

**Tributes to Winston Churchill as state funeral remembered.**

Patrick Kidd Friday January 30, 2015, 12.14pm GMT, The Times  
<https://www.thetimes.co.uk/article/tributes-to-winston-churchill-as-state-funeral-remembered-xxvdvc6t0pn>

This time the cranes did not dip, nor the traffic halt, but Londoners came in their thousands to line the banks and bridges of the Thames as the *Havengore*, which had borne Winston Churchill on his final journey 50 years ago today, recreated the ceremony.

In place of a coffin, she carried a commemorative wreath and 50 passengers, including the Churchill family, representatives of the Winston's Wish childhood bereavement charity and six members of the Company of Watermen and Lightermen in the bow, glorious in their bright scarlet coats. As they passed *HMS Belfast*, a four-gun salute sounded.

It was a low-key ceremony, yet London still turned out to pay its respects to Churchill's memory on a grey and chilly lunchtime. The riverbanks were full, if not heaving, all the way from Tower Bridge to Westminster, where the *Havengore* halted for a service of remembrance before the wreath was cast on to the waters of the Thames.

On Westminster Bridge, in particular, they stood half a dozen deep on both sides of the road, causing a stampede and the inevitable angry honking of horns when spectators dashed from one side to the other as the boat passed beneath.

They were of all ages and nationalities. Tyson Bradley, a 21-year-old Canadian, had been waiting for almost half an hour before the boat arrived. "We have nothing like this sense of history and occasion in Canada," he said. "It feels as if we have travelled in time."

Born almost 50 years after the end of the Second World War, Mr Bradley said that Churchill "showed us a lot about courage and standing firm in the face of adversity".

Beside him was a gentleman in his 80s, who refused to give his name but said that he had stood on duty for Churchill's funeral as part of the Metropolitan Police.

"It was a long day and a sombre one," he remembered. "The music made it so. The crowd was silent." For him, today's ceremony was also an excuse for a reunion with former colleagues.

In a service at Westminster in the morning, the prime minister had said that Churchill's "courage and resolve" should inspire Britons as they fight to protect freedoms in the 21st century.

David Cameron, born the year after Churchill's death, paid tribute to "a great leader and a great Briton" after laying a wreath at the feet of his predecessor's bronze statue in the members' lobby of the Commons, where the toe of Churchill's left shoe gleams from being rubbed so often for good luck.

A further ceremony will be held at Westminster Abbey tonight and flowers laid on Churchill's green marble memorial stone.

Mr Cameron, whose older brother, Alex, now a QC, had been taken by their mother to join the funeral crowds, recalled first hearing Churchill's voice "booming out" from dusty vinyl recordings of his wartime speeches found at his grandmother's house.

"He knew that Britain was not just a place on the map but a force in the world, with a destiny to shape events and a duty to stand up for freedom," Mr Cameron said.

John Bercow, the Speaker of the Commons, noted that Churchill's parliamentary career had spanned almost 64 years and five constituencies. He had contested 21 parliamentary elections, under five party banners, winning 16 of them.

"He was a House of Commons man through and through," Mr Bercow said. "The chamber was his natural constituency."

There was no business scheduled in parliament yesterday but the terraces on the river side of the building were packed, beneath the green and red canopies of the Commons and the Lords, to watch the service and the ceremonial laying of the wreath.

From the bridge it was near impossible to hear the readings and prayers being conducted on board the *Havengore*, yet the crowds remained for the 20 minutes of the service before suddenly there cut through the traffic noise the haunting brass of *The Last Post*. The wreath was cast into the water and then *Reveille* was sounded.

As a final act, a choir sang *Mine Eyes Have Seen the Glory*, also known as *The Battle Hymn of the Republic*. At Churchill's request, it had been played at his funeral at St Paul's Cathedral.

Composed at the start of the American Civil War, the hymn was one of Churchill's favourites, perhaps reflecting his fondness for the country of his mother's birth, while his wartime spirit is captured by the line: "As he died to make men holy, let us die to make men free."

The words, by Julia Ward Howe, were set to the music of the American folk song, *John Brown's Body*, whose original lyrics also seemed rather appropriate for this commemoration. Winston's body may lie a-mouldering in the grave, but his soul is marching on.

### **Let's face it, Churchill was often a disaster.**

. . . yet he had the genius to recognise that the threat from Hitler would lead to the end of western civilisation

Daniel Finkelstein

Wednesday January 28 2015, 12.01am GMT, The Times

<https://www.thetimes.co.uk/article/lets-face-it-churchill-was-often-a-disaster-5qr8sx96tc6>

'Temperature 100.6. Pulse normal. Head scalp wound severe. Two cracked ribs. Simple slight pleural irritation of right side. Generally much bruised. Progress satisfactory.'

On December 13, 1931, Winston Churchill, after a quiet dinner at the Waldorf Astoria, got out of a taxi on the Central Park side of Fifth Avenue in order to visit his friend Bernard Baruch. Trying to cross the road on foot without looking both ways, he was run down by a car going at more than 30 miles an hour.

As the injuries recorded by his wife Clementine attest, no serious lasting damage was done. He spent weeks convalescing but was able to resume his American speaking tour by the end of January. Yet this was extremely fortuitous and also raises a question. If the cab had killed him, what would we now remember of Winston Churchill?

The man himself was certainly overcome with similar gloomy thoughts. In the previous two years he had suffered disastrous financial losses, had lost his political footing in the Conservative party entirely and now this. "He said", recorded his wife, that "he did not think he would ever recover completely from the three events."

Yet of course, he did. He lived for another 34 years, succeeding triumphantly, and this month we mark the 50th anniversary of his death, recalling him as possibly the greatest man in our history. I mark it myself with the respect due to someone who, I believe, was responsible for the survival of both of my parents.

To look at Churchill's life in that way — from the perspective of 1965, looking back at his extraordinary life and aware of its climax — allows us to smile knowingly at hearing of his feelings of failure. We know what he could not about what was to come. It is a standard historical approach. But also flawed, as I think can be shown if we use what might loosely be called a statistical method. One that also allows us to isolate the cause of Churchill's reputation as a great man.

