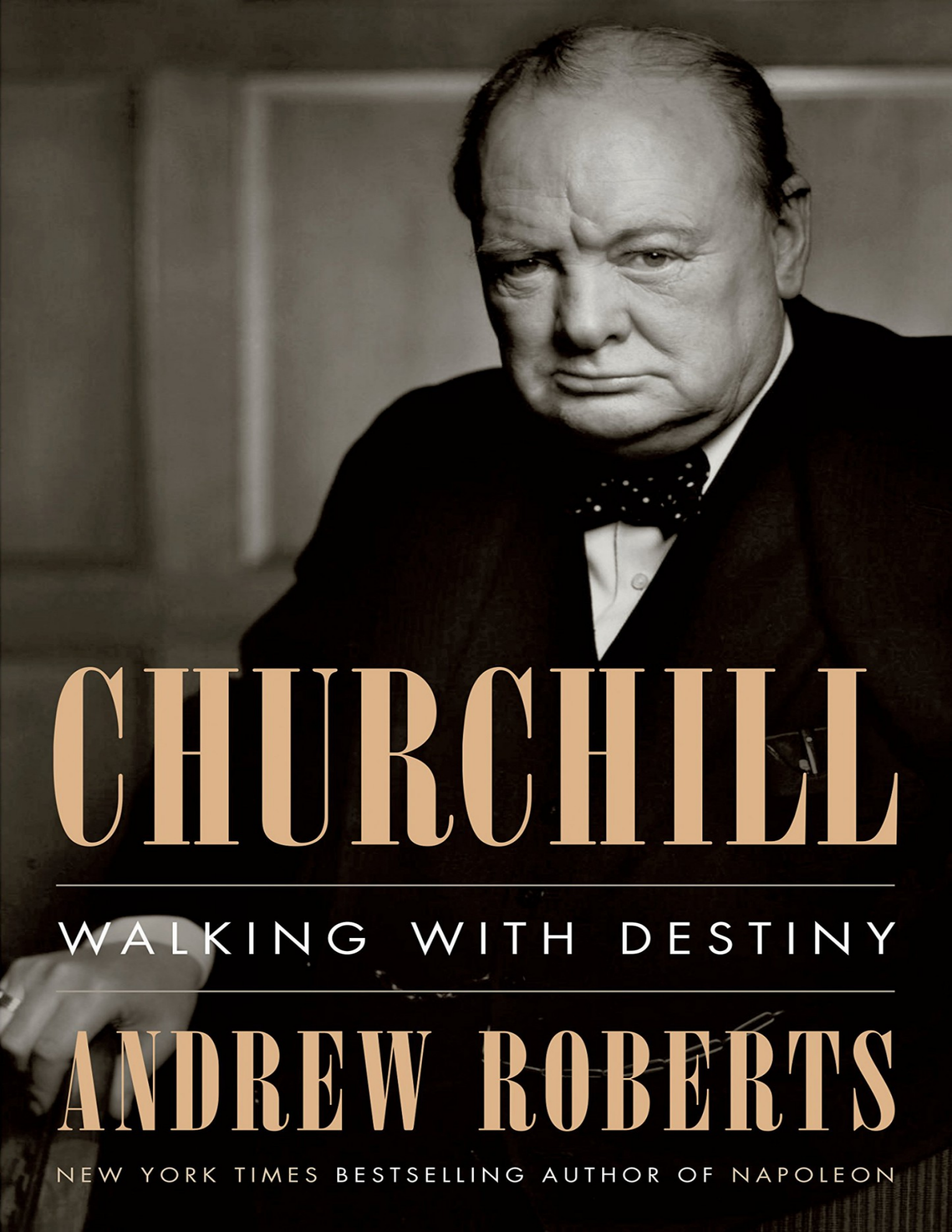
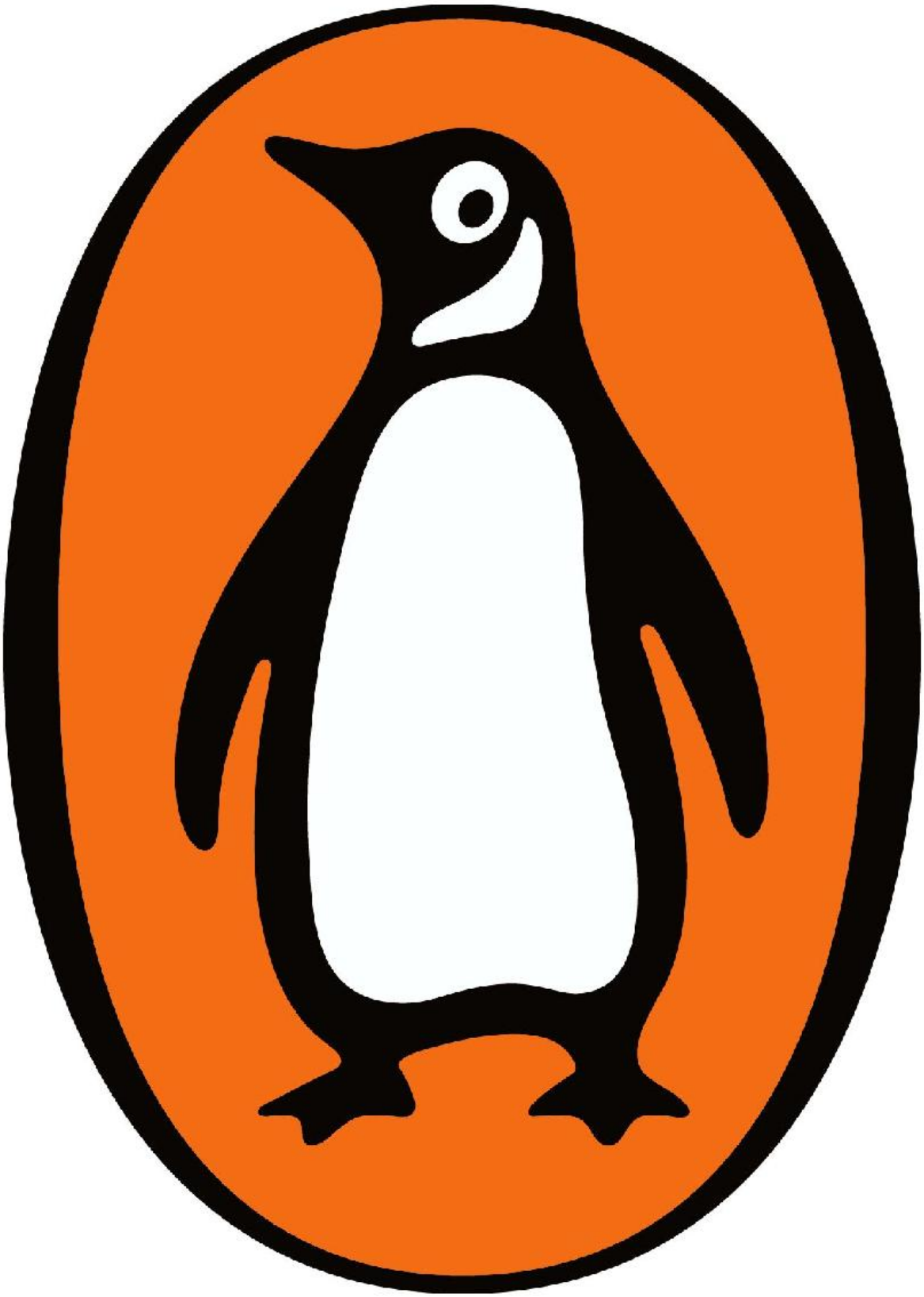


CHURCHILL

WALKING WITH DESTINY

ANDREW ROBERTS

NEW YORK TIMES BESTSELLING AUTHOR OF NAPOLEON



Andrew Roberts

CHURCHILL

Walking with Destiny

Contents

For Henry and Cassia
From their proud father

List of Illustrations

All material from the Churchill Archives Centre is reproduced by kind permission of The Master, Fellows and Scholars of Churchill College, Cambridge. Every effort has been made to contact all copyright holders. The publishers will be happy to amend in future editions any errors or omissions brought to their attention.

S. Churchill. Copyright in the reproduction © The Sir Winston Churchill Archive Trust

8. Churchill's school report from St George's School, Ascot, 1884. *Churchill Archives Centre, Churchill Papers, CHAR 28/44/7*

9. Welldon's House group photograph, Harrow School, 1892. *Harrow School Archives*

10. Jennie and Jack Churchill on the hospital ship *Maine*, in South Africa, 1899. *Churchill Archives Centre, Broadwater Collection,* BRDW 1 Photo 2/25. *Reproduced by permission of Curtis Brown, London, on behalf of the Broadwater Collection. © Broadwater Collection.*

11. Churchill in military uniform, 1899. *Churchill Archives Centre, Broadwater Collection, BRDW I Photo 2/22. Reproduced by permission of Curtis Brown, London, on behalf of the Broadwater Collection. © Broadwater Collection.*

12. Churchill returning to Durban, 1899. *Churchill Archives Centre, Broadwater Collection, BRDW 1 Photo 2/18. Reproduced by permission of Curtis Brown, London, on behalf of the Broadwater Collection. © Broadwater Collection.*

13. Churchill with the Kaiser, Germany, 1906. *Ullstein-bild/Getty Images*

14. Churchill and his entourage sitting on the cowcatcher of a train in East Africa, from Winston S. Churchill, *My African Journey*, 1908. *Churchill Archives Centre. © Winston S. Churchill. Reproduced with permission of Curtis Brown, London on behalf of the Estate of Sir Winston Churchill and the Master, Fellows and Scholars of Churchill College, Cambridge*

15. Clementine Hozier, 1908. *Hulton Archive/Getty Images*

16. Winston and Clementine Churchill emerge from St Margaret's Church, Westminster, on their wedding day, 1908. *Chronicle/Alamy*

17. Churchill interrupted by a suffragette while campaigning in Dundee, 1908. *Mirrorpix*

18. On board the Admiralty yacht HMS *Enchantress* in the Mediterranean, 1912. *Fremantle/Alamy*

19. Admiral Fisher, *c*. 1910. *Getty Images*

20. David Lloyd George, *c*. 1914. *Alamy*

21. Churchill, 1927, by Walter Richard Sickert. © *National Portrait Gallery*, *London*

22. Arthur Balfour, 1912. *Getty Images*

23. Lord Kitchener, 1915. *Alamy*

24. Lord Curzon, 1921. *Alamy*
25. F. E. Smith, *c*. 1922. *Granger/Alamy*
26. Churchill painting at Hartsbourne Manor, Hertfordshire. *Author collection*
27. Winston and Clementine at Hartsbourne. *Author collection*
28. *Bottlescape*, painting by Winston S. Churchill, 1926. National Trust, Chartwell. *Reproduced with permission of Anthea Morton-Saner on behalf of Churchill Heritage Ltd. Copyright © Churchill Heritage Ltd*
29. Letter from F. E. Smith to Winston S. Churchill, 1913. *Churchill Archives Centre, Churchill Papers, CHAR 1/107/20*
30. Churchill arriving at Hilsea, Hampshire, by air, *c*. 1913. *Hulton Archive/Getty Images*
31. Churchill with 6th Battalion, The Royal Scots Fusiliers, near Ploegstreert, Belgium. *Fremantle/Alamy*
32. *Winston Churchill wearing a French Poilu's Steel Helmet* by Sir John Lavery, 1916. National Trust, Chartwell. © *National Trust*
33. Visiting the Pyramids during the Cairo Conference, 1921. *Churchill Archives Centre, Broadwater Collection, BRDW I Photo 2/83. Reproduced by permission of Curtis Brown, London, on behalf of the Broadwater Collection. © Broadwater Collection*.
34. Churchill playing polo with Lord Londonderry, Roehampton, 1921. *TopFoto*
35. Chartwell, Westerham, Kent. *AP/TopFoto*
36. Front page of *The British Gazette*, 13 May 1926. *Alamy*
37. Churchill and friends having tea at Chartwell, photograph by Donald Ferguson, *c*. 1928. © *National Trust Images*
38. Front cover of the Devon-Gloucester Election Address, published by the Conservative Party, 1929. © *Bodleian Library, University of Oxford, Conservative Party Archive [CPA PUB 229/5/10 fo73]. Reproduced with permission of the Conservative Party*
39. Churchill's installation as Chancellor of Bristol University, 1929. *Hulton Archive/Getty Images*
40. The Pinafore Room, Savoy Hotel. *Courtesy The Savoy Archive*
41. Churchill, pencil sketch on an Other Club dinner menu, by Sir Alfred Munnings, 1929. *Courtesy The Savoy Archive. Photo: Neville Mountford-Hoare. © DACS, London, 2018*

