opposition ex-Cabinet Ministers. Winston was apparently the only person in the Choir, and he and Clemmie walked up, his beaming smile almost as broad as his waist line, rather looking as if the whole thing were his own show and he the genial parent or godparent of the Bride. After the ceremony, while waiting for his car, he strolled back down the Nave to chat to Anthony [Eden] and Oliver Stanley, pick them up and give them a lift home. The contrast between him and [Prime Minister] Attlee, trying to look as if he wasn’t there, very striking.

A few days later on the 25th, Amery met with South African Prime Minister Smuts and discussed the wedding.

He told me a nice story about Winston, whom he was sitting next to at the Abbey. Smuts said, “This is the Middle Ages.” “No,” said Winston, “This is all the ages.”
Harrow Visit

Amery was a governor of Harrow and during the war had successfully persuaded the Prime Minister to visit their old school for the first time in decades and listen to the school songs. Churchill had not been fond of his schooldays, but the visit was a success and thereafter became a post-war tradition. This entry from 1948 touches on the subject of newly-established Israel, which both men strongly supported.

November 4th.

Winston’s car came round to fetch me about 4 o’clock and presently he came along from the Smoking Room and we drove down to Harrow for his usual concert. He began being very glum about the present state of the world and about a creature like Cripps [Labour Chancellor of the Exchequer] boasting of having liquidated the British Empire….We got onto Palestine….He thinks [Foreign Secretary Ernest] Bevin’s policy has been hopeless and that Partition should have been done with our troops to keep order, but evidently feels deeply about the murders. On the other hand, with his characteristic love of vigour he could not help saying that he thought the terrorists tremendous fellows in their way. Anyway, he was delighted that the Jews had beaten the Egyptians.

We then got back onto the Harrow songs and the beauty and felicity of their influence, putting Bowen first, but Howson by no means negligible. He added that he was increasingly coming round to the view that it would be a disaster to drop the Classics and Humanities generally. After we were at the concert I felt a sudden pang of remorse at having talked all the time to Winston when he might have been wishing to think out a speech and I was very interested to find that his speech to the boys was really the result of our talk, including even a glimpse of a pretty girl on horseback whom I had pointed out to him in the Park. Topped up by talking about Rule Britannia which was included in the programme at the end. It was, perhaps not one of his most inspiring speeches and his voice has grown rather old. All the same there were things in it that will live in the boys’ memories. Apropos of that I mentioned on the way back the influence that G. R. Parkin’s lecture on the Empire at Harrow had had on me [circa 1890]. Winston then proceeded to quote an actual phrase in it which I confess I had forgotten—a very fine one too—when Parkin said that the day would come when instead of Nelson’s signal being flashed down a line of ships, it would be flashed down a line of nations round the world. For songs we had Stet Fortuna, Queen Elizabeth, Five Hundred Faces (beautifully sung by a small boy from a council
school), Boy, Byron Lay, and Giants. Winston only had twenty minutes or so with the Monitors afterwards as I had promised to bring him back to meet a deputation of Finnish Parliamentarians at Hyde Park Gate.

Talking of Army Reform, Winston rather took the line that, hopeless as the present organisation is, nothing could be really set right in time to deal with war if it came in the next couple of years, a rather defeatist conclusion. We talked of much else. He is a good deal more deaf than he used to be and I think more so than myself. At his house I helped, together with Pug Ismay and Clemmie, to entertain a dozen or more Finnish Parliamentarians, male and female, rather square faces, and rather tough individuals, very few of whom spoke English, and I chatted a bit with the Speaker in German. Winston then welcomed them in a happy little speech dwelling chiefly on the value of individual freedom and the rejection of the slave life.

Talking about his school days Winston said rather pathetically that the whole eleven years of his boyhood, both at prep school and at Harrow, were unhappy, and the holidays unhappy too. The only thing he agreed with [Indian Prime Minister] Nehru on when he saw him the other day was that they had both been unhappy at Harrow. “It was all very well for you, a successful athlete and brilliant scholar, but I was no good at work or games. I hated both cricket and football,” he said. It struck me as rather pathetic but I suspect Winston’s aggressive, self-centered temperament had a good deal to do with it. There was none of his present mellowness about the schoolboy or even the younger man.

## Israel

As Assistant Secretary to the War Cabinet in November 1917, Amery—whose mother had been Jewish—drafted the document that became known as the Balfour Declaration providing British support to the Zionist cause. As Colonial Secretary in 1922, Churchill had responsibility for implementing this policy. Both men continued to follow the establishment of Israel with keen interest.

February 10th [1949]

Apropos of nothing in particular Winston suddenly indulged in an eloquent outburst on the subject of Israel and what a big event it is in history adding that it really is all to the good that the result has come about by fighting.

### Chartwell Again

In the summer of 1949 Amery visited Chartwell again to discuss with Churchill the Middle East and defence matters. They also discussed Amery’s possible return to Parliament, which he had been out of since losing his seat in 1945. The entry concludes with Churchill urging Amery to take something stronger than tea!

August 21

In the afternoon Sadie drove me over to see Winston, whom we found in a flannel romper suit with a sombrero, superintending the cleaning out of his little ponds. He told us there had been a great crisis, and for a moment I thought he referred to the world situation, but I think it was only the blocking up of the drain pipe of the pond by mud, of which there was certainly plenty. I talked to him as best I could about the Middle East and Defence, but as often as not his answer was directed to the German ex-prisoners working for him. However, he told me he had read my Middle Eastern memorandum with great interest, but apparently not yet my Defence Memorandum or my two Middle Eastern articles. Presently I told him that if he thought I would be really useful in Parliament I would be willing to submit myself for the Oxford by election if they wanted me. He said that I certainly would be useful though he had thought of me for the other House [i.e., the Lords]. I put to him the objection that in that case my death might at any moment cut Julian out of the House of Commons and limit his political prospects. It would be very different if I felt sure that the House of Lords would be so reformed that hereditary peers have the option of staying out….We then had tea with Mary, who was delightful as always, and [her husband] Christopher Soames. Winston vainly trying to persuade me to take whisky and soda instead on account of the toughening effect of its carbohydrates.

Amery diary extracts reproduced by kind permission of the Master and Fellows of Churchill College, Cambridge.
A couple of years ago, that would be in 2015, I decided to take myself back to Chartwell. I had just finished writing the first full draft of a short memoir capturing the strangeness and the wonder of staying there with Mr. and Mrs. Churchill in the summer of 1949 and again in 1950. [See p. 51.] In 1949 I was eight years old: classrooms at my all-boys school in London were furnished with double-desks, each one shared by two boys sitting side by side. The little boy I was told to sit next to in this our final year at the school could not, by any stretch of the imagination, be described as my great friend. I had hardly spoken to him during the two or three years we had been at this expensive private school in South Kensington. Nevertheless Winston, for that was his name, mentioned one day that his grandmother had asked him to bring a friend when he went to stay with her and his grandfather in their country house in Kent this summer. “Would I,” he asked me solemnly, “like to be that friend?”

It was a difficult one. I was not at all sure that Winston and I had anything much in common: I loved nothing better than kicking a football around, Winston seemed little interested in sport. He seemed to enjoy making artworks of different kinds, maybe cutting out bits of paper, colouring them in, all that sort of thing and frankly, it did not interest me very much. The fact that we had not had much social contact at school seemed to me a bad omen. Perhaps he was short of friends. I did not know. But when I told my mother about the invitation, I began to sense that however forcefully I might present a case for not going it would be to no avail. “It is a great honour for the family,” my mother said, “that you should have been invited to go to Chartwell. You’re going. Let that be an end to it.”

In the memoir I do my best to remember various incidents and episodes and the emotional dynamics that made each one memorable. Maybe I had stored these impressions away under lock and key in my memory bank for, generally speaking, these were not topics I discussed with friends or family. I was no great raconteur, and I had tended to keep my Chartwell stories to myself. I simply did not believe that I could carry my listeners with an account of mealtime rituals in the dining room or descriptions of particular dishes or observations of looks and gestures and tones of voice. No story about table decorations, or Winston’s annoying little habits, or anything else that I had observed would, I felt sure, carry enough dramatic momentum to amuse or entertain a wider audience.
Yet during my first visit in 1949 Winston and I found ourselves caught up in a number of adventures which probably did contain the elements of strong and lively narrative. When I was able to send my son, who is now forty-six, and my daughter, now forty-four, copies of the memoir, they did not hesitate to reprove me for keeping so many of the stories to myself: “you never told us about that…or that….” But there had been a private element to some of these stories. Winston and I had played as the kids we were, not always polite or tasteful kids, but wild and crazy when we were alone: Winston’s cunning plan to use an army periscope to spy on people on the ground-floor of the house; our rampage in Eddie’s bedroom. Eddie was at that time Mr. Churchill’s bodyguard, a police officer specially trained to ensure the personal security of Mr. Churchill and his family. We wanted Eddie to show us his guns and pistols, but Eddie did not want to do that. With amused forbearance, however, he allowed us to create havoc in his room for a few fun-filled minutes as we searched for weapons. When we had exhausted his patience he sent us packing. [For more about Sergeant Edmund Murray, see p. 54.]

I was surprised to find how vividly I could remember the comings and goings of various members of the Churchill family and visiting statesmen. It was fun, for instance, meeting the Churchill daughters Mary Soames and Diana Sandys, but not so much fun meeting young Winston’s father Randolph Churchill, large and hairy and stark naked in the swimming pool. It was instructive to sit next to Robert Menzies at lunch on the day when grouse was being served, and we were treated to a coup de théâtre when, on another day, a large lunch party at Chartwell was served Russian caviar, a gift to his friend Winston Churchill from none other than Joseph Stalin. Mr. Churchill took Winston and me to Chequers on the day he went to visit Prime Minister Clement Attlee. We went to Blenheim Palace, where with Mrs. Churchill and the Duchess of Marlborough looking after us, we all had tea with John (known as Albert), the 10th Duke of Marlborough, Mr. Churchill’s cousin.

Second Visit

I had enjoyed my two weeks at Chartwell in August 1949, but never expected to be invited back the following year. Mrs. Churchill was such a huge and magnetic presence, so altogether admirable and attractive in her dealings with everyone that I did have a keen sense of not wanting to let her down. Maybe I felt that I would have disappointed her, and let myself down in the process, if I had refused her invitation.

Mrs. Churchill was consistently warm and kind to me. Not warm in any physical cuddly sense—that was not her style at all. Rather she demonstrated warmth through an outpouring of real pleasure when her attention was focused upon you. She made you feel that it was both special and a delight for her to be in your company and to be talking with you. So very many of my feelings of happiness and content at Chartwell were due to the soft glitter of brilliance, which shone in her eyes and animated her personality when she was with you. This was more than mere charm—there was a diamond-like solidity behind any mere manners.
Throughout the many hours I spent in her company in the dining room at Chartwell I came to recognise some of the ways Mrs. Churchill’s family relied on her, not just for her familial love and affection and not just for her extraordinary skills—it seemed to me—as household manager. But all the members of her family that I met seemed to value, if not depend upon, the rock-solid strength of her character. Mrs. Churchill did not attempt to mask the strength of her convictions, nor the importance she attached to the values, which informed her daily life. Sometimes Mr. Churchill would appear to be uncertain whether a point he had just made in conversation was altogether acceptable or whether it betrayed a flawed or dubious moral outlook. On some of these occasions he would look across at Mrs. Churchill sitting at the other end of the long table, with a beseeching almost plaintive look that, when I think of it, still touches me. The look said first how much he loved her, and second how much he needed her thoughts and guidance on the matter in question that he did not feel altogether certain about.

I could see from his composure, his little looks and expressions how much Mr. Churchill enjoyed being at home. He would play gentle and amused when he was with Winston and me; respectful yet commanding with Randolph; and just happy and contented with Mary and with Diana. With other adults he could clearly choose—and he did choose—what role to play, what performance to give, for his thespian range was boundless. He would perform when the occasion demanded it, even for us boys. When, on our last night, he gave us his Boer War story—an escapade from which he narrowly escaped alive—it was as if he was the complete actor, the Player King in Hamlet. And I remember the house cinema showing of *Pride and Prejudice* where Mr. Churchill’s loud and critical commentary on the film had his fellow audience creased up with laughter. He was happy and he was very funny. He was at home.

**Chartwell Redux**

When I went back to Chartwell in 2015, I had more or less finished writing the memoir. I went because I was nursing the fond hope that my visit would somehow re-stimulate a living sense of what it had been like all those years ago: the smells, the sounds, the particular character of a room, maybe even the words and rhythms of actual conversations would come flooding back to me.

I am glad I made the effort to go. But Chartwell is a different place now. I understand and respect that.

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*Jonathan Dudley* retired from the University of Wolverhampton after a career in education.
Hello and welcome to this special issue of *Finest Hour*, which looks at my home in Kent. My name is Jock or more formally Jock VI. I proudly work for the National Trust, the charitable organization that owns and maintains many historic properties in the United Kingdom.

Shortly after the Second World War, Chartwell was purchased from Winston Churchill by a group of his friends who donated the property to the National Trust with the proviso that Mr. Churchill should be allowed to stay in residence for the remainder of his life. After her husband's death in January 1965, Lady Churchill vacated the house, which she had long been preparing for its new role as a museum dedicated to the memory of Sir Winston. Chartwell opened to the public in June of the following year, and has now been one of the most frequently visited Trust properties for more than fifty years.