Let us start with a game. A group of people are asked to stand up and choose between heads and tails. If heads, they put their hands up; if tails, they keep them down. A coin is tossed. Those who chose incorrectly must sit down, the rest continue. They make fresh guesses each time.

Eventually, after numerous coin tosses only one person is left standing, who is the winner. Their victory is pure luck. It is a feature of randomness. They didn't do anything different from anyone else. Yet it can be difficult not to think of them as rather clever.

This survivor bias, as it is known, is a common mistake made, for instance, in business textbooks. A company that has survived for 100 years is reviewed and its sterling qualities extolled as if these qualities were responsible for the longevity. Yet the many companies which did exactly the same things and did not survive for 100 years are ignored.

Reviews of Churchill's life often make the same error. A contrast, for instance, is drawn between his boldness, risk-taking and individuality and the mediocrity and conformity of most modern politicians.

Yet while the unreliability and eccentricity of Churchill was certainly striking, it is not unique. There are strong strands of it in his father, for instance. And it is quite common to encounter it in politics. What was unique about it in Churchill's case was that it was crowned with success.

Consider the sheer unlikelihood of someone becoming prime minister after joining a party, then becoming its greatest enemy as a cabinet minister in the other party, then rejoining it as a cabinet minister, and then becoming its greatest dissident. Leave aside repeated policy errors in and out of office. This is something that might happen only once in a thousand years.

Roy Jenkins concludes his biography of Churchill with these words: "I now put Churchill, with all his idiosyncrasies, his indulgences, his occasional childishness, but also his genius, his tenacity and his persistent ability, right or wrong, successful or unsuccessful, to be larger than life, as the greatest human being ever to occupy 10 Downing Street."

It is hard to argue with this judgment but the last four words are crucial. Because people that indulgent, childish, brilliant and stubborn generally fall by the wayside long before they make it to No 10. And even Churchill was almost killed by a car on Fifth Avenue.

A statistical approach also throws light on another claim about Churchill's greatness. Read, for instance, the pioneering book by John Lukacs on the crucial days in May 1940 when Lord Halifax wanted to negotiate peace with Germany and Churchill successfully resisted.

Churchill emerges as heroic and essential. Against overwhelming odds he insists on the audacious choice and is successful. Yet throughout his life, Churchill always insisted on the audacious but improbable course against the more cautious yet prudent one. The Dardanelles, the return to gold standard, supporting the empire in India, resisting the abdication — he takes the bold position each time. And it is generally a disaster.

Looking at Churchill's career as a whole — as any statistical account must — it is impossible to see him as a person of good judgment. The risks he takes are unwarranted and it is entirely reasonable that so many thought it more likely that Lord Halifax was the sage.

Yet from this same way of looking at things emerges Churchill's true claim to have been a towering figure. When making a calculation about whether to act, it is necessary not merely to consider the probability of success, but also to consider what is at stake. You need to take these two things together — multiply them, as it were — to determine the right course.

Unlike almost all of his contemporaries, and unlike most voters, Winston Churchill understood what succumbing to fascism would mean. He may have overestimated the chances of victory, but he correctly estimated the cost of a negotiated so-called peace with Hitler. He saw that it would mean an end to civilisation.

He realised that taking almost any risk was worthwhile in these circumstances. And this realisation, a comprehension almost unique, made him a great man and turns his presence on the scene, at exactly the moment he was needed, into the most astonishing piece of good fortune for every free citizen in the world.

There is much to enjoy in the life of Sir Winston and much to commemorate on the anniversary of his death, but above all things I toast the man who appreciated the price of liberty.

## THE TELEGRAPH

**No man ever lived his life more fully.**

By Telegraph View 24 January 2015 • 6:35am

<https://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/winston-churchill/11365421/No-man-ever-lived-his-life-more-fully.html>

Telegraph View: On January 25, 1965, this newspaper ran the following leader to mark the death of Winston Churchill. He was perhaps the greatest British Prime Minister of the 20th century

Churchill's achievements in war were so great that many have misjudged his character and forgotten his achievements in peace. Credit: Photo: Toni Frissell

*Today we reprint the leader first published to mark the death of Winston Churchill exactly 50 years ago.*

Men and women in many lands will mourn the passing of Winston Leonard Spencer-Churchill, for they know well that if he had never lived they might not be alive today. Never was more justified the saying of the Greek statesman Pericles that "the whole earth is the sepulchre of the renowned and their memorial is written not on tablets of stone but on the

hearts of men". Few of our great men have been more British, but also few have been more international. In every land where a trace of freedom remains, and perhaps in many where freedom seems to have been snuffed out, the name of Churchill evokes the admiration of the noble and silences the gibes of the petty. To those abroad who found consolation in despair from his indomitableness and caught fire at the flame of his courage, it will always be a puzzle that the British people temporarily discarded one whom they would have been proud to acclaim. It is our way not to treat our great men well, though it does not follow that we are unworthy of them.

No man, until the last few lingering years, ever lived every moment of his life more fully, with more zest and with less aloofness. The dazzle of his war leadership is so great that we are apt to be blind to the forty years of sailing in the rough seas of democracy that preceded the fearful storm through which he guided us. Yet there was material enough in those forty years to form a not inconsiderable pedestal. Among this material were disappointments. The bitterest was probably the failure of the Dardanelles expedition in the First World War. Unjust censure for that tragedy has already been converted by history into triumphant vindication. The second most bitter may have been the rebuffing for seven long years of his warnings of the renewed German menace.

Again, his achievements in war were so great that many have misjudged his character and forgotten his achievements in peace. Deep study of the art of war or of military history, immense courage and capacity in war, do not make a man a warmonger. He hated war as much as any pacifist, because he knew its horrors better. All the time that he was warning us about Germany he was beseeching us to put strength into the League of Nations, and in the post-war years he sought to give substance to the hope of world peace by promoting cohesion between the still free States of Europe. Nor should it be forgotten that he who gave us victory gave us also, as much as any single man, the structure of our social services.