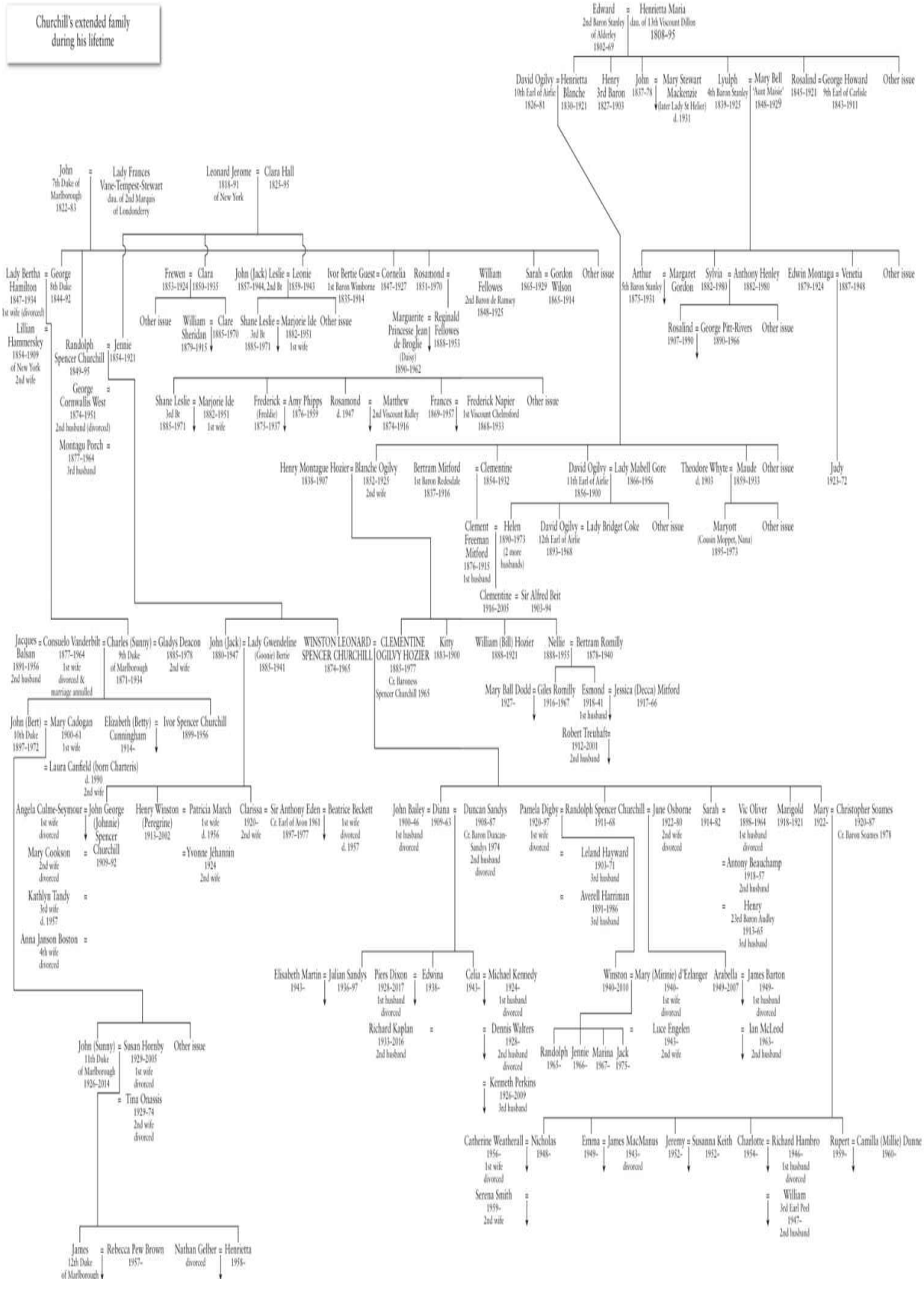
42. Churchill dressed as a baby, pencil sketch by Sir Alfred Munnings, 1936. *Courtesy The Savoy Archive. Photo: Neville Mountford-Hoare. © DACS, London, 2018*
43. *Winston Churchill,* portrait by David Jagger, 1939. *Private Collection © Estate of David Jagger*
44. Annotated notes for Churchill's Munich speech of 5 October 1938. *Churchill Archives Centre, Churchill Papers, CHAR 9/130D/356. ©* Winston S. Churchill. *Reproduced with permission of Curtis Brown, London on behalf of The Estate of Winston S. Churchill and The Sir Winston Churchill Archive Trust. Copyright in the text © The Estate of Winston S. Churchill. Copyright in the reproduction © The Sir Winston Churchill Archive Trust*
45. *What Price Churchill?*, poster in the Strand, London, 1939. *Topical Press/Getty Images*
46. Churchill returning to the Admiralty, 1939. *Fox Photos/Getty Images*
47. Churchill's War Cabinet, 1939. *Fox Photos/Getty Images*
48. Visiting King George VI and Queen Elizabeth after bombs fell on Buckingham Palace, 1940. *Corbis/Getty Images*
49. Churchill and friends at Ditchley Park, 1940. *Author collection*
50. Churchill visiting a bombed-out shop, Ramsgate, Kent, 1940. *Alamy*
51. 'Action This Day' sticker. *The Trustees for the Liddle Hart Centre for Military Archives, Kings College London.*
52. Desk in the Map Room, Cabinet War Rooms, London. *TopFoto*
53. Churchill's War Cabinet, 1941. *Corbis/Getty Images*
54. Churchill with President Franklin D. Roosevelt at a press conference in the Oval Office of the White House, Washington, DC, 1941. *Courtesy Barry Singer*
55. Churchill with Marshal Joseph Stalin at the Kremlin, 1942. *Private collection*
56. Churchill in North Africa with Field Marshal Jan Christian Smuts, Air Chief Marshal Sir Arthur Tedder and General Sir Alan Brooke, 1942. *Alamy*
57. Churchill and Admiral of the Fleet Sir Dudley Pound on board the SS *Queen Mary*, 1943. *Alamy*
58. Engagement card for January 1943. *The National Churchill Library and Center at the George Washington University*

59. *War of Nerves*, cartoon by 'Vicky' (Victor Weisz) in the *News Chronicle*, 4 February 1943. © *Solo Syndication*
60. *The Tower of Katoubia Mosque*, *c*. 1943, painting by Winston S. Churchill. *Private collection. Reproduced with permission of Anthea Morton-Saner on behalf of Churchill Heritage Ltd. © Churchill Heritage Ltd*
61. Churchill making a V-sign to sailors on the SS *Queen Mary*, 1943. *Popperfoto/Getty Images*
62. Winston Churchill, painting by Sir Oswald Birley, 1951. *Private collection. By permission of Robin Birley*
63. Churchill with General Dwight D. Eisenhower near Hastings, Sussex, 1944. *IWM/Getty Images*
64. The 'percentages agreement'. *Churchill Archives Centre, Churchill Papers, CHUR 4/356/174*. © Winston S. Churchill. *Reproduced with permission of Curtis Brown, London on behalf of The Estate of Winston S. Churchill and The Sir Winston Churchill Archive Trust. Copyright in the text © The Estate of Winston S. Churchill. Copyright in the reproduction © The Sir Winston Churchill Archive Trust*
65. Churchill with General Charles de Gaulle and marchers on the Champs-Elysee, Paris, 1944. *Central Press/Getty Images*
66. Churchill, Roosevelt and Stalin at the Yalta Conference, 1945. *Private Collection. US Army Signal Corps*
67. Crossing the Rhine, 1945. *IWM/Getty Images*
68. Churchill's private office, 10 Downing Street. From Sir John Martin, *Downing Street: The War Years*, 1991
69. Churchill with his Chiefs of Staff in the garden of 10 Downing Street, 1945. *IWM/Getty Images*
70. Churchill giving a speech at Westminster College, Fulton, Missouri, 1946. *Popperfoto/Getty*
71. Speech notes for Churchills 'iron curtain' speech at Fulton, 1946. *Churchill Archives Centre, Churchill Papers, CHUR 5/4A/83*. © Winston S. Churchill. *Reproduced with permission of Curtis Brown, London on behalf of The Estate of Winston S. Churchill and The Sir Winston Churchill Archive Trust. Copyright in the text © The Estate of Winston S. Churchill. Copyright in the reproduction © The Sir Winston Churchill Archive Trust*

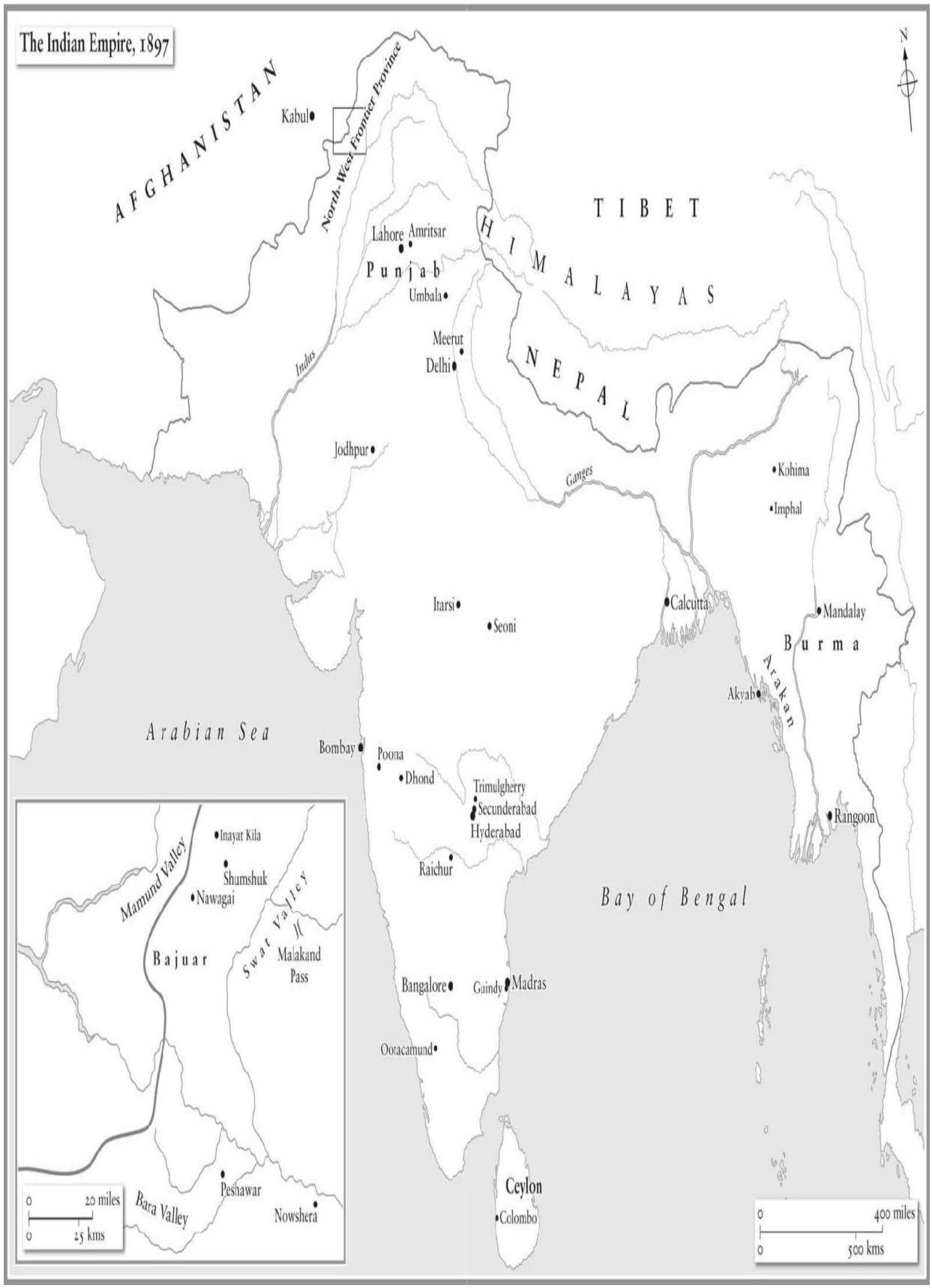
72. Churchill with Clementine and Sarah, Miami Beach, 1946. *Private collection*
73. After Churchill's speech at the Congress of Europe, The Hague, 1948. *Getty Images*
74. Churchill being presented with a cigar, 1951. *Churchill Archives Centre, Baroness Spencer-Churchill Papers, CSCT 5/7/5*
75. Churchill speaking at the Conservative Party Conference, Margate, 1953. *Getty Images*
76. Corrected galley proof from Churchill's *A History of the English-Speaking Peoples*, volume two. *Churchill Archives Centre, Churchill Papers, CHUR 4/403A/79. Reproduced with permission of Curtis Brown, London on behalf of The Estate of Winston S. Churchill and The Sir Winston Churchill Archive Trust. Copyright in the text © The Estate of Winston S. Churchill. Copyright in the reproduction © The Sir Winston Churchill Archive Trust*
77. Clementine, Randolph, Winston and Arabella Churchill, Monte Carlo, 1958. *Associated Press/Rex Shutterstock*
78. Churchill aboard Aristotle Onassis's yacht *Christina*, Capri, 1959. *Ullstein-bild/Getty Images*

The endpapers are adapted from Lieutenant-Commander Frank A. de Vine Hunt's map of the journeys undertaken by Churchill during the Second World War, originally printed and published in 1947 by George Philip & Son, Ltd., London, in association with *Time and Tide*.