On hand to greet the first visitors was my predecessor Jock I. Mr. Churchill owned many pets throughout his life for he dearly loved those of us in the animal community. In very old age, he received the birthday gift of an orange marmalade cat. This was a present from his former secretary Sir John “Jock” Colville. Thus Jock I came to reside at Chartwell. Sir Winston, as he was by then, loved his new friend so much that he expressed the desire for a similar such feline always to be in residence at his country house when it opened to the public.

And so it has come to pass that I am the sixth in the line of official Chartwell mascots. I took over from Jock V upon his retirement in 2014. At the time I was living with Croydon Animal Samaritans and quite young. Nevertheless, when I saw the opening for the position, I applied and was immediately accepted. One of the benefits to the job, apart from meeting and greeting Churchilians from all over the world, is the inclusion of a grace-and-favour residence. I live with Mr. and Mrs. Carter in the flat above the shop—that is the attic space of the main residence.

Having worked at Chartwell for some time now, I have been able to familiarize myself with the other animals in residence as well as learn much about our predecessors including those of the most superior species. I would like to tell you about them.

**Feline Fraternity**

Marmalade cats at Chartwell go back to before the war. In 1933 the official cat in residence was Tango. A fine likeness of him was created by the artist William Nicholson who had been commissioned to do a painting of Mr. and Mrs. Churchill to mark their silver wedding anniversary. Tango appears in the portrait on the breakfast table with the master and lady of the house although in truth they never did have breakfast together. Mr. Nicholson also drew a fine study of Tango curled up asleep.

During the war, Chartwell had to be shuttered while the Churchills lived in official residences in London. At Downing Street there was a house cat named Nelson who typically curled up on the Prime Minister’s bed. After the war, a black cat wandered into Number 10 on the very day that the Churchills moved in for the second time, when Mr. Churchill became Prime Minister again in October of 1951. Whisky, as he was named, settled in to become a great favourite for some years until one day he disappeared as mysteriously as he arrived.

At Chartwell after the war, another ginger cat took up residence and was named Marmalade. Half wild, he supported himself on a diet of voles, birds, and other small creatures. Mrs. Churchill disliked him intensely and at first would not have him in the house. But Marmalade knew his man and ingratiated himself with Mr. Churchill by rubbing up against his legs when he sat in the garden. Soon he was in the main residence being fed fish by the master himself. This did not, however, quite satiate Marmalade’s appetite for wild creatures, an indiscretion largely kept from Mr. Churchill.

When Jock I arrived in the early 1960s, he was very young. The nursing staff took charge of his care. At 28 Hyde Park Gate, the family home in London, Jock knew...
Above: Painting of the Churchills at Chartwell by William Nicholson
Left: Nicholson’s drawing of Tango
Below left: Current residents of Chickenham Palace
Below: Goldfish pond at Chartwell
the routine very well. At 1 pm, he would take up his position outside Mr. Churchill’s bedroom door knowing that his master was about to emerge for his pre-luncheon aperitif. As Mr. Churchill made his way to the drawing-room, Jock walked two paces in front with tail erect, a proud escort. While Mr. Churchill sat in his chair enjoying his drink, Jock curled up at his feet. The two then made their way to the dining room where Jock ate out of a bowl set on a placemat decorated by an image of a black cat.

**Canine Companions**

It must be said that Mr. Churchill dearly loved dogs, and thus it was necessary for my predecessors to cohabit with such company. Mr. Punch, a Pug owned by Mr. Churchill’s youngest daughter Mary, was in residence when Charlie Chaplin visited Chartwell and found himself immortalized in a famous family photograph outside the front door.

Mr. Churchill himself had a reddish-brown toy poodle named Rufus who accompanied his master everywhere, including on the drives between Chartwell and London. Sadly, Rufus was run down by a vehicle in Brighton during the 1947 Conservative Party Conference. He was buried at the foot of the stairs leading up to the croquet lawn at Chartwell. Deeply upset by this tragedy, Mr. Churchill soon acquired another poodle, whom he named Rufus II. When the two walked the grounds and came to the resting place of Rufus I, the old man would tap the gravestone and say, “There also, my dear Rufus, will you find a resting-place when you go to join your predecessor.” Not only did this come to pass, my illustrious predecessor Jock I now lies buried at this same location.

Rufus II slept on Mr. Churchill’s bed and even joined the family in the dining room where a Persian carpet was laid out on the floor beside Mr. Churchill’s seat. Upon this carpet, the butler would set the dog’s bowl. The first
course could not be served before this ritual took place. Perhaps the fine dining did for Rufus as he developed tooth decay and stomach trouble that resulted in unpleasant smells. For this reason he was eventually banned from the Churchills’ stately London address and would remain at Chartwell in the care of Mrs. Churchill’s secretary Grace Hamblin when the Churchills were away from their primary residence.

**Fine Feathered Friends**

Birds have long been a feature of the Chartwell menagerie. Before the war, a parrot described by Mary Churchill as a “singularly disagreeable African Grey” was in residence. At the same time, Mary made a business of breeding budgerigars. (She briefly had a side business breeding goats, but there were not many takers for these.) The budgies were kept in cages at the top of the orchard and made quite a din. Yet they were far enough away from the house not to disturb residents, and their azure blue and brilliant green plumage made them a popular feature when visitors toured the Chartwell grounds.

During the 1950s Lord Montgomery, who also bred budgies, presented Mr. Churchill with a bird of his own. Thus began the reign of Toby who became inseparable from Mr. Churchill. Toby frequently perched on the head and shoulders not only of his master but of guests as well. This sometimes resulted in unfortunate but not unforeseen outcomes. Mr. R. A. Butler, the Chancellor of the Exchequer at the time, found himself the victim of one of Toby’s indiscretions and lamented, “The things I do for England.”

Toby spoke a bit and chirped a good deal more. He fought with his own reflection in the silver pepper pot, and nibbled at the pages of books that Mr. Churchill had borrowed from the London Library. Special arrangements were made for Toby to accompany Mr. Churchill on his many visits to the south of France. Evidently, Toby took a liking to the climate, for one day he flew out of an open window in the penthouse suite of the Hotel de Paris in Monte Carlo and was never seen again, although many false sightings were claimed.

Budgies, however, were not the only birds at Chartwell. Residing on the ground were black swans first given to Mr. Churchill by Sir Philip Sassoon in the 1920s. After the war, new birds were donated by the people of Western Australia. These handsome creatures lived on the ponds at the bottom of the valley below the residence. Mr. Churchill himself had overseen the construction of these ponds in the 1930s and had kept Mrs. Churchill, who was travelling, informed about the progress of construction in a series of letters he called “Chartwell Bulletins.”

Mr. Churchill was always certain to show off the black swans to his guests. He also enjoyed feeding the birds, which—although large and fearless—became prey for the local foxes. Additionally, the wild animals would sometimes take it into their minds to fly off in search of a new home like Toby. The loss of just one of his beloved birds always caused Mr. Churchill great sadness. Nevertheless, black swans have become a permanent and popular feature of Chartwell. Just this year we received two new swans, which came to us from nearby Leeds Castle.
The flock there began with the donation of birds from Mr. Churchill, so now the Castle is returning the gesture. We also welcomed this year a new group of chickens to take up residence in the kitchen garden. These are no ordinary henhouse birds but a variety of fancy Bantam breeds. Appropriately, their home was named by Mr. Churchill “Chickenham Palace.”

**Les Poissons**

Mr. Churchill’s favourite place for meditation at Chartwell was in a chair next to his goldfish pond. Here he would feed his Golden Orfe, who swam among the ordinary goldfish, with maggots that were supplied regularly in a tin can. Mary Churchill remembered the original school taking up residence before the war. By the 1950s some of these fish were quite large and up to twenty years old.

At one point the fish were attacked by a fungal disease and required individual treatment—all 164 of them. Mr. Churchill supervised the task from his chair while family and staff pitched in. Diana, Mr. Churchill’s eldest daughter, without hesitation lifted her skirt, tucked in her undergarments, and stepped into the cold water. When Mr. Churchill complained that the job was not being completed fast enough, his chauffeur spoke up to say, “Give us the tools and we will finish the job!”

The goldfish have remained a permanent feature of the grounds. Mr. Churchill loved them so much that he immortalized them in oils twice. “The Goldfish Pool at Chartwell” is regarded as one of his greatest paintings. It remained in the possession of his daughter Mary until she passed away. The last painting that he ever completed was also of his beloved goldfish. He gave this to his bodyguard and painting companion Edmund Murray (see p. 54).

**Chevalier**

Horses were long an important part of Mr. Churchill’s life. Trained as a cavalry officer, he spent well beyond his means to maintain a stable of polo ponies while a young soldier stationed in India. He continued to pursue the sport up to the age of fifty. Thereafter, as master of Chartwell, he and Mrs. Churchill presented their daughter Mary with a horse before the war. After the conflict, Mr. Churchill owned a number of racehorses, which he kept at a stud farm that he visited regularly near Chartwell. Mr. Churchill carefully inspected each horse as well as the stud book and made knowledgeable comments about each horse’s costs and probable current value. His most successful horse, Colonist II, won Mr. Churchill a good deal of prize money.

Mr. Churchill’s final visit to the stud farm took place in the autumn of 1964. Dressed in a green siren suit, he put on a grey overcoat and large Stetson pulled down over his eyes. At the farm, stable boys stood ready to parade each horse. A wooden chair was set out for Mr. Churchill and next to this was placed a large plate of sliced apples. As each horse was brought round for his inspection, Mr. Churchill stroked the animal for the last time and fed him a slice of apple.

**Other Creatures**

Mr. Churchill’s love for animals extended well beyond the traditional human companions of cats, dogs, birds, fish, and horses. The large Butterfly House near the main residence was another popular stop when guests were shown the grounds. And despite the predations made against the swans, there were even two fox cubs briefly in residence just before the war. These were called Charles-James and Victoria. With the approach of hostilities in 1939, the foxes were by steps successfully adapted to the wild.

Two final stories show the passion that Mr. Churchill felt for all God’s creatures great and small. The first was recently told me by Lady Williams, who as Jane Portal worked as a secretary for Mr. Churchill from 1949 to 1955. She was once taking dictation from Mr. Churchill while they rode together in a car between Chartwell and London when the vehicle struck and killed a badger in the road. Mr. Churchill insisted that the car stop so that he could get out and hold the poor creature in his arms. In an unusual tribute, he had the badger skinned, and the pelt was thereafter displayed on his bedroom wall. He would tell people, “It was not the badger’s fault.”

The final story shows that Mr. Churchill truly understood the position of all animals in our world. Once, when the croquet lawn became infested with worms, Mrs. Churchill had insecticide laid down. As she showed her husband the fatal results, he became very cross and said, “You know it is very wrong to kill the poor worms for they all have their place in nature’s grand design.”

I am very grateful to have my place at Chartwell.  

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**Jock VI** works for the National Trust. He took up his duties as the official Chartwell mascot in the spring of 2014. You can follow him on Facebook at “Jock of Chartwell.”
The snow has stopped falling. Chartwell and the garden sit under a hefty, white cloak. The air is cold, quiet, and still. Sunshine dazzles, reflected by the snow and glowing from the house; only the shadows of trees and shrubs give respite from the intensity of the phosphorescent light.

The grounding colours of Winter Sunshine, Chartwell (1924/5) are greens, browns, and blacks, which are constructed to frame the view of the house between the foliage of shrubs and trees. The house is draped in russet colours of reds, oranges, and yellows, contrasting sharply with the background of deep shadows. The white paint is laid thick, with heavy layers foregrounding the vista, as if it had just fallen and now rests upon our view. An intense sense of sunlight shimmers across the scene. The colours are sensational rather than representative, lending the painting an emotional dimension. It is a work that prioritises subjectivity over observation.

The painting is one of Churchill’s most important. It is the work that elevated his hobby from personal pastime to critical acclaim. The story of how the painting was submitted anonymously to an amateur art exhibition is well-documented. On the reverse of the canvas is a letter signed by Oswald Birley relating how he, as one of the judges for the exhibition, awarded it first prize. He did so, however, against the wishes of one of the judges, Sir Joseph Duveen, who is said to have refused to believe it was by an amateur. It was only when the renowned art historian Kenneth Clark sided with Birley that the prize was duly awarded. Emboldened by this success, Churchill subsequently entered the same painting, under the pseudonym David Winter, to the Royal Academy’s Summer Exhibition, which gained him entry into the RA in 1947.

Churchill as Impressionist

As the title indicates, the painting is a view of Chartwell under snow. Churchill purchased the house in 1922, in part for the panorama it commanded over the Weald of Kent. As David Coombs has noted, “[The] new house and the marvellous views it offered often inspired his brush.” Despite the commanding views over the Kent countryside, for Winter Sunshine, Chartwell Churchill turned his back on the landscape and focused his attention upon his home. The resulting canvas is a view of Chartwell seen from directly outside the studio looking up towards the house. One can imagine the artist painting in the biting cold, furiously trying to capture the moment with the sunshine reflecting off the snow, creating this intense and luminous picture.