It is, of course, natural and right that his chief title to fame should rest upon 1939-45. He became Prime Minister at the darkest hour in our history. The heavier the odds, the greater the achievement. His was not marred by any pretensions to be indispensable. He offered only "blood, toil, tears and sweat," and to fight. For he was, as he said himself, "the child of the House of Commons", as resigned to bow as he was resolute to rule, if called upon to do either. He well knew that there is no substitute for sweat, and he worked hard – in office and out of it. The reason why he could withstand so great a strain so long was only that he was always at peace with himself.

In the achievement of this inner quietude he was continuously fortified by a serene and cloudless marriage. To say, as he said himself: "I married and lived happily ever afterwards," is the simple epitome of a companionship unaffected by any buffets of fortune, and immune to even the most viperish tongues. He had his moments of despair, of bitterness, or impulse, and of revolt. In all such, his wife was steadfast and wise, neither assertive nor over-awed, neither too outspoken nor too restrained. His affection for her was founded on deep respect, and if he was sometimes deaf to others he was ever attentive to her.

It is tempting to make a comparison between Churchill and other great war leaders who have helped this country to ride similar storms. The closest analogy in spirit, skill and eloquence is Elizabeth I. Many of her phrases have the true Churchillian ring. William Pitt the Elder's genius had a touch of the feverish. He too was equal to his hour; he had his element of flamboyance and his moments of unquestioned grandeur. But his mind hovered on the border-line between brilliance and insanity. William Pitt the Younger had stubborn resolution and far sight. But he was broken by his disappointment.

There remains Lloyd George. He was spurred to rise to a stature which nobody thought he possessed. He spoke with the tongues of men and of angels. He defied the lightning. But he had brains rather than character. He could “charm the birds off the trees”, but one felt all the time that he was better at conjuring tricks than genuine magic. On the whole, therefore, with the possible exception of the splendid but slightly misty figure of the first Elizabeth, Churchill outshines all his competitors to the title of chief architect of national salvation. Such a man has the power to lift up the hearts of men. That was his supreme gift to us in life, and it may be his legacy to us in death. If he could send any message from the shades to the people whom he loved so well, we may be very sure that it would be a call to acquit ourselves like men. Did he not prove that his country in the storm of calamity has “a secret vigour and a pulse like a cannon”? “He does not die,” says the poet, “who can bequeath some influence to the land he knows.” If so, and it surely is so, Winston Churchill, acknowledged and acclaimed as a paladin in and architect of the past, has still a contribution to make to the history of the future.



### **When we buried Winston Churchill, we buried the British nation.**

By Tim Stanley 30 January 2015 • 12:06am

<https://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/winston-churchill/11379447/When-we-buried-Winston-Churchill-we-buried-the-British-nation.html>

Mourners file past the flag-draped coffin of Sir Winston Churchill Credit: Photo: Hulton/Getty

After attending Churchill's funeral, Labour minister Richard Crossman wrote the following in his diary:

*What a faded, declining establishment surrounded me. Aged marshals, grey, dreary ladies, decadent Marlboroughs and Churchills. It was a dying congregation gathered there and I am afraid the Labour cabinet didn't look too distinguished either. It felt like the end of an epoch, possibly even the end of a nation.*

Even in 1965, without the perspective of hindsight, it was obvious that something else died with Churchill. You might even say that they put Britain in that coffin. What little remains haunts us like a ghost. The Left would exorcise it, the Right would resurrect it. We all have cause to mourn.

Much was bad about the Britain of Churchill. It sustained an empire through force: it was Churchill who helped create the brutal Black and Tans that tried to terrorise colonial Ireland into submission. It was a country in which life was cheap and war an extension of foreign policy: think of Churchill's disastrous Dardanelles campaign that gambled away thousands

of lives. And it was also a place of deep class divisions coloured by appalling poverty: it was our Winston, yet again, who convinced the cabinet to use the army during the General Strike. In 1945, the British people voted to end the age of empire and to establish the welfare state precisely because Churchill's "decadent" class was so cruel and unjust. He may well have led us to victory in the Second World War, but the voters rejected his shrill prediction that socialism would require a secret police and elected a radical Labour government instead. The nation loved Churchill. It didn't always like him.

But he was Britain. Just like de Gaulle embodied France, so one could disagree with what Churchill said and still see the very best of the nation in him. A soldier who took enormous risks, a wit, a lover of champagne and cigars, a lover of the English language and one its most brilliant writers, and an internationalist who remained stubbornly, brilliantly British. Image counts for a lot. You might know him best as a man in a pin stripe suit holding a machine gun – the angry suburbs epitomised. But surely the finer image is Winston in a suit and hat, smoking a cigar, laying a brick wall. Incidentally, he took the art of bricklaying so seriously that he even joined the union.

Many politicians have represented dimensions of Britishness. Tony Benn was its radical dissenter; Margaret Thatcher its Victorian shopkeeper. But few have ever embodied the whole package to the extent that a single photo can summarise a national spirit. Boris Johnson crawling about with a gun is pretty close but, ultimately, it's a parody rather than the real thing. We're enjoying a cheerful allusion to Churchillian bravado rather than witnessing genuine heroism. And the fact that it feels like Britain is incapable of producing leaders like Churchill – someone who reaches beyond party and speaks to the country as a whole – says much about our fraying society. Would Winston have struggled to find the words to defend the Union during the Scottish referendum? No way, no way.

To return to Crossman's words about the drabness of the funeral congregation, what we really buried in 1965 was strength of will. The country was poorer, sicker, nastier back then. But it also had a better idea of what it stood for and the will to defend it. Britain was the rule of law, God, manners, Shakespeare, pink bits on the map, tranquillity, a country lane ("A cottage small/ Beside a field of grain"), honour, enterprise, dignity and a world power governed by people who didn't like going abroad. We still are a lot of these things to other people. I recently returned from Nigeria and have to report that the only two things uniting that mad country are the English language and English football. A government minister saw my striped white and blue shirt and asked, "Are you a Chelsea supporter?" Yes, the only people who really despise the British are the British.