Churchill's extended family during his lifetime

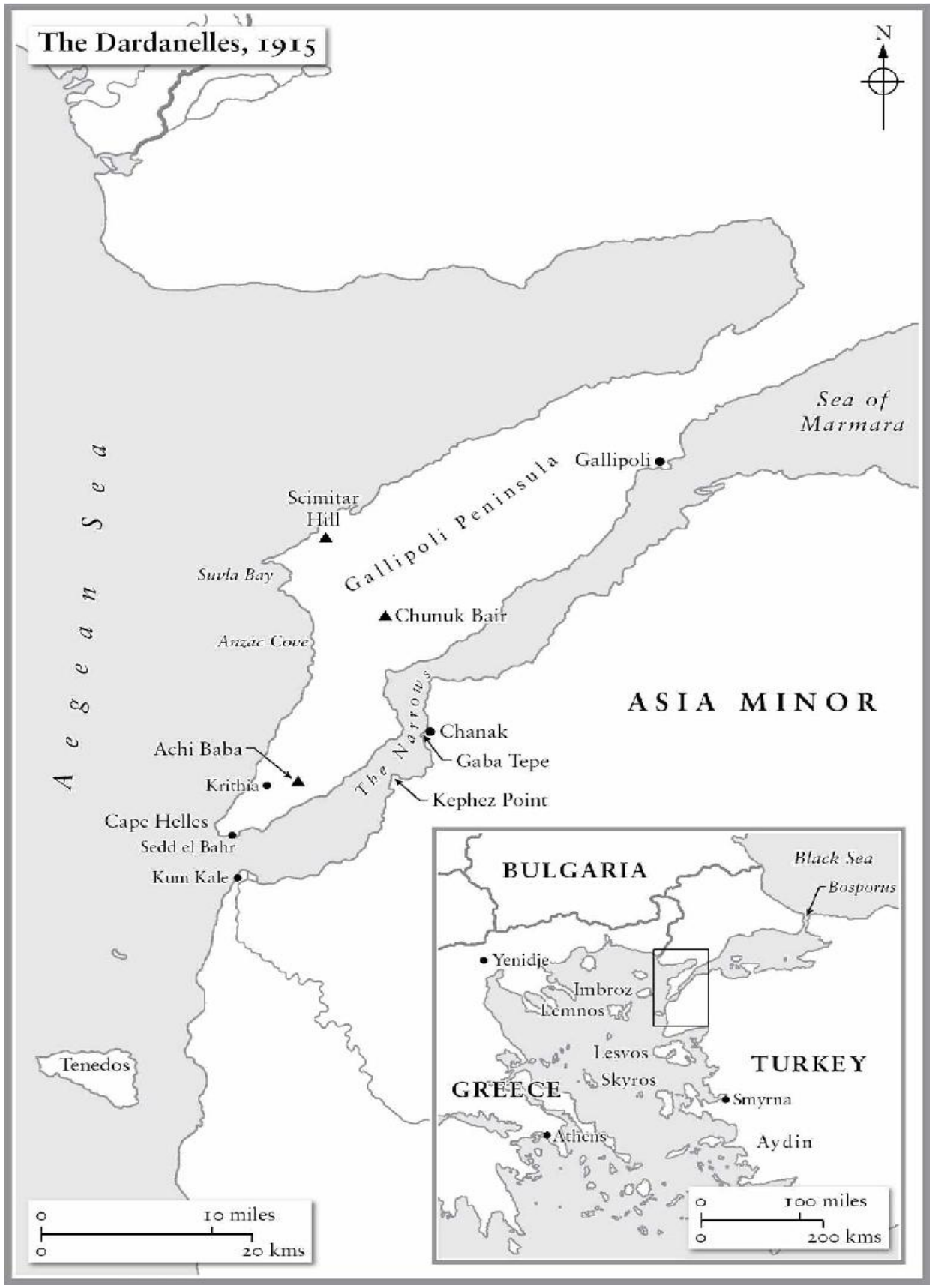


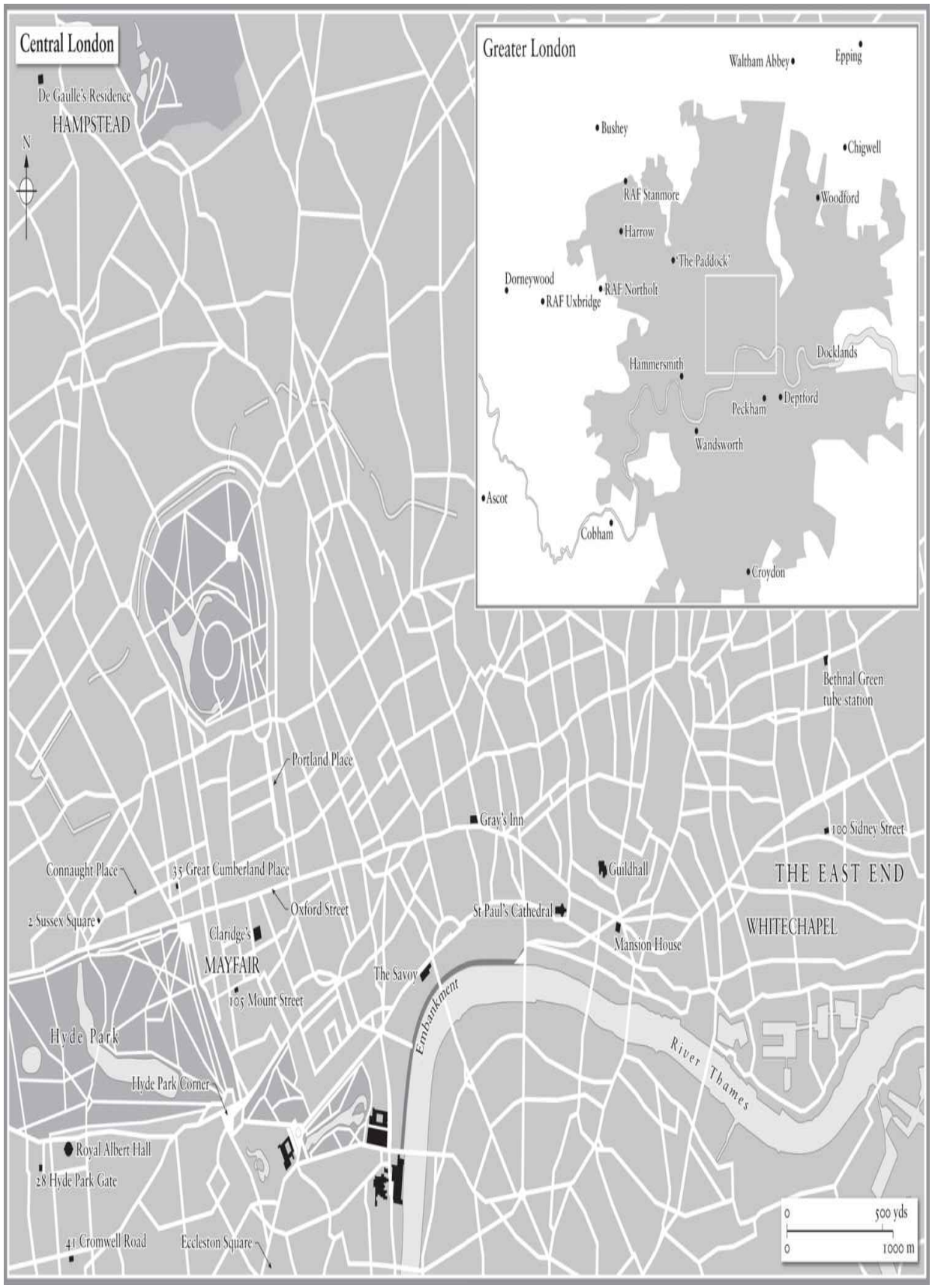

The British Isles
N
North-Western Approaches
Orkney Islands
Scapa Flow
Hebrides
Inverness
Aberdeen
Balmoral Castle
SCOTLAND
Dundee
Perth
Firth of Clyde
Inverkeithing
Rosyth
Firth of Forth
Edinburgh
Glasgow
North Sea
Lough Swilly
Lamlash
Isle of Arran
Garron Tower
Stranraer
Tyrone
Belfast
Fermanagh
Ulster
Tyne
Newcastle
Hartlepool
Scarborough
Isle of Man
Dundalk
IRELAND
Irish Sea
York
Hull
Humber
Blackpool
Burnley
Leeds
Grimsby
Bolton
Oldham
Manchester
Sheffield
Liverpool
Llandudno
Dublin
Kingstown
The Curragh
ENGLAND
Nottingham
Overstrand
Norwich
Norfolk
Oakham
Leicester
Birmingham
Coventry
Severn
Ashby St Ledgers
Cambridge
WALES
Bletchley Park
Waltham Abbey
Ditchley Park
Woodstock
Nazeing
Blenheim Palace
Chequers
Bladon
Oxford
Theydon-Bois
Shoeburyness
Thanet
Margate
Thames
London
Rhondda Valley
Llanelli
Tonypandy
Swansea
Cardiff
Bristol
Lyneham
Bath
Sandhurst
Canterbury
Walmer Castle
Chartwell
Kent
Dover
Godalming
East Grinstead
Ashdown Forest
Southampton
Wimborne
Portsmouth
Brighton
Pevensey
Dungeness
Bournemouth
Cowes
Spithead
Solent
Isle of Wight
Cork
Berehaven
Plymouth
Portland Bill
English Channel
100 miles
100 kms