Leaving the history of the painting aside, Winter Sunshine, Chartwell tells us much about Churchill’s broader artistic inspirations, influences, and ambitions. The painting is an attempt to capture the fleeting moment in time and the sensation the scene creates in the onlooker. To this end, the work has been described as one of the most impressionistic paintings by Churchill. Yet, what is meant by the term “impressionistic” in this context?

In an art historical sense, the term “impressionism” was coined by the French critic Louis Leroy, in his review of L’Exposition des Impressionnistes, which was the first group exhibition to include new works by Claude Monet, Auguste Pierre Renoir, Camille Pissarro, and Alfred Sisley, in Paris during 1874. Monet exhibited the work that was to give the group its lasting name, Impression, Sunrise (1872). Impressionism had been developed in France by some of the most advanced painters of the nineteenth century. Rather than painting in a studio, the so-called “Impressionists” aimed to capture the momentary and transient effects of natural light by working quickly, in front of their subjects, en plein air. This result was a heightened awareness of atmosphere, colour, and light, and the shifting patterns of the natural landscape. Brushwork was rapid and broken into separate dabs in order to render the fleeting quality of daylight. In addition to their new, radical techniques, the bright colours of Impressionist canvases were shocking for eyes accustomed to the more sober
tones of Academic painting. Many of the artists chose not to apply the thick golden varnish that painters customarily used to tone down their works. The paints themselves were more vivid too. The period saw the development of synthetic pigments for artists’ paints, providing vibrant shades of blue, green, and yellow that painters had never used before.

The importance of the Impressionists and their followers on the work of Churchill, together with the modern movement more generally, cannot be overemphasised, as made clear in his *Painting as a Pastime*:

> Have not Manet and Monet, Cézanne and Matisse, rendered to painting something of the same service which Keats and Shelley gave to poetry after the solemn and ceremonious literary perfections of the eighteenth century? They have brought back to the pictorial art a new draught of *joie de vivre*; and the beauty of their work is instinct with gaiety, and floats in sparkling air.

> I do not expect these masters would particularly appreciate my defence, but I must avow an increasing attraction to their work.

As David Coombs has insightfully noted, Churchill was always interested in the techniques of the masters and he copied a number of paintings, as was the custom of many artists in the past schooled in this practical way of

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**Date, 1924/1925**
**Materials, Oil on millboard**
**Measurements, 356 x 508 mm (14 x 20 in)**
**Place of origin, Chartwell**
learning; his painting in 1935 entitled *Bay near Marseilles* (C330), appears in fact to be a copy of Monet’s *L’Ally Point, Low Tide, 1882*.

**The Monet Connection**

In addition to his mastery of landscape painting, Monet also had a talent for capturing the aftermath of heavy snowfalls. His scenes were primarily personal records of familiar places that had been suddenly transformed, revealing a new beauty. As these were fleeting moments, Monet would draw upon all of his painterly skills to capture the scene rapidly, its new guise altered by snow showers. The best examples of this aspect of his work are in those the artist made during his visit to the fjordside village of Sandvika, about nine miles south of Christiania (now Oslo), Norway during the winter of 1895. There he sought out quiet places in order to paint the transformations winter had brought about. Monet spent two months exploring the country on foot and by horse-drawn sleigh, setting up his easel outside to paint, in temperatures down to -20° C. On one occasion he wrote to a friend in Paris saying: “I painted part of the day today, while it was snowing continually: you would have laughed to see me entirely white, my beard covered in icy stalactites.”

The influence of Monet and those who followed Impressionism is evident in Churchill’s earlier work and remained an enduring influence throughout his practice. This is made clear in his own account of those who inspired his paintings:

Chance led me one autumn to a secluded nook on the Côte d’Azur, between Marseilles and Toulon, and there I fell in with one or two painters who revelled in the methods of the modern French School. These were disciples of Cézanne. They view Nature as a mass of shimmering light in which forms and surfaces are comparatively unimportant, indeed hardly visible, but which gleams and glows with beautiful harmonies and contrasts of colour….Now I must try to represent it by innumerable small separate lozenge-shaped points and patches of colour—often pure colour—so that it looked more like a tessellated pavement than a marine painting. It sounds curious. All the same, do not be in a hurry to reject the method. Go back a few yards and survey the result. Each of the little points of colour is now playing his part in the general effect….

Although originating in France, Impressionism had great influence overseas, and included artists working in Britain, amongst them Walter Richard Sickert. When Churchill was Chancellor of the Exchequer during the 1920s, we find him taking detailed advice and instruction from Sickert. It was the latter who passed on his enthusiasm for French painters such as Degas, Corot, and others. From then on, Churchill was to spend years scrutinising the works of many painters, including J. M. W. Turner, widely regarded as the founding influence of the Impressionists, and Camille Pissarro (whom Clementine had met in Paris). What these painters have in common is the subject of the famous remark by Cézanne that “Painting from Nature is not copying the object; it is realising one’s sensation.” And, as a poem is made of words arranged on a page, then painting too should be seen as ordered patches on a flat blank surface. Here painting’s task was not to describe but to express. By this means, colour could claim the sensibility of emotion itself.

**The Passionate Painter**

Through *Winter Sunshine, Chartwell* we glimpse a different image of Churchill the painter. Far from being the stalwart of traditional values in art, as he is too often depicted, Churchill was deeply interested in and influenced by the “masters” of modern art. Yet, let us be clear, no one is suggesting that his work matched the innovative artistic heights that Monet and his contemporaries achieved in their pursuit of the world seen differently—to poeticise the effects of light and colour. The lightness of Churchill’s painting doesn’t lie in his technique. He battled with technique, and so his lightness is of a different kind. By relinquishing the pursuit of technique he gained a carefreeness that allowed him a lightness to enjoy painting for its own pleasure.

Commentators have claimed that Churchill was not a great painter. This is true, at least if by “great” painter they mean someone to whom painting has come easily, someone who has shown talent at an early age and then followed a path of major innovation allied to outstanding technique. Painting did not come easily to Churchill. Like almost everything in his life, he fought passionately for the things he believed in, and painting was certainly one of those things.

Barry Phipps is an art historian and a Fellow of Churchill College, Cambridge. He wishes to thank Katherine Carter and the staff at Chartwell for assistance with this article.
One of the most impressive objects on display at Chartwell is Winston Churchill’s 1953 Nobel Prize for Literature and the accompanying certificate. I have in my home in Sweden a typewritten copy of the letter nominating him for the prize that year. This letter is signed Birger Nerman, and my copy has a handwritten dedication to Gerda Serrander, my great-grandmother. It appears likely that, as nowadays, those making nominations were asked to keep their nominations secret, but that after the prize had been awarded, Nerman could not resist giving copies of his successful nominating letter to some of his close friends. We know, moreover, that Nerman also sent a copy to Churchill.

I spent the autumn of 2016 as a visiting Fellow at Churchill College in Cambridge, and I took the opportunity to contact Allen Packwood, the director of the Churchill Archives Centre, which is located in the college, and inquire about Churchill’s Nobel Prize. He found in the Archives a letter from Nerman to Churchill dated 19 December 1953, a week after the Nobel Prize Award Ceremony on 10 December, where Nerman explains that he has had “for some years the honour of suggesting your name for the Nobel Prize in Literature,” and that several persons, including Churchill’s Swedish publisher Captain Bertil Sterner, had encouraged Nerman to send the nomination to Churchill; Nerman enclosed a copy of the nomination letter together with an English translation of it. Churchill’s private secretary Anthony Montague Browne forwarded the letter to Churchill, together with a draft of a reply, which Churchill signed on 25 December, thanking Nerman for the copy of “your letter to the Nobel Committee in which you express yourself in such flattering terms.”

The nomination letter is three pages long and begins by saying that Nerman has had the honour of nominating Churchill since 1948 and now repeats his nomination. Nerman praises Churchill’s vast production, commenting in some detail on his early works *The Malakand Field* and *The River War* (which “extend far beyond the range of mere war stories”), his great biography of his ancestor Marlborough (“universally acclaimed as a masterpiece”), the sketches in *Great Contemporaries* (“as psychologically pertinent as they are chivalrous”), his history of the First World War (“the most distinguished account of that war ever written”), and also on Churchill’s political speeches before and during the Second World War (“expressive of the eternal heroism of the human spirit”). There are also added enthusiastic comments on *The Second World War*, of which five volumes had appeared since Nerman’s first nomination (“there is not a single work in the entire world of literature in which a writer with so supreme a mastery of language has described a course of events of such a significance”).

Nerman concluded his nomination by saying that Churchill’s writings exhibited “those high, inalienable human virtues of courage, chivarly and truth.” Ner-
In the left-hand panel of the certificate can be seen the Houses of Parliament and references to the muses of painting and writing. In the right-hand panel you can see Chartwell’s trellis-covered nursery wing at left and the first Duke of Marlborough at right.
man also wrote: “The fact that Churchill in action has played a greater part than any other person of our times in rescuing humanity from the barbarism of the dictators and in preserving the Western world’s system of law and justice should not, of course, in any way detract from his purely literary merits.” Thus Nerman succeeds both in reminding the reader of Churchill’s enormous political importance and in denying that this was a factor in awarding the Nobel Prize to him.

**Birger Nerman**

But who was the nominator Birger Nerman? He was a well-known Swedish archaeologist born in 1888. He had been a professor of Archaeology in Dorpat (Estonia), 1923–25, and director of the Swedish History Museum in Stockholm since 1938. As a member of the Swedish Academy of Letters (an academy for the humanities), he was invited to submit nominations for the Nobel Prize in literature, which is awarded by the Swedish Academy (an academy for Swedish language and literature). Nerman died in 1971.

Birger Nerman had two brothers who were also well known. His twin brother Einar (1888–1983) was a famous artist. His older brother Ture (1886–1969) was a politician and journalist and may possibly have influenced Birger’s nomination. Ture Nerman was before and during the Second World War one of the leading anti-Nazi politicians in Sweden. He had been one of the founders of the Swedish Communist Party in 1917 and was a Member of the Swedish Parliament for the communists, 1931–37. In 1939, however, he left the Communist Party and returned to the Social Democratic Party. During the Second World War, when Sweden was neutral but surrounded by countries occupied by or in alliance with Germany, Ture Nerman published the fiercely anti-Nazi weekly newspaper *Trots Allt*. The government tried (successfully) to keep Sweden out of the war and did not want to irritate Germany. It therefore tried to stop Ture Nerman in various ways, including a jail sentence in 1940 for “endangering Sweden’s relations with Germany” when Ture published an editorial on “Hitler’s hellish machine.” After the war, Ture Nerman was back in Parliament, 1946–53, as a Social Democrat friendly to the West.

**Nomination Process**

Nominations for the Nobel Prizes are kept secret for fifty years, but the Nobel Prize website now contains a database of older nominations with names of nominators and nominees. The database shows that there were thirty-four nominations for the Nobel Prize in Literature in 1953, for twenty-five different persons, and that Birger Nerman was the only person who nominated Churchill this year, so it was really his nomination that gave the prize to Churchill. Among the twenty-four other nominees that year deemed less worthy of the prize than Churchill by the Swedish Academy was Ernest Hemingway (who got the prize the year after). The database also shows that Churchill had previously been nominated in 1946 by Axel Romdahl (1880–1951), a Swedish professor of art history and museum curator in Gothenburg. Furthermore, from 1948 to 1952 several others in addition to Nerman had nominated Churchill. (Churchill had also been nominated for the Nobel Peace Prize in 1945 and 1950, but as we know, he did not get it.)

The digitized archives of the Swedish newspapers *Dagens Nyheter* and *Svenska Dagbladet* show that the Swedish Academy made their decision on Thursday, 15 October 1953. The news, however, had already leaked the day before. On 14 October the Swedish papers reported that according to Reuters, Churchill would get the prize; this was also reported in the British newspapers the same day. After the official announcement, Churchill was honoured and grateful and hoped to come to Stockholm to receive the award. Gustaf VI, the King of Sweden, invited Churchill to stay at the Royal Palace. Ultimately, though, Churchill’s duties as Prime Minister took precedence, and he went to a summit in Bermuda, while his wife Lady Churchill and their daughter Mary went to Stockholm and accepted the Nobel Prize on his behalf.

The comments on the Nobel Prize in the Swedish newspapers were, with few exceptions, very positive. The Permanent Secretary of the Swedish Academy stressed that the prize was a literary award and that one reason for not giving it to Churchill earlier was that it then might have been seen as a political award.

The official citation for Churchill’s Nobel Prize is “for his mastery of historical and biographical description as well as for brilliant oratory in defending exalted human values.”

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Chartwell and the National Trust

By Katherine Carter

Last year, Chartwell marked fifty years since its first opening to the public. Today, with more than 200,000 people visiting the house and gardens each year, Chartwell remains one of the National Trust’s most popular properties, and Director General Dame Helen Ghosh recently described it as “a jewel in the crown of the National Trust.” But what has it been like to care for a national landmark for half a century, and what awaits Churchill’s beloved home in the coming years?

When Winston Churchill passed away in January 1965, Chartwell entered a very different phase in its long history: one of purposeful curation, public accessibility, and memorialisation. Lady Churchill decided to move to London following her husband’s death and left the house in June of the same year.

