
THE CHURCHILLIAN

Churchill Society of Tennessee

Christmas Edition - 2020

Season's Greetings Churchillians!



Churchill's study at Chartwell (Source: National Trust)

“Let the children have their night of fun and laughter... Let us grown-ups share to the full in their unstinted pleasures before we turn again to the stern task and the formidable years that lie before us, resolved that, by our sacrifice and daring, these same children shall not be robbed of their inheritance or denied their right to live in a free and decent world. And so, in God’s mercy, a happy Christmas to you all.”

WSC - Washington D.C. 24 December 1941

THE CHURCHILL SOCIETY OF TENNESSEE



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Mark your calendars!
Our Annual CSOT Dinner will be held on
October 2, 2021 at the Brentwood Country Club



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Message from the President



Dear CSOT Members,

I would like to take this opportunity to send you all the warmest wishes for a happy holiday season!

2020 has been a particularly challenging year for us all. Now during this Christmas time, we can take comfort in our families, our friends, our faith and our belief that tomorrow brings a better day.

I wish to thank the Board of Directors: Dick Knight, Robin Sinclair, Beth Fisher, Michael Shane Neal, Don Cusic, Bob Beck, The Earl of Eglinton & Winton AKA Hugh Montgomerie and Lynne Siesser our Administrative officer. These are all busy folks who find the time to come together and keep the CSOT going. I would also like to send holiday greetings to our patron Randolph Churchill and his family and to our sister ICS branch at Chartwell in Kent, England.

To express our appreciation for your loyalty, we are waiving the 2021 membership dues for all of our members. Of course, voluntary tax-exempt donations are always appreciated as our operating cost continue despite the pandemic.

Our goal is to provide you with top quality events. As you know, we had to postpone our 'International Churchill Symposium' last March at the Belle Meade Country Club. Then we had to cancel our 'Churchill and Art' lecture at the studio of Shane Neal in Nashville in May and finally our annual 2020 dinner this fall.

We have gone out on a limb and scheduled our annual dinner for October 2, 2021 at the Brentwood Country Club. Fingers crossed that we will be through with Covid 19 by then. Hopefully, as circumstances change, we will have the opportunity to schedule other events next year as well.

Finally, it is with great sadness that I must report the passing of Dr John Mather. John was a founding member of the CSOT and a former president. He suffered a heart attack on December 6 at the Williamson Medical Center in Franklin TN. We have included his obituary in this issue.

We wish you all a very Merry Christmas and a happy New Year. I look forward to seeing you all again soon.

Merry Christmas!

Jim Drury

Dr John Mather MD (1943-2020)



John was educated at The John Lyon School, Harrow-on-the-Hill, England where he was Head Boy, Regimental Sergeant Major of the Combined Cadet Force and Captain of Athletics and Cross Country. He was awarded the Oliver Hanscombe Cup for the most outstanding cadet for his last three years at the School. John then trained at the Middlesex Hospital Medical School, London and graduated in Medicine in 1967, after which he undertook a six-month residency at the Middlesex Hospital.

During his training, John met an exchange medical student from the University of Maryland, Susan, in 1964, and they fell in love. In the Summer of 1966, John undertook a return summer student exchange at the University of Maryland,

which was when he and Susan became engaged. They married in 1967 and lived in England for the first year of their marriage, moving to the US in 1968. They lived in Baltimore, Maryland, for five years while John completed his training in ENT surgery and Susan completed hers in Pulmonary Diseases. They then moved to Bowie MD outside Washington DC with their two children, Stephen aged 3 and Alexandra, 6 months old.

In Bowie, John was an Ordained Elder in Christian Community Presbyterian Church and served as Clerk of Session for three years. He was also Chairman of the Sanctuary Building Committee. He was active in the Bowie Soccer Association, as a coach and referee. John's military service was deferred until he had finished his training and he served as a Major at Walter Reed Army Medical Center from 1972 until 1974. John became a naturalized citizen in 1975. The couple divorced in 2010 after 43 years of marriage. They shared one beautiful granddaughter, Maggie Sue Bourne, who is now 9 years old.

John served subsequently as a Commander, US Public Health Service, and was involved in health manpower policy development in the National Institutes of Health Bureau of Health Manpower. He graduated from the Federal Executive Institute and was in the first Veterans Administration Leadership Class. John then held various positions as a physician executive in the Veterans Administration Central Office (VACO), including Director, Affiliated Education Programs; Associate Chief Medical Officer, Geriatrics and Long-Term Care; Chief Medical Director of the Social Security Administration; Assistant Inspector General for Inspections, Veterans Administration and Chief Officer, Office of Research Compliance and Assurance. He retired after 30 years Federal Service in 2004.

His Federal career as a physician executive was interrupted for two years when John was appointed as the Associate Executive Director, Medical and Research Programs, Paralyzed Veterans of America. After retirement from the Veterans Administration, John became the first Director of Human Subjects Research Compliance, at the University of Michigan before establishing his own medical consultancy firm, UNI-CORN LLC.



Following his divorce, John moved to Franklin, Tennessee and in 2016 he married Dr Karen Rhea, a physician who practices general psychiatry, child and adolescent psychiatry, and pediatrics; they were divorced in 2020. John was an active member of American Legion John E. Stephens Post 156, Brentwood TN and WA Post 1014; he was Chirurgien for both. He also had a keen interest in identifying WW II veterans and ensuring that their stories were captured for purposes of historical record. He became an Independent Medical Examiner and conducted medical evaluations of veterans applying for disability benefits at the Nashville VA Medical Center, as well as completing the review of applicants for Social Security disability benefits in Tennessee. John spearheaded the development of a resource

brochure for those with actual or nascent PTSD in Williamson County, TN, for both veterans and non-veterans and their families. He was a designated/certified Mentor of the Veterans Treatment Court of Williamson County TN. He was a Life Coach holding the Certificate of the Coaching Alliance and was a Certified Federal Mediator and Mentor and completed the Stephens Ministry training.

John was elected to Fellowship in several medical organizations including the Academy of Otolaryngology and Head and Neck Surgery, the American Geriatrics Society, and the Gerontological Society of America.



John was active in the International Churchill Society for many years and served as its Secretary for a decade for which he received its prestigious Blenheim Award. He

was the second President of the Churchill Society of Tennessee, a Chapter of the International Churchill Society, which he helped to found. At the time of his death, he was the Chapter's Past-President. John was a pathographer, that is a medical biographer who studies the effects of illness on leaders and how this affects their vocation and avocations. He was an acknowledged expert on the medical issues that affected Sir Winston Churchill.