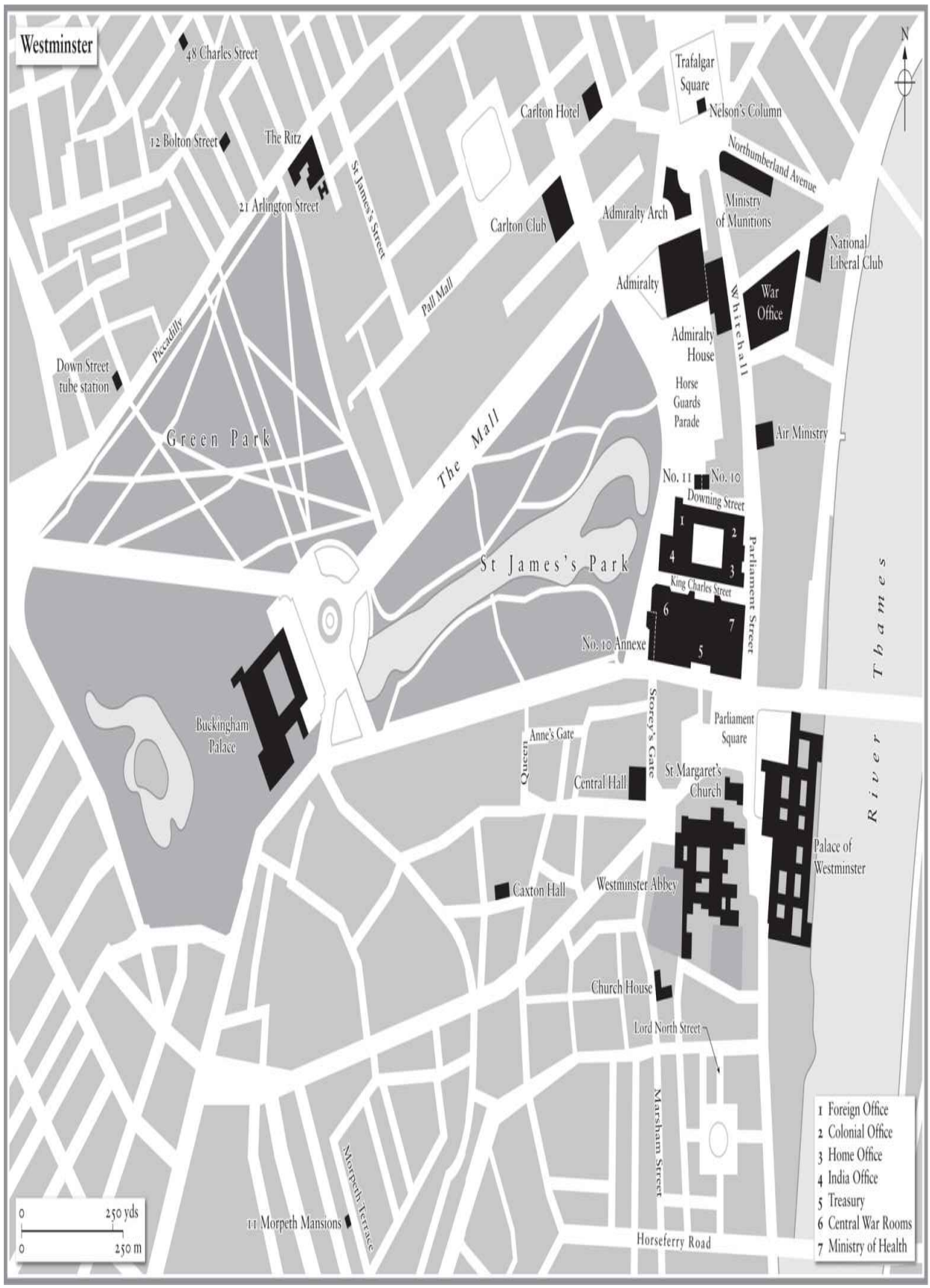

The Indian Empire, 1897
N
AFGHANISTAN
Kabul
North-West Frontier Province
TIBET
HIMALAYAS
Lahore
Amritsar
Punjab
Umbala
Meerut
Delhi
Indus
NEPAL
Jodhpur
Ganges
Kohima
Imphal
Itarsi
Seoni
Calcutta
Mandalay
Burma
Arakan
Akyab
Arabian Sea
Bombay
Poona
Dhond
Trimulgherry
Secunderabad
Hyderabad
Rangoon
Raichur
Bay of Bengal
Bangalore
Guindy
Madras
Ootacamund
Ceylon
Colombo
0 400 miles
0 500 kms
Inayat Kila
Shumshuk
Nawagai
Mamund Valley
Swar Valley
Malakand Pass
Bajuar
Peshawar
Bara Valley
Nowshera
0 20 miles
0 25 kms

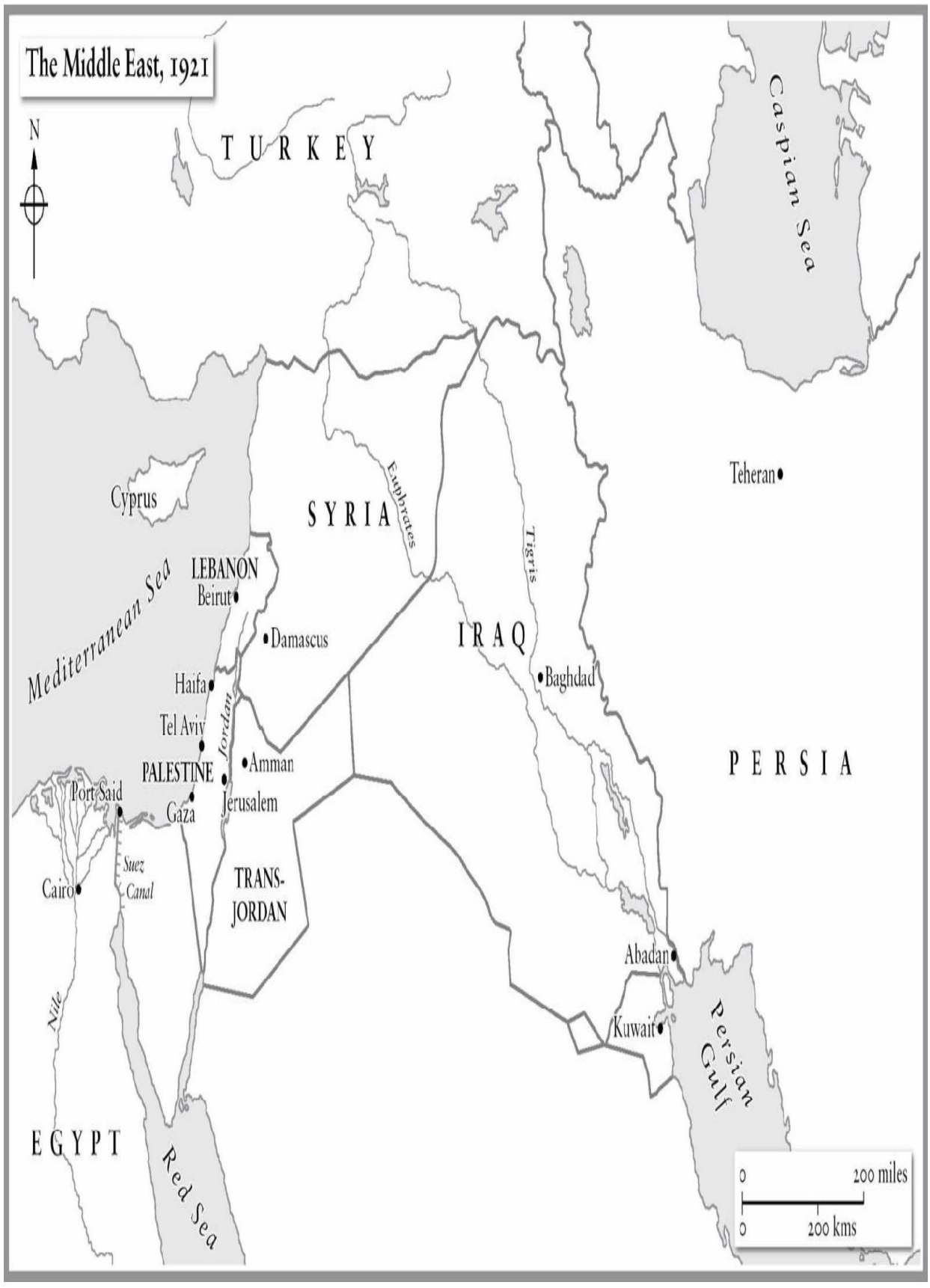

Southern Africa, 1899
N
RHODESIA
PORTUGUESE EAST AFRICA
BECHUANA LAND
GERMAN
SOUTH-WEST
AFRICA
TRANSVAAL
Pretoria
Mafeking
Diamond Hill
Delagoa Bay
Lourenço Marques
Johannesburg
SWAZI-
LAND
ORANGE FREE STATE
NATAL
Ladysmith
Spion Kop
Tugela
Chieveley
Bloemfontein
Tugela Heights
Estcourt
Orange
BASUTO-
LAND
Durban
INDIAN OCEAN
ATLANTIC
OCEAN
CAPE COLONY
East London
Port Elizabeth
Cape Town
0
200 miles
0
250 kms


The Western Front
N
Dunkirk
Yser
Ypres
Wytschaete
Ploegsteert
Messines
Armentieres
Neuve Chapelle
Loos
Vimy Ridge
Arras
Cambrai
Bapaume
Pozières
Battle of Jutland
NORTH SEA
DENMARK
Sylt
Dogger Bank
Heligoland
Kiel Canal
Borkum
Broad Fourteens
Wilhelmshaven
Emden
HOLLAND
Amsterdam
London
Rotterdam
Ostend
Zeebrugge
Antwerp
Calais
BELGIUM
GERMANY
Boulogne
Château de Verchocq
Brussels
Liege
Mons
Namur
Mauberge
La Boisselle
Le Cateau
Somme
LUXEMBOURG
Verdun
Marne
Paris
FRANCE
front line
0
100 miles
0
200 kms
SWITZERLAND


The Dardanelles, 1915
N
Aegean Sea
Sea of Marmara
Gallipoli Peninsula
Gallipoli
Scimitar Hill
Suvla Bay
Chunuk Bair
Anzac Cove
ASIA MINOR
The Narrows
Chanak
Gaba Tepe
Achi Baba
Krithia
Kephez Point
Cape Helles
Sedd el Bahr
Kum Kale
Tenedos
0 10 miles
0 20 kms
BULGARIA
Black Sea
Bosporus
Yenidje
Imbroz
Lemnos
Lesvos
Skyros
TURKEY
GREECE
Smyrna
Athens
Aydin
0 100 miles
0 200 kms

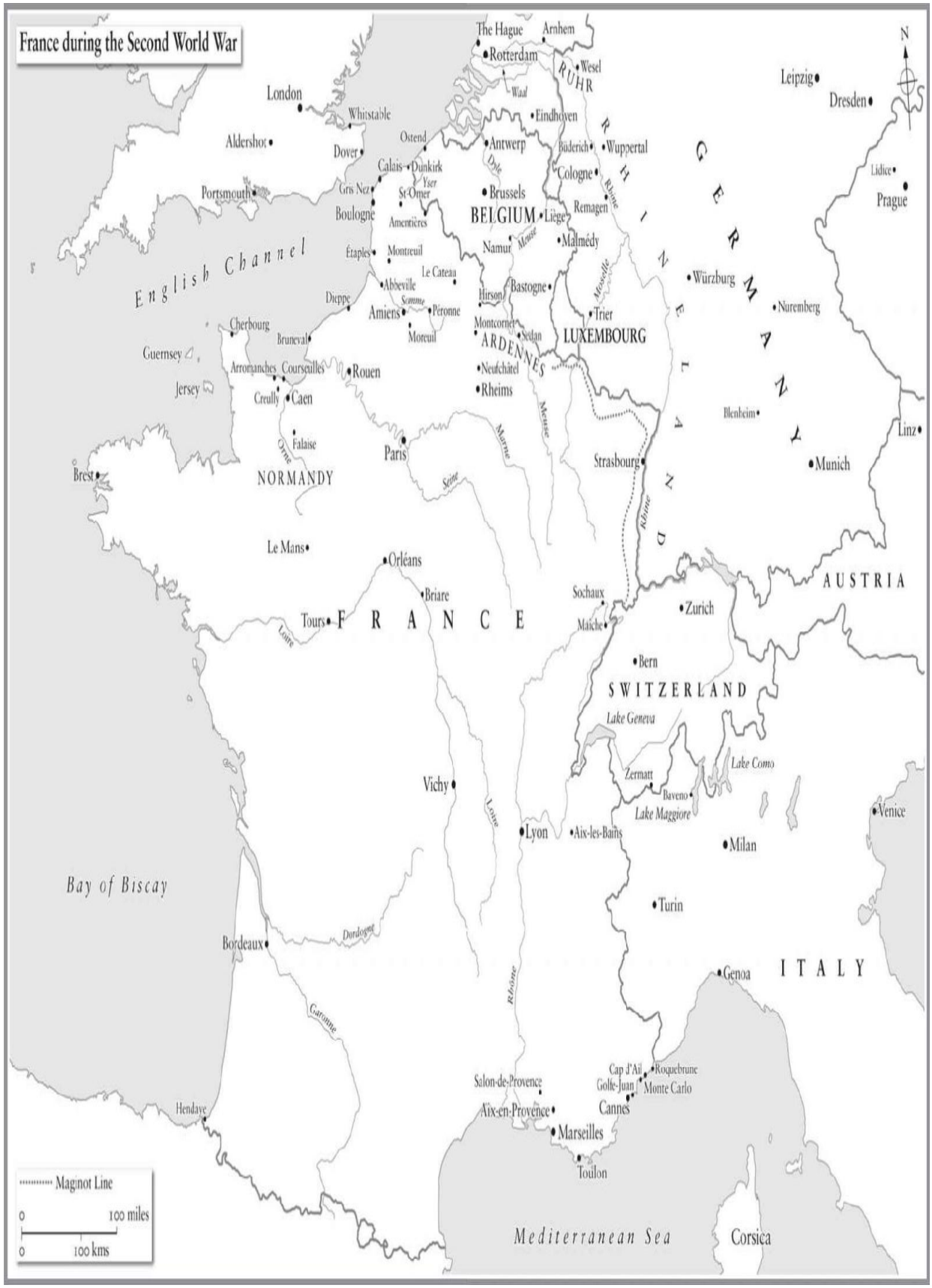

Central London
De Gaulle's Residence
HAMPSTEAD
N
Greater London
Waltham Abbey
Epping
Bushey
Chigwell
RAF Stanmore
Woodford
Harrow
'The Paddock'
Dorneywood
RAF Northolt
RAF Uxbridge
Docklands
Hammersmith
Deptford
Peckham
Wandsworth
Ascot
Cobham
Croydon
Bethnal Green tube station
Portland Place
Gray's Inn
100 Sidney Street
Connaught Place
35 Great Cumberland Place
Guildhall
THE EAST END
Oxford Street
2 Sussex Square
St Paul's Cathedral
Claridge's
Mansion House
WHITECHAPEL
MAYFAIR
The Savoy
105 Mount Street
Embankment
Hyde Park
River Thames
Hyde Park Corner
Royal Albert Hall
28 Hyde Park Gate
41 Cromwell Road
Eccleston Square
0 500 yds
0 1000 m