Although the National Trust had owned the house for nineteen years prior, and were able to make some preparations in advance, it was not until 1965 that they had a hand in its presentation, working closely with Lady Churchill, her daughter Mary Soames, and Lady Churchill’s former secretary Grace Hamblin, who became the first Administrator. As Martin Drury observed, “it was rare for a house to come to the National Trust ‘in full sail’ in this way.”

Legacy Connections

The involvement of, and consultation with, the family continued beyond the initial opening. As rooms were altered, discussions on presentation were made. Mary Soames sometimes advised on the choice of furniture, for example with the choice of furnishings in Lady Churchill’s sitting room, which opened much later in 1981. She would also advise on the garden, being involved in discussions of planting around the Marycot, and as recently as 2011 she planted new Churchill Roses in her mother’s rose garden.

When the house first opened in June 1966, Lady Churchill returned to Chartwell, greeting the long queue that formed to the north of the house along the forecourt. From that date on, she received regular “bulletins” from Grace. Each Sunday evening there would be a phone call to Chartwell to ask how many people had visited that week. The numbers must surely have delighted them. Between the June opening and the house’s closure for the season in October, there had been more than 150,000 visitors, even though the house was only open a few days each week.

Upon opening, the spirit of Chartwell was maintained by Grace, who had worked for the Churchills since the early 1930s. The Head Gardener, Mr. Vincent, had similarly been there when the Churchills were in residence. He continued to grow the potted plants that Lady Churchill liked to have in the house, regal pelargoniums in particular, and to arrange the flowers. These living connections to the time the house was displayed to represent made Chartwell truly “authentic” in a way that other National Trust houses often struggle to emulate, having come into the Trust after either a period of decline or a succession of sales.

Inside

The National Trust remain faithful to the vision of displaying Chartwell as a family home, though there have been a number of changes since the first opening in 1966. The Studio, for example, first opened in 1968 but looked markedly different compared to how the space can be seen today. The sparseness of the paintings displayed upon opening bore little resemblance to how Churchill would have known his Studio, which saw canvases cover the walls from floor to ceiling. As more of his paintings came to Chartwell, however, from the private collections of Lady Churchill as well as her daughters Lady Audley and Lady Soames, the Trust were able to create a much fuller and more authentic display. The Studio came to provide more interpretation of Churchill’s paintings as well as explanation as to how the process of painting was such a key element in his life. The paintings cover a range of subjects and techniques and are from the span of Churchill’s time as a painter in oils from the 1910s to the 1950s. This variety and the presentation of the paintings in the location of their creation or completion (a place created by Churchill specifically for this purpose) enables visitors to appreciate fully Churchill the artist.
Further changes to the Studio took place in the 1970s. The basement of the main house had been full of surplus furniture and gifts given to Churchill by governments, institutions, and individuals, some of them still in the boxes and packing cases in which they arrived. In 1974, Jean Broome, Grace’s successor as Administrator, wanted the basement cleared, and so the decision was made to put as many of the items on display as possible. These items largely went to an annex in the Studio, though they bore no connection to the story of Churchill and his passion for painting and felt somewhat incongruous in that space. The changes over the course of the National Trust’s tenure were not limited to the Studio. Initial interventions had included the knocking-through of walls and transformation of stairs, all under the watchful eye of Lady Churchill. Later changes included the opening of a Sitting Room in 1981, this time with the guiding hand of Lady Soames. This room had previously served as a “visitor holding area” and also a VIP room. In addition, the shop that had been in the main house in the pre-war kitchen on the lower ground floor was relocated to its own building adjacent to the car park, and the display of the kitchen was resurrected in 1992.

Outside

In the gardens, there were also considerable changes. The statue by Oscar Nemon of Winston and Clementine, which today looks out across the lakes, was only added to the gardens in the early 1990s. There are some reservations about its likeness to Clementine, with her features appearing harsher, but this did not prove an obstacle to the grand event of its unveiling by the Queen Mother, with a wonderful talk by Lady Soames.

The garden features themselves have also seen great change. The kitchen garden, for example, was grassed over in 1965 in an effort that the maintenance should be “simple and labour saving.” This meant, however, that the use of the land within Churchill’s brick walls was entirely artificial and wholly unlike how the family used that part of the garden. In 2006 the decision was made to recreate the Churchills’ kitchen garden, which was such an important part of Chartwell life, supplying not only Lady Churchill’s flower displays but even providing provisions for their London residences, with 10 Downing Street receiving deliveries of fresh fruit and vegetables throughout the war. Today the fruit and vegetable stand in the garden allows visitors to take a piece of Chartwell home with them. Alternatively guests, like the
Above left: Churchill’s bedroom, recently opened to the public

Left: Katherine Carter with three former secretaries to the Churchill family: Jill Ballantyne, Doreen Pugh, and Nonie Chapman

Top: The late Lady (Mary) Soames plants flowers at Chartwell

Right: Chartwell’s first Administrator, Grace Hamblin
Churchills’, might find themselves feasting on the kitchen garden’s produce in our Landemare Café, named after the Churchills’ wonderful cook.

Sadly, there have also been changes entirely beyond the National Trust’s control in the wider estate, resulting from the Great Storm of 1987. Extensive damage to the gardens and woodland saw the loss of around eighty percent of the trees. The nineteenth-century trees planted by the Campbell Colquhouns, the family who lived at Chartwell before the Churchills, were almost entirely lost. A few weeks ago, the team at Chartwell marked thirty years since the Great Storm, and it is remarkable to look out across the estate today, recalling how much woodland was lost, and marvelling at how well the woodlands have grown and developed since.

**New Directions**

Alongside these obvious and visible changes and transformations are more subtle changes which aid the National Trust in its care for Chartwell. The development of the science of conservation, in particular, has transformed the care of collections from a simple process of cleaning to a scientific and highly technical process of preventive conservation. Through the careful management of the environment, from the humidity to dust levels and light monitoring, we are able to give the best possible care to ensure that Chartwell’s collections are preserved and safeguarded for future generations to see and enjoy.

So, after half a century of providing access to Churchill’s home and caring for the house, garden, and collections, what are the next fifty years likely to bring? We are at a crucial point in the story of Winston Churchill’s legacy, and, since Chartwell is a key location to share his stories and achievements, it is our obligation to ensure that Churchill remains relevant. As time passes, we are losing the generation who remember his achievements in the Second World War, and his heroism is passed down rather than recalled. A presumption that visitors know and understand the stories of his life before they walk through the doors is no longer accurate. We must engage new, diverse and younger audiences, and measures must be taken to interpret Churchill’s home in such a way that visitors with less pre-existing knowledge of the man can enjoy it and be inspired to learn more about him.

In September 2016, the National Trust launched an appeal to reinvigorate Churchill’s legacy at his home. One of the ways this will be done is by safeguarding the collection and giving it resonance in the twenty-first century. A large part of the collection on display at Chartwell has been on long-term loan to the property. These items are increasingly important with the passage of time, offering a direct connection to Churchill through his cherished possessions, each one of which has a fascinating story to tell. The Trust’s fundraising efforts so far have been very successful, with the majority of items within this collection recently purchased and therefore guaranteed to remain on display at Churchill’s future home for future generations.
to enjoy. The fundraising campaign, however, continues, because there is one further item which has not yet been secured for permanent public display: the Nobel Prize for Literature awarded to Churchill in 1953 and comprising a large medal and presentation document. [See the preceding story.]

The Nobel Prize is a fascinating object. It was awarded in 1953 for “his mastery of historical and biographical description as well as for brilliant oratory in defending exalted human values.” It was received by Lady Churchill, who admitted ahead of the presentation ceremony that she was having an attack of “stomach butterflies,” commenting to her daughter Mary that “I have never had to read a message from him on such an important occasion before.”

Having been on display at Chartwell for more than half a century, it has become an integral part of Chartwell’s narrative. It is also inherently connected to the place. The Study, from which so much of Churchill’s writing was undertaken, is just two rooms away from where the Nobel Prize is displayed. The accompanying certificate [see p. 28] includes an image of Chartwell. It is moving to think how commonly known it was that Chartwell was a vital part of Churchill’s work.

**Churchill’s Chartwell**

Beyond the collection, the National Trust is undertaking a wider “Churchill’s Chartwell” project, which is set to bring in new audiences as well as enhance connections with existing ones. From opening new spaces, developing improved interpretation, and expanding our learning, outreach, and volunteering programmes, Chartwell is committed to play its part in keeping Churchill relevant in the twenty-first century. The National Trust’s vision remains to maintain the presentation of Chartwell as a much-loved family home, but it will do so in a way that will inspire a new generation to engage with Churchill’s history, his love of Chartwell, and how he continues to affect our lives today.

The “new rooms” will include Sir Winston’s bedroom and bathroom, the secretaries’ room, and Sarah’s bedroom, which will provide a new space to tell the stories of all the Churchill children. None of these spaces has ever been open to the public before. They will now be available to see by tour of the house as and when they are ready for opening, which will be phased across the three years of the project.

Whilst Sir Winston’s bedroom requires less intervention, as we are very lucky that it remained largely as Sir Winston left it in 1964, the other rooms require considerable research and transformation of the spaces. The secretaries’ room, for example, will provide a new and exciting way to tell the story of the army of secretaries who supported Churchill in both his literary and political tasks. Working until the early hours of the morning, the dedication and resilience of these individuals was a vital part of Winston’s work, and they were integral to life at Chartwell. The room itself has remained semi-historic, but bears little resemblance to its original appearance. For this and many other elements of the project, Chartwell has undertaken an “oral history” project to capture the insights and recollections of those who were so lucky to have known the Churchills and seen Chartwell when it was their home.

This is such an exciting time for Chartwell, and as I enter my fifth year at this incredibly special place, it is a genuine honour and privilege to play a part in securing Churchill’s legacy for future generations. Sir David Cannadine said of Churchill’s beloved home, “It is through Chartwell and its profoundly personal collection that we can most vividly and most memorably come to know this extraordinary man.” Chartwell is unique and synonymous with Winston Churchill in a way unlike any other place he stayed or visited. By telling his stories and those of his family in new and dynamic ways, his home of more than forty years will ensure that the record of his life and achievements remains relevant, captivating, and truly unforgettable.

**Endnotes**

1. Extract from a speech given at Chartwell fiftieth anniversary event, 30 June 2016.
2. Martin Drury, interviewed in 2015 by Jeremy Musson. He is a former National Trust Director General who knew Chartwell as a young man and was the National Trust’s Curator from 1973 to 1981.
3. Lanning Roper, quotation taken from records at Scotney Castle, National Trust. Roper was Chartwell’s Garden Adviser, worked closely with Lady Soames upon Chartwell’s opening, and continued to work with the gardens until 1980.
"Both my wife and I stand in need of some rest and sunshine and we hope it would be possible for us to live very quietly indeed with you for some few weeks," Winston Churchill wrote on 22 November 1945 to his old Canadian friend Col. Frank Clarke, who had a home in Miami. Churchill continued, "The President has asked me to visit Westminster University [sic], Missouri, which is his home state, and deliver an address. He proposes himself to be present and introduce me. This will obviously be a public appearance of considerable importance."

Churchill may have believed that a day away from Chartwell was a day wasted, but he wasted little time in asking an old friend for temporary accommodation at his home on North Bay Road in Miami Beach. Like many before him—and countless since—Churchill sought a much-needed and well-deserved period of rest and relaxation in south Florida.

After years of war and three dismal months following his defeat in the general election of July 1945, Churchill received an invitation from Westminster College President Franc McCluer. Churchill’s spirits were buoyed by the now-famous postscript from President Truman: “This is a wonderful school in my home state. Hope you can do it. If you come, I’ll introduce you.”

At once, Churchill accepted the invitation, knowing it was his chance to make an appearance with the American president and deliver a speech of “considerable importance.” What better place, Churchill asked himself, than Miami to rejuvenate, recharge, and prepare for his most significant post-war speech, which he titled “Sinews of Peace” but is now known commonly as the “Iron Curtain” speech?

While a guest of Col. Clarke, Churchill contemplated his message, which would be a stern warning about the threat of Soviet expansion in Europe. But his month in Florida was not all business. Churchill found time to paint amidst palm trees, bathe in the Miami surf, befriend a cockatoo during a visit to the Parrot Jungle and Gardens, and make a brief visit to Cuba, where he was presented with a handsome—and large—humidor stocked with cigars as a “gift from the Government and People of Cuba” [see FH 171].

The Miami sunshine was indeed good for Churchill. He returned to Washington to meet President Truman. The two great leaders with their entourages, including host Col. Clarke, journeyed by railway to Missouri, where Churchill’s speech on 5 March 1946, put Fulton on the world map.

Churchill was indebted to his Canadian friend, who provided not only accommodation in Miami, but also bankrolled the former Prime Minister’s visit. It was a debt that Churchill would repay, but not without complications. On March 26, as he steamed home toward Southampton aboard the RMS Queen Mary, Churchill dashed a letter off to Col. Clarke explaining that he wished to pay his expenses from “sufficient dollars in the First National Bank of New York.”