If you are a vapid consumer, a socialist or a ignoramus then you're also a materialist and, so, the miserableness of Crossman's funeral scene won't bother you. All that really matters is the "pound in your pocket" – and we've all gained more of those since 1965. But if you're someone concerned at all with the life of the spirit – and with the spirit of the nation – then its sadness resonates down through the years. For man does not live by bread alone but strives for transcendence through poetry. Churchill was one of our greatest national poets living in an age of cultural aspiration that made Britain a place special to live in and worth dying for. That it is less so now is beyond dispute. That it can become so again, we have to

hope and work towards. For one of the greatest sins is despair, and Winston spent his career counselling against it. "Do not despair," he said, "do not yield... march straight forward!"

## THE INDEPENDENT

### Winston Churchill: the enigma of a British hero.

Dj Taylor, Sunday 25 January 2015 01:00

<https://www.independent.co.uk/voices/winston-churchill-the-enigma-of-a-british-hero-10000596.html>

AC Benson called him 'a horrid little fellow', George Orwell would have shot him, but what a giant he seems now

*"Ferdinand Mount's 1978 novel The Clique, about journalism in the Sixties, opens with its hero, Gunby Goater, being sent to cover the final illness, 50 years ago last week, of "the Last Great Englishman". Later, watching from the Embankment as the barge carrying the behemoth's coffin moves up the river towards Westminster, Goater reflects that this is a "factitious" event – "All over England, middle-aged men were dressing up". Later in the novel, he wanders through down-at-heel East End terraces, where every house name – Tel-el-Kebir, Balmoral, Inkerman Villa – stokes some glowing imperial memory. No prizes for guessing the identity of the Last Great Englishman, or reckoning up the symbolism of Goater's journey around the backstreets: "It was the end of an era, all right."*

*So many rapt defences of the Churchill case have been produced in the half century since his death – more than 400 books at the last count – that it can come as rather a shock to examine some of the testimonies put forward by the prosecuting counsel. Here, for example, is the Edwardian man of letters AC Benson, coming across him at the Athenaeum in the summer of 1915: "I had not realised what a horrid little fellow he was – like some sort of maggot. His head is big, he stoops. He has thin nervous limp sort of hands. He looks like a drug-taker, or at least as if there was something wrong to be ashamed of... I happened to be next to him also in the lavatory and hated the way he washed. He seemed self-conscious even there and on edge – indeed, as if he were on fire within."*

*To Benson, a gentlemanly pacifist from a bygone age, Churchill was merely a warmonger (the same sense of a man spoiling for a fight emerges from Margot Asquith's diaries from August 1914). To George Orwell, nearly three decades later, he was simply a political opponent who required support in the absence of any credible left-wing alternative. ("I've no wish to praise him/I'd gladly shoot him when the war is won," he melodramatically wrote while trading some Byronic stanzas with Alex Comfort in Tribune.) Evelyn Waugh, summing up his achievements in 1965, declared that he was "always in the wrong, surrounded by crooks, a terrible father, a radio personality".*

*Winston Churchill: Life in pictures*

*Show all 30*

*That none of these accusations, verifiable though they may be, matter in the least is a tribute to the teleological gloss that attached itself to Churchill's personality from the mid-1940s onward, and the way in which every aspect of his previous history could be refashioned as*

a part of the Churchillian legend once the Second World War had been won and his place in our national history secured. Had he died in 1939, it seems fairly certain that posterity would have remembered him only for his failures – the catastrophic Dardanelles campaign of 1915, his sabre-rattling during the General Strike of 1926, the long years of exile in the 1930s, when he was regarded as a maverick figure whose day was done. Six years later, for all Orwell's complaints about "Winston Churchill posing as a democrat", he was reinvented as the champion of freedom.

But paradoxes of this kind are a feature of Churchill's career. Even that "Last Great Englishman" tag is a misnomer of a sort, for he was half-American, on his mother's side, and the almost uncanny sense he sometimes gave off of embodying a certain kind of English cultural heritage – see the well-nigh Shakespearian language of the war-time broadcasts – was balanced by a very un-English swagger. He was one of "us" (a duke's grandson, brought up in the great palace at Blenheim, whose father had been Chancellor of the Exchequer) and also, mysteriously, capable of bold strokes and evasions of which "we" were rarely capable, a pattern insider-outsider, able to draw on his establishment connections when they came in useful and ostentatiously discard them when they did not. A man, more to the point, whose early progress, when seen in the round, is a kind of object lesson in defying your limitations.

In the paralysing light of the 21st century, it tends to be forgotten quite how dim Churchill's prospects seemed at the end of the 19th. He narrowly evaded being kicked out of Harrow in his early teens and was only rescued by his father's celebrity. A 5ft 6in army cadet with a 31-inch chest, who had almost died of pneumonia as a schoolboy, he spent three days in a coma in 1893 after falling off a bridge. Like one of the less admirable characters in Anthony Powell's novels, his life seems at a very early stage to have resolved itself into a struggle to impose his will on the circumstances around him; a struggle in which impetuosity, obstinacy, shrewdness and an entirely romantic view of history, and the part that Britain might play in it, all had a role. It was no wonder that the Bensons of this world took fright.

As a politician, too, Churchill had increasingly come to be seen as an anachronism in the age of Stanley Baldwin (one of whose slogans was "safety first"), Ramsay MacDonald and Neville Chamberlain. But if his eventual rise to power, and military success, was a triumph of the will, then it also demonstrated one of the great truths of British political life, which is the electorate's more than occasional preference for style over substance, the heroic amateur over the efficient professional, the Cavalier over the Roundhead, the public figure who is not frightened to say what he, or she, thinks and whose lack of scruple is seen as a mark in his, or her, favour.

When, for example, in the aftermath of Dunkirk, Churchill delivered his famous "We shall fight them on the beaches, we shall fight them in the streets..." speech, a rumour instantly circulated in London to the effect that he had added the words "We'll throw bottles at the buggers – it's about all we've got left", but that this qualification had been struck out by the BBC censor. The story has since proved to be apocryphal but, as Orwell – in no doubt of Churchill's qualities of leadership, while looking forward to a Labour government – pointed out, it was the kind of thing that people thought him capable of; another feather added to the plumage of the Churchill myth at about the same level of that other apocryphal war-era story of the boxes of condoms sent to Russia which the Prime Minister had insisted should be stamped with the slogan "Extra small".

Naturally, when placed beneath the lens of history, much of the Churchill myth soon falls apart. Even that much-vaunted "national unity" he is supposed to have inspired is called into

*question by a working- class novel such as Alan Sillitoe's Saturday Night and Sunday Morning (1958). Its hero, Arthur Seaton, remembers his disaffected parents taking no interest in the war effort, and the family listening to Churchill's speeches "as if it mattered". As for policy, had a Conservative government under his leadership managed to get itself elected in 1945, it would almost certainly have had to introduce a version of the National Health Service and give India its freedom. The Churchill of the 1950s, returned to Downing Street, was in some ways quite as much a trimmer as his predecessors. But the contradiction of his achievement remains.*

*If the 1940s, as historians insist, saw the birth of a new kind of Britain, then its only guarantor was a representative of a very old, if not archaic, kind. Not the least irony of his legacy to us is that the freedoms which the average modern liberal takes for granted should come courtesy of a man whose attitude to the political process is enough to make the average modern liberal feel thoroughly ill at ease, and that the severest of his detractors should end up thanking providence that a man called Churchill live".*

## BBC NEWS

### **Winston Churchill: How a flawed man became a great leader.**

By John Simpson, World Affairs Editor, 23 January 2015  
<https://www.bbc.com/news/magazine-30934629>



Image source, PA

By John Simpson  
World Affairs Editor

On Thursday, the Magazine looked at the greatest controversies of Winston Churchill's career. Here, the BBC's world affairs editor examines how an all-too-human politician became a great wartime prime minister.

In 2002 the BBC broadcast a series called 100 Greatest Britons. After each programme in which particular figures were proposed and examined - they were mostly but not exclusively

the usual suspects, such as Darwin, Shakespeare and Elizabeth I - viewers were invited to vote.

In the end, there was no doubt about their verdict - Sir Winston Churchill was the greatest Briton.

The case for him is a powerful one, of course. He was first a government minister in 1908, and occupied most of the top jobs in politics during half a century. He finally retired in 1955, having served as prime minister for a total of nine years.

But it was his extraordinary leadership in World War Two that marked him out. Bold, brave and tireless in his resolve to take on the might of Nazi Germany, he inspired a nervous and hesitant Britain through his sheer energy and force of personality to defy stark odds and never give in.

The entire world's history would have been different if he hadn't come to power in Britain in 1940.

Still, Churchill made huge mistakes in his long political life - Gallipoli, the Black and Tans in Ireland, backing the use of poison gas.

As a particularly inexperienced chancellor of the exchequer in the 1920s, he put Britain back onto the gold standard. John Maynard Keynes, the great economist, believed this was a major factor in bringing about the Great Depression.

In the 1930s, in the political wilderness, he was an angry opponent of Indian nationalism, and his language about Gandhi verged on racism.

He stubbornly supported Edward VIII during the Abdication Crisis of 1936, though he was manifestly unsuited to the job.

Image source, ALAMY

There were several major strategic mistakes in WW2.

After it, Churchill was old and ill, yet he returned to lead the government from 1951-55, refusing for a long time to stand down.

It's a powerful litany of failure and misjudgement, and a leading academic at Cambridge University, Dr Nigel Knight, has examined it carefully.

"Churchill was fundamentally flawed. This was shown in his military strategy: Gallipoli in World War 1 was replicated in the Norwegian and North African and 'soft underbelly of Europe' campaigns during World War Two."

Nevertheless at the supreme moment, in May 1940, Churchill got it absolutely right.

During the 1930s he had visited Hitler's Germany and seen for himself the potential for evil there. Few people, either in the UK or the US, wanted to know, and he often had a problem selling his articles about the evils of Nazism to the press.

And of course once he was in power, his superb speeches inspired the country and kept it going.

Boris Johnson, the Conservative mayor of London, who recently published a book about Churchill, believes that it was Churchill's characteristic determination to go and find things out for himself that was a mark of his greatness.

"It's an illusion to think he was just a rhetorician, a guy who skated over the issues. He was deeply immersed in all the detail, and all the technicalities. And that helped him to get the right answer."

In 1938-39 British public opinion, as measured by the polling organisation Mass Observation, was strongly against Neville Chamberlain's policy of appeasement.

But Chamberlain's political position was unassailable, and he forced it through. Even after war had broken out in September 1939 the most likely outcome was that Britain would do a deal with Hitler and stand aside.

However, Chamberlain couldn't keep Churchill out of the Cabinet. He was now back again at the centre of power.

Image source, PA

Image caption,

Churchill leaving parliament in 1964 - he remained an MP almost until the end of his life  
As Hitler smashed his way through Western Europe, Churchill remained utterly faithful to Chamberlain. He forbade his supporters from leaking hostile stories to the press.

Eventually Chamberlain, his policy in ruins, was obliged to resign. He had no moral alternative but to put Churchill forward as his replacement.

Churchill was a decent and honourable man, as well as a charming one, and it was these qualities, not just his famous defiance, that made him prime minister.

He never actually quite said "History will be kind to me, for I intend to write it", but that turned out to be the case. His historical works were so good, they earned him the Nobel Prize for literature.

No other British prime minister can remotely match the scope of Churchill's achievement. When he died in 1965 the historian Sir Arthur Bryant said: "The age of giants is over."

Bryant was right - and yet that, in a way, is a measure of Churchill's success. Ever since he destroyed Hitler's despotism, our political leaders haven't needed to be giants.

They can just be ordinary. Image source, PA

Image caption,

Paint thrown over Churchill's statue in Parliament Square, 2007

The UK is marking the 50th anniversary of the death of Winston Churchill. He is regarded by many as the greatest Briton ever, but for some he remains an intensely controversial figure.

## THE NEW STATEMAN

Why it's time to debunk the Churchill myth?

By Simon Heffer 15 January 2015

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Our unquestioning idolatry of Winston Churchill prevents a true understanding of his life and career.

Anyone sentient at the time remembers how the nation stopped at the news of Sir Winston Churchill's death, and engaged in an act of homage to the man who had led the salvation of Britain from Hitler and the Nazis. In many ways the act of homage has never ended, and there are, indeed, perfectly good reasons why it should not. Britain did face a mortal threat in 1940. Churchill, whose career up to that point had been littered with catastrophic mistakes and misjudgements and was then aged 65, had nonetheless led the minority that correctly

understood the menace of Hitler and the dangers of disarmament and appeasement. The two British prime ministers of the late 1930s, Stanley Baldwin and Neville Chamberlain, chose to disregard him: partly because they had inherited a sense of Tory isolationism that made them want, above all things, not to involve themselves in quarrels with Hitler, but partly because they thought Churchill was simply on another of his bizarre hobby horses, and that his latest cranky obsession would end in the usual personal humiliation for him.

However, the humiliation would, in this instance, be theirs. Churchill had read Hitler and the Nazi threat exactly right, and the urgent need for national survival was perfectly suited to his greatest talents – those of the showman and orator rather than the strategist. Once he had faced down his rival for the premiership, the appeaser Lord Halifax, he used those talents to articulate the spirit of anti-defeatism on behalf of the British people more effectively, passionately and sincerely than anyone else could possibly have done.

He knew only too well how many in the British establishment were sympathetic to, or complacent about, Hitler and felt no need to challenge him. He foresaw the catastrophe that would ensue if Britain did not oppose the Nazi menace and, even worse, if she were invaded. He inspired the physical heroism of countless others and used these examples to motivate the civilian masses. In several speeches in the summer of 1940, when what he memorably called the finest hour was in fact the nation's darkest hour, his rhetorical and literary gifts created a liturgy of hope and faith in a triumph for civilisation and freedom against barbarism. At the moment when Britain, and the idea of liberty, needed it most, he provided the leadership without which both would have been sunk. He drove a people first to survival, and then to victory.

In 1965 his nation, and the world, recognised the debt to him and marked his passing accordingly. Two-minute silences were observed at football matches; 321,360 people filed past his coffin at his lying-in-state in Westminster Hall; the cranes in London's docklands dipped their jibs as his funeral barge sailed down the Thames after his state funeral at St Paul's, attended by the Queen and potentates from around the globe; there was a 19-gun salute and an RAF fly-past; he became the first contemporary commoner to appear on a British postage stamp and a five-shilling piece was issued bearing his image. No politician had ever had such respect and reverence shown to him on his or her death before, and none has since.

His was a political career that, apart from what happened during the Second World War, was of a length and scope that was, and remains, difficult to comprehend. Politics was in Churchill's blood. He was a grandson of the Duke of Marlborough. His father, Lord Randolph, had been a controversial Tory MP and, even more controversially, briefly chancellor of the exchequer in the 1880s. After an undistinguished career at Harrow – which at least had the crucial effect of making young Winston realise that failure was something to be overcome and not to be crushed by – he was, following a spell in the army, first elected to the House of Commons in 1900, during the reign of Queen Victoria, and first served in the cabinet as president of the Board of Trade under Edward VII in 1908; yet he endured to be the present Queen's first prime minister, and did not resign as an MP until the 1964 general election, held just three months before he died and a few weeks before his 90th birthday. Those facts of chronology, and the list of the great offices he held – not just prime minister but chancellor and home secretary, among many others – further inspire the awe in which he, or rather his memory, is held, and help to create a picture of the unstoppable romance of his life.

But it is his indispensable and nation-saving achievement in 1940 that obscures so much else about him, with myth suffocating reality. It diverts attention from all else that Churchill did before and after, and even discourages analysis of it. Worst of all, it discourages reflection on his management of the war, which, as anyone who has read the accounts of some of his closest colleagues – notably Sir Alan Brooke and Anthony Eden – will know, was much more hit and miss than conventional history usually has it. The effect of the often unquestioning idolatry with which he is widely regarded not only hinders us from evaluating Churchill properly but from forming an accurate assessment of the times in which he lived, and that he did so much to shape.

For anyone who bothers to think about him critically and in detail – something not accomplished by his latest hagiographer, Boris Johnson, whose self-regarding travesty of a biography was reviewed so devastatingly in these pages last November by Richard Evans – Churchill is immensely problematical: that pivotal motivational role in saving the country from Nazism inevitably clouds everything else about him. He had an unfortunate knack of finding himself on the wrong side of too many arguments, over things that usually did not require the benefit of hindsight to be understood. In the 1930s his dismissal of the idea of Indian independence seemed reactionary and inhumane even to many of his contemporaries, and his support for the plainly degenerate, weak and self-obsessed Edward VIII, though admirably motivated by loyalty, appalled so many of his contemporaries that it very nearly ended his political career. These misjudgements provided the background against which he was marginalised by Baldwin and Chamberlain when in his prime.

By the 1930s he had long been an intensely controversial figure, appearing sometimes as one who combined the worst sort of pre-Reform Act Tory arrogance and harshness with an occasional and deeply self-serving lack of principle: the latter apparently being a trait that so magnetically attracts the admiration of the present Mayor of London, and other charlatans who piggyback on his greatness for the purposes of self-projection. After his years as a junior officer in the army, during which he took part in the last ever British cavalry charge, serving in the Sudan, he made a significant mark in journalism. He was taken prisoner by the Boers in 1899 in the second Boer war but escaped. At the khaki election of 1900 he began his political career, as a Tory. He left for the Liberal Party in 1904 when the Tories, under the influence of Joseph Chamberlain, who had left the Liberals in protest against the Irish home rule bill, started to move towards protectionism. That was fair enough: but moving back to the Tories after the collapse of the coalition in 1922, when the Liberal Party had divided, imploded and been eclipsed by Labour, was widely regarded as an act of outrageous cynicism, not least by those whom he was rejoining. Churchill deployed his considerable wit to gloss over this episode – “Anyone can rat, but it takes a certain amount of ingenuity to re-rat” – but a bad smell lingered in the Tory party for some time because of it. His father, Lord Randolph, possibly died of syphilis, and for much of his political career demonstrated great instability. At many junctures in his son’s career it seemed as though he had inherited this distressing characteristic.

He had fallen into what the aristocratic class from which he came considered bad company, forming a friendship with Lloyd George and seeming determined to exceed him in radicalism wherever possible. That, too, was no bad thing – Churchill deserves credit for his part in the Asquith government’s establishment of a basic welfare state – but much of his political activity came to take on an air of exhibitionism. His friendship with Lloyd George was not the first manifestation of this in politics. While a backbench Tory, he had joined the gang of Lord Hugh Cecil, son of the Marquess of Salisbury, who made it their business openly to attack

ministers from their own side for perceived shortcomings and who became known as the “Hughligans”.

Such behaviour was consistent with that of his earliest youth, so much so, that he would for some time give the impression that he had never grown up: Margot Asquith, writing when Churchill was nearly 40, recognised this trait in him frequently. He had often been bottom of the class at school when the good conduct marks were awarded and developed a habit of seeking attention, largely, it is believed, because of the neglect he endured from his parents. His father railed at him for being a failure when he twice flunked the entrance exams for Sandhurst. Much of the rest of his life was devoted to proving he was worthy of his father’s respect – for decades after Lord Randolph died, in fact – and to commanding regard by demonstrating a wide range of capabilities, whether as a soldier, a writer, a historian, a politician or a painter.

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On public platforms Churchill frequently used language that, if not so inflammatory in terms of class war as that used by Lloyd George, was considered shocking by many in his social circle. And his conduct as a minister sometimes showed poor sense: most famously, when a group of anarchists was besieged by the police in Sidney Street in the East End of London in the winter of 1911, Churchill, as home secretary, could not resist going down to the scene of the siege and standing in the police line, conspicuous in his silk hat and fur-collared greatcoat. As well as being evidence of his exhibitionism, it was indicative of how much he loved a fight, and needed to be present at the action. The idea of him as a warmonger, which was widely held by those who knew him in the run-up to the Great War and during its early stages, took hold because it appeared to be well founded.

That was not quite the most controversial incident during his time at the Home Office. Even after the heroics of 1940, some in the labour movement continued to hate him because of his decision to send the troops into Tonypandy in 1910, when as home secretary he was alerted to the inadequacy of the local police in controlling rioting by striking miners. To be fair to Churchill, he did not want to send troops in, and held them back for as long as he felt able: but the decision in the end to commit them was held against him in South Wales for the rest of his life, and many on the left continue to view it as an unnecessary act of aggression and intimidation. He also deployed troops during the dock strikes of the summer of 1911, with a comparable effect on his public relations. Similarly, he had made no efforts to hold the police to account after the fighting on “Black Friday” in November 1910 between them and suffragettes around Westminster. It was also in this period in his life that he showed a close interest in eugenics, worried as he was about the physical degeneracy of “the race”.

Churchill initially acquired a reputation as a politician largely through his charisma and the power of his oratory rather than because of any executive achievements. Despite his controversial reputation, he was put in charge of the navy in 1911 as first lord of the Admiralty. He continued to have a magnetic attraction to other fanatics, and came heavily under the influence of Admiral Lord “Jackie” Fisher, even though Fisher had long since retired as first sea lord. Sir John Jellicoe, the second sea lord at the time, wrote of Churchill’s inability to see his own limitations as a politician and a civilian. Churchill was responsible for expanding the navy before the Great War: but he was also one of the most fervent advocates of fighting that war. He changed his mind and then re-changed it about what to do with Ulster over the implementation of the Government of Ireland Act 1914, a squabble that was silenced temporarily by the outbreak of war in August that year.

Now Churchill had the war he wanted, and could start to deploy his navy. "Everything tends towards catastrophe and collapse," he had said, writing to his wife the previous month. "I am interested, geared up & happy." He micromanaged the navy in a way that no first lord had done before: so when in September the Germans sank three British cruisers in the North Sea, with the loss of 1,459 lives, he began to attract blame. The previous day he had boasted that if the Germans did not send out their fleet it would be dug out "like rats in a hole". He created the Royal Naval Division, his critics said, so he could have an army to command, and sent it to defend Antwerp, which, inevitably, he had visited first. When Antwerp fell he attracted more opprobrium. He wanted to be both general and politician, something the British constitution, happily, does not allow for.

This cast of mind was shown in the plan, inspired by Kitchener but executed with enthusiasm by Churchill, to sail a fleet through the Dardanelles to Constantinople, inspire panic in Turkey and cause that country to withdraw from the war. But the naval attack failed; a military operation to support it was a disaster; Fisher, whom Churchill had brought back as first sea lord – though he was then 73 and mildly unhinged – resigned and left Churchill exposed. The operation cost 46,000 lives, a quarter of them Australians and New Zealanders: one of Churchill's biographers, Paul Addison, has described it as "a cross to which he nailed himself".

He resigned from the Admiralty, secured a promotion to lieutenant colonel in the army, and spent a hundred days on the Western Front before resigning his commission and seeking to get back into politics. He came home not because he was deficient in courage, but as always because he was driven by ambition and thwarted in the conventional structure of a fighting army, where he was not in charge. He became minister of munitions in 1917 and then, as war secretary in 1919, sought to intervene against the Bolsheviks in Russia. He made a correct estimate of the barbarism of the revolutionary forces: but his colleagues vetoed his impetuous idea for large-scale direct intervention, which would have led to another generation of soldiers being slaughtered.

By 1924, the Liberal Party having ceased to be a force, he had persuaded the Conservatives to take him back. He became chancellor of the exchequer, and his complete ignorance of economics had catastrophic consequences. In 1925 he took Britain, its economic health and stature ravaged by war and its aftermath, back on to the gold standard at the pre-war fix of \$4.86 to the pound. Sterling was overvalued: exports declined, deflation took root in the economy, the coal industry was crippled and the General Strike ensued. Churchill had consulted a range of economists about the policy before implementing it, one of whom was John Maynard Keynes. Keynes warned him that pegging the currency in this way would have serious deflationary consequences, a sentiment Churchill chose to disregard. Keynes had his revenge by publishing *The Economic Consequences of Mr Churchill*, the most devastating attack on him ever written because of the way it undermined Churchill both as a politician and as an intellect. Later, Churchill would observe that going back to the gold standard at the pre-war fix was the greatest mistake of his life. In the House of Commons, when he announced the move, he said that it would "shackle us to reality". Unfortunately, it shackled Britain to a reality that had ceased to exist in August 1914. It was not the last time he would pursue a course dictated not by what was practical, but by what might create the semblance of the world in which he had flourished before 1914 and to which, for reasons of his own doctrine and beliefs, he wished to return. His reactionary ideas about India were part of the same mindset.

Once the Conservatives were pushed out of office in 1929 he began his “wilderness years”, and adopted resistance to Indian self-government as one of his main causes. It was at this stage that he described Gandhi as “a seditious Middle Temple lawyer, now posing as a fakir of a type well known in the East, striding half-naked up the steps of the Viceregal palace . . . to parley on equal terms with the representative of the King-Emperor”. Such rhetoric turned Baldwin against him and ensured he did not serve in the National Government that Baldwin formed with Ramsay MacDonald in 1931.

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The 1930s were a grim time for Churchill. He flourished as a writer and journalist, making some much-needed money – he always lived beyond his means, with not just his penchant for Pol Roger, cognac and cigars but also his acquisition of a fine country house at Chartwell in Kent – and apart from what he earned was happy to accept financial support from admirers in a way that would end a political career today. His marriage was, however, under strain, not because of any impropriety on his part, but because of the sense of neglect felt by his wife and her dislike for some of his circle of friends – notably the adventurer Brendan Bracken who, to Clementine Churchill’s disgust, did little to counter scurrilous rumours that he was Churchill’s illegitimate son. Churchill also had a difficult relationship with his own son, Randolph, who never successfully emerged from his father’s shadow and departed early down the road to alcoholism.

Churchill merited his return to government in 1939, but was, ironically, responsible for the fiasco of British intervention in Norway that brought down Chamberlain and made him prime minister. He had the good sense to form a coalition government, and to undertake a discreet purge of those who had been the strongest advocates of appeasement, whether politicians or officials. It took the Tory party some time to come round to him, displaying a loyalty to Chamberlainite methods that was finally punished in the Labour landslide of 1945. In military terms, Churchill had learned from the mistakes of 1914-18. He took countless bold initiatives that paid off, and others that did not. A study of Alan Brooke’s diaries presents the irrationality and bluster that could make him so infuriating: yet these were the caprices not of a martinet, but rather of a man under the most almighty pressure.

It is hard to think of anyone else in that period who would have led Britain with such certainty of purpose and inspiration, and who had the qualities to handle our allies so well. The relationships Churchill formed with Stalin and Roosevelt were essential to the war having the right outcome, even if he was outmanoeuvred at Yalta, to the detriment of the postwar settlement in eastern Europe and the liberties of the nations concerned. Had Halifax and not Churchill become prime minister in May 1940, Britain would soon have become a satrapy of Nazi Germany. Churchill hated communism, and the accommodation he came to with Stalin was made in the national interest. His “Iron Curtain” speech, made the year after the war ended, showed his true feelings, and set the tone for the next four decades.

Ideally, Churchill would have retired, heaped with honours, in 1945. The postscript to his time in high office, his premiership of 1951-55, was undistinguished and bad for the country. His determination to keep Eden from succeeding him for as long as possible was not merely the Tory party’s private grief. It bequeathed the country, when Eden eventually took over, with a leader whose health, morale and judgement had all been worn down by a man who refused to leave Downing Street until his 81st year, despite having suffered a debilitating stroke two years earlier that was cleverly covered up by his family and colleagues, and whose knack of getting things wrong had reverted to its pre-war standard.

He was as always living in the past, uninterested in domestic affairs, and obsessed with restoring British greatness in a world that he still failed to realise had changed beyond his recognition.

These were not wasted years – his government met its pledge to build 300,000 houses a year, to replenish stock depleted by the war and to accommodate growing families – but they were largely fruitless ones.

Churchill pursued a colonial policy, notably in Malaya and Kenya, that refused to recognise the powerful movements to dissolve the British empire that existed in most colonies, or to assess the disproportionate costs in material, human and reputational terms of holding them. When he did eventually go, the Tory party he left behind him was anachronistic and fractured. Eden's early departure would have been a blessing had he not been replaced by the intensely cynical Macmillan, who manipulated his party and public opinion to give him a handsome election victory in 1959, after which the contradictions and denials within the Tory party, and its hidebound, class-obsessed attitudes that it should have put behind it during the war, caused Churchill's party to limp to defeat at the hands of Harold Wilson, bereft of any sense of vision whatsoever.

Churchill's triumph against Hitler made him the recipient of unconditional deference after it. The Tories' 1945 election campaign was farcical and offensive, with its comparison between Labour under Attlee and the Gestapo, and his party should have taken this as a warning that, for all the Tories' and the nation's gratitude to Churchill, the time had come to be put under new management. It was not an opportunity any of them was prepared to take.

Despite a record of failure and misjudgement that in any other politician would offset even the most considerable achievements, Churchill in death has become largely untouchable by all, apart from those who are dismissed as mavericks and sectarians. The myth keeps us from an honest interpretation of our history in the first half of the 20th century. The false and romanticised picture we have of him, created by his reputation from 1940-45, is a huge obstacle to true understanding.

In one aspect of his life, when the man met the hour, he was as outstanding as anyone in British history has been. In all others he was just another politician on the make, firing out opinions at random in the hope that one, now and again, would hit the target. He had a bellicosity that in all circumstances other than 1940-45 could be intensely dangerous, and that had its downside even in the fight against Hitler.

But we would best understand his indisputable greatness, and our enduring debt to him, by realising how his achievements came in spite of, not because of, his particular character. The myth is too much. It is more important than ever to examine the reality of his life and works, and to try to get him in a true perspective.

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