

**THE FRIENDSHIP BETWEEN THE HAMILTONS  
AND THE CHURCHILLS**

**by Celia Lee author of:**

**JEAN, LADY HAMILTON (1861-1941)**

**DIARIES OF A SOLDIER'S WIFE**

General Sir Ian Hamilton wrote: "... nobody, not even Lord Bobs in all his glory, has touched my life at so many points as Winston Churchill." Lord Bobs was the Hamiltons' nick-name for Frederick, Lord Roberts, Commander-in-Chief of the British Army in India.



**Miss Jean Muir, later Lady Hamilton, on her wedding day, Calcutta, India, 1887. Portrait by her great-niece, Mrs Barbara Kaczmarowska Hamilton.**



**Miss Jean Muir on her wedding morning 1887. By kind permission of Mr Ian Hamilton. Photo enhancement, Mr John David Olsen.**

The little-known relationship between General Sir Ian Hamilton and his wife Jean, Lady Hamilton, with Winston and Clementine Churchill, comes to the fore in *JEAN, LADY HAMILTON (1861-1941) DIARIES OF A SOLDIER'S WIFE*, pub. Pen & Sword, that is written from the actual diaries by Celia Lee.



**The drawing room of the Hamiltons' bungalow, Simla, India. Ian Hamilton is relaxing on a sofa reading a book. Photo by kind permission of his great nephew, Mr Ian Hamilton.**

Miss Jean Muir, daughter of the Scottish millionaire, Sir John Muir, and Margaret *nee* Kay, whose father was a partner in the tea manufacturing business of James Finlay & Co., married the penniless but brilliant soldier, Major Ian Hamilton. The wedding was a high society affair in St. Paul's Cathedral, Calcutta 1887, followed by a lavish wedding reception. Afterwards the young couple were whisked away on the viceregal motor-launch to Lord William Beresford's villa in the lovely, romantic surroundings of Barrackpore, where they began their honeymoon. The early years of the Hamiltons' married life was spent in India, where they lived in a bungalow at Simla. Much of Jean's activities involved appearing like a mannequin, her tall, slim figure, immaculately dressed in the fashions of the day, attending dinners and balls, her head dazzling in a tiara, ropes of pearls around her neck, and missing no opportunity amongst the hierarchy of the British army to further her husband's career.



**Major Ian Hamilton, 1887. By kind permission of Mr Ian Hamilton.**

Major Ian Hamilton and Winston Churchill had met on the North-West Frontier, India, 1897, when the British were going to war against the tribesmen. The friendship between the two men struck up then, would last for the rest of their lives. Twenty-one years spanned the difference in their ages, and there can be little doubt that young Winston, just 23 years old, looked up to the experienced 44-year-old soldier as a kind of father figure, his own father, Lord Randolph

having died two years earlier. But for Jean's diaries the closeness of the friendship would have remained relatively unknown.

When Hamilton was given command of a brigade in the Tirah province, on the north west frontier of India, Winston wired him, pleading for his help in obtaining an interview with Sir William Lockhart. Hamilton made the arrangements and Sir William was persuaded to take Winston on as an extra aide-de-camp. Sir William then took up his own duties as Commander-in-Chief India. Winston remained in the Bara Valley, going out with parties that were guarding the hill-tops and learning much about active soldiering. He returned home on leave in August and, with the help of Sir Evelyn Wood, who had served as a lieutenant during the Indian Mutiny (1857), got onto Kitchener's Khartoum campaign. Before leaving, he appealed to Hamilton in a letter, asking him again to help further his career:

'I am anxious to get something at home after Egypt as I do not want to leave the army until I am fixed in politics. But what? The only thing I can think of is the I.B. [Intelligence Branch.] I have no qualifications. But perhaps you would know whether this was in any way possible. It would interest me, and I believe I might be of use, as my pen is mightier than my sword ... . *Au revoir*, my dear general - may we meet again when rifles are loaded and swords sharpened - if possible before an audience which will include 40 centuries.' [Quoted: Hamilton, General Sir Ian, *Listening for the Drums*, pub. Faber 1944, p.238.]

Winston is here making reference to the upcoming campaign in Egypt and the Sudan, and to Napoleon Bonaparte's famous address to his troops at the battle of the Pyramids, when he told them that forty centuries of history looked down upon them.

Ian Hamilton went to England to take up the position of Commandant at the School of Musketry, Hythe, Kent. Winston sent with him his manuscript of his novel *Savrola* that Hamilton delivered into the hands of his mother, Jennie, Lady

Randolph Churchill, who was to pursue publication on his behalf. From the ship, Hamilton wrote a fatherly letter to the younger man, warning him:

“... you will only be losing time and training if you continue to hang between two or three avenues which radiate from your feet and lead towards fame each in its own way.”

He urged Winston, in whom he clearly saw great promise, to decide between the army or politics and to put all his efforts behind one or the other.