“Would you be so kind therefore as to send me an account for:
(a) all the railway fares for myself and party,
(b) Sarah’s flight from New York to the south,
(c) the final items at the Waldorf-Astoria and
(d) anything else I owe you including, please, the pressure cooker and the toast-making machine”

Churchill reiterated his desire to pay Col. Clarke with American funds, imploring his host to hold off on cashing another check: “Meanwhile, please destroy the cheque for £500 which I gave you before I left or advise me if you have already sent it to the bank.”

The check in question was never cashed and is now deposited safely in the archive at the National Churchill
Above: Churchill’s cheque
Below: WSC painting of Venetian Causeway painted in 1946 and given to Col. Clarke
Right: Letter to Colonel Clarke

Endnotes
2. Letter marked “Private and Confidential” from Churchill to Col. Frank Clarke, written aboard the RMS Queen Mary in 26 March 1946, Bachmann Collection, National Churchill Museum at Westminster College.
3. Ibid.

Timothy Riley is Sandra L. and Monroe E. Trout Director and Chief Curator of the National Churchill Museum.
I was recently asked when Churchill’s only full-length work of fiction was written, relative to its publication date. After all, most of the time (but not always), he chose his book subject and drove it forward to conclusion. That said, in later years, financial demands became a primary motivation, and the order of writing books occasionally changed as a function of publishers’ advances against royalties.

In the earliest days of his writing career, when his military histories and then his political perspectives and positions were paramount, Churchill wrote and published in order, except in the case of his only novel Savrola, about which he “misled” us in My Early Life regarding two not insignificant matters: his own attitude toward the book and the history of its creation.

In 1930, Churchill advised readers of My Early Life that, over the years he “consistently urged [his] friends to abstain from reading it [Savrola].” Although he stated that his attitude toward the work had not significantly mollified over the half-century between the publication of its first and second American editions, our acceptance today of this amusingly self-deprecating sentiment does not actually gibe with his expressed feelings at the time of writing and publication of the first edition. By way of comparison, consider the cautious restraint of his new foreword to the Random House republication in 1956, referring to the preface more than a half-century before: “The preface to the first edition in 1900 submitted the book ‘with considerable trepidation to the judgement or clemency of the public.’ The intervening fifty-five years have somewhat dulled though certainly not changed my sentiments on this point.”

Consider also the following from an interview with a reporter from The Toronto Daily Star in 1929: “Do you ever think, Mr. Churchill, of writing fiction? ‘Not much—I wrote a novel once.’ ‘What happened to it?’ ‘I don’t know,’ in the tone of voice people employ when they say ‘lost at sea.’”

While writing the novel, though, Churchill expressed a youthfully enthusiastic attitude: “It is far and away the best thing that I have ever done,” he wrote his mother on 24 August 1897. Nine months later, he said to Lady Randolph, “It is a wild and daring book tilting recklessly here and there and written with no purpose whatever, but to amuse. This I believe it will do. I have faith in my pen.” Soon after, he wrote his Aunt Leonie that the book “appeals to all tastes from philosophical to bloodthirsty and is full of wild adventures and atheistic philosophy.” This contrasts markedly with the perspective he expressed more than thirty years later in My Early Life.

As for the publication timeline, although Savrola is Churchill’s third published book, it was the first book he undertook and the second he completed. It was indeed already about one-quarter completed (he had written eighty pages or five chapters by the end of August 1897) when he set it aside on his return to Bangalore that month to begin work on The Story of the Malakand Field Force. On 29 August, he wrote: “The novel is indefinitely shelved. Five chapters are already completed and I am very much pleased with them. I hope before Christmas to have it ready for publication.” Churchill was unduly optimistic; it was, in fact, almost two years before the work appeared in volume form.

Churchill did return to the novel before submitting the Malakand text, and by 25 October eight chapters had been completed. On 24 November, while he was still six weeks away from sending on the Malakand manuscript, he remained consumed by Savrola. “[T]he novel filled & still fills my mind,” he wrote Lady Randolph. By 2 December, however, he was quite discouraged. He admitted to his mother then that “[t]he novel is at present illegible and must be shelved. I will have it typewritten as soon as possible and send it to you—in part—for your opinion. But you must remember it is in the rough and must be expanded.”

On 5 January 1898, he still had not returned to Savrola, although he had shipped off the Malakand manuscript on 31 December. He had, he said, “some reading to do which I intend to plod through before taking to the pen again.” Exactly three weeks later, he regretted that he still had not returned to his writing: “I am still reading—though I should prefer to write. The novel lies still unfinished and I am longing to take up the threads.” Churchill seemed more sanguine about the delay and, on 9 February, wrote Lady Randolph that “I am still reading—a good deal and the novel remains half-finished. But there is no hurry about it and as I have put & am trying to develop in the mouth of my hero a cheery but I believe a true philosophy it takes much thought.”
By 25 February, his former positive attitude was returning and he reported that “the novel is forging slowly along, and I like it better every day,” and, in a letter of 18 March, he declared his intention “to polish it until it glitters.” On 25 April, he believed that Savrola was within a chapter of completion and about four weeks from despatch. Indeed, on 3 May, maintaining that schedule, he still expected that the novel would be sent in a fortnight. Churchill’s estimates were a trifle optimistic; on 10 May, he reported that he would send off the first six chapters to his mother, although he was delaying completion because of some dissatisfaction with the ending, “[I]t rather falls away at present.”

By 16 May, the moment had arrived, in part. He despatched the Preface, Table of Contents, and six chapters, with the promise that the balance of the twenty (then projected) would flow at three per week, such that Lady Randolph would have the whole manuscript in a month. In his letter of 22 May, he announced that ten more chapters were going “by this week’s mail” and that the “remaining six” would go next week. Yet he wrote his brother Jack on 26 May that the novel was finished and that he had sent “5 chapters last week & 10 go by this mail: The other seven next.” On 1 June, he explained that the structure of the novel had changed somewhat, “making a total of 22 chapters. The last seven chapters are rather differently arranged to what I had originally intended.” The next day he actually sent off the remaining chapters, the necessarily altered Table of Contents, and a “list of suggested illustrations.”

The book was done, but, although begun first it was published third, having been bypassed by The Story of the Malakand Field Force (14 March 1898) and The River War (6 November 1899). The Longmans agreement had been signed on 17 March 1899, and the novel was serialised in Macmillans Magazine from May through December 1899. Savrola was first published in Boston on 1 or 2 February 1900 (the publisher’s dates on the title page verso are incorrect). The English edition was published on 12 February 1900.

Thereafter, a beautiful paper wraps edition was published by George Newnes in 1908, a third edition by Hodder & Stoughton in their Sevenpenny Library in 1915, the American Random House edition in 1956, a UK Beacon Books paperback in 1957, a Cedric Chivers edition in 1973, Amercon House in 1976, and finally Leo Cooper in London in 1990. Interestingly, it was the very first of Churchill’s works to be published in translation (as Kansa Nousee in Hämeenlinna, Finland in 1916) and—just months ago—the most recent as Саврола (Savrola) in Kiev, Ukraine. It was also the most magnificent illustrated publication of any of Churchill’s volumes as published by À la Voile Latine in Monaco in 1950.

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Winston’s brother Jack joined him at Harrow in the fall and the two boys shared a room. On 24 September, their mother wrote to Winston: “I hope you & Jack are settled and comfortable. Do write & tell me all about it, & what you find your room wants.” In fact, their room did not want for much as he advised her in a letter on one occasion: “The room is very beautiful. We purchased in London sufficiency of ornaments to make it look simply magnificent.” He later wrote that “The room is now very nice, in fact it is universally spoken of as the best room in the House.”

On 25 October, Lord Randolph advised his sons that their mother was “extremely ill yesterday and we were rather alarmed.” In fact, Lady Randolph was diagnosed on 12 October as having an enlarged ovary that was causing her a great deal of pain for which the treating physician had advised her to “rest and do nothing to bring on pain.” By 22 October, her condition had not improved and she was given morphine as “the absolute necessity of controlling the pain.” The problem did not clear up until early in December.

Winston’s second attempt to take the Sandhurst entrance exam took place on 29 November, and he changed tactics in dealing with his father’s expectations. In the middle of his first exam, he had sent his father a letter telling him how well he had done. He was wrong, of course, and his disappointed father had written to Winston’s grandmother, “If he fails again I shall think about putting him in business…” Before taking the exam a second time, Winston had the Headmaster J. E. C. Welldon write to Lord Randolph that “Winston is anxious that I should write to you about his prospect of success in the Examination which begins tomorrow. I do so gladly… I should say he has a very fair chance of passing now and is certain to pass in the summer if not now…of late, he has done all that could be asked of him.” Winston, of course, failed a second time, but Welldon’s letter had done the trick, since his father allowed him to take the exam a third time in the summer of 1893, which was the charm.

Sir Douglas Haig, the British commander in France had written in his diary during the summer that Churchill “can hardly stop meddling in the larger questions of strategy and tactics.” In that, if nothing else, Haig was accurate. Churchill had been appalled by the slaughter of Passchendaele, with its more than 300,000 casualties. Haig’s initial assault petered out after only two weeks of intense, often hand-to-hand combat, with just a half-mile advance to show for it. In contrast, Churchill had been heartened by the first British tank offensive of the war in late November at Cambrai where, within two weeks, the German trench lines had been breached (something Haig never accomplished at Ypres) at the cost of fewer than 10,000 casualties. Churchill wrote about this bitterly in 1927 in *The World Crisis*: “Accusing as I do without exception all the great ally offensives of 1915, 1916 and 1917, as needless and wrongly conceived operations of infinite cost, I am bound to reply to the question, What else could be done? And I answer it pointing to the Battle of Cambrai, *This could have been done.*”

This was not hindsight by Churchill. On 8 December, he presented a paper to the War Cabinet contrasting Cambrai with Passchendaele and urging the greater use of tanks “not only as a substitute for bombardment,” but also as “an indispensible adjunct to infantry.” At this point in the war, the British Army inexplicably still maintained tens of thousands of cavalrymen and their horses. Churchill’s paper to the War Cabinet suggested a repurposing of these units into mechanized warfare.
On 31 October, Churchill had shown the Conservative MP Leo Amery an early draft of his December paper to the War Cabinet. Amery, who was a friend not a fan of Churchill [see p. 12], wrote in his diary after reading the draft: “Whatever his defects may be, there is all the difference in the world between the tackling of a big problem like this by a man of real brain and imagination, and its handling by good second-rate men like…Haig, who still live in the intellectual trench in which they have been fighting.”

75 YEARS AGO

**Autumn 1942 • Age 68**

“Quite All Right”

In mid-September, Churchill’s Aunt Leonie, eighty-three years old and the younger sister of his mother Jennie, wrote to him that she was “all puffed up with pride at your great achievements, yes puffed up like an old pouter pigeon,” to which Churchill replied, “It is a great pleasure to me to know you follow my toils.”

An Enigma intercept on 20 October revealed a fatal weakness in Germany’s Afrika Corps: fuel stocks were low and, as a consequence, it “did not possess the operational freedom of movement which was absolutely essential in consideration of the fact that the British offensive can be expected to start any day.” Three days later, the offensive began and went well. Rommel’s successor General Stumme was killed on the first day, leading to Rommel’s return to Egypt to resume his old command. It did no good. Within three days, 1,500 German and Italian soldiers had been taken prisoner. On 27 October, Rommel attempted a counter-attack with all his available tanks but was stopped in his tracks by the RAF, which dropped eighty tons of bombs in less than three hours while he was assembling his tanks.

Pausing to regroup, the British launched a renewed attack on the morning of 2 November. By evening, Rommel reported to Berlin that his troops were exhausted and that “the gradual annihilation of the army must be faced.” By 4 November, the British army had broken through the German front lines, and Churchill received a report from General Alexander that the enemy was “in full retreat.”

Churchill was elated and decided “to ring the bells all over Britain for the first time this war.” He wrote on 4 November to Alexander, “Try to give me this moment to do this in the next few days. At least 20,000 prisoners would be necessary.” Two days later, Alexander replied, “Ring out the bells! Prisoners estimated at 20,000, tanks 350, guns 400, motor transport several thousand. Our advance mobile forces are south of Mersa Matruh. 8th Army is advancing.”

In the event, Churchill held off on the bells until after Operation Torch had commenced. Early on 8 November, American and British forces landed in North Africa at Algiers, Oran, and Casablanca and faced fierce resistance from the Vichy French forces there. By the evening, it was clear the initial landing had succeeded. Part of the success was due to the French Admiral Darlan who was, fortuitously, in Algiers visiting his ill son. He sided with the Allies and ordered the Vichy French forces there to surrender.

That evening, Churchill was in a good mood, as recorded by one of his secretaries, Elizabeth Layton, who wrote that, after the night’s dictation had begun, “He began to bark, then quickly stopped himself and said ‘No, no; quite all right, quite all right. Tonight you may rejoice. Tonight there is icing on the cake.’”

The icing on the cake was to last through the rest of the autumn. On 19 November, the Russian encirclement of the German Army at Stalingrad commenced and three days later was completed. General von Paulus wanted to end the siege and break out of the circle, but Hitler forbade him to do so, eventually resulting in the destruction of his army. While German U-boats had sunk 721,000 tons of Allied shipping in November, the highest total in the war, things were about to change. German success had been due to British inability to break the code used by the Kriegsmarine to communicate with its submarines. By mid-December, the code was finally broken, and the tide began to turn.