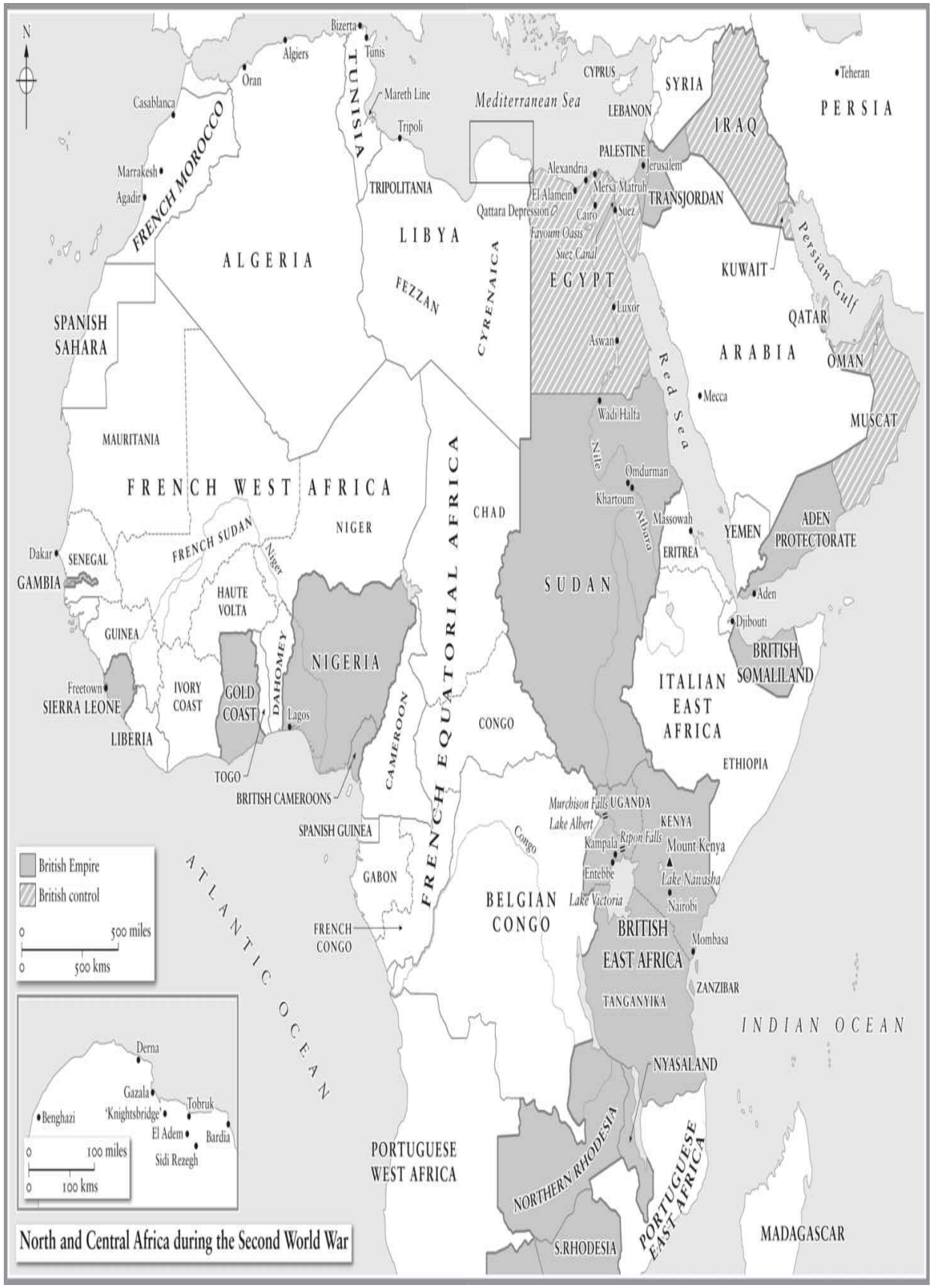

Westminster
48 Charles Street
12 Bolton Street
The Ritz
21 Arlington Street
St James's Street
Carlton Hotel
Trafalgar Square
Nelson's Column
Northumberland Avenue
Ministry of Munitions
Carlton Club
Admiralty Arch
National Liberal Club
Admiralty
War Office
Whitehall
Admiralty House
Pall Mall
Piccadilly
Down Street tube station
Horse Guards Parade
Air Ministry
Green Park
The Mall
No. 11
No. 10
Downing Street
St James's Park
King Charles Street
Parliament Street
No. 10 Annexe
Thames
Buckingham Palace
Storey's Gate
Parliament Square
Queen Anne's Gate
Central Hall
St Margaret's Church
River
Palace of Westminster
Caxton Hall
Westminster Abbey
Church House
Lord North Street
Marsham Street
Morpeth Terrace
11 Morpeth Mansions
Horseferry Road
0 250 yds
0 250 m
N
1 Foreign Office
2 Colonial Office
3 Home Office
4 India Office
5 Treasury
6 Central War Rooms
7 Ministry of Health


The Middle East, 1921
N
TURKEY
Caspian Sea
Cyprus
SYRIA
Euphrates
Tigris
Teheran
Mediterranean Sea
LEBANON
Beirut
Damascus
IRAQ
Haifa
Baghdad
Tel Aviv
Jordan
PERSIA
Amman
PALESTINE
Port Said
Gaza
Jerusalem
Suez Canal
Cairo
TRANS-JORDAN
Abadan
Kuwait
Persian Gulf
Nile
EGYPT
Red Sea
0 200 miles
0 200 kms


N
60°
40°
20°
0°
GREENLAND
Scharnhorst sunk
(26 Dec. 1943)
Tirpitz sunk
(12 Nov. 1944)
Denmark Strait
ICELAND
Reykjavik
Scapa Flow
Orkney Islands
Shetland Islands
Western Approaches
Edinburgh
Glasgow
Liverpool
London
Bristol
Brest
EUROPE
60°
CANADA
Air Gap
Newfoundland
Sydney
Halifax
45°
New York
USA
Bismarck sunk
(27 May 1941)
The Azores
NORTH
ATLANTIC
Gibraltar
Madeira
30°
AFRICA
Cape Verde Islands
Dakar
15°
0°
SOUTH
AMERICA
15°
SOUTH
ATLANTIC
30°
approximate convoy routes
approximate limit of Allied air cover
Air Gap until spring 1943
0
1000 miles
0
1000 kms
Cape Town
The Battle of the Atlantic


Europe during the Second World War
borders as in January 1938
Curzon Line
Baku–Batumi railway
Gothic Line
0 500 miles
0 500 kms
N
ATLANTIC OCEAN
NORWAY
SWEDEN
FINLAND
UNION OF SOVIET SOCIALIST REPUBLICS
Murmansk
Narvik
White Sea
Archangel
Trondheim
Andalsnes
Bergen
Oslo
Rjukan
Stavanger
Stockholm
Leningrad
Tallinn
ESTONIA
Jösing Fjord
Skagerrak
SCOTLAND
NORTHERN IRELAND
North Sea
Baltic Sea
Riga
LATVIA
Moscow
Volga
DENMARK
Copenhagen
Memel
LITHUANIA
Katyń
Orel
GREAT BRITAIN
IRELAND
Dublin
Sylt
Wolfschanze
Minsk
Danzig
EAST PRUSSIA
BELORUSSIA
Hamburg
Lübeck
Stettin
WALES
ENGLAND
HOLLAND
Bergen-Belsen
Amsterdam
Lek
Berlin
Potsdam
Warsaw
Stalingrad
London
Nijmegen
Torgau
POLAND
Dniepr
Kiev
GERMANY
Breslau
Lublin
BELGIUM
Rhine
Buchenwald
Elbe
Kraków
Auschwitz-Birkenau
UKRAINE
Paris
CZECHOSLOVAKIA
Dniester
LUXEMBOURG
Danube
Vienna
Odessa
Caspian Sea
FRANCE
AUSTRIA
Budapest
CRIMEA
Balaklava
Baku
SWITZERLAND
Carinthia
HUNGARY
Sevastopol
Yalta
GEORGIA
Ljubljana Gap
ROMANIA
Batumi
AZERBAIJAN
Ljubljana
Po
Trieste
Black Sea
Bucharest
YUGOSLAVIA
Belgrade
Florence
Metauro
Adriatic Sea
BULGARIA
Sofia
PORTUGAL
Madrid
ITALY
Corsica
Lazio
Rome
Istanbul
SPAIN
Ajaccio
Anzio
Iserna
Bari
TURKEY
Monte Cassino
ALBANIA
Salonica
Naples
Salerno
Sardinia
Aegean Sea
Corfu
GREECE
Dodecanese
Athens
Leros
Mediterranean Sea
Gibraltar
Sounion
Cape Matapan
Rhodes
Nicosia
Cyprus
Pantelleria
Crete
Malta
Malemc


France during the Second World War
N
The Hague
Arnhem
Rotterdam
Wesel
RUHR
Waal
Leipzig
Dresden
London
Whitstable
Eindhoven
Aldershot
Ostend
Antwerp
Büderich
Wuppertal
Dover
Dyle
Lidice
Calais
Dunkirk
Cologne
Yser
Rhine
Prague
Portsmouth
Gris Nez
St-Omer
Brussels
Boulogne
BELGIUM
Liège
Remagen
Amentières
GERMANY
Meuse
Malmédy
Namur
Étaples
Montreuil
Moselle
Würzburg
Le Cateau
Abbeville
Bastogne
English Channel
Hirson
Dieppe
Somme
Amiens
Péronne
Trier
Nuremberg
Cherbourg
Montcornet
Sedan
Moreuil
LUXEMBOURG
Bruneval
ARDENNES
Guernsey
Arromanches
Courseulles
Neufchâtel
Rouen
Jersey
Creully
Caen
Rheims
Blenheim
Linz
Falaise
Marne
Meuse
Orne
Paris
Strasbourg
Munich
Brest
NORMANDY
Seine
Le Mans
Rhine
Orléans
AUSTRIA
Briare
Sochaux
Zurich
Tours
FRANCE
Maiche
Loire
Bern
SWITZERLAND
Lake Geneva
Lake Como
Zermatt
Vichy
Baveno
Lake Maggiore
Venice
Lyon
Aix-les-Bains
Milan
Bay of Biscay
Turin
Dordogne
Bordeaux
Genoa
ITALY
Rhône
Garonne
Cap d'Ail
Roquebrune
Golfe-Juan
Monte Carlo
Salon-de-Provence
Cannes
Hendaye
Aix-en-Provence
Marseilles
Toulon
Maginot Line
0
100 miles
0
100 kms
Mediterranean Sea
Corsica