John was inducted as a Knight Commander of the Sovereign Military Order of the Temple of Jerusalem and was the Grand Chirurgeon for the Grand Priory of the USA. He was an elected member of the International Bow Tie Society and the designated Town Crier in Franklin TN for the Heritage Society of Williamson County, the Bard of Franklin and a toastmaster for special events. John was Regent for the International Douglas Clan in Tennessee and

latterly attended St. Paul's Episcopal Church in Franklin, TN.

John suffered his first heart attack in 2003 and was admitted to hospital on three occasions in 2020, most recently to Williamson Medical Center on 5 December; he died the following day.

John is survived by his first wife, Susan, a pulmonologist and public health physician, their son, Stephen R Mather of Bowie MD, and their daughter, Alexandra Mather Bourne. Alexandra is married to Thomas and with their daughter, Margaret Susan "Maggie Sue" Bourne, they reside in Rehoboth Beach, DE. John is also survived by his second wife, Dr Karen Rhea. He has a brother Martin, who is a medical practitioner who lives in North Devon, England and by his sisters Helen, a retired Specialist Nurse who lives in Texas, and Margaret, a retired Child Care specialist who resides in North Devon.

[Read John Mather's obituary in the Williamson Herold](#)

How Winston Churchill Spent Christmas 1882 -1947

Halcyon and Sterner Days

Richard M Langworth



Christmas, 1932: “Fetch me associate and fraternal bottles to form a bodyguard to this majestic container.” WSC’s command to family children after receiving an enormous bottle of Christmas brandy. The result was his painting, “Bottlescape,” [Coombs](#) 177. (Reproduced by kind permission of Churchill Heritage Ltd.)

“I spend this anniversary and festival far from my country, far from my family, yet I cannot truthfully say that I feel far from home. Whether it be the ties of blood on my mother’s side, or the friendships I have developed here over many years of active life, or the commanding sentiment of comradeship in the common cause of great peoples who speak the same language, who kneel at the same altars, and, to a very large extent, pursue the same ideals, I cannot feel myself a stranger here in the centre and at the summit of the United States. I feel a sense of unity and fraternal association

which, added to the kindness of your welcome, convinces me that I have a right to sit at your fireside and share your Christmas joys....” —Winston S. Churchill, Washington, 24 December 1941

My juvenile friends...

Churchill’s ninety Christmases saw family joy interspersed with loneliness and separation, owed to his stern sense of duty. The festival was not always a joyous time, but it always illustrated Churchill’s sensitive, caring nature.

Young Winston wrote his first letter in January 1882. He was seven, celebrating Christmas at Blenheim, minus his parents: “My dear Mamma, I hope you are quite well. I thank you very very much for the beautiful presents those Soldiers and Flags and Castle they are so nice it was so kind of you and dear Papa I send you my love and a great many kisses.”

When he *was* home, he was a handful. Reports of his mother’s disinterest are exaggerated. [Lady Randolph](#) was quite absorbed in the lives of her two sons, if sometimes exasperated. In 1891 his parents planned to send him to France to polish his French over the holidays. Winston erupted: “I am forced to go to people who bore me excessively.... I should like to know if Papa was asked to ‘give up his holidays’ when he was at Eton.” His mother angrily returned his letter unread, only to reap the whirlwind: Never, he replied, would he write her a letter “of any length, as in my letter’s length I can perceive a reason for your not reading it....I expect you were too busy with your parties and arrangements for Christmas.”

Are gentlemen all foxhunting?

Childhood frustrations were forgotten after his father’s untimely death in 1895. Now his mother was his ardent facilitator. As she aged her feelings deepened, along with her desire to have her sons with her at Christmas. Many times, this was not to be. Winston was a soldier and war correspondent now, consumed by drive and ambition.

In 1899 in South Africa, he [escaped](#) from a Boer prison camp. He spent Christmas Eve at British Commander [General Buller](#)’s headquarters in Chieveley. He awoke Christmas day in a hut a few hundred yards from where he had been captured. His thoughts were not of good will toward men. Cabling a column to the *Morning Post*, he

urged the dispatch of more troops to the Boer War: “More irregular corps are wanted. Are the gentlemen of England all foxhunting? Why not an English Light Horse? For the sake of our manhood, our devoted colonists, and our dead soldiers, we must persevere with the war.”

This was not received with much pleasure back home. He recalled later that a London acquaintance cabled: “Best friends here hope you won’t go making further ass of yourself.” But two years later, on an extensive lecture tour of North America, his situation had improved: “I have promised to eat Christmas dinner with [Lord Minto](#), Governor General of Canada, at Ottawa.”

There’s a European in the bath

Winston *did* like to move around. At Christmas 1907, now Undersecretary for the Colonies, he was in Khartoum, where he had charged with the 21st Lancers nine years earlier. Now he was making an inspection tour of African colonies. His secretary [Eddie Marsh](#) dispatched a servant to prepare a tub. The man reported, “there’s a European in the bath.” [7] Churchill had got there first. He usually did.

He stayed home more after he married Clementine Hozier in 1908, but never at the expense of official responsibilities, which mushroomed in World War I. From his post at the front after the Dardanelles debacle in 1915, he managed to secure leave, returning on Christmas Eve.

Blenheim and Chartwell

Churchill enjoyed more conventional Christmases in the 1920s, after the war ended. The first venue was Blenheim. After his cousin “Sunny,” the 9th Duke of Marlborough had divorced, the scene shifted to Chartwell, the Churchill home from 1922.

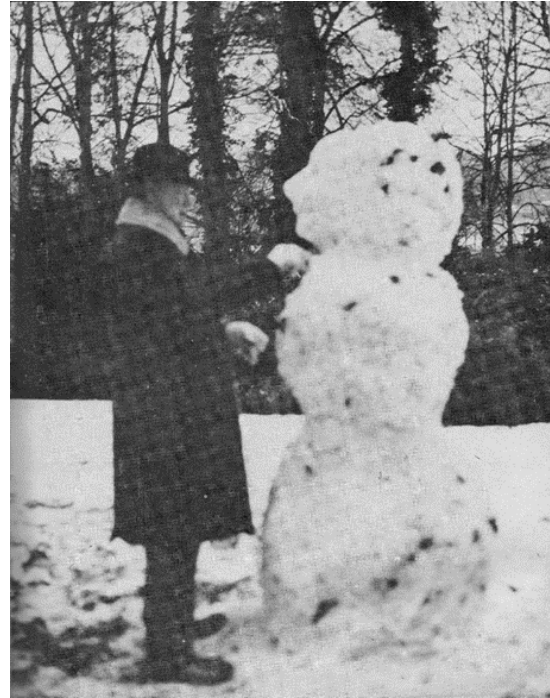
Clementine Churchill, the archetypal hostess, was inevitably the director of holiday programs. With the births of Sarah (1918) and Mary (1922) it was a crowded household, and guests were restricted to close family: Winston's brother Jack and Lady Gwendoline (affectionately nicknamed "Goonie"), their children Johnny and Peregrine and baby Clarissa (who would later marry Anthony Eden). Sometimes they were joined by Clementine's sister, the widowed Nellie Romilly, with her two "tiny monsters," Esmond and Giles. One of the few outsiders was Winston's scientific adviser, Professor Frederick Lindemann, who would bring along fine cigars and a case of champagne, even though he himself was a teetotaler.

Those were wonderful times, Sarah Churchill remembered. Maryott Whyte, a cousin and Mary's beloved Nanny, played Father Christmas, and decorated the Christmas tree: "One day in full array she leant to put one tiny thing right and was nearly burnt to death.... The smaller children, which included me, were not told and somehow Nana as Father Christmas still appeared."

Bottlescape

Jack's son Johnny recalled how his Uncle Winston adored children and gift-giving:

Charades, with its secrecy, dressing up and acting, particularly appealed to him. He was a generous uncle, and we in return always gave him the best presents we could afford, though choosing a gift for someone who already had everything he needed was a worry. I solved it by asking the advice of



WSC built a snowman at Chartwell during the frosty winter of 1927-28. (Broadwater Collection, Churchill Archives Center)

his butler or his valet.... Some of the presents, such as a pair of braces or a toothbrush, struck me as most dull, but at least I felt they were needed. The wonderful part about it is that my uncle loved, and always has loved, receiving presents. No matter how small and humble the gift, he accepted it with surprise and pleasure. 'For me?' he would ask, his eyes lighting up. 'How very kind!'

Johnny's brother Peregrine remembered Christmas 1932, when their uncle created his famous still life, "Bottlescape." Churchill had received as a present "a huge bottle of brandy, and decided to paint it, accompanied by lesser bottles. He sent us children scurrying around Chartwell to find them: "Fetch me associate and fraternal bottles to form a bodyguard to this majestic container."

Christmas in the pool

For a man who underwent civilization's greatest storms, engineering a special Christmas was no problem. One useful prop: his outdoor heated swimming pool. [Lady Diana Cooper](#) referred to "this sad crepuscule" as "Winston's delightful toy." [Desmond Morton](#), one of his key informants on German rearmament, lived near Chartwell and was a frequent visitor. Constructing the heating equipment, Churchill had told Morton, "I want something that will raise the temperature to boiling point on Christmas Day."

One December 25th the Churchills invited Morton over to bathe! "Steam was rising from the bath. A large and cumbrous heating apparatus had been installed—unusual at the time—which Winston's friends thought had sufficient capacity to heat the Ritz Hotel." Taking her turn in a wintery pool, Lady Diana remembered Churchill summoning Inches the butler: "Tell Allen to heave a lot more coal on. I want the thing full blast." Inches returned to say that Allen was out for the day. "Then tell Arthur I want it full blast," but it was Arthur's day out as well, "so the darling old schoolboy went surreptitiously and stoked it himself for half an hour, coming in on the verge of apoplexy. Again, all had to bathe in the afternoon."

More separate Christmases superseded those halcyon days. In 1934, his wife was en route to the South Seas on a voyage with their friends the [Moynes](#); the next two holidays would also be spent apart. In 1935, Churchill repaired for painting and sunshine to Majorca, remembering to invite Lindemann: "It would be very nice if you could come out....Clemmie and I will have everything ready for you on the 19th. I am not sure whether she is staying for Christmas or not." Alas she was not.

Christmas apart

In 1936 Churchill faced his ever-present money problems. "There is no less than £6,000 to pay in income and super tax during 1937," he wrote his wife. He would sail to America on December 18th for a series of lucrative lectures. "I am disappointed not to be with you all at Christmas: and I don't know how I shall spend my poor Christmas day [but] I feel that this particular toil is a measure of prudence."

It didn't work out. Instead, Churchill spent a bleak holiday in the wake of the Abdication of [King Edward VIII](#) and mounting European dangers. He pleaded in vain on the King's behalf; the House hooted him down. Temporarily he lost all the credibility he had gained in the rearmament debate.

Christmas at War

Nineteen thirty-nine found Britain at war. The family spent the last Christmas of a dying era. Now that he was again First Lord of the Admiralty, Churchill's sense of duty prevailed. "In view of the danger of surprise attacks at a time when the enemy may expect to find us off our guard, there must be no break or holiday period at Christmas or the New Year," he minuted.

World War II clamped many a lid on Christmas celebrations. When [Eric Seal, his principal private secretary](#), asked to arrange a week's leave for the private office, Churchill replied: "Your minute about Christmas holidays surprises me. No holidays can be given at Christmas, but every endeavour should be made to allow members of the staff to attend Divine Service on Christmas Day, either in the morning or afternoon. My own plans will be

to work either here ([Chequers](#)) or in London continuously.” He set off from Downing Street wishing the staff he left behind “a happy Christmas and a frantic New Year.” Private Secretary [John Martin](#) wrote:

We had a festive family Christmas....For lunch we had the largest turkey I have ever seen.... Afterwards we listened to the King's speech and [Vic Oliver](#), [Sarah Churchill](#)'s actor husband, played the piano and Sarah sang. It was the same after dinner.

Benevolent old cherub

December 1941 found the United States at last in the war, “up to the neck and in to the death,” as Churchill put it—and found him, quite naturally, in Washington, for the memorable remarks above.

By the end of 1942 things began to improve. Christmas at Chequers found Churchill in “a grand temper,” [secretary Elizabeth Nel](#) remembered. He “left us in peace most of the time and just sat up in bed reading a book and looking like a benevolent old cherub.” To President Roosevelt he telegraphed: “I passed a happy Christmas in your home and now I send my heartfelt wishes to you and all around you on this brighter day than we have yet seen.” Roosevelt replied, “The old team-work is grand.”

Churchill nearly died of pneumonia in North Africa following the [Teheran Conference](#) in late 1943; his wife and doctor rushed to his side in Carthage. His doctor [Lord Moran](#) spoke of his emotion when told she was coming. “Oh, yes,” she replied, “he’s very glad I’ve come, but in five minutes he’ll forget I’m here.”

Sure enough, by Christmas Day he was back

on whisky and cigars, enjoying an epic plum pudding, and meeting with [General Eisenhower](#), the supreme Allied commander. [General Alexander](#), [Air Marshal Tedder](#) and [Admiral Cunningham](#) were also there to discuss the coming invasion of Europe.



Negotiations by lamplight: Churchill in Athens, December 1944, assured the survival of Greek democracy by installing Archbishop Damaskinos (to WSC's left) as regent in a coalition government. (Hillsdale College)

The following year drew him away again, without protest from the stalwart Clementine. The family had gathered at Chequers with a huge Christmas tree, the gift of President Roosevelt. Suddenly, telegrams brought news of a civil war in Greece. Churchill immediately left for Athens, [to negotiate a truce between communists and royalists that saved Greece](#).

Nine months later he remarked that the “Bolshevisation of the Balkans” was almost complete. All “the cabinets of Central, Eastern and Southern Europe are in Soviet control, excepting only Athens. This brand I snatched from the burning on Christmas Day.”

At Chartwell on Christmas 1946, Churchill's presents included honey from [Sir Stewart Menzies](#), head of the Secret Service throughout his premiership. Two bottles of port arrived from Duncan and Diana Sandys. [Sir Stafford Cripps](#), perhaps in jest, sent a bottle of turpentine. Despite political opposition the Churchills remained good friends with the [Clement Attlees](#). Replying to their Christmas greeting, he mentioned struggling with his war memoirs. "It is a colossal undertaking.... However, it is a good thing to get a certain amount of material together which, if not history, will still at least be a contribution thereto."

"Whirl me round the floor once, Mule"

An aging Churchill was now less able to cope with England's damp, cold winters. Christmas 1947 found him in Marrakesh, where he came to paint and write. At the Mamounia Hotel he hosted a party for staffers who had given up their holiday to accompany him. "There was a 25-foot Christmas tree, windows hung with orange branches, and daubs of white paint on the window panes made it seem that a blizzard was blowing outside," wrote his daughter Sarah. "Everyone was 'dolled up'.... When midnight struck they raised their glasses and

clapped—and 'Vive Churchill' and 'Bravo' echoed round the room." The band played *It's a Long Way to Tipperary* as a Christmas pudding was brought in. Much moved, Churchill bowed to them all.

Suddenly he stood. Sarah thought it was time to go. Instead he turned to her. "Whirl me round the floor once, Mule—I think I can manage it." They took the floor for a waltz amidst a roar of applause. Then Churchill danced with all his secretaries.

Suddenly he noticed "a good-looking fair lady" seated by herself. Sarah remembered him asking, "Why is she alone? Dance me around the floor." They stopped before this proud but forlorn looking woman. Churchill said: "You are the Christmas fairy. May I have a dance?"

Sarah had no idea what they said, but "he never liked to see a beautiful woman alone. When their turn at dancing was done, he left her at her place. Meanwhile, the detectives were wondering if she had been imported as a spy." A telegram arrived later:

YOU WILL NEVER KNOW MY NAME
BUT I AM PROUD TO HAVE DANCED
WITH WINSTON CHURCHILL.



*“Winter Sunshine, Chartwell,” oil on millboard, circa 1924, Coombs 142. During a Christmas season in the 1920s, Churchill painted a familiar scene of his Kentish home under snow.
(Reproduced by kind permission of Churchill Heritage Ltd.)*

This article first appeared in the [‘Hillsdale College Churchill Project’](#)

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Churchill and Christmas during the Second World War

David Freeman

The Second World War erupted at the start of September 1939 and dragged on for six long years. During this time, Winston Churchill passed six Christmases in high office. Each was as unique and dramatic in character as the progression of the war.

1939

After becoming First Lord of the Admiralty under Prime Minister Neville Chamberlain at the start of the war, Churchill threw himself completely into plans for how the Royal Navy could take offensive action against Germany. Christmas Day 1939 found him at Admiralty House, both his office and official residence in London, drawing up an eight-point survey for “the War in 1940.” This he sent to the First Sea Lord, Admiral of the Fleet Sir Dudley Pound with a note that read: “This is the best I can do for a Christmas Card in these hard times....The supreme strategy is to carry the war into a theatre where we can bring superior forces to bear, and where a decision can be obtained which rules all other theatres.”

1940

After becoming Prime Minister on 10 May, Churchill had access to Chequers, which had been donated to the nation by Lord Lee of Fareham in 1921 for use by the prime minister of the day. On 23 December, Churchill travelled to Chequers for what would be the last Christmas of the war at which all of the members of his family were gathered together. Joining the Prime Minister were his wife Clementine, daughter Diana with her husband Duncan Sandys, son Randolph with his wife Pamela and their newborn son Winston, daughter Sarah with her husband Vic Oliver, and daughter Mary.

Once again Churchill intended it to be “a busy Christmas.” Duty Private Secretary John Martin recorded that “The Prime Minister has made a great point of working as usual over the holiday, and yesterday morning [Christmas Day] was like almost any other here, with the usual letters and telephone calls and of course many Christmas greeting messages thrown in.”

On Boxing Day, Churchill wrote a note to Lord Lee thanking him for “the inspiration which moved you to make this splendid gift.” Lord Lee responded: “For the house of ancient memories, this is its finest hour.”

1941

Following the attack on Pearl Harbor on 7 December, Churchill made plans to travel to Washington to meet with President Roosevelt and work out a coordinated strategy for the duration of the war. Churchill travelled on HMS *Duke of York* to the United States and arrived on 22 December to spend Christmas at the White House.

On Christmas Eve, Churchill joined the President on the White House balcony for the lighting of the White House Christmas tree. Churchill told the gathered crowd: “I feel a sense of unity and fraternal association which, added to the kindness of your welcome, convinces me that I have a right to sit at your fireside and share your Christmas joys.”

On Christmas Day, Churchill went to church with the President surrounded by G-men armed to the teeth with “Tommy-guns and revolvers.” The business of the war did not go unattended that day. There was a long meeting to discuss the situation in the Far

East. Churchill reported that same day to the Australian Prime Minister the reassuring news that the President was willing “to send substantial United States forces to Australia, where the Americans are anxious to establish important bases for the war against Japan.”

On Christmas night, Churchill dined with the President and initially joined the First Family for a screening of the film *Oliver Twist*. When the reel had to be changed, however, “Churchill rose rapidly and excused himself with the words: ‘I must go and do some homework.’” The “homework” was polishing up the speech that he delivered the next day to a joint session of Congress in which he had to make the case for a Europe-first strategy against the Axis powers.

1942

The Prime Minister was back at Chequers for Christmas 1941 with most but not all of his family. Once again Clementine and all three Churchill daughters were present along with daughter-in-law Pamela and “Baby Winston,” but Randolph Churchill was away to the war. As usual the Prime Minister attended to war business. He dictated to his secretaries in the morning and exchanged greetings by telegram with President Roosevelt.

The big development on Christmas Day was the news reaching Chequers that French Admiral Darlan has been assassinated in Algiers. Under the Vichy regime, Darlan had been collaborating with the Nazis. After Operation Torch, the Allied landings in

Northwest Africa that had taken place in November, Darlan had opportunistically switched sides for the second time in the war. For the Allies this was advantageous but awkward. It also brought to mind Shakespeare’s line from *Henry VI*: “Done like a Frenchman, turn and turn again.”

Though never proven conclusively, Darlan’s murder by a French monarchist had all the signs of a British Intelligence operation. For the only time during the entire war, Stewart Menzies—the head of MI6—left Britain for a brief period and just happened to be in Algiers when the assassination took place. The next day, the assassin was tried in-camera, executed by firing squad, and buried in an unmarked grave in a coffin that had already been ordered before the trial.

As if winking at history, Churchill afterwards wrote in his memoirs that “Darlan’s murder, however criminal, relieved the Allies of their embarrassment of working with him, and at the same time left them with all of the advantages he had been able to bestow during the vital hours of the Allied landings [in North Africa].

1943

In late November, Churchill travelled to Teheran to meet with President Roosevelt and Soviet leader Joseph Stalin. At this first meeting of the “Big Three,” Churchill celebrated his sixty-ninth birthday on the last day of the month. Unfortunately, age, the exhausting journey, and more than four years of warfare were taking their toll on the Prime Minister.

While returning from Iran via North Africa to meet with Allied generals in Tunisia, Churchill became seriously ill. His doctor, Lord Moran, diagnosed a serious case of pneumonia and atrial fibrillation (an irregular heartbeat) on 15 December. Moran began calling in specialists from London and was able to obtain the use of a portable x-ray machine from the US Army Medical Corps.

The Prime Minister’s daughter Sarah had accompanied him to Teheran as his ADC and was able to remain with him throughout his illness. Since the danger to Churchill was so great, it was decided not to move him. He was settled into a seaside village at Carthage

appropriately called the White House. Soon Churchill was joined by Clementine, who flew in from London, and their son Randolph, who was already stationed in the Mediterranean.

By the morning of Christmas Day, Churchill was feeling well enough to preside at a meeting of Allied generals in his bedroom. Afterwards, Clementine wrote to her daughter Mary, “We had a most interesting Christmas luncheon party with all the notabilities assembled, and your father at the end made a charming speech about his distinguished guests and their new functions. This was his first meal outside his bedroom [since the onset of illness].” Churchill would convalesce in Morocco for a time in the New Year before finally returning to London.

1944

Churchill’s last Christmas of the war was also the strangest, riskiest, and most adventuresome. By now he was seventy, and had been in high office for more than five years. On 12 October, the German army had evacuated from Greece. British forces moved in immediately in support of the official Greek government, which had been in exile during the Nazi occupation and now was under attack from communist forces.

From the beginning of the fighting, Churchill supported the decisions of the commander of British forces in Greece, General Scobie, and the British ambassador in Athens, Sir Reginald Leeper, to suppress the revolt against the Greek government. Accordingly, Churchill resolved to intervene personally in an effort to resolve the conflict. In a dramatic, last-moment decision, he flew to Athens along with

Foreign Secretary Anthony Eden and arrived there on Christmas Day.

Fighting was still taking place in the streets of Athens, and Churchill’s party had to be driven under heavy guard to the building where a meeting of all of the Greek political parties had been arranged. Due to the absence of electricity, the session took place by the light of kerosene lamps punctuated by the occasional and not-so-distant sounds of gunfire.

In his opening speech, Churchill underlined his wish to end the Greek turmoil by political means, but at the same time he pointed out that—as a last resort—he was ready to resolve the issue militarily and indicated that he had the support of both Stalin and Roosevelt. After statements by Eden and Field Marshal Sir Harold Alexander, the British party departed, leaving the Greek politicians to their deliberations, which proved unfruitful.

Churchill’s intervention, however, did bring about general agreement of the parties represented at the conference for the appointment of a Regent until the Greek people could decide whether they wished to restore their old government along with its monarchy. Without Churchill’s role and influence, it is highly unlikely that the Greek king would have accepted such an arrangement.

Happy Christmas!

Hopefully, your Christmas this year and in years to come will be more peaceful than those Churchill experienced during the Second World War!

Lord Randolph and Jennie Spencer Churchill: A Russian Christmas and New Year 1887-88

Celia Lee

Lord Randolph Churchill decided to take his wife Jennie away on a month-long holiday, where they could escape the political treadmill and raise their prestige. With the backing of the Prince of Wales, they made a highly publicised visit to the court of the Czar and Czarina of Russia.

Prior to leaving, December 1887, they gave their sons Winston and Jack, generous gifts of money. Randolph had gone down to Brighton School to see Winston and the Miss Thompsons were in such admiration of him that they gave all the boys a half-day holiday. During their parents' absence Winston and Jack were left in the charge of Jennie's sisters Clara Frewen and Leonie Leslie and the boys' nanny Mrs Elizabeth Everest at home in Connaught Place.

The Churchills arrived at St. Petersburg, where they were received as though they were visiting royalty. Their time was filled with visits to important people and to places of cultural. Following a night at the opera

'enveloped in great fur coats and caps' the party 'drove in troikas' to the Polovstows's pavilion on the 'islands in the Neva'. They entered a 'conservatory' that was 'brilliantly lighted and full of orchids and rare flowers'. Amongst the palm trees 'a band of Tziganes' played 'melodies', while in the dining-room an excellent supper was served 'on genuine Louis XV plate'. The Russians kept late hours, with life springing into action 'at midnight'.

Whilst in St. Petersburg Jennie 'was able to indulge to my heart's content in my favourite pastime of skating on the lake of the Palais de La Tauride' that was a royal palace, where Russian society congregated. What the Russians really enjoyed was 'tobogganing down the ice-hills, half a dozen or more persons in a sleigh'. Jennie felt she had been 'duly "blooded"' by 'being placed in the front seat of the sleigh and shot into a bank of snow'.



Gatschina Palace, St. Petersburg

In Moscow, Czar Alexander III invited them to the Gatschina Palace. There were 600 rooms; corridors were filled 'with priceless Oriental china', and the walls were adorned with 'tapestries and treasures of art.' Randolph had a private audience with the Czar, Jennie with the Czarina the former Danish, Princess Maria Feodorovna Dagmar, known affectionately to her husband as Minnie. Jennie remembered her from having met her at Cowes in 1873. She wanted to know everything about society, fashion, and political life in England, and showed Jennie the many beauties of the palace.



Czar Alexander III and Czarina the former Danish, Princess Maria Feodorovna Dagmar

The Czar received Randolph with great affection and, over shared cigarettes got onto the serious matter concerning him. He wanted Randolph to know, and presumably to convey home, that Russia was absolutely no military threat to Britain and its Empire. When they dined with Prince Dolgorouki they were given a 'good representation of wild national songs and dances' by Tziganethey.



Jennie, Lady Randolph Spencer Churchill

In St. Petersburg the Churchills were every day the guests at some aristocratic party. There were troika drives in the country, dinners, theatre, and opera. Randolph kept up a stream of amusing and highly informative letters to the Prince of Wales, assuring him of the great friendship towards Britain that was expressed by the dignitaries he met.

They were invited twice to Gatchina Palace, taken there in a 'special train' that 'conveyed about one hundred and fifty guests'. Royal carriages awaited them then drove them to the palace. They were entertained to 'three short plays' after which



Lord Randolph Spencer Churchill

‘supper was served’. Jennie was given a place of honour behind the Empress, who turned round every so often and made ‘some pleasant remark’. The atmosphere was relaxed, considering the Czar was present, and he ‘walked about talking to his guests, all of whom remained seated’. It had been a ‘habit of Peter the Great, who disliked ceremony of any kind’. The officer in charge that was the ‘Colonel of the Preobjensky Guards the smartest regiment in Russia’ and responsible for Czar’s safety ‘was so drunk that he fell heavily on my shoulder when presented to me. Those near laughingly propped him up’.

Jennie was the centre of attention and at ‘private dinners’ when they were announced ‘the host would rush forward, seize my hand, and kiss it, and then proceed to introduce all the men present. I then had to ask to be presented to every lady’.

One of the highlights of their visit ‘was the New Year’s Reception at the Winter Palace’. In the morning at 11 o’clock the

entire ‘court attended’ paying ‘its respects to the sovereign’. The Czar was dressed in ‘the uniform of the Gardes du Corps’ and gave his arm to the Czarina, whereupon he was ‘followed by the imperial family’. The train of each ‘Grand Duchess was carried by four young officers’. Following on were ‘ladies-in-waiting, dressed in green and gold, and maids-of-honour in red and gold’. The court officials, ‘resplendent in gorgeous uniforms and covered with decorations’ lined up ‘on each side with officers’ wearing the red, white, or blue of their regiments’. The Czar spoke to them as he passed, saying ‘Good morning, my children, and they replied, ‘We are happy to salute you.’ In other rooms, ladies were ‘assembled, dressed in the national costume of every hue, and covered with jewels, mostly cabochon sapphires and emeralds.’ The royal choir at mass in the Greek Church sang to ‘perfection’. After the service the procession entered a room ‘reserved for the ambassadors and diplomatic corps’. The Czar conversed with a few. Then the ‘ladies passed before him and kissed hands’.

Jennie wore a blue-and-gold tea-gown which ‘seemed a strange garment in which to go to court’ for luncheon in the afternoon. She found that most Russian ladies smoked cigarettes and reception rooms were set aside for this purpose. Russians had ‘enormous appetites’ and they drank to excess’.

On another night they dined with the Grand Duke and Duchess Serge at ‘the beautiful old “Beloselski” palace’, that had been built in the reign of Catherine the Great. It was decorated and furnished by the ‘best French artists of the day’ with ‘lovely Bouchers and carved white panellings’.

They visited the Trichiakoff picture gallery where they saw ‘all the grimmest and most gruesome historical incidents of Russian

tyranny and cruelty: Ivan the Terrible murdering his son’.

One day they drove with Prince Ourousow the aide-de-camp to Prince Dolgorouki the Governor General of Moscow to the Sparrow Hills to the spot where Napoleon stood when he first looked upon the city. The marble statue of him crowned with laurels that he brought with him was preserved in the Kremlin.

They viewed also the Organaya Palace and the church with its mosaics and Byzantine decorations. The place was filled with ‘beggars and cripples’ who ‘pestered us for alms’.

At the “Bal de la Noblesse” in the Assembly Rooms the music was ‘inspiring’ and an officer whisked Jennie around the floor ‘at enormous speed’ and before she could catch her breath, he handed her over to another.

Russians loved light and made their houses as bright as possible with profusions of candles as well electricity. Flowers that were rare due to the climate ‘decorated every available place, and the staircases were lined with footmen in gorgeous liveries’. The freezing weather meant that Russian ladies stayed indoors and read books and educated themselves and learnt to speak ‘many languages’.

The opera *La vie pour le Czar* by Glinka produced ‘charming music’ and ‘all the national characteristics of sadness and wild boisterous gaiety’. Jennie saw the ‘famous dancer Zucchi perform in *Esmeralda*. Despite being in her ‘prime’ she was ‘a marvellous dancer of the old school’.

The day Jennie left Moscow the Governor saw them off and presented her with a lovely bouquet of orchids her favourite flower, but the temperature was 22 degrees below zero and the flowers wilted.

Randolph’s mother had written to ask if she could have Winston to stay at Blenheim Palace for a week. She didn’t invite Jack which meant the nanny Mrs Everest would be left behind with him because the Duchess didn’t like her. Winston appealed directly to his aunts against this disruption of his holiday and separation from Jack. The duchess was refused, and she wrote to Randolph that she would ‘trouble no more about my grandchildren’. She was however fated to get her way. Soon after a very happy Christmas, Mrs. Everest was taken seriously ill. Dr. Robson Roose thought it was diphtheria and both boys were immediately removed to Blenheim. However, the boys enjoyed many visits to pantomimes and the theatre in London. The Duchess was glad when Winston returned to school, writing to Randolph, 23rd January 1888:

‘I do not feel sorry for he is certainly a handful. Not that he does anything seriously naughty except to use bad language which is bad for Jack. I am sure Harrow will do wonders for him for I fancy he was too clever and too much the boss at that Brighton school. He seems quite well and strong and very happy – Jack is a good little boy and not a bit of trouble.’

Winston was able to write to his parents that Mrs. Everest was not so ill as at first feared. It was ‘more Quincy than Diphtheria’. He solemnly reported that he was glad she had not died.

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The 37th General Hospital saves the life of Winston Churchill and Churchill celebrates Christmas Day 1943 in Carthage

Allister Vale

At the presentation I gave to members of CSOT in September 2019, the identity of the US Army General Hospital that provided the EKG and X-ray machines and drugs used to diagnose and treat Winston Churchill's illness in December 1943 was not known. The family of the late Capt. DiGregorio responded to a review of one of our medical papers on the Hillsdale College Churchill Project website and Richard Langworth CBE kindly put me in touch with the family. This meant that I was able to add a brief note in proof to our book.¹ The contribution of the 37th General Hospital, and Capt. DiGregorio specifically, are explained here more fully.

This article will also review Churchill's first meal outside his bedroom after recovery from his severe illness, which was on Christmas Day 1943.

Summary of Churchill's illness¹

Winston Churchill sailed from London on 12 November 1943 in the battleship HMS *Renown* and arrived in Alexandria, Egypt on 21 November. From there he flew to Cairo for meetings with US President Roosevelt. On 27 November 1943 Churchill flew to Teheran for the first "Big Three" meeting with Roosevelt and Marshal Stalin, Chairman of the Council of Ministers of the Soviet Union. He returned to Cairo on 2 December for further discussions with Roosevelt. Churchill flew to Carthage (Tunis) on 11 December to review military operations in Italy.

Churchill himself wrote: "I am completely at the end of my tether, and I cannot go on to the front until I have recovered my strength."² In fact, Churchill had developed a fever (that lasted for six days) due to left lower lobe pneumonia; this infection was complicated by two episodes of atrial fibrillation (irregular heartbeat) lasting four hours and one and a half hours respectively. But as Lt Col (later Professor) Robert Pulvertaft RAMC wrote after being summoned from Cairo by Lord Moran, Churchill's personal physician:

When I had finished [taking Churchill's blood], I spoke with Moran and told him something of the resources of British medicine in North Africa, and its deficiencies. It was decided that Churchill had pneumonia and a very wonky heart. But the British Army had no portable x-ray apparatus, or electrocardiograph and no modern up-to-date drugs – and I had finished all my penicillin.³

Pulvertaft continued: "I sought out Tedder [Air Marshal Tedder, Commander of Mediterranean Allied Air Forces] who kept his head consistently. I asked him whether there were any American hospitals in Tunis. He rang up and said, 'Yes'. 'Can I have a car?' I asked. 'I've had one waiting outside for you,' he answered. And we drove to the American hospital. The C.O. [Col Arthur Fankhauser] was a remarkably monosyllabic man.

I said, 'I guess this is breaking security, but I'm here doctoring Churchill.

'Yes', he said. 'Have you any sulfadiazine?' I asked. 'Yes'.

'Have you a portable x-ray?'. 'Yes.'

'Have you a portable electrocardiograph?'

'No.' 'Can you get one? Try anyway.' He rang up several numbers, at last he got satisfaction. 'Right, I'll have it.'"

Pulvertaft commented: "It is a remarkable fact that, so far as I know, no credit was ever claimed by any American for their service on that occasion, without which it is not likely that Churchill would have survived."³

In a press communiqué issued on 30 December Churchill wrote:

On December 11 I felt so tired out that I had to ask General Eisenhower for a few days rest before proceeding. This was accorded me in the most generous manner. The next day came the fever, and the day after, when the photographs [X-rays] showed that there was a shadow on one of my lungs, I found that everything had been foreseen by Lord Moran. Excellent nurses and the highest medical authorities in the Mediterranean arrived from all quarters as if by magic. This admirable M and B [May and Baker was the manufacturer of sulfonamides in the UK], from which I did not suffer any inconvenience, was used at the earliest moment, and after a week's fever the intruders were repulsed. I hope all our battles will be equally well conducted. I feel a good deal better than at any time since leaving England, though of course a few weeks in the sunshine are needed to restore my physical strength.⁴

After Churchill had recovered, he asked Cdr CR "Tommy" Thompson RN, his aide-de-camp, to write to the CO of the 37th General Hospital (see Fig. 1.) to thank him for the

services rendered during his recent illness as "the reports and results obtained were of the greatest possible value".

Based on the letter kindly provided by Capt. DiGregorio's family, we know that he was the doctor who undertook Churchill's EKGs. DiGregorio can be seen in the photograph (Fig. 2) with Lt Col Fankhauser. He was told by his CO to "don full dress, grab his electrocardiograph, and ask no questions".

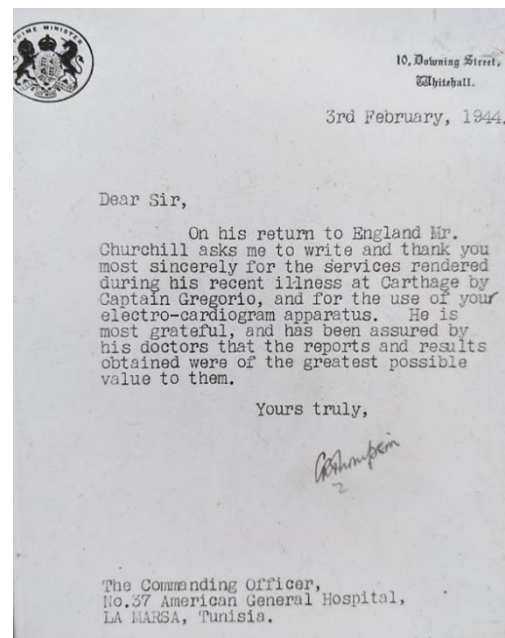


Fig. 1. Letter to Col Fankhauser from Cdr Thompson RN, Churchill's aid-de-camp

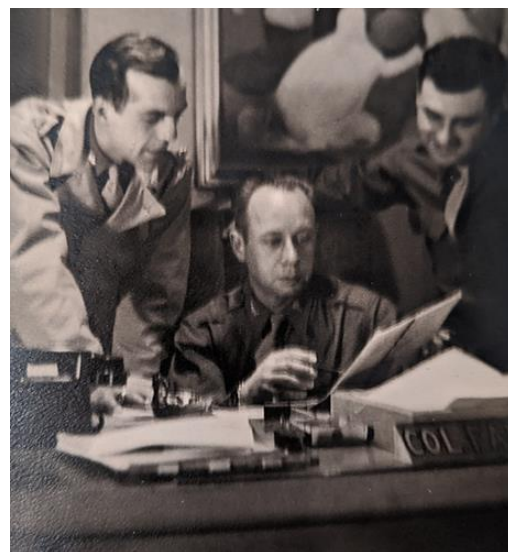


Fig. 2. Col Fankhauser (centre) with Capt. DiGregorio on his right

The EKGs DiGregorio performed have survived and are in Lord Moran's closed Archive in the Wellcome Library.

On discharge from the Army in the rank of Major, DiGregorio practiced as a cardiologist in Brooklyn. He considered that: "Sir Winston Churchill was the greatest statesman of my time." He had two children: Maryanne DiGregorio and Vincent DiGregorio, who also served as a doctor in the US Army in Vietnam.

37th General Hospital

What is known of the 37th General Hospital? The Kings County, Brooklyn, New York mobilized staff from New York medical schools and training hospitals to form firstly, the 79th General Hospital and, secondly, the 37th General Hospital. The 37th was under the sponsorship of the Kings County Hospital and consisted of 40 physicians, surgeons, pathologists, radiologists, and dental surgeons, 110 Army reserve nurses and 250 enlisted men. During training the 37th General Hospital Unit was under the command of Lt Col George Dixon, former chief surgeon at Kings County Hospital and the Medical Division was commanded by Col Arthur Frankhauser.^{5,6}

According to Lt Jean Clough, an Army nurse, the staff went by train from New York to Stark, Florida, and then by bus to Camp Blanding where basic training was undertaken. The 37th General Hospital staff boarded the *Empress of Japan*. The liner sailed from Newport News, Virginia on 7 July 1943 to Casablanca, Morocco. It took eight days to make the crossing to North Africa, and the *Empress* did not slow down except to pick up 15 French nuns in a lifeboat after their ship had been torpedoed by a German submarine. From Casablanca staff went by train across the Horn of Africa

to Mateur, Tunisia then to La Marsa, 4km from Carthage. The 37th General Hospital was set up in tents, supplemented by prefabricated buildings (1000 beds). The Hospital moved to Naples in May 1944 where it was accommodated on the Mostra Fairgrounds outside Naples (1,500 beds).⁷

Christmas Day 1943

It is remarkable that despite the severity of his illness, Churchill was able to continue to direct the affairs of State from his bed. On 24 December there was a great influx of Generals and others to discuss Operation SHINGLE (Allied amphibious landing at Anzio). This meeting was held despite Churchill's X-ray still showing an opacity at the left base of his lung (indicative of pneumonia), though this was less marked than in the previous X-ray film.

Churchill began Christmas Day with a two-hour conference involving British and US senior military staff in his bedroom. It was then time to celebrate Christmas. Harold Macmillan (Minister Resident in the Mediterranean and future Prime Minister) flew in from Algiers, arriving at 1.30 pm. He drove to the White House (General's Eisenhower's villa where Churchill was being treated) and found Churchill and assembled guests sitting down to a magnificent Christmas dinner, with soup, turkey, plum pudding and champagne!⁸ Mrs Churchill wrote to daughter Mary: "We had a most interesting Christmas luncheon party with all these notabilities assembled, and your father at the end made a charming speech about his distinguished guests and their new functions. This was his first meal outside his bedroom."⁹

Macmillan recalls that Churchill presided at the festive gathering clothed in a padded silk Chinese dressing-gown decorated with blue and gold dragons (Fig. 3) and Cdr



Fig. 3. Winston Churchill with General Eisenhower (Supreme Allied Commander in Europe), Christmas Day 1943. General Sir Harold Alexander (Commander the 15th Army Group) stands behind them ©IWM

Thompson recalls the striking pair of bedroom slippers which bore Churchill's initials in gold across each foot.¹⁰ Churchill proposed a series of toasts "in the best Russian style, with a short speech in each case".⁸ Macmillan was gratified that Churchill proposed his toast "in most eulogistic terms."⁸ Martin also noted in his diary: "Festive lunch with toasts à la Russe."¹¹

It has been suggested that Churchill's son Randolph proposed the toast: "Ladies and gentlemen, let us rise and drink to my father's health and his remarkable recovery, which is entirely due (turning first to Lord Moran and then to Dr Bedford) to M & B."¹² However, it would seem more probable that it was Churchill himself who made the toast. This is confirmed in a letter Moran wrote to his wife: "P.M. in great form. Proposed health of Bedford and me (M & B). I replied that when in difficulty we had

another consultant at hand, himself (much appreciated by everyone who knows his interfering nature)."¹³

Colville wrote in his diary that in the evening there was a large cocktail party hosted by Sarah Churchill which Churchill attended "as if in perfect health".¹¹ This merged into a cold stand-up dinner and "everybody finished the day feeling the merrier for Christmas".¹⁴ "Churchill was in sparkling form, working the room in his dressing gown and slippers."¹⁵

Acknowledgements

I am most grateful to Maryanne DiGregorio Bennett (daughter), Robert DeSalvo, (grandson) and Christine DeSalvo (great granddaughter) of Dr DiGregorio for their permission to publish, for the personal biographical details and the photographs reproduced here.

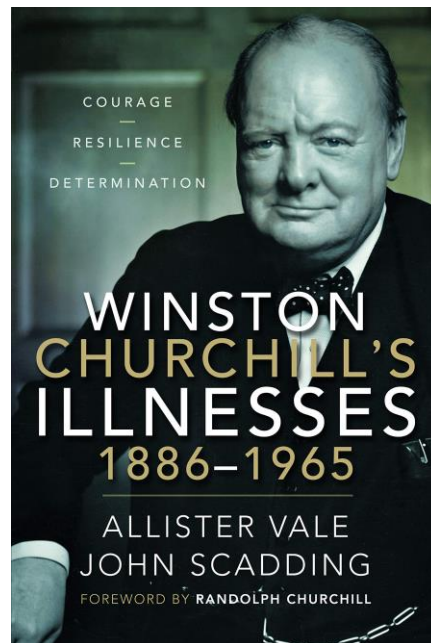
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Book Reviews

Winston Churchill's Illnesses 1886 - 1965

The definitive work on the subject!



Allister Vale and John Scadding have produced the definitive work on the health of Sir Winston Churchill. Their research is highly detailed and impeccably sourced. The book covers the medical aspects of Churchill's life with accuracy, clarity and is conveyed in terms that are easily understood by the layman. This is a must read for those who seek a broader understanding of Churchill's life and the many medical challenges he had to face.

Winston Churchill's Illnesses is far more than a laundry list of his medical history. Vale and Scadding bring to life a new understanding and insights into the effects of Churchill's illnesses and its impact on the course of world history. For example, it explains how Winston's health affected the

choice of attending the Harrow School over Eton. Why dislocating his shoulder while disembarking from the *Britannia* at Bombay Island, India in October 1896, may have saved his life at the battle of Omderman in the Sudan two years later. These and so many other stories give a fascinating behind the scenes peek and a deeper understanding of why Churchill's life unfolded the way it did.

Allister Vale MD resides in England where he is a Pharmacologist and Toxicologist at City Hospital, Birmingham. He holds an honorary chair at the University of Birmingham and is former chairman of the Ministry of Defence Research Ethics Committee. Allister is also a member of the Churchill Society of Tennessee and a

contributing editor to this publication. He was the guest speaker at our annual dinner in 2019 and at the Churchill Symposium that same year.

We are extremely proud of Allister's efforts in co-authoring what is undoubtedly the most historically significant work on the subject ever written. Our patron Randolph Churchill had this to say:

"Winston Churchill's Illnesses is a tour de force of scholarship. Vale and Scadding have conducted exhaustive research and brought to light much previously unpublished material. Their meticulous and scientific analysis of Winston Churchill's health makes this one of the most historically significant and important books ever published in the field of Churchill studies."

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