Churchill is often accused of micromanaging the war effort when, in fact, he usually deferred to his generals. He was capable, however, of micromanaging whenever he came across a particularly pointless piece of bureaucratic excess. One such occasion was after he read in *The Times* on 21 November that the Ministry of Food had banned the exchange of rationed food. Churchill promptly wrote to the Food Minister Lord Woolton: “I hope it is not true that we are enforcing a whole set of vexatious regulations of this kind. It is absolutely contrary to logic and good sense that a person may not give away or exchange his rations with someone else who at the moment feels he has a greater need. It strikes at neighbourliness and friendship. I should be so sorry to see the great work you have done spoilt by these officials, whose interests are so deeply involved in magnifying their functions and numbers, to lead you to strike a false note. The matter must be brought before the Cabinet next week unless you can reassure me.” ☺
Darkest Before the Dawn

Darkest Hour released by Focus Features, directed by Joe Wright and starring Gary Oldman and Kristin Scott Thomas. Written by Anthony McCarten

Review by Michael F. Bishop

There is a lazy journalistic trope that suggests that films about Winston Churchill are a common occurrence, but Darkest Hour, directed by Joe Wright and starring Gary Oldman as Churchill, is the first major cinematic release about the great man since 1972's Young Winston (with the regrettable exception of the dreadful Churchill, which defaced a tiny number of screens earlier this year before disappearing without a trace).

Most portrayals of Churchill have been in television dramas, and oddly, most of those have avoided the most dramatic chapter of his remarkable life: his earliest days as prime minister. They have instead depicted him in the political wilderness (Richard Burton, Robert Hardy, Albert Finney), in old age (John Lithgow), or in infirmity (Michael Gambon). Recently only Brendan Gleeson has portrayed Churchill the warlord—but in a rushed storyline that condensed long years of war into less than two hours.

Darkest Hour devotes two full hours just to Churchill’s first month as prime minister, a wise dramatic choice that heightens the excitement of the film. It opens with the fall of Neville Chamberlain (Ronald Pickup) and accurately depicts the resistance on the part of many Tories to the elevation of Churchill. The coincidental and fateful invasion of Western Europe by Hitler’s forces on the very day of Churchill’s appointment sets up the dilemma that dominates the rest of the film—whether to resist the Nazi tide or to negotiate with “that man.”

Churchill’s chief rival for the premiership, and the preferred candidate of most, was the Foreign Secretary, Lord Halifax (Stephen Dillane), who forcefully advocates negotiation with Hitler through Italian intermediaries. With the intermittent support of Chamberlain, Halifax harries Churchill in Cabinet and rejects the new prime minister’s policy of defiance. These bitter debates are interspersed among powerful depictions of Churchill’s three great speeches of that time: his first address to Parliament as prime minister on 13 May, his first radio address as prime minister on 19 May, and his mighty “We shall fight them on the beaches” speech of 4 June (in the film the latter speech appears to be delivered on 28 May, a vexing but forgivable act of dramatic compression).

Gary Oldman inhabits the role of Churchill, capturing his wit, grit, and determination, and even his impish smile. Wreathed in cigar smoke, with a voice that ranges from a slurred mumble to a stentorian roar, Oldman looks and sounds the part (kudos to makeup wizard Kazuhiro Tjuri, who encases the slender Oldman in the skin of Winston Churchill—even in the brightest light, the effect is flawless). But the real genius of the performance is in the energy that Oldman brings to the role. Churchill is accurately depicted as the “human dynamo” his contemporaries thought him to be. It is by far the greatest portrayal of Churchill ever captured on film.

Oldman naturally dominates every scene, but the performances are uniformly strong. Of particular note are the ethereal Kristin Scott Thomas, who beautifully captures the strength, elegance, and grace of Clementine Churchill, and Ben Mendelsohn, who perfectly conveys the awkward dignity of King George VI. The relationships of these two figures to Churchill are sensitively captured as well, from the profound affection (and occasional exasperation) that Clementine felt for her husband, to the growing respect that the King felt for Churchill after his initial dislike and distrust.

The superb script by Anthony McCarten and the deft touch of Joe Wright have conjured a thriller out of events that, while earthshaking in importance, are not inherently cinematic. It is no easy thing to make the arguments of men in conference rooms exciting, but in
Darkest Hour is a triumph, an entertaining and substantive film that celebrates human greatness and glories in the power of the English language. Its popular and critical success, for which Churchilians should devoutly wish, would encourage legions of new admirers to learn more about the man whom A. J. P. Taylor called “the saviour of his country.”

Michael F. Bishop is the Executive Director of the International Churchill Society.

Outfoxing the Holy Fox


Review by Michael McMenamin

Anthony McCarten, the screenwriter of the film Darkest Hour, has written a book about the time when Churchill became Prime Minister on 10 May 1940 through the miracle of Dunkirk on 4 June. There is a special focus on War Cabinet meetings in late May, when a politically weak Churchill outmaneuvered his own Foreign Secretary Lord Halifax (known as the “Holy Fox”), who wanted to have Mussolini ascertain Hitler’s peace terms.

McCarten wrote the book after writing the screenplay because, according to his publicist, “he had more to say about the subject than the film allowed.” The book tells a gripping, albeit oft-told story. But the “more to say” that is accurate is not new, and what is new is not accurate.

McCarten writes that “Many readers will be astonished to learn that the great Winston Churchill...told...the War Cabinet that he would not object in principle to peace talks with Germany ‘if Herr Hitler was prepared to make peace on the terms of the restoration of German colonies and the overlordship of Central Europe.’” Yet Churchill’s “overlordship” statement has been published in many books through the years.

What is new here is McCarten’s claim that between 13 and 28 May, Churchill changed his position from “victory at all costs” to “seriously considering...peace talks” back to “choking in his own blood” rather than “consider negotiations with That Man.” McCarten says this “puts me at odds with almost all the historians” who have taken a contrary view.

McCarten’s argument that Churchill “seriously considered” peace talks with Hitler is unpersuasive. It relies mostly on War Cabinet minutes where Halifax argued for and Churchill against seeking Hitler’s peace terms. There, the two men debated hypotheticals as to what Germany might offer and what Churchill might accept, not actual peace terms. McCarten makes too big a meal of this claiming the minutes show that Churchill “seriously considered” peace talks with Hitler, but Churchill’s words can plainly be read as arguments against seeking terms. Furthermore, McCarten fails to explain why Churchill suddenly returned to his original position. He just says that Churchill did so right before his 28 May meeting with the outer Cabinet. In the film, he creates a fanciful explanation.

McCarten summarizes his case in an epilogue, but it remains un persuasive:

this as in much else, Darkest Hour succeeds brilliantly.

By Hollywood standards, the film demonstrates a remarkable fidelity to the historical record; the liberties taken are for the most part minor. Much of the action is set in the Cabinet War Rooms, which in reality were not yet in use. Churchill is depicted as moving immediately into 10 Downing Street upon his elevation, when in fact he remained in Admiralty House for a time.

More far-fetched is a wholly invented scene late in the film when Churchill improbably descends into the Underground and asks the working-class people around him whether they think England should keep fighting on. This sentimental diversion has its amusing moments, but the film would have been even better without it. What can be said in its defense is that it foreshadows Churchill’s real-life interactions with the working classes later in the war, as he visited their bombed neighborhoods and wept at their courage in the face of misfortune. And it is the case that many working class people were stauncher in their resistance to Hitler than some of their supposed social betters.
No, those who disagree with McCarten on this do not have to “posit a near-unhinged Churchill, a man utterly immune to the terrifying facts on the ground and amnesiac about his own tragic miscalculations at Gallipoli” and Norway.

No, Churchill did not consider Gallipoli “his own tragic miscalculation” nor were there “dark lessons he learned about himself from Gallipoli [that] never left him.” In 1915 as in 1940, he thought it to be a strategy far superior to the senseless trench warfare of Europe.

No, Churchill would not have been “insane,” as McCarten claims, not to “seriously consider peace talks in preference to almost certain annihilation,” because Churchill knew the RAF and the Royal Navy posed almost insurmountable obstacles to a successful German invasion of Britain.

No, Churchill was not “gradually persuaded that, so long as British independence was assured, it made sense to seriously explore peace with Nazi Germany.” Rather, Churchill said in a War Cabinet meeting on 26 May “we could never accept” a peace “achieved under a German domination of Europe.”

McCarten covers Churchill’s life before May 1940 in a captious chapter portraying his subject as going from one failure and misjudgment to another—the standard anti-Churchill charges. Just skip it and go straight to the good parts like this fictional exchange between Halifax and Churchill, where McCarten imagines him explaining to Halifax “that you can’t reason with a tiger when your head is in its mouth!” Priceless.

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Michael McMenamin writes the “Action This Day” column. He is co-author of Becoming Winston Churchill, the Untold Story of Young Winston and His American Mentor (2007).

An Unsuitled System

Christopher M. Bell, Churchill and the Dardanelles, Oxford University Press, 2017, 464 pages, $34.95.
ISBN 978–0198702542

Review by Warren Dockter

The ill-fated attempt during the First World War to force the Dardanelles Straits by naval vessels alone began on 18 March 1915. By April, it had become painfully obvious to the War Council in London that the operation could not succeed. Exasperated, First Sea Lord Jacky Fisher wrote to Churchill at the Admiralty on the 5th to voice his concerns directly, exclaiming, “You are just simply eaten up with the Dardanelles and can’t think of anything else! Damn the Dardanelles! They will be our grave!”

This portentous warning has served as evidence for numerous narratives concerning the failure of the naval operations and indeed the entire Gallipoli campaign that followed. It has been used to paint Churchill as an enthusiastic but reckless amateur strategist who neglected the advice of his professional advisers. Alternatively, it has provided evidence for a narrative in which Churchill is seen as the visionary architect of a brilliant strategy to knock out the Ottoman Empire, aid Russia, and rally the Balkans to the Allied cause. It would have succeeded, the argument runs, if Churchill had not been undermined by the erratic Fisher and the tepidity of his admirals. These competing narratives have long obscured how historians examine the Dardanelles. Additionally, many of the precise details are difficult to follow, often confusing, and even contradictory.

Thankfully, Christopher M. Bell has written a clear and authoritative account about Churchill’s role in the Dardanelles offensive. Bell’s style is easily accessible for the armchair strategist but is equally thorough and well footnoted for the weathered naval historian. Everyone can appreciate the enormous efforts and herculean tasks Bell undertook to disentangle the reality of the Dardanelles from its various narrative myths.

Bell divides his study into two parts. The first examines Churchill’s role, why the operation failed, and who—if anyone—was at fault for the failure. The second part examines how the different narratives of the Dardanelles developed in various political contexts and evolved to serve or detract from Churchill’s own political aspirations.

The first part is admirably balanced. Bell is neither a Churchillian apologist nor a revisionist bent upon besmirching the great
man’s legacy. The book highlights Churchill’s original low-risk strategy, intended to alleviate the “futility of large offensives on the Western Front.” Bell asserts that Churchill was “probably justified” in taking the proposal to the War Council, with the stipulation that it remained on the periphery “where better results might be obtained at a lower cost.” The book also grapples with the “Churchill Legend” and reveals some of Churchill’s weaknesses such as his “habitual overconfidence, his impatience and willingness to run unnecessary risks,” and “his tendency to disregard or downplay professional advice he did not like.”

One of the major myths Bell deconstructs is the notion that Churchill “completely dominated the decision making process at the Admiralty and in the Cabinet and War Council.” It is important to remember that the First Lord was part of an ensemble cast of major figures, which included Prime Minister H. H. Asquith, David Lloyd George, Lord Kitchener, and Jacky Fisher. All played a role in pushing the operation forward, while Fisher also acted to discredit Churchill immediately after the operation.

In exploring Churchill’s experience in the War Council, we discover just how difficult successfully navigating these titanic personalities must have been. Bell describes Kitchener as “a law unto himself,” largely free from oversight, reluctant to share information and dismissive of his general staff, while Fisher remains “an enigma” who was “volatile, emotional, duplicitous, secretive, and inconsistent.” These characters, combined with Churchill’s personality and Asquith’s seeming indifference (he stopped convening the War Council for eight weeks while the critical decision to use the Army at Gallipoli was taken), effectively reveal the system itself to be the culprit in the operation’s failure. As Sir Maurice Hankey argued in 1915, “the British system such as it was, was not suited to the demands of modern global warfare.”

The second part of the book relies on the pioneering work of historians like Robin Prior, David Reynolds, and John Ramsden to reveal how powerfully Churchill’s own memoirs helped to shape public opinion during the interwar period. Bell’s contribution here is superb. He enthusiastically traces attacks on Churchill’s reputation from the Northcliffe press during 1915 and reveals the sources to be the indiscretions of Fisher and others. What is perhaps more remarkable is how Churchill was able to coordinate with his allies to control evidence presented to the Dardanelles Commission in 1916–17 and how during the 1920s he was able to shape official histories published by the government, in addition to pleading his own case by penning his memoirs. In this way, Churchill insured that history would be kind to him and, with a couple of notable exceptions, it has been.