North and Central Africa during the Second World War


North America
N
Hudson Bay
C A N A D A
ALBERTA
Edmonton
Lake Louise
Calgary
Banff
Regina
Winnipeg
Vancouver
NEWFOUNDLAND
Lac des Neiges
Botwood
Naval Station Argentia
Quebec City
NOVA SCOTIA
Ottawa
Montreal
Placentia Bay
Halifax
Toronto
Niagara Falls
Hudson
Ann Arbor
Harvard
Hyde Park
Boston
Chicago
New York
Shangri-La
Fulton
Indianapolis
Baltimore
Philadelphia
Jefferson City
Mount Vernon
Washington DC
Ohio
Richmond
Hampton Roads
Norfolk Aerodrome
Snake
Missouri
Platte
UNITED STATES
Mississippi
Red
ATLANTIC OCEAN
San Simeon
Hollywood
Santa Monica
Fort Jackson
Hamilton
Bermuda
New Orleans
Pompano Beach
Miami
Nassau
Bahamas
Havana
Arroyo Blanco
Sancti Spiritus
CUBA
PACIFIC OCEAN
MEXICO
0
1000 miles
0
1000 kms


The Pacific Theatre
USSR
MONGOLIA
MANCHURIA
Vladivostok
40°
Peking
Wei-hei-wei
KOREA
JAPAN
Tokyo
Hiroshima
Kyoto
CHINA
Nagasaki
Shanghai
Yangtze
Midway
Kohima
Burma Road
Imphal
Irrawaddy
Mandalay
Hanoi
Hong Kong
Pearl Harbor
Hawaii
20°
Akyab
BURMA
Rangoon
FRENCH
INDO-CHINA
Luzon
PHILIPPINES
PACIFIC OCEAN
THAILAND
Bangkok
Bataan
Guam
Straits of
Malacca
Prince of Wales
and Repulse sunk
(10 Dec. 1941)
MALAYA
0°
Sumatra
Singapore
Borneo
DUTCH EAST INDIES
Rabaul
Solomon Islands
Java
Port Darwin
20°
INDIAN
OCEAN
AUSTRALIA
Brisbane
Perth
Sydney
NEW ZEALAND
Canberra
100°
120°
140°
160°
180°
200°
1000 miles
1000 kms
N

If you can meet with Triumph and Disaster,
And treat those two impostors just the same …

Rudyard Kipling, 'If'

Study history, study history. In history lie all the secrets of statecraft.

Churchill to an American student before a Coronation luncheon in Westminster Hall, 27 May 1953

Introduction

On Thursday, 20 December 1945, the editor of the *Sunday Dispatch*, Charles Eade, lunched with Winston Churchill and his wife Clementine at their new home in Knightsbridge in London. Eade was editing the former Prime Minister's wartime speeches for publication, and they were due to discuss the latest volume.

Before lunch, Eade had waited in what he later described as 'a beautiful room with bookshelves let into the wall and carrying superbly bound volumes of French and English books', which Churchill called his 'snob library'. The walls were adorned with pictures of Churchill's great ancestor, the 1st Duke of Marlborough, and a portrait of Churchill painted by Sir John Lavery during the First World War.

The lunch reflected post-war British rationing: an egg dish, cold turkey and salad, plum pudding and coffee. They drank a bottle of claret that the Mayor of Bordeaux had just sent over. Churchill told the trusted journalist, who had lunched with him several times during the war, that he 'had got very drunk' at a dinner at the French Embassy the previous night, adding with a chuckle, 'drunker than usual'.

Over several glasses of brandy and a cigar – whose band Eade took away as a souvenir – Churchill got down to discussing the best way to publish the wartime speeches he had delivered when the House of Commons had been in secret session during the war. In the course of their hour-long talk, he showed Eade the sixty-eight volumes of minutes, messages and memoranda

that he had sent to various Cabinet ministers and the Chiefs of Staff between 1940 and 1945, allowing him to open them at random.

When Eade naturally expressed surprise at the sheer volume of work that Churchill had managed to get through as prime minister, 'He explained to me that he was able to handle all these affairs at the centre, because his whole life had been a training for the high office he had filled during the war.' It was a sentiment that Churchill had expressed two years earlier to the Canadian Prime Minister, William Mackenzie King, during the Quebec Conference in August 1943. When King told Churchill that no one else could have saved the British Empire in 1940, he replied that 'he had had very exceptional training, having been through a previous war, and having had large experience in government.' King rejoined, 'Yes, it almost confirmed the old Presbyterian idea of pre-destination or pre-ordination; of his having been the man selected for this task.' This idea was reiterated by the Conservative politician Lord Hailsham, who had been a junior minister in Churchill's wartime government, when he said, 'The one case in which I think I can see the finger of God in contemporary history is Churchill's arrival at the premiership at that precise moment in 1940.'

Churchill put his remarks to King and Eade far more poetically three years later in the final lines of his book *The Gathering Storm*, the first volume of his war memoirs. Recalling the evening of Friday, 10 May 1940, when he had become prime minister only hours after Adolf Hitler had unleashed his Blitzkrieg on the West, Churchill wrote, 'I felt as if I were walking with destiny, and that all my past life had been but a preparation for this hour and for this trial … I could not be reproached either for making the war or with want of preparation for it. I thought I knew a good deal about it all, and I was sure I should not fail.'

He had believed in his own destiny since at least the age of sixteen, when he told a friend that he would save Britain from a foreign invasion. His lifelong admiration of Napoleon and his own ancestor, John Churchill, 1st Duke of Marlborough, coloured his belief that he too was a man of destiny. His aristocratic birth, as the holder of the two famous names of Spencer and Churchill, gave him a tremendous self-confidence that meant that he was not personally hurt by criticism. In the courageous and often lonely stands he was to take against the twin totalitarian threats of Fascism and Communism, he cared far more for what he imagined would have been the

good opinion of his fallen comrades of the Great War than for what was said by his living colleagues on the benches of the House of Commons.

The memory of his friends killed in war or by accidents (such as Lawrence of Arabia) or alcoholism (such as F. E. Smith) very often moved Churchill to tears, but so did many other things, as this book will relate. Churchill's passions and emotions often mastered him, and he never minded crying in public, even as prime minister, in an age that admired the stiff upper lip. This was just one phenomenon of many that made him a profoundly unusual person.

This book explores the extraordinary degree to which in 1940 Churchill's past life had indeed been but a preparation for his leadership in the Second World War. It investigates the myriad lessons that he learned in the sixty-five years before he became prime minister – years of error and tragedy as well as of hard work and inspiring leadership – then it looks at the ways that he put those lessons to use during civilization's most testing hour and trial. For although he was indeed walking with destiny in May 1940, it was a destiny that he had consciously spent a lifetime shaping.

Part One

THE PREPARATION

1

A Famous Name, November 1874–January 1895

It is said that famous men are usually the product of unhappy childhood. The stern compression of circumstances, the twinges of adversity, the spur of slights and taunts in early years, are needed to evoke that ruthless fixity of purpose and tenacious mother-wit without which great actions are seldom accomplished.

Churchill, *Marlborough*[1]

Half English aristocrat and half American gambler.

Harold Macmillan on Churchill[2]

Winston Leonard Spencer-Churchill was born in a small ground-floor room, the nearest bedroom to the main entrance of Blenheim Palace in Oxfordshire, at 1.30 a.m. on Monday, 30 November 1874. It was a worrying birth as the baby was at least six weeks premature, and his mother, the beautiful American socialite Jennie Jerome, had suffered a fall a few days earlier. She had also been shaken by a pony-cart the day before the birth, following which her labour-pains started. In the event there were no abnormalities, and the baby's father, Lord Randolph Churchill, the younger son of the 7th Duke of Marlborough, was soon describing him as

‘wonderfully pretty’ with ‘dark eyes and hair and very healthy’.[3] (The hair soon went strawberry blond, and great tresses of it from when he was five can be seen in the birth room at the Palace today; thereafter Churchill was red-headed.)

The name ‘Winston’ recalled both Sir Winston Churchill, the child’s ancestor who had fought for King Charles I in the English Civil War, and Lord Randolph’s elder brother, who had died aged four. ‘Leonard’ honoured the baby’s maternal grandfather, a risk-taking American financier and railway-owner who had already made and lost two great fortunes on Wall Street. ‘Spencer’ had been hyphenated with ‘Churchill’ since 1817, the result of a marital alliance with the rich Spencer family of Althorp, Northamptonshire, who at that time held the earldom of Sunderland and were later to become the Earls Spencer. Proud of his Spencer forebears, he signed himself Winston S. Churchill, and in 1942 told an American trade unionist that ‘of course his real name was Spencer-Churchill and it is in this way that he is described, for example, in Court Circulars when he goes to see the King.’[4]

The child’s paternal grandfather was John Winston Spencer-Churchill, owner of Blenheim Palace, which has been described both as the English Versailles and as ‘the greatest war memorial ever built’.[5] Named after the most glorious of the battles won by John Churchill, 1st Duke of Marlborough, in the War of Spanish Succession in 1704, its magnificent structure, tapestries, busts, paintings and furnishings commemorated a victory in a conflict that had saved Britain from domination by a European superpower – in this case, the France of Louis XIV – a message that the young Winston did not fail to imbibe. ‘We have nothing to equal this,’ King George III admitted when he visited Blenheim Palace in 1786.

‘We shape our buildings,’ Winston Churchill was later to say, ‘and afterwards our buildings shape us.’[6] Although he never lived at Blenheim, he was profoundly influenced by the splendour of the Palace’s 500-foot frontage, its 7 acres of rooms and its 2,700-acre estate. He absorbed its magnificence during the many holidays and weekends he stayed there with his cousins. The Palace was – still is – pervaded with the spirit of the 1st Duke, the greatest soldier-statesman in British history, who, as Churchill was to describe him in his biography of his ancestor, was a duke ‘in days when dukes were dukes’.[7]

For his late Victorian contemporaries, the young Winston Churchill's name conjured up two images: the splendour of the 1st Duke's military reputation and Palace of course, but also the adventurous career of Lord Randolph Churchill, the child's father. Lord Randolph had been elected a Member of Parliament nine months before Churchill was born, and was one of the leaders of the Conservative Party from the child's sixth birthday onwards. He was controversial, mercurial, opportunistic, politically ruthless, a brilliant speaker both on public platforms and in the House of Commons, and was marked out as a future prime minister – as long as his inherent tendency to recklessness did not get the better of him. In politics, he followed the precepts of the Conservative leader Benjamin Disraeli, which combined imperialism abroad with a progressive programme of social reform at home. Lord Randolph was to call his version Tory Democracy, and it was to be imbibed in full by Winston. His slogan, 'Trust the People', was to be used many times in his son's career.

Although Lord Randolph was the son of a duke, he was not rich, at least relative to most of the rest of his class. As an aristocratic younger son in the era of primogeniture, he could not expect to inherit much from his father; and although the father of his American wife Jennie Jerome had been enormously rich in the recent past – he was once nicknamed 'the King of New York' – he had seen massive reverses in the American stock-market crash of 1873. Nevertheless, Leonard Jerome still lived in a house that covered an entire block on Madison Avenue and 26th Street, and which boasted extensive stabling and a full-size theatre. He had owned the land where the Jerome Park Reservoir is today, founded the American Jockey Club and co-owned the *New York Times*.

By the time of Jennie's wedding the year after the crash, however, Jerome could settle only £2,000 per annum on his beautiful daughter, the Duke of Marlborough contributing £1,200 per annum for his son. Along with the leasehold on a house at 48 Charles Street in Mayfair, courtesy of Jerome, that ought to have been enough for the couple to live upon comfortably, had they not both been notorious spendthrifts. 'We were not rich,' their son recalled during the Second World War. 'I suppose we had about three thousand pounds a year and spent six thousand.'[8]

Lord Randolph had met Jennie at Cowes Regatta on the Isle of Wight in August 1873. After only three days he had proposed and been accepted. They married in the British Embassy in Paris after a seven-month

engagement, on 15 April 1874. Although the Marlboroughs gave their formal blessing to the union, they were absent from the wedding, because the Duke – who had sent agents to New York and Washington to try to ascertain Jerome's genuine net worth – thought it a *mésalliance* and Jerome 'a vulgar kind of man', 'a *bad* character' from 'the class of speculators'.[9]

Churchill was proud that his parents had married for love. Writing in 1937 about a libel action he was launching against a book which had described him as 'the first-fruit of the first famous snob-dollar marriage', he told a friend:

> The reference to my mother and father's marriage is not only very painful to me, but as you know is utterly devoid of foundation. This was a love-match if ever there was one, with very little money on either side. In fact they could only live in the very smallest way possible to people in London Society. If the marriage became famous afterwards it was because my father, an unknown sprig of the aristocracy, became famous, and also because my mother, as all her photographs attest, was by general consent one of the beauties of her time.[10]

(He eventually won £500 in damages from the publisher for the libel, plus £250 in costs, but not the apology for which he had been hoping.)