Reminiscing years later, Jean Hamilton wrote in her diary of a visit by Winston's mother, made to her at Hythe, circa 1898/99:

‘The day Lady Randolph and Lady Sassoon called there, ... Nancy [Bateman] was staying with me, and we had one or two nice boys from the Musketry School with us who had been lunching, and we were sitting grouped half in the garden and half on the low window seat. I had on a picturesque hat I had invented. I suppose having nothing special to do on Sunday afternoon while their men played golf, they thought they'd like to come and see what I was like – Winston had written so much about Ian to his Mother.’

Jennie's future, second husband, Lieutenant George Cornwallis-West was attending the school of musketry at that time which was undoubtedly an added attraction for her as thus far their affair had been kept secret.



**Jean, Lady Hamilton, 1900, by kind permission of Mr Ian Hamilton.**

Hamilton and Winston were to see action again, during the South African Boer War (1899-1902). Hamilton was in the thick of the fighting from the very start, winning fame at the battles of Elandslaagte and Ladysmith. Winston came out as a war correspondent, was captured by the Boers, and made a dramatic escape with a price on his head - wanted dead or alive - eventually making his way back to the army, where he served as an officer in the South African Light Horse, and was for a while attached to Hamilton's command. When Winston went home to England, he was greeted as a war hero, ripe for political advancement to stand for a Conservative Party parliamentary seat.

By 1900, the Hamiltons had set up home at No.3 Chesterfield Street, in London's prestigious Mayfair.



**Right, the present Mr Ian Hamilton, great nephew of General Sir Ian and Jean, Lady Hamilton, enjoying a drink at the Polish Hearth Club, South Kensington, London, with HRH Prince Edward Duke of Kent KG. Photo by kind permission of Mrs Barbara Kaczmarowska Hamilton.**

Jean was obliged to befriend Winston for her husband's sake, and he would frequent their various homes. Winston published his Boer War dispatches, entitled *Ian Hamilton's March*, adding greatly to Ian's fame, and Jean invited him to dine with them. They got off to rather a bad start as she later told her family over dinner one day at her own family home, Deanston House, Doune, near Perthshire, recording in her diary the reply she had received:

*' "... as Mr Churchill is so much engaged by his political work I write to say he is sorry", ... and signed by a secretary. I was furious at this impertinence, and had it framed and placed in my drawing-room.'* (27 April 1902, Deanston House, Doune.)



The letter hung on the wall for years! The reason for Jean's fury was she knew Winston's then girlfriend, Pamela Plowden (later Lady Lytton), who a few days later had quite unwittingly mentioned to her that Winston had taken her out to dine that same day. But the relationship between Jean and Winston improved due to their shared love of painting. Although it has been widely believed that Winston never sold a painting, Jean was able to record in her diary he made his first sale to her of one she had admired:

'Winston ... has been painting a lovely picture of the Barn, with brilliant sunshine and shade effects all day. ... Winston brought his picture of 'Ightam Moat' ... I paid him £50 for it.' (16 October 1921, Lullenden Manor, East Grinstead).

Ian, in his Will, bequeathed it to Ightam Moat, that is a beautiful, idyllic, medieval, moated manor house in Kent. Ian also bequeathed to Winston a statue of a black buddha that he 'acquired' in Burma, 1886, and which had adorned the Hamilton's staircase. It for a time, in turn, adorned the staircase at Chartwell House, until someone accidentally knocked it over and it smashed, surviving today only as a painting by Winston.

On a much earlier occasion Jean and Winston were at loggerheads over the death penalty, he, having been just made Home Secretary. She wrote in her diary that he told her over dinner, "I have had to sign a death warrant for the first time today, and it weighed on me." When she enquired about the crime, he told her it was for "A man who took a little child up a side street and brutally cut her throat." Jean's sharp reply was, "That would *not weigh* on my mind." (21 February 1910, 6 Seamore Place, London.)



**Mrs Barbara Kaczmarowska Hamilton, great niece of Jean and Ian Hamilton, who painted Lady Hamilton's portrait. Photo by kind permission of Mrs Hamilton.**

Ian Hamilton was knighted for his heroic war service, January 2, 1901, and they became known as Sir Ian and Lady Hamilton. Jean found that becoming a titled lady elevated them to new heights in society and opened even more doors for her as well as for her husband.

Winston Churchill married, September 1908, Clementine Hozier, and soon brought her along and introduced her to Jean. What the Hamiltons and Churchills had in common was soldiering, battles and wars and, of course, politics. In all of this (excepting the actual battlefields) the women were almost as much involved

as the men. No chance was passed up by the wives to further their husbands' careers at dinners and house parties, in the presence of senior army officers. The women could argue as good as the gentlemen on the subject of politics.

With Winston's advancement in politics the situation turned around. Having been newly promoted (1911) to First Lord of the Admiralty, Winston assisted Hamilton to be given the post of General Officer Commanding at Malta, where he and Jean lived in the splendid San Antonio Palace, Valletta. During that time Winston visited and witnessed Hamilton's secret amphibious exercises that he carried out there. The experience would crucially influence Hamilton's involvement in the future Dardanelles Campaign during the First World War.