There is something about greatness that brings out the worst in some observers, be it out of envy, spitefulness, or invincible ignorance. Thus by common consent the three greatest American presidents are Washington, Lincoln, and Franklin Roosevelt, yet each was subject to a barrage of opprobrium and invective. The same holds true for Winston Churchill, probably the savior of Western civilization in Europe in 1940 and the Man of the Century. Because of his colorful, risk-taking personality and his active imagination, Churchill attracted the criticisms of more conventional, conformist political colleagues and of the chattering class—not always, be it noted, unfairly.

For many years Richard M. Langworth waged a campaign in the pages of Finest Hour to clear the record of many of the false accusations hurled at Churchill. Here he has finally collected these corrections, fleshed them out with documentation and logic, and put the results within the covers of a book. This is as close to rendering a definitive verdict on the topic as anyone has come.

In following a chronological order, Langworth inevitably mingles
important matters with lesser ones. Thus such lesser issues as what killed Lord Randolph, the Battle of Sidney Street, Churchill’s consumption of alcohol, and the extent of his “Common Touch” must take a back seat to serious charges: that Churchill opposed women’s suffrage, sent troops to crush Welsh strikers, was eager for the First World War to begin, favored the use of poison gas, opposed auton­omy for India, did nothing to help Indians in the 1943 Bengal Famine because he was a racist, tried to quash or delay the Second Front, was silent on the Holocaust, and sold out Eastern Europe in 1944–45. In each case, weighty or not, Langworth gives the nay-sayers a platform and then proceeds to offer evidence and arguments to dismiss them. When, as occasionally happens, there is some ambiguity, he indicates that fact.

Each of the thirty-seven chapters begins with a subtitle, which states a given unflattering story about Churchill. As an example of the procedure, take what is perhaps the most serious of the charges lev­elled at Churchill: that he was the architect of the Dardanelles/Gallipoli disaster in the First World War. Langworth presents the historical background and the substance of the charge, together with a helpful map. Then he turns to a brief exposition of Churchill’s role, sympathetically presenting the rationale for Churchill’s idea that something must be done to circumvent the bloody deadlock in the trench war on the Western Front. The operation is then described, as well as the unexpected adverse developments. After some contemporary eyewitnesses are quoted, he rounds out the chapter with the findings of the official inquest, which relieved Churchill of most of the responsibility.

That judgment did not prevent political adversaries, who were suspicious of Churchill’s motives and temperament throughout his career, from continuing to associate Churchill with the fiasco. Especially careful about hearsay evidence, Langworth weighs the reliability of various sources of information and uses common sense in drawing conclusions. In effect, he warns critics to proceed no further unless they can provide fresh evidence. Since this is a book for the general reader, Langworth avoids getting bogged down in the morass of books and essays debating the pros and cons to no viable conclusion.

There is one minor defect in the book. Upon finishing it, the reader comes to the conclusion that Churchill, acquitted of all charges, is some sort of secular saint. We know of course that there are few saints—certainly none in politics. And, to be fair to the author, he has gone out of his way, both in Finest Hour and elsewhere on the internet, to discuss in detail those defects and mistakes of Churchill’s which exasperated people who worked with him and provided fodder for legitimate criticism. It is too bad that that material was not included in the book in order to forestall the accusation of hagiography and to highlight Langworth’s unquestionable objectivity. But that omission is not crucial.

Written in a lucid style and with brief chapters concentrating on the key questions, this book will be consulted by every person eager to find the truth about one “Great Man” of history whose reputation has been somewhat besmirched by “alternative facts,” rumors, malice, or intellectual laziness.

Manfred Weidhorn is Emeritus Guterman Professor of English at Yeshiva University and author of four books about Churchill.

Misguided History


Review by Raymond Callahan

Central to Winston Churchill’s story is the moment in May 1940 when, amidst disaster, he became Prime Min­ister and Minister of Defence. “I thought I knew a great deal about it all,” he later wrote about that moment, and, indeed, he had a very impressive resume for the task he was about to undertake. He had, in addition to a brief, adventurous subaltern career at the end of Victoria’s reign and a short spell as a battalion commander on the Western Front in 1917, been the ministerial head of each of the fighting services, Minister of Munitions, and, as Chancellor of the Exchequer, had made decisions...
that helped shape the armed forces that, as Minister of Defence, he would now direct. Furthermore, no one in British public life had a longer perspective on the strategic problems of a global empire whose commitments had not been matched by comparable resources since 1918 (if not 1900).

How the knowledge that Churchill had accumulated shaped his perceptions and actions during the Second World War is a subject very much worth examining. Brian Lavery’s subtitle “How a Military Life Guided Winston’s Finest Hour” seems to promise just such an exploration. His book, however, does not really deliver one. It has certain strengths, perhaps the most important being that it is clearly and energetically written—Lavery is an experienced writer with a number of other books to his credit. He is an emeritus curator at Britain’s National Maritime Museum, and his previously published work has been in naval and maritime history.

The strongest parts of this book, not surprisingly, deal with the Royal Navy. But the greatest weakness of the book is not its understandable maritime bias but the research base on which it rests and the link between that and the issue he is trying to explore: what Churchill brought to 10 Downing Street from his past involvement with Britain’s fighting services and how that accumulated knowledge shaped what he then did. Lavery leans very heavily on the documentation provided by the companion volumes to the official biography. He has also consulted archival collections—chiefly Cabinet and Admiralty papers. But to do what he sets out to do, it would have been necessary to master the now vast literature written not from the prime minister’s perspective but from that of the services with which he dealt.

The conversations between the Minister of Defence and the Admiralty, War Office, and Air Ministry were two-way. One of the great problems with the official biography companion volumes is that we usually hear only one side of those conversations. (The recent volumes, produced by Larry Arnn and his team, have begun to rectify that somewhat.) Moreover, the companion volumes reflect Churchill’s concerns at any given moment. If the prime minister was not focusing on an issue, neither do the documents—and neither does Lavery. Britain’s war against Japan is therefore barely mentioned. To tease out what Churchill had learned before 1940 and carried forward with him into his war leadership years, and how exactly it played out in his relations with the services, requires exploration of a much wider range of materials than those found in the companion volumes, rich as that source is.

Mastery of all relevant archives—for which a lifetime would barely be sufficient—is not necessary, but a thorough trawl through the now-abundant monographic literature is. Here Lavery’s bibliography indicates considerable gaps. The work of Stephen Roskill and Arthur Marder on the Royal Navy, David French and Brian Harrison Place on the army, and Richard Overy on the strategic bombing offensive—just to mention a few—do not appear. Lavery’s book, readable as it is, does not fulfill the promise of its subtitle. It can, however, certainly be read by someone starting an expedition into the subject (although no professional historian at this date should still be repeating as fact the hoary legend that Singapore’s guns could only fire to seaward!), but it will not be of very great help to serious students of Churchill’s finest years.

Raymond Callahan is Emeritus Professor of History at the University of Delaware.

More Dirty Tricks


Review by Leon J. Waszak

Winston Churchill’s embrace of irregular warfare in the Second World War is the focus of this fast-paced adventure drama animated by a carefully selected but motley team of secret warriors who could easily find themselves in one of Alistair MacLean’s novels: think The Guns of Navarone or Where Eagles Dare. The difference here is that this version is anything but fiction.

We learn, for instance, of a fly-by-the-seat-of-his-pants team
leader named Anders Lassen, who organized havoc behind enemy lines, breaking all the rules of engagement, and seemingly in possession of a “license to kill.” Daring seaborne raids, sabotage, assassinations, blackmail, bribing, bank robbery, and subterfuge are part of the repertoire of activities designed to break the progress of enemy operations in remote regions of the Mediterranean and Aegean. What is all the more remarkable is that this extensive damage to the enemy and their collaborators is the work of a core element consisting of no more than six cunning individuals (although sometimes taking on others when the need arose). Some of the team spoke fluent German and donned German uniforms to get into enemy strongholds, nimbly moving about on a commandeered yacht throughout the region (referred to, somewhat erroneously by the author, as a Q-Ship).

Churchill himself gave the operatives carte blanche to do whatever was necessary to achieve their ends, while retaining his own right to deny “absolutely all knowledge and culpability.” Team members signed an agreement prior to their mission that they would be disavowed by the British government in the event of death or capture. Here we have the origin of what we now describe as “black ops.” Much of this is now coming to light as a result of the release of the last of the Special Operations Executive (SOE) files declassified by the British National Archives in the late 1990s. What is becoming evident is that these shadow warriors contributed substantially to the final victory over the Nazis.

Author Damien Lewis seems the perfect fit to relate these exploits, himself a writer of over a dozen books both of non-fiction and thrillers. His style reveals a flair for story-telling, and fleshes out his subjects in the manner of a great novelist. But, Lewis draws his material mostly from books and academic papers, so one must assume that his research was not from original documents. There is no real evidence that he spent time in any primary archives, but he did interview some surviving members of the operations. Lewis’s reputation as a best-selling author has earned him some lucrative rewards—some of his books have been turned into films. Lewis does include an extensive appendix section showing the citations earned by Lassen as he rose from an obscure second lieutenant to a major within a couple of years, which proves useful to tracking his otherwise clandestine career.

Hitler’s reactions to Lassen and his team of operatives, acknowledging the effectiveness of their disruptive tactics, ultimately represent the best measure of their success. The Führer vowed to expose them to unspeakable torture before hanging them using piano wire to make their deaths “slow and degrading.” Sadly, indeed, very few of the Lassen team survived the war. Churchill, in a quotation cited by the author, sums up their legacy: “There comes out of the sea from time to time a hand of steel, which plucks the German sentries from their posts with growing efficiency.”


A House Divided

ISBN: 978–1633883192

Review by Richard A. McConnell

“Unresolved crises in command were among the factors that prolonged the war in Europe for another nine months and produced an estimated 500,000 additional casualties. The Allied leaders could and should have done better.”

Thus Edward E. Gordon and David Ramsay state the thesis of their new book Divided on D-Day. Some might view this assertion with skepticism. This thought-provoking narrative, however, describing the numerous challenges faced by the leaders of Operation Overlord provides a significant amount of evidence to support the authors’ argument.

While many may have gained an almost romantic view of D-Day, Gordon and Ramsay depict the epic struggle as first and foremost...
a human endeavor, with all the associated blemishes and virtues. Quite rightly the authors reflect on the sources of the conflicts between Overlord leaders that may have caused challenges leading up to and throughout the execution of the operation.

The key elements of this book are the intricate portraits drawn of the D-Day leaders, ranging from General Eisenhower to Air Chief Marshal Sir Arthur Tedder and Admiral Sir Bertram Ramsay. David Ramsay is in fact Admiral Ramsay’s son, but this in no way has clouded his objectivity. The authors provide fair and evenhanded assessments of all the leaders they describe.

One of the most perpetually interesting leadership comparisons of the Second World War is the contrast between Generals Montgomery and Patton. Gordon and Ramsay draw a fascinating picture. Montgomery was an excellent planner with a meticulous mind, characteristics useful for preparing and executing set-piece battles, but which prevented him from readily grasping emerging opportunities in the fluid environment of combat. In contrast, Patton was also a gifted military planner but truly flourished in the environment of uncertainty characterized by his own fast-moving version of blitzkrieg. Gordon and Ramsay make a reasoned argument that the differences in these two key leaders and the allied failure to apply their capabilities appropriately substantively affected the length of the war and the number of casualties. The authors believe that if Patton had been unleashed, the war would have ended sooner. Instead, Montgomery’s cautiousness prolonged matters. For example, Montgomery liked to “tidy up” the battlefield before moving on to the next phase of an operation. Patton liked to keep his opponent off balance by ratcheting up the tempo and seizing opportunities quickly, which was anything but tidy.

A good example of opportunities missed is that at one point, Patton could have advanced into Germany as early as September 1944. Eisenhower instead elected to allow Montgomery to attack north into Belgium with the intent of seizing the port of Antwerp. Montgomery failed to exploit that opportunity by seizing the port but not its entry canal, thus delaying the opening of Antwerp by sixty days.

The level of detail given and the quality of sources utilized are excellent, including an exhaustive review of personal journals, operational reports, historical expert testimony, and thirty outstanding maps. One of the most engaging portions of the book is in the last chapter, where the views of German generals are introduced that tend to support the arguments of Gordon and Ramsay. The inclusion of new sources, such as the personal journals and correspondence of Admiral Ramsay, gives this account of a familiar subject a fresh and personal perspective. If these political and military leaders of the past could succeed with this much internal conflict and still prevail, perhaps we can today.

Richard A. McConnell is a retired US Army officer and Associate Professor in the Department of Army Tactics at the US Army Command and General Staff College.

Behind the Scenes


Review by John Campbell

Compared to the White House or most other national centres of government, Number Ten Downing Street has always been an almost laughably small operation. Until quite recently the British Prime Minister was served by the Cabinet Secretary and a principal private secretary, plus just four or five subordinate private secretaries—youngish (that is, in their early forties) high-fliers destined to go on to senior positions within the civil service. The most senior, usually seconded from the Foreign Office, normally for no more than three years, dealt specifically with foreign affairs. Holders of this sensitive job were required to tread a fine line between loyalty to the Prime Minister on the one hand and civil service neutrality on the other. Some held strong views of their own which they pressed upon the Prime Minister, and sometimes
acted independently on his behalf; others saw their role simply as smoothing the conduct of business between Downing Street and the Foreign Office. This arrangement survived, with varying degrees of intimacy and influence, from Churchill’s day to the early years of Mrs Thatcher, until she tested the system to destruction by allowing her third foreign affairs secretary, Charles Powell, to outgrow his role, refusing to let him move on as convention required, so that by the time of her fall he was virtually acting as deputy Prime Minister.