Winston Churchill was born into a caste that held immense political and economic power in the largest empire in world history, and that had not yet become plagued by insecurity and self-doubt. Churchill's sublime self-confidence and self-reliance stemmed directly from the assurance he instinctively felt in who he was and where he came from. In his obituary of his cousin 'Sunny',[fn1] the 9th Duke of Marlborough, he wrote that he had been born into one of 'the three or four hundred families which had for three or four hundred years guided the fortunes of the nation'.[11] He knew he came from the apex of the social pyramid, and one of the key attributes of that class at that time was not to care overmuch what people further down it thought of them. As his greatest friend, the Tory MP and barrister F. E. Smith, later Lord Birkenhead, was to write of him, 'He was shielded in his own mind from self-distrust.'[12] This was to prove invaluable to Churchill at the periods – of which there were many – when no one else seemed to trust him.

The social life of the Victorian and Edwardian upper classes was partly based upon staying in the country houses of friends and acquaintances for the 'Friday-to-Monday' extended weekend. Over the coming years,

Churchill was to stay with the Lyttons at Knebworth, his cousins the Londonderrys at Mount Stewart, the Rothschilds at Tring, the Grenfells at Taplow and Panshanger, the Roseberys at Dalmeny, the Cecils at Hatfield, the Duke of Westminster at Eaton Hall and on his yacht *Flying Cloud*, his cousins Lord and Lady Wimborne at Canford Manor, the John Astors at Hever and the Waldorf Astors at Cliveden, as well as paying frequent visits to Blenheim and very many other such houses. Although he occasionally experienced social ostracism as a result of his politics in later life, he always had an extensive and immensely grand social network upon which he could fall back. This largely aristocratic cocoon of friendship and kinship was to sustain him in the bad times to come.

The Victorian English aristocracy was a distinct tribe, with its own hierarchies, accents, clubs, schools, colleges, career-paths, vocabulary, honour-codes, love-rituals, loyalties, traditions, sports and sense of humour. Some of these were quite intricate and almost impenetrable to outsiders. When as a young subaltern Churchill was introduced to the caste system in India, he understood it instantly. His political opinions essentially stemmed from Disraeli's Young England movement of the 1840s, whose sense of *noblesse oblige* assumed eternal superiority but also instinctively appreciated the duties of the privileged towards the less well off. The interpretation Churchill gave to the obligations of aristocracy was that he and his class had a profound responsibility towards his country, which had the right to expect his lifelong service to it.

The British upper classes of the last quarter of the nineteenth century could on occasion seem quite separate from the rest of society. Lord Hartington, heir to the dukedom of Devonshire, had never heard of napkin-rings, for example (because he assumed that table linen was washed after every meal); the statesman Lord Curzon was reputed to have taken a bus only once in his life, when he was outraged that the driver refused to take him where he was ordered. Similarly, the first time that Churchill dialled a telephone number himself was when he was seventy-three.[13] (It was to the speaking clock, which he thanked politely.) He did not believe he depended on household servants quite as much as he did. 'I shall cook for myself,' he once proudly told his wife in the 1950s. 'I can boil an egg. I've seen it done.'[14] (In the end, he did not.) Aged fifteen, one of the postscripts to his letters reads: 'Milbanke is writing this for me as I am having a bath.'[15fn2] Two years later he complained bitterly about having to travel in a second-

class compartment, writing, 'I won't travel Second again by Jove.'[16] When older, he rarely went anywhere without a valet, even to the battlefields of the Boer War and Second World War, and while in prison in South Africa he had a barber come in to shave him. He ordered food at the Savoy that wasn't on the menu, and as prime minister, if he wanted a fly swatted, he asked his secretary to call for his valet to 'Wring its bloody neck.'[17] Churchill was emphatically not representative of the coming Age of the Common Man.

Like a true aristocrat, he was no snob. 'What is the sense of being against a man simply because of his birth?' he wanted to ask Adolf Hitler of the Jews.[18] His closest friends were taken from a wide social circle; indeed, if anything, he had something of a weakness for parvenus, such as his friends Brendan Bracken and Maxine Elliott. 'Imbued with a historic sense of tradition,' a close friend wrote, 'he was quite untrammelled by convention.'[19] This was seen in his eccentric dress-sense such as siren suits and zip-shoes, as well as the highly irregular hours he kept. He enjoyed disregarding the rules of hierarchy, often to others' fury. 'I am arrogant,' he once said of himself in a perceptive piece of self-analysis, 'but not conceited.'[20] In the modern world, a sense of aristocratic entitlement is considered reprehensible, but Churchill was replete with it and it affected his attitude towards everything – it explains, for example, his readiness blithely to spend money that he did not have. He lived his life in an aristocratic way even if he could not afford it, but that was in itself aristocratic. He demanded extended credit, gambled heavily in casinos and as soon as he was properly solvent – which was not until he was in his seventies – he bought racehorses.

Many are the memoirs that condemn Churchill for his insensitivity to other people and their views, but they fail to appreciate that just such a rhinocerine hide was essential for someone who was to become as addicted to controversy as he was. 'You are one of the few who have it in their power to bestow judgments which I respect,' he wrote to Lord Craigavon who had fought in the Boer War and was prime minister of Northern Ireland, in December 1938, at one of the lowest points in his life.[21] Like the Marquess of Lansdowne, who promoted peace with Germany during the First World War, or the Marquess of Tavistock, who much more reprehensibly did so during the Second, the aristocrat in Churchill encouraged him to say fully and exactly what he thought, regardless of the consequences.

Churchill spent his early years in Dublin, where his parents lived at Little Lodge, close to the Viceregal Lodge[fn3] in Phoenix Park, where Lord Randolph worked as private secretary to his father. The 7th Duke had been appointed viceroy and lord lieutenant of Ireland by Disraeli in January 1877; Lord Randolph had to leave London because he was being socially ostracized by the Prince of Wales after trying unsuccessfully to blackmail him over a scandal involving Randolph's elder brother, the Marquess of Blandford, some compromising love-letters and a married former mistress of the Prince. It was one of the very many unedifying scrapes in which Lord Randolph found himself during his short, unstable but undeniably exciting life. The elephantine Prince had a long memory, and Lord Randolph was not permitted to return to London for over three years.

Churchill's earliest memory was suitably martial, of his grandfather unveiling a statue to Lord Gough, the Anglo-Irish imperial hero, in Phoenix Park in 1878. The Duke made a speech which included the phrase 'And with a withering volley he shattered the enemy's line,' which Churchill claimed he understood even at the age of three.[22] With his grandfather representing Queen Victoria and discharging her ceremonial duties in Ireland, Churchill acquired a profound reverence for monarchy that was to stay with him for the rest of his life. His next memory came the following March, in 1879, when he was riding a donkey in the Park and came across what his governess feared was an Irish republican demonstration, but which was probably in fact only a march by the Rifle Brigade. 'I was thrown off and had concussion of the brain,' he later recalled. 'This was my first introduction to Irish politics!'[23] His next came in 1882 when Thomas Burke, the Under-Secretary of Ireland, who had given Churchill a toy drum, was stabbed to death in Phoenix Park by Irish republican terrorists along with the newly appointed Chief Secretary, Lord Frederick Cavendish, profoundly shocking the household.

Churchill's younger brother Jack was born – also prematurely – in February 1880, while the family was still in Ireland, but that April Lord Randolph's social exile came to an end and he returned to set up house at 29 St James's Place in London. Churchill's next political memory was the death of Disraeli in April 1881, when he was six. 'I followed his illness from day to day with great anxiety,' he recalled, 'because everyone said what a loss he would be to his country and how no one else could stop Mr Gladstone from working his wicked will upon us all.'[24] The Liberal

William Gladstone had won a general election in the month the Churchills returned to London, becoming prime minister for the second time. In 1883, Lord Randolph founded the Primrose League, a grass-roots Tory political organization, named after Disraeli's supposed favourite flower. It existed principally to promote his father's career and the Tory Democracy political programme, and Winston joined its Brighton branch when he was twelve.

'My dear Mamma, I hope you are quite well,' he wrote from Blenheim Palace in his first surviving letter, in January 1882, after his parents had celebrated Christmas elsewhere. 'I thank you very very much for the beautiful presents those Soldiers and Flags and Castle they are so nice it was so kind of you and dear Papa I send you my love and a great many kisses, Your loving Winston.'[25] Many boys had toy soldiers, but one of Churchill's cousins later recalled that 'His playroom contained from one end to the other a plank table on trestles, upon which were thousands of lead soldiers arranged for battle. He organized wars. The lead battalions were manoeuvred into action, peas and pebbles committed great casualties, forts were stormed, cavalry charged, bridges were destroyed.'[26] These battles were 'played with an interest that was no ordinary child game'. The enormous lead army implies generosity from his parents for the boy whom his grandmother was by then describing as 'a naughty, sandy-haired little bulldog'.[27] Yet the fact that his parents had spent Christmas away from him was indicative of a persistent physical as well as emotional distance that would today be regarded as verging on the abusive. His brother Jack's son Peregrine was possibly correct in his belief that his uncle had not been neglected by his parents more than most upper-class Victorian children of the period, but that his sensitive nature rebelled against it more than most.

Lord Randolph Churchill's political career and Jennie's active social life meant that they had relatively little time for their son. On one occasion Lord Randolph gave a speech in Brighton without bothering to visit Winston at school less than 2 miles away in Hove. After a dinner in the late 1930s, Winston was to say to his own son, 'We have this evening had a longer period of continuous conversation together than the total which I ever had with my father in the whole course of his life.'[28] Jennie noted in her diary each of the thirteen occasions that she saw her sons during the first seven months of 1882, such as 'Found the children pretty well' or 'Saw the children'.[29] She also went shopping eleven times, painted twenty-five times, had lunch or tea with her friend Lady Blanche Hozier twenty-six

times and had tea with the Conservative MP Arthur Balfour ten times. She went out in the evenings so often that she mentioned instead the very rare occasions when she 'did not go out to any parties, too sleepy'. Otherwise she hunted, spent weekends in house parties in the country, had 'tremendous chaff' with the famous beau Captain Bay Middleton at tea and 'mostly frivolous larking' with friends at lunch, played the piano, dined at the Café Royal, played billiards, lunched at St James's Palace, watched Sarah Bernhardt and Lilly Langtry on stage, 'stayed in bed till 2 p.m.', played tennis and generally lived the crowded life of a much sought-after Society beauty.[30]

'Went to the Salisburys' party', reads a typical entry in Jennie's diary, 'afterwards to Cornelia's ball. The Prince and Princess there. Not wildly amusing.'[31] Since she could hardly have found 'Little Win' wildly amusing at seven, he had to take his place in the long queue for her attention and affection, as she lived the socially accomplished if somewhat vacuous life of the wife of a Victorian aristocrat and politician. On a single occasion she went out with Consuelo, Duchess of Marlborough, 'to give away blankets, etc' to the poor, two days after she had 'Shopped all morning'.[32] Winston was later famously to write of his mother, 'She shone for me like the evening star. I loved her dearly – but at a distance.'[33]

Much of Churchill's well-documented naughtiness at the various schools to which he was sent seems to have stemmed from the desire to draw attention to himself, for unlike the archetypal child of the Victorian era he was determined to be both seen and heard. It is rare for anyone to depict themselves as less intelligent than they genuinely are, but Churchill did so in his autobiography *My Early Life* in 1930, which needs to be read in the context of his colourful self-mythologizing rather than as strictly accurate history. His school reports utterly belie his claims to have been an academic dunce. Those from St George's Preparatory School in Ascot, which he entered just before his eighth birthday in 1882, record him in six successive terms as having come in the top half or usually top third of the class.[34]

Churchill was regularly beaten at St George's, but this was not because of his work – his History results were always 'good', 'very good' or 'exceedingly good' – but because his headmaster, H. W. Sneyd-Kinnersley, was a sadist described by one alumnus as 'an unconscious sodomite', who enjoyed beating young boys on their bare bottoms until they bled.[35] Ostensibly the reason for these fortnightly beatings derived from

Churchill's bad conduct, which was described as '*very* naughty', 'still troublesome', 'exceedingly bad', 'very disgraceful' and so on.[36] 'He cannot be trusted to behave himself anywhere,' wrote Sneyd-Kinnersley in April 1884, but in the very next sentence: 'He has very good abilities.'[37]

'Dreadful legends were told about Winston Churchill,' recalled the writer Maurice Baring, a near-contemporary at St George's. 'His naughtiness appeared to have surpassed anything. He had been flogged for taking sugar from the pantry, and so far from being penitent, he had taken the headmaster's sacred straw hat from where it hung over the door and kicked it to pieces. His sojourn at this school [was] one long feud with authority. The boys did not seem to sympathize with him. Their point of view was conventional and priggish.'[38] (This lack of friendly support from conventional and priggish contemporaries was to dog Churchill for almost the rest of his life.)

At this distance of time it is impossible to tell whether Churchill's bad behaviour had genuinely warranted punishment, or whether Sneyd-Kinnersley's craving to hurt children was more to blame, but before Churchill was ten years old the beatings had so damaged his health that his parents took him away from St George's and sent him to a far kinder school in Hove, run by two sisters both called Miss Thomson.

In *My Early Life* Churchill calls St George's 'St James's', perhaps out of tact, but more likely because he had sensibly put the place out of his mind for nearly half a century.[39] The person who had first spotted the lashes wrought on the young boy by Sneyd-Kinnersley was Churchill's fifty-two-year-old spinster nanny, Elizabeth Everest. 'My nurse was my confidante,' Churchill later recalled. 'It was to her I poured out my many troubles.'[40] One doesn't have to embrace Freudianism to find his nicknames for her – 'Woom' and 'Woomany' – poignant in a child looking for a mother-surrogate while his real mother was dazzling the Prince of Wales's Marlborough House Set[fn4] with her beauty, high spirits and sexual allure. Other maternal figures sometimes stepped in: his grandmother often had him to stay at Blenheim, and his aunt Lady Wimborne, Lord Randolph's sister, hosted him at Bournemouth during school holidays, but the woman who was by far the closest to him was Mrs Everest. 'Lots of love and kisses from your loving WOOM,' she would write to 'My darling Winny' when they were apart.[41] The Churchills unceremoniously sacked her when he was

nineteen and Jack thirteen, leaving the elder boy distraught. When she fell ill from peritonitis a short while later, he paid for her nursing and rushed to her bedside when she was dying, aged sixty-two. 'She had lived such an innocent and loving life of service to others and held such a simple faith', he later wrote of her death, 'that she had no fears at all, and did not seem to mind very much. She had been my dearest and most intimate friend during the whole of the twenty years I had lived.'[42] Subsequently he paid for the upkeep of her grave for the rest of his life.[fn5] Close friends were to predecease him throughout his life, but few were closer to him than Elizabeth Everest.

Aside from a lacerated bottom, Churchill took away from St George's a photographic and phonographic memory, perhaps as a means to avoid floggings by memorizing things by heart that he did not properly understand. He claimed in his autobiography that, because he could not master the first declension of Latin, 'there was one thing I could do: I could learn by heart.'[43] His capacity for memorizing huge amounts of prose and verse stayed with him for life, and would continue to astonish contemporaries well into old age. Many were the occasions that he would quote reams of poetry or songs or speeches half a century after having learned them. He was omnivorous in what his mind's ear chose to retain, which included long Shakespeare soliloquies, but also much of the repertoires of music-hall performers such as Marie Lloyd, George Robey, 'Little Tich' and George Chirgwin ('the White-Eyed Kaffir').[44]

At Hove, Churchill read voraciously, especially epic tales of heroic, often imperial, adventure, such as *Treasure Island*, *King Solomon's Mines* and the works of G. A. Henty.[45] He came first in Classics, third in French and fourth in English in 1885, further belying his later claims to have been an academic failure, while he continued to be either near or at the bottom of the entire school for conduct.[46] His unpunctuality was to be a lifelong trait; even as prime minister he would arrive late or with only minutes to spare for meetings with Cabinets and monarchs and for debates in Parliament. As his exasperated wife was to say, 'Winston always likes to give the train a sporting chance to get away.'[47]

Churchill knew from an early age that his father was famous, and he asked him for autographs to sell to his classmates.[48] When he was taken to a pantomime at Brighton where an actor playing Lord Randolph was hissed

by the audience, he burst into tears and turned furiously on a man behind him, shouting, 'Stop that row, you snub-nosed Radical!'[49] In the summer of 1883, when Churchill was eight, his father took him to Paris. As they drove together through the Place de la Concorde, Churchill noticed that one of the monuments was covered with black crêpe and he asked his father why. 'These are monuments of the provinces of France,' replied Lord Randolph, but 'Alsace and Lorraine have been taken from France by the Germans in the last war [that is, the Franco-Prussian War of 1870–71]. The French are very unhappy about it and hope some day to get them back.' Churchill remembered 'quite distinctly thinking to myself, "I hope they will get them back." '[50] It was his first introduction to what he was to call 'the long feud between Teuton and Gaul'. His Francophilia was to remain long after Alsace and Lorraine had been restored to France by the Versailles Treaty in 1919.

Hove was kinder than St George's, but there were two dangerous incidents there. The first came in December 1884 when the ten-year-old Winston was stabbed in the chest with a penknife by a boy whose ear he was yanking. It turned out to be merely a flesh wound. The second came in March 1886 when he contracted pneumonia, his temperature reached 104.3 degrees Fahrenheit (40.2 Celsius), and he became delirious, an illness so serious that it even persuaded his parents to visit him.[51] Part of the cure was the regular administration of relatively large doses of brandy, both orally and rectally.[52] 'My boy at school at Brighton nearly died of inflammation of the lungs[fn6] last week,' his father informed the 3rd Marquess of Salisbury, the Conservative Party leader.[53] Overall, however, Churchill was happy at Hove, where he could pursue the activities that interested him, primarily French, History, riding, swimming and learning reams of poetry by heart.[54]

In June 1885, Lord Salisbury appointed Randolph Churchill secretary of state for India. It was in recognition of his talents and his ability to cause trouble rather than for any loyalty he had shown. As the leader of the tiny so-called Fourth Party of Tory MPs, Lord Randolph had often rebelled against the Conservative Party leadership in the Commons, making jokes at its expense. Salisbury hoped that an important Cabinet office might discipline him.

In February 1886 Lord Randolph annexed Upper Burma, a country five times the size of England, to the British Empire (which was already thrice

the size of the Roman Empire at its height).[55] He had earlier opposed Gladstone's bombardment of Alexandria in 1882 as too much of a 'Forward' imperialist policy, yet only four years later he went further. Similarly, he had given assurances to Charles Stewart Parnell, the Irish nationalist leader, in 1885 that he would endorse Irish Home Rule, assurances which in 1886 he completely reneged upon, declaring that the northern Protestants would start a civil war sooner than join a united Ireland. 'Ulster will fight,' he said provocatively in a public letter of 7 May 1886, 'and Ulster will be right.' Lord Randolph also made private remarks in favour of 'Fair Trade' – then a code for Imperial Protectionism – before publicly advocating Free Trade. His principles may have been flexible, but audiences that turned out to hear him speak were enormous, sometimes numbering in their tens of thousands, because he was an electrifying orator. His obvious ambition and opportunism, however, made him distrusted by Lord Salisbury and the Tory Establishment.

In the summer of 1886, when Winston was eleven, Lord Randolph and Jennie became estranged, and rumours spread of a formal separation.[56] She was spending even more of her time with the Marlborough House Set, pursuing an affair with the dashing Austrian Ambassador to London, Prince Karl Kinsky, which lasted at least until 1892, when she began another with the handsome Freddy, Lord Wolverton.[57] Lord Randolph meanwhile, when he was not in the Commons or the Carlton Club, spent a good deal of time in Paris, where people presumed he was womanizing. 'Tell Mary she is a fool not to forgive Billy,' he once wrote to Jennie about two of their friends. 'What does one occasional cook or housemaid matter?'[58] It was indicative of his attitude, but nonetheless surprising to express it in a letter to his wife.

The general election of July 1886 saw the Conservatives and their anti-Irish Home Rule allies the Liberal Unionists (henceforth together the Unionists) win an outright victory. In recognition of Lord Randolph's key role in enthusing massive audiences around the country and attacking Gladstone with wit and eloquence, Lord Salisbury, the Prime Minister, appointed him both chancellor of the Exchequer and leader of the House of Commons. As Salisbury was almost twenty years older, and sat in the Lords rather than the Commons, Lord Randolph seemed to be the heir apparent for the premiership. He was also in a key position to promote the Disraelian concept of Tory Democracy which he had adopted as his political

philosophy. When asked by a friend to explain what it meant in 1885, he only half joked, 'I believe it to be principally opportunism.'[59] Forced to define it publicly three years later, he waffled, 'It invokes the idea of a Government who … are animated by lofty and liberal ideas.'

After only five months in office, Lord Randolph threatened to resign from the Cabinet over the military budget (the Estimates), which he considered too high, despite having supported higher defence expenditure in opposition. Behind this was an attempt to wrest power inside the Cabinet from the Prime Minister. Instead of backing down, as he had done several times in the past, Lord Salisbury simply accepted the resignation. Lord Randolph was never to hold public office again. He had behaved like a prima donna for years and ridden roughshod over his colleagues, and not a single Cabinet minister supported him.

In the biography of his father that Churchill was later to write, he connected the resignation with the onset of the mysterious disease that was to kill Lord Randolph within a decade: 'That frail body, driven forward by its nervous energies, had all these last five years been at the utmost strain. Good fortune had sustained it; but disaster, obloquy, and inaction now suddenly descended with crushing force, and the hurt was mortal.'[60] The boy was profoundly affected by his father's entirely self-inflicted disaster, from which he learned several important lessons. The most important was not to threaten to resign unless one is prepared to go into the wilderness. If one is not so prepared, then only threaten to resign along with several other people capable of bringing down the Government.

The attempted power-grab having spectacularly failed, Lord Randolph did indeed start to decline politically, mentally and personally. There were still some social occasions where the Churchills performed together in public – despite their informal separation, they still lived in the same house – although these grew fewer and fewer. On 8 August 1887, the diary of Prince George of Wales (the future King George V) records that at the time of Queen Victoria's Golden Jubilee 'the Randolph Churchills & Winny & Jack' went aboard the Royal Yacht *Osborne* at Spithead.[61] The twelve-year-old Churchill had the thrill of sailing on the Royal Yacht through the battle-fleet of twelve warships commanded by Vice Admiral Sir William Hewett VC, many of them names redolent of British history: HMS *Agincourt*, *Black Prince* and *Iron Duke* among them. That evening they went aboard the newly launched ironclad flagship HMS *Collingwood*.

‘Did you go to Harrow or Eton?’ Churchill asked his father in October 1887.[62] It seems extraordinary that he did not know his father had gone to Eton, but he himself was destined for Harrow, largely because of the supposed health benefits of Harrow Hill’s sunlit uplands over Eton’s misty lowlands. Founded in 1572, Harrow was one of the great public schools of England, which among ancient buildings provided an elite, largely classical education informed by equally ancient traditions for the future gentlemen who were expected to go on to run the country and Empire. He passed the entrance exam in March 1888, after working through the second book of Virgil’s *Aeneid*.[63] In September 1941 he reminisced about Harrow to his private secretary John ‘Jock’ Colville, himself an Old Harrovian, saying that this was ‘where he had spent the unhappiest days of his life’.[64] He wrote to his parents in November of this second year, ‘Don’t imagine I am happy here.’ He nonetheless returned to Harrow frequently between 1938 and 1962.

In *My Early Life*, Churchill boasted of how badly he had done in the entrance exam, and one of his school contemporaries, Sir Gerald Woods Wollaston (later Garter King of Arms), recalled that ‘The inconvenience likely to be caused by the rejection of Lord Randolph Churchill’s son’ probably played a part in his acceptance.[