Whilst home on leave in London, Hamilton went shopping at the royal jewellers for a present for Clementine Churchill, Jean wrote in her diary:

'Yesterday evening he told me he had been to Asprey's to buy a blue enamelled brooch and mirror for Clemmie Churchill – he never can be bothered choosing anything for a present or entering a shop, I don't know what has come over him, it seems as though some other soul has come to inhabit his body for a time, such a rage for life and pleasure possesses him! (22 December, 1911).

The Hamiltons returned to live in London in 1914, setting up home at another mansion, No. 1 Hyde Park Gardens, overlooking Hyde Park, just prior to the outbreak of the First World War. As Jean received a handsome allowance from her father's estate, she could put on lavish dinner parties and balls to which she invited Edwardian high society. The names that people her life who are recorded in her diaries as friends, intimates, and acquaintances, were many: the famous hostess, Ethel (Ettie) Lady Desborough; Winston's first love Pamela Plowden; Alice Keppel (the famous great-grandmother of Camilla, Duchess of Cornwall),

who was for many years mistress of King Edward VII; Lady Diana Manners, later Duff Cooper; the Asquiths, he being Prime Minister; Lady Randolph Churchill *nee* Jennie Jerome a great American beauty; Sir F.E. Smith the Attorney General; Sibyl, Lady Colefax; the colourful Maud, Lady Cunard; George, Lord Curzon, Viceroy of India, and his wife Mary, another American beauty; Frances Horner, patron of the Arts; the renown gardener Norah Lindsay; Consuelo, Duchess of Marlborough; Lady Sarah Wilson *nee* Spencer Churchill, and her sister Cornelia, Lady Wimborne, both being aunts to Winston.

There was, too, British army generals, including Ian Hamilton's old commanding officer Frederick, Lord Roberts and his wife Aileen; Sir William Robertson, a future Chief of the Imperial General Staff; Hugh Arnold-Foster, Secretary of State for War; Lieutenant-General Sir William Birdwood; Major-General Walter Braithwaite; Sir John French; Earl Kitchener of Khartoum; Sir William Nicholson; Lieutenant-General Sir Henry Rawlinson; and Lord Alwyne Compton, to mention but a few that peopled their lives. There were, too, numerous Members of Parliament and the House of Lords, and the noted newspaper journalist Charles Repington, whose second wife Molly was a close friend of Jean.

Jean was shy of the British royalty as she did not like curtsying, but both they and foreign royalty and embassy dignitaries, peopled her life and her home. Queen Mary, the Duke and Duchess of Windsor, King George VI and Queen Elizabeth, feature in her diary.

There was as ever, at Jean's homes, and those of her many friends that she visited, dinners, conversation, balls, music, and dancing, sometimes into the chandelier-

glistening night and early hours of the morning, with breakfast being served before guests departed, all of which she recorded in her diary.

Jean was artistic and wrote poems, and she had a circle of prominent artist, literary, and musical friends, who peopled her dinner parties and took tea with her and accompanied her to the theatre. Articles about Jean and photographs of her and her glamorous home, featured in the fashionable magazines of the day, and she was painted by several artists, including a sitting to John Singer Sargent.



**Jennie, Lady Randolph Churchill and friends, entertaining at a party.**

The Hamiltons were supporters of the Liberal Party, and Winston Churchill was throughout his life a liberal Tory that rendered him something of a maverick amongst the Conservative Party hierarchy and much of its membership. In 1904, he infuriated them by famously crossing the floor of the House of Commons to sit with the Liberals. It was through politics that Winston had met his future wife Clementine Hozier, who was a Liberal supporter, she, observing him in action in

the House of Commons, from the Ladies Gallery, fell in love with him. Winston's brother, John (Jack), younger by five years, had earlier, 1908, married Lady Gwendeline Bertie from Oxford, who was also a Liberal supporter, and close friend of the Asquith family, dining frequently at their house and engaging with them in card-playing. Jack followed Winston, who eventually returned to the Conservative Party fold, but Lady Gwendeline remained a staunch Liberal throughout her life. It meant the Churchills had a foot in both the Liberal and Tory camps. This was told to me in interview by Jack and Lady Gwendeline's daughter, Clarissa Eden, Countess of Avon, (widow of the former Prime Minister Sir Anthony Eden), who will become a centenarian, June 28, 2020.

The Hamiltons' marital relationship was competitive, and it is apparent from a conversation Jean had with Winston, when they were staying as guests for Christmas at the home of Lord and Lady Howe, (she being formerly Lady Georgina Spencer-Churchill), that Jean preferred it that way:

'We discussed matrimony from his point of view, touched on love very slightly, and discussed "strife and life" at some length – I maintaining "that the one meant the other, and that when a thing was perfect it was finished and over".' (Christmas Day, 1903, Gopsall Hall, Warwickshire.)

## **OUT BREAK OF THE FIRST WORLD WAR (1914-18)**

A major war would alter the lives of the Hamiltons and Churchills for the future. Britain's entry into the First World War (1914-18) was a shock to everyone. No one was prepared and that included these two families. Winston and Clementine along with Jack and Lady Gwendeline Churchill (the two women being known in the family as Clemmie and Goonie), were actually on holiday in two cottages next door to each other, at Overstrand, Norfolk, by the sea, when war was declared. It was a terrific shock especially to the wives. Their children had been

playing happily in the sand, and the buckets and spades had to be tidied away earlier than expected so that they could return home.

Winston was immediately busy at the Admiralty, Jack left his city job as a stockbroker and went into uniform and thence to France with his regiment. The Hamiltons were at their prestigious mansion home, No.1 Hyde Park Gardens.



**Winston and Clementine Churchill on holiday by the sea, just prior to the declaration of the First World War, 1914.**

There was instantly a meeting of minds between Winston and Hamilton and the Liberal Party Prime Minister Herbert Asquith, that would lead to the fated Dardanelles campaign and the disastrous amphibious landings on the Gallipoli peninsula.

The initial suggestion for an attack elsewhere than on the main theatre of war, the Western Front, was first mooted by Maurice Hankey, a lieutenant colonel in the Royal Marines who, as Secretary to the War Council in 1914, produced the *Boxing Day Memorandum*, in which he favoured an attack on Turkey, through the Dardanelles as an alternative to the trench stalemate in France and Flanders.



**Left to right: Jack Churchill kneeling; centre Winston Churchill; right, Winston's secretary, Eddy Marsh; watching a British Army victory march through Lille, 1918.**

Winston Churchill took up the idea, in response to an appeal from the Russians early in January 1915, as a means of diverting Turkish forces away from their offensive in the Caucasus, and he suggested the attack should take place at Gallipoli.



The actual attack was made by the Royal Navy alone, but the guns in the Turkish forts guarding the Dardanelles, the sea passage between the Gallipoli peninsula and Asia Minor, proved too much for the fleet. The warships were unable to suppress their fire long enough for the minesweepers to clear the minefields in the Dardanelles Straits. As the Navy got into increasing difficulty, it was finally realised that troops would be needed to complete the operation.

The newly-appointed War Secretary, Earl Kitchener of Khartoum, approved the release of troops from England and Egypt, and placed General Sir Ian Hamilton in command of the Constantinople Expeditionary Force (later renamed the Mediterranean Expeditionary Force), then gathering in the eastern Mediterranean. Initially, Hamilton's orders were only to support the navy in its operations. The major naval attack, March 18, 1915, ran into an undetected new minefield and was broken off after heavy loss of ships. At a meeting between Hamilton and the commander of the fleet, Admiral de Robeck, it was decided that the army would attack the Gallipoli peninsula and clear it of Turkish guns and forts before the navy would renew its efforts. Together, they would clear the way for the expeditionary force to reach and capture Constantinople and put Turkey out of the war. However, the Dardanelles campaign – the joint naval and military operation – soon became the Gallipoli campaign, Hamilton's purely military effort to clear the way before the fleet would renew its attack.

The main theme of Jean's diaries throughout the Gallipoli campaign is her complete faith in her husband and her total conviction that he could have won there and moved on to take Constantinople, which would have gone some way towards winning the war for Britain. The failure at Gallipoli is a highly controversial subject and there are bodies of military historians with varying opinions and, today, it is still a hotly debated subject. Hamilton and Churchill

were, however, ‘in it together’ and they had to stand shoulder-to-shoulder in defence of their actions – a point Jean also made in her diary.

The press abused the campaign, apportioning blame on both Hamilton and Churchill, and Lord Kitchener was viewed as indecisive and not up to the job of Secretary for War. Baying for a sacrifice, some wanted General Sir Ian Hamilton court-martialled. It was not until after his recall and his return to England that Hamilton realised fully the damage done to him and the campaign by the journalists, Ellis Ashmead-Bartlett and Keith Murdoch, by what they had published in the newspapers. Considering the enormity of his struggle to win at Gallipoli, and the traumatic effect on both his wife and him, of being recalled, to face humiliation, the suggestion can only be viewed as outrageous.

Winston had to resign as First Lord of the Admiralty. He went back into uniform as lieutenant-colonel of the 6<sup>th</sup> Royal Scots Fusiliers, commanding the battalion at Ploegsteert, near Ypres, Belgium. Hamilton was left unemployed, his hitherto unblemished career now hanging in the balance and under scrutiny.