Unfortunately Powell does not feature in this book, which ends with his appointment in 1984, though he does contribute a typically elegant introduction describing some of his own experiences. Instead it comprises eight case studies by mainly British academics examining the relationship between successive Prime Ministers and the thirteen foreign affairs secretaries who temporarily served them. A concluding overview by Anthony Seldon seeks to analyse the differing relationships but rather confusingly widens the focus, first by including the principal private secretaries as well, and then by bringing the story up to date with the different structures tried out since Thatcher by John Major, Tony Blair, and David Cameron.

Seldon distinguishes three types of private secretary: those who were so closely identified with their Prime Minister that they overstepped civil service conventions; others who were influential but stayed within the conventions; and a third group who were merely correct and not very influential. Epitomising the first category was Jock Colville, joint principal private secretary to Churchill after his return to office in 1951. With Churchill in his last phase, the boundary between private and official roles was practically non-existent. Colville, as Warren Dockter (co-editor of the book) writes in the opening essay, was used on the one hand as a “secret diplomat,” attempting among other things to set up Churchill’s longed-for summit with the Russians after Stalin’s death, behind the back of the Foreign Secretary Anthony Eden; and on the other as the “Churchill family therapist,” playing endless games of bezique with Winston—while recording it all for posterity in his diary.

The next most influential were probably Philip de Zulueta under Harold Macmillan (1957–63), who (like Powell with Thatcher) stayed in post for twice the normal tenure and played an important part in turning Macmillan’s mind towards applying to join the European Common Market; and Michael Palliser (1966–69), who likewise helped steer Harold Wilson away from his initial commitment to maintaining Britain’s global role towards making a second attempt to join Europe. By contrast, Edward Heath’s two foreign affairs secretaries, Peter Moon (1970–72) and Thom-
Through the Eyes of a Child


**Review by Fred Glueckstein**

Jonathan Dudley was eight years old in the spring of 1949 attending a pre-prep school in London. One day young Dudley, who shared a desk with a boy named Winston Churchill, was told by his schoolmate that his grandmother wanted him to bring a “little friend” with him for his summer stay in Kent. Winston asked Jonathan if he would be that friend. Jonathan said he would. Afterwards, he learned from his family that Winston’s namesake grandfather was the famous statesman and war leader.

Dudley recalls that during his first visit to Chartwell in August 1949, his main impressions were of Mrs. Churchill. He remembered her as a lady of “grace and composure,” cheerful and caring to young Winston and himself.

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Dudley remembers an early event at Chartwell involving Mr. Churchill, as he called him. With the general election some six months away, he and Winston were told during lunch that “a special event” was to occur that afternoon. Churchill was scheduled to give a live broadcast to the nation and to deliver his speech into the BBC microphone in his painting studio.

If Jonathan and Winston agreed to be absolutely quiet and made no sound at all, they could sit quietly in the studio and watch the Great Man deliver his speech. They agreed. Dudley remembers Churchill as relaxed, cheerful, talkative, and not nervous at all before beginning his broadcast. When the green light went on and Churchill began his speech, Dudley found that he did not have the “foggiest idea what Mr. Churchill was talking about.”

Dudley describes being introduced to Winston’s mother Pamela before heading to Chartwell. He also tells of encounters at Chartwell with other visiting members of the Churchill family, including Churchill’s son Randolph and June Osborne—whom he had wed after his divorce from Pamela—as well as Churchill’s daughters Mary Soames and Diana Sandys. Dudley also writes of Grace Hamblin, Mrs. Churchill’s Private Secretary, who was a great help to him.

Each day, Jonathan and Winston joined the Churchills for lunch in the dining room. Sometimes prominent guests attended, such as Robert Menzies, the Australian prime minister. One day, Jonathan sat next to Menzies, who taught him to eat a strange dish called grouse.

Another day at the end of a family-only lunch, Churchill called Jonathan over to him and asked him to stand by his chair. Churchill asked Jonathan, “What are you going to do with yourself when you grow up?” It was not an easy question to answer for the eight-year old. His recollection of his nervousness and foolish answer to Churchill has remained in Dudley’s memory for more than sixty-five years.

When Jonathan was again invited by the Churchills to stay at Chartwell in July 1950, he had many new experiences, including one where he and Winston went to Blenheim Palace to have tea with the Duke of Marlborough, Churchill’s cousin. There are poignant moments in the book, such as when Jonathan says goodbye to Churchill, who gives him an inscribed book, and tells the youngster “maybe you will read it one day.”

Dudley intertwines such fascinating stories of his visits to Chartwell with recollections of his own family. His description of trying to understand why his father was not coming home is particularly touching. The elder Dudley was killed on 9 April 1945 by a sniper while leading the Irish Guards battalion towards Berlin. At the time, Jonathan was four.

*Winston, Churchill, & Me* is well written, enjoyable, and contains memories that are often touching and amusing. As seen through the eyes of a child, Jonathan Dudley’s memoir brings to life the Churchills at Chartwell during the early post-war era. It is fascinating and recommended for readers of all ages.

Fred Glueckstein is a regular contributor to *Finest Hour* and the author of *Churchill and Colonist II* (2014).
**Rigged Tale**


*Review by Larry Kryske*

This tale is mostly about nine-year-old Harry, who helps at the Royal Society for the Protection of Animals (RSPCA). He rescues a marmalade kitten, which he names Little Houdini. Meanwhile, John Colville, private secretary to Winston Churchill, is looking for a "marmie" kitten at the RSCPA for his master’s eighty-eighth birthday. Harry wants to keep Houdini but is persuaded to give him up for the Great Man. When, however, Harry shows up at Chartwell to give up the kitten, he learns that Churchill is at his London residence in Hyde Park Gate and that Colville has found another marmie for Churchill, which has been named Jock—Colville’s nickname. Eventually, Harry regularly brings Little Houdini around to play with Jock while Churchill smiles.

There are some absurd characters in this story like Old Ned, who is supposed to be Churchill's childhood friend from a year of age but now lives near Chartwell. Churchill himself only makes brief appearances. There are flashback chapters about him and some of his former pets: Rufus the poodle, Nelson the cat, and Mr. Buttons—another poodle, which Churchill gave to his wife's secretary Grace Hamblin. An absurd chapter has Harry and his classmates in school trying to identify the location where many of Churchill’s famous speeches were made—not a plausible activity for children.

This book is advertised for ages six to eight. My grandchildren are five, seven, and eight. None of them would have understood this story, especially the Churchill references. Neither age appropriate nor providing young readers with any real understanding of who Churchill was, this stray is best left at the pound.

*Larry Kryske is a retired US Navy commander. He now runs Your Finest Hour Leadership Programs, which develop victorious leaders who have vision, courage, and determination.*

**Strong Women**

*Queen Anne* by Helen Edmundson played at the Theatre Royal Haymarket, London in summer 2017

*Review by Anne Sebba*

The bravest soul. The keenest mind. The greatest woman of her time. Is that how Sarah Churchill, Duchess of Marlborough, is remembered by posterity? These powerful words are Sarah Churchill’s *cri de coeur* as she exits the stage of *Queen Anne*, a gripping new play about the twelve-year reign (1702–14) of the last Stuart Queen of England and her friendship with the wife of the first Duke of Marlborough, John Churchill. But Sarah is by this time a desperate figure who fears that the power and influence she craves, and has previously enjoyed, is slipping from her grasp. When the play opens, the nervous and sickly Princess Anne hangs on her friend’s every word. But the former Sarah Jennings pushes too hard, manipulating, scheming, and determined to wield power over the Queen, her intimate and vulnerable confidante since childhood.

Eventually Anne stands up to Sarah and rebukes her for telling her how she should think, insisting she is quite capable of thinking on her own. She resents the implication that she is devoid of understanding. She refuses to engage with her erstwhile bosom friend and imperiously sweeps out, telling her, repeatedly, that anything she wants to say can be put in writing. It is a glorious theatrical moment.

The play, written by Helen Edmundson and initially commissioned by the Royal Shakespeare Company, was first performed in Stratford-upon-Avon in 2015 and, following excellent reviews, transferred to London. It is a study of the triangular relationship between Sarah, Anne, and the impoverished and articulate Abigail Hill, who rises from servant girl to become, as Lady Masham, the new confidante of the monarch, replacing the jealous Sarah. The drama flows from the changing relationship between these three women, each exerting power and influence in very different ways. Edmundson cleverly handles the shifting dynamic, set against key issues of the day such as the growing oppo-
sition between Whigs and Tories, while Britain’s future as a Catholic or Protestant nation hung in the balance. How refreshing to see this period of history examined through the prism of three women at the centre of power. Additionally, all three have separate relationships with husbands and are portrayed as mothers as well as courtiers. Queen Anne famously had at least seventeen pregnancies, although only three of her babies survived past infancy and one son died aged eleven of smallpox. Sarah’s son and heir, Jack, also died of smallpox aged seventeen and the pain and grief, however well controlled, suffered by these women is never far below the surface.

And yet Sarah insists after one of the most sexually charged scenes in the play, “I am so much more than her.” Played convincingly by Romola Garai, Sarah has a natural glamour (she is always dressed in red) and overt sexuality. Trying to manipulate her friend, she threatens to walk out if her advice is not heeded but returns when Anne pathetically begs her to give her a kiss, but not, as demanded, on the lips. Emma Cunniffe’s Anne, overweight and suffering from gouty legs, is in need of reassurance and affection, not sex. But she lies down, curled up close to Sarah, which enables her to fall asleep. Tellingly, Sarah escapes immediately. Whether or not there was once sexual passion between the two women is uncertain but alluded to in Sarah’s later threat to expose intimate letters.

There is a lot of history to cover in this play, which Helen Edmundson manages with a light touch. She avoids the “history lesson” label partly thanks to the entertainingly bawdy songs, most but not all especially written for the play, which give a nod to the prevailing satire of the days and its most notable practitioners, Jonathan Swift and Daniel Defoe. Marlborough makes a single reference to his earlier period in the Tower of London and, as Anne becomes increasingly sure of herself as monarch, there is plenty about her concern over the high cost of war in terms of men and money. Who is benefiting from this? Clearly John Churchill is, and the play ends with him facing corruption charges and determined not to return to the Tower. Sir Winston Churchill grew up hero-worshipping the first duke, in particular his military victories, and in the 1930s, determined to vindicate this illustrious ancestor from Victorian criticism, wrote a four volume account Marlborough: His Life and Times.

Edmundson, however, is more concerned with the reputation of his wife, the first Duchess, and her conviction that she was superior to the Queen and would be remembered as such by future generations. This play leaves that hope in some doubt. 

For the last fifteen years of his life, Winston Churchill was protected by his bodyguard Sergeant Edmund Murray. One of Murray’s responsibilities was to serve as custodian of Churchill’s painting equipment and to set up these materials wherever they might be traveling. Yet Chartwell always remained Churchill’s favorite place to be and to paint. On the grounds, Churchill had no more preferred place to meditate than his beloved goldfish pool. One of his most famous paintings *The Goldfish Pool at Chartwell* was done at some point in the 1930s and became a treasured possession of his daughter Mary.

Fittingly, Churchill’s final painting is also an image of the goldfish pool. Less well known than the first, since it has never before been exhibited or reproduced, this second goldfish painting was done in 1962 when Churchill was eighty-seven. In his catalogue of Churchill paintings, David Coombs assigns it the number C 544.

Unlike many of Churchill’s landscapes at Chartwell, this painting is unusual in zooming right into the water, taking in the luscious foliage along the waterside. It is an exemplary essay in tonality and near-abstraction, combining multiple hues of greens and browns to striking effect with the Golden Orfe brought to life through vivid flashes of orange impasto.

Murray was a painter himself, and for the Churchills’ fiftieth wedding anniversary he made a painting of the Rialto Bridge and Grand Canal in Venice, one of the cities that Winston and Clementine visited on their honeymoon in 1908. Churchill enjoyed it so much that he had the painting displayed at his Chartwell studio. It was the only canvas on display there not done by himself. In turn Churchill gave his own final painting to Murray. It will go up for auction this November at Sotheby’s in London.
Gary Oldman, who plays Winston Churchill in *Darkest Hour*, and Joe Wright, the film’s director, visited the National Churchill Library and Center on November 4. They were in Washington for a private screening for Members of Congress and others the night before. The visit was arranged by Focus Features, the distributor of the film.

During their hour-long visit, Mr. Oldman and Mr. Wright received a private tour from NCLC Director Michael F. Bishop. They were particularly interested in the calendar engagement cards on which the prime minister’s wartime schedule was recorded and admired the other original artifacts and documents on display, including the wedding gifts that Clementine gave her husband.

In brief remarks, Mr. Bishop commended Mr. Oldman for his performance and Mr. Wright for conjuring a gripping thriller out of the intense Cabinet debates of May 1940, and thanked them for inspiring a new generation to learn more about Churchill’s extraordinary historical importance. *Darkest Hour* was released in theaters November 22, 2017.