The Churchills were obliged to remove from Admiralty House, leaving them with no place to live. The only abode available was Jack and Lady Gwendeline’s home at Cromwell Road, south west London, and the two families of four adults and five children, plus nannies and servants, were squashed into that small house, being joined later by the now divorced Lady Randolph, who Clemmie and Goonie called *Belle mère* (beautiful mother-in-law). The women were all living on their nerves in case the two breadwinners Winston and Jack would be killed in the war. Lady Gwendeline went to Blenheim Palace and helped with the hospital there for troops, but she worried so much about Jack that she became a chain-smoker. Winston, ever dramatic, made his Last Will and Testament, though he had little to leave, before setting out to Ploegsteert, Belgium, commonly known amongst the British Tommies as ‘Plug Street’. Jennie wrote to him:

‘Please be sensible, ... I think you ought to take the trenches in small doses, after 10 years of more or less sedentary life - but I’m sure you won’t “play the fool” - Remember you are destined for greater things ... I am a great believer in your star ... .’

In 1916, the Hamiltons had taken Postlip Hall, Winchcombe, in the Cotswolds, Gloucestershire, for a holiday, and Winston was staying with them. Jean wrote of an after-dinner scene:

‘We had a *very* exciting dinner. Winston after two large goblets of iced champagne, became very communicative. ... Afterwards in the drawing-room, he walked about the room, declaiming, shouting, trying his oratory on me, as Ian says. He was terribly excited, talking about Lord Kitchener, said he had a spitting toad inside his head, he pressed his hands hard over his own head and eyes to show the baffled weariness of trying to deal with such a fool.’ (29 May 1916, Postlip Hall).



**General Sir Ian Hamilton**

## **CLEMENTINE CHURCHILL OFFERS TO GIVE HER BABY TO JEAN, LADY HAMILTON**

It was during this difficult time, when Winston and Clementine Churchill were homeless and relatively penniless, that Clementine offered to give away her fourth unborn child, (later named Marigold Frances), to Jean Hamilton, who had left it too late to be able to conceive. The actual date was June 18, 1918 as recorded in Jean's diary. Clementine had been shouldering a heavy responsibility of her own throughout the war. In June 1915, she had taken up important war work by joining the Munitions Workers' Auxiliary Committee, formed by the Young Men's Christian Association (YMCA). Millions of women flocked to the factories to take up posts vacated by men going into the armed services. To maximise production, canteens had to be provided and kept open 24 hours a day to feed the workforce. Clementine became responsible for opening, staffing, and running nine canteens in the north and north-eastern metropolitan area of London, each one providing meals for up to 500 workers.



**Clementine Churchill speaking at the opening of the first YMCA hut canteen for women munitions workers, Edmonton, north London, August 1915.**

It was gruelling work, travelling about on a crowded bus from one venue to another, travelling across London as there was no petrol for the car. There were arguments and disagreements to deal with as men complained that women were taking their jobs. The women complained they were being paid a lower rate than the men for the same job. Then Clementine discovered she was pregnant with a fourth child! Following a dinner party at the home of Lord Haldane, (formerly Secretary of State for War, 1905–12), Jean wrote in her diary of the demands still met by Clementine:

‘Clemmie Churchill and Frances [Horner] departed in high dudgeon about 11 o’clock to the night shift of the Hackney Canteen.’ (14 June 1918).



**The drawing room of No.1 Hyde Park Gardens, the Hamiltons' London home, where Clementine Churchill offered to give away her unborn child to Lady Hamilton. By kind permission of Mr Ian Hamilton.**

## **JEAN HAMILTON'S WAR WORK**

Jean Hamilton had also taken on a lot of war work, being an active member of the Red Cross. She did not waste a moment, setting about organising food,

clothing, and other parcels at her home, to be shipped to the troops. Ian would later write that on certain days throughout the year, their house would be ‘thrown open and a good tea given to meetings of every sort of good work.’ These included injured soldiers invalided out of the war. Jean also set up a Gallipoli Fund to raise cash to buy supplies that were sent to the troops at the Dardanelles. The appeal was published in the newspapers, July 12, 1915, and ‘brought an immediate and most gratifying response.’ Jean was also a member of Queen Alexandra’s Field Force Fund that was run by a committee on which sat Mr Henry Fenwick Reeve, who was a senior executive officer, and Mrs Charlotte Sclater Honorary Secretary. Hundreds of bales of comforts and medical supplies were packed at Jean's house, under her supervision, and at the depots of Queen Alexandra's Field Force Fund. The supplies were then shipped to the troops at Gallipoli and the base hospitals at Mudros (on the island of Lemnos), Alexandria, and Malta. Jean wrote in her diary on her birthday:

‘No rest or peace all day, telephoning and worry from dawn to midnight. ... Heather [her sister] and I were so busy with Red Cross work. ... much agitated all day getting ten huge bales of Red Cross things off to Alexandria – they had to be off at 2.30 – Miss Batt, my new war secretary, quite lost her head, but Heather's chauffeur came to the rescue and took them off in her motor and they were in time.’ (8 June 1915).

During the war, items sent to the troops via Queen Alexandra’s Field Force Fund of which Jean’s efforts was part, included: 17,000 shirts; over 7,500 vests; socks, mufflers, shorts and sweaters; 14,000 mosquito nets; 37,000 towels and 20,000 cakes of soap; nearly 1½ million cigarettes; 1,648lbs. of tobacco and over 13,000 pipes; 1,500lbs. sweets; 359 barrels of apples; boracic and carbolic ointments and Vaseline; 360 mouth organs, 20 gramophones with records, 6 sets of boxing gloves; pocket mirrors, scissors, and soldiers' ‘housewives’ [sewing kits]. Supplies for the hospitals included 100 pillows and pillowcases, bandages and dressings, slippers and bed jackets. At Mudros, a recreation tent had been erected,

capable of holding 500 men, and was equipped with a piano, gramophones, and several refrigerators. [Figures from the Imperial War Museum: BO2/12 Women's Work Committee, First Report 12 July–30 September 1915, and 12/3, 12/4, 12/5-11, 12/3].

In the midst of it all, Jean could recall happier times, dancing at a ball with Winston Churchill's secretary, Eddy Marsh, at San Antonio Palace, on the beautiful, sun-soaked, island of Malta, that must now have seemed so far away and very long ago.



**A soldiers' party, December 18, 1917, put on by the Hamiltons at their home, No.1 Hyde Park Gardens, London. The fresco on the wall is Maurice Greiffenhagen's *Mary Queen of Scots at the Battle of Langside*. By kind permission of Mr Ian Hamilton.**

## THE DARDANELLES COMMISSION OF INQUIRY

Due to the failure of the Dardanelles Campaign, Hamilton and Churchill had to face an official Dardanelles Commission of Inquiry, that was set up in 1916, by Liberal Prime Minister Herbert Asquith, the final report of which was withheld, meaning it hung over their heads for many months, until after the war was over. Hamilton and Churchill stuck together to defend their reputations and those of the men who served under them. On June 6, 1916, Hamilton lunched with Winston at Cromwell Road, where Churchill was still living at the home of Jack and Lady Gwendeline. The house stands to the present day, directly facing the Natural History Museum. The meeting was to enable them to go through something in the region of twenty cables that had been sent from Gallipoli to Kitchener, appealing for men and munitions in support of the active operations there. The cables had been held by Kitchener and never replied to or shown to the Cabinet, constituting negligence on his part. Hamilton and Churchill were planning to use these to expose Kitchener, and in support of themselves and their actions, in relation to the Dardanelles campaign. Whilst they were thus engaged a news boy visible from the window, ran along the pavement shouting: 'Kitchener drowned! No survivors!' Earl Kitchener had drowned, June 5, whilst on his way to Russia on HMS *Hampshire* to attend negotiations with Tsar Nicholas II. The ship struck a German mine 1.5 miles (2.4 km) west of Orkney and sank with the loss of over 700 lives. Kitchener's body was never recovered.

Hamilton described their reaction to the news: 'We looked at one another with wild surmise like Cortes at the Pacific from the heights of Darien. ... Had I put the idea of going to Russia into his head?' There had been talk of Hamilton going to 'Russia to give the Czar his field-marshal's baton ... .' It had been decided that Kitchener should go instead. 'When we came into the dining-room, Winston signed to everyone to be seated and then, before taking his own seat, very solemnly quoted: "Fortunate was he in the moment of his death!" It was now



impossible for Hamilton and Churchill to implicate Kitchener in the way that they should, and his failure to support the campaign went unsaid.

The delay in publishing the Report on the Dardanelles Commission of Inquiry would seem to have been deliberate, probably to save the reputations of the War Cabinet and absolve them of any blame. Hamilton was never again employed in active service and, somewhat ironically, was offered and accepted the post of Constable of the Tower of London, that he held until his retirement. Winston Churchill who was then in his early-40s had to entirely rebuild his career and his credibility as a politician, which he did to an incredible degree – but he never forgot what he owed to Hamilton.

During the Second World War, (1939-45), Hamilton was writing his memoirs *Listening for the Drums*. In a chapter about Winston he said:

“... no-body, not even Lord Bobs in all his glory, has touched my life at so many points as Winston Churchill. So much indeed has he done so that were my pages to give no glimpses of his strange voyage through the years, showing him sometimes as the Flying Dutchman, scudding along under bare poles; sometimes as the Ancient Mariner under flapping canvas in a flat calm; sometimes as a small boy playing with goldfish; my story would not be complete. As a sample – on the 6<sup>th</sup> January ’41 Bardia had fallen; - red-hot news. Before it began to cool it must be hammered into all sorts of shapes and handed out through many channels leading to Finance, Parliament, and the World. Every second was priceless yet he paused to let his mind fly back to forty-one years to end a special message to an old comrade of the wars who had long since ceased to interest the Press, Parliament of Finance.” [Quoted: Hamilton, General Sir Ian, *Listening for the Drums*, pub. Faber & Faber 1944, p.238.]

Lord Bobs was the Hamiltons’ nick-name for Frederick, Lord Roberts, Commander-in-Chief of the British Army in India. Hamilton’s reference to ‘Bardia’ was to the British capture of Bardia in Libya from the Italians. Hamilton then went on to quote a telegram he had received from Winston, January 6, 1941:

Post Office Telegram London 12.43, addressed to General Sir Ian Hamilton, Blair Drummond, Perthshire.

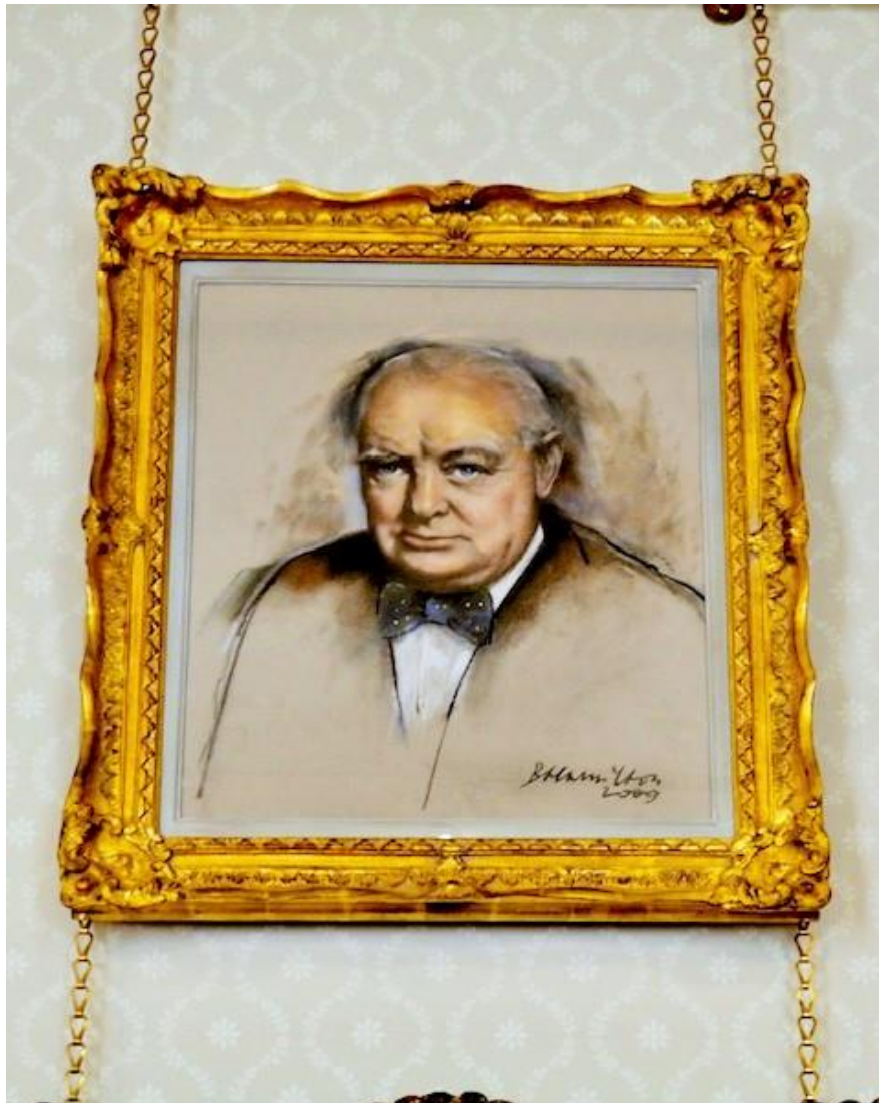
“I am thinking of you and Wagon Hill when another January 6<sup>th</sup> brings news of a fine feat of arms. Winston.”

It was to Winston’s credit as British wartime Prime Minister, that he remembered his mentor of an earlier time. The relevance of the date, January 6 was that it was on that date in 1900, during the South African Boer War, that Hamilton defeated the Boers at Wagon Hill in the siege of Ladysmith. Ten days after receipt of the telegram, January 16, was Hamilton’s 88<sup>th</sup> birthday. Jean and Ian were staying at her brother Sir Alexander Kay Muir’s home, Blair Drummond Castle, partly to escape the bombing in London, but much more-so because Jean was dying of cancer. Churchill’s thoughtfulness must have come as a comfort to Hamilton at such a time. Jean held on throughout February 22, their fifty-fourth wedding anniversary, and slipped away the following day.

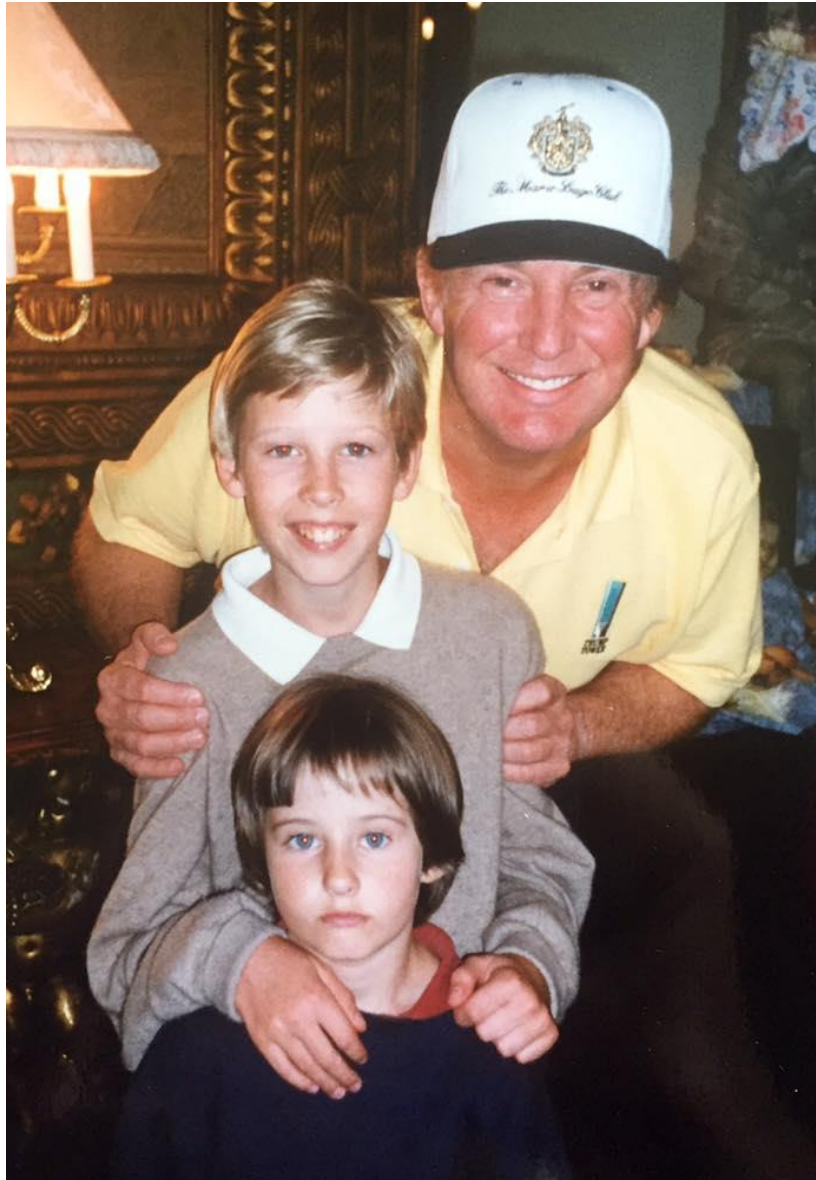


**Left to right: General Sir Ian Hamilton; Mr Winston Churchill; Roger Keyes, Admiral of the Fleet, at a reunion of the Royal Naval Division, Crystal Palace, London, 1938.**

The friendship between the Hamiltons and the Churchills has continued to the present day. Mrs Barbara Kaczmarowska Hamilton painted a portrait of Sir Winston Churchill that enjoys pride of place, hung in the room at Blenheim Palace where he was born.



**Portrait of Sir Winston Churchill by Mrs Barbara Kaczmarowska Hamilton, Blenheim Palace. By kind permission of Mrs B. Hamilton.**



**The present generation of Hamilton children, Felix and Maximilian, Pictured with Mr Donald Trump, prior to his becoming President. Photo by kind permission of Mrs Barbara Kaczmarowska Hamilton.**

President Donald Trump who plays golf with Felix and Maximilian Hamilton, the sons of Ian and Barbara, upon becoming president, reinstated Jacob Epstein's bust of Sir Winston Churchill in the White House's Oval Office.

Click on the below weblink to hear Celia Lee, British delegate, speaking on Winston & Jack the Churchill Brothers, at a Churchill Society Conference, Franklin, Tennessee, March 2018.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Xoivska6cSw&feature=youtu.be>

Sources:

Celia Lee, *Jean, Lady Hamilton (1861-1941) Diaries of A Soldiers Wife*, pub. 2020, Pen & Sword, Barnsley, South Yorkshire, UK, and 1950 Lawrence Road, Havertown, PA 19083, USA. Electronic editions available now. Hard cover pub. October 2020, available in bookshops and over the internet, including Amazon: Hard cover ISBN 9781526786585; October 2020.

ISBN E-Pub: 978152678594; Available now.

ISBN Kindle: 9781526786609;

ISBN PDF: 9781526786616.

John Lee, *A Soldier's Life: General Sir Ian Hamilton 1853-1947*, pub. 2021, Pen & Sword, Barnsley, South Yorkshire, UK, and Havertown, PA 19083, USA.

Celia Lee and John Lee, *The Churchills A Family Portrait*; pub. February 2010, Palgrave Macmillan, New York and London, hard cover and soft cover available in book shops and internet along with electronic versions including Amazon.

General Sir Ian Hamilton, *Listening For the Drums*; pub. Faber & Faber, 1944, p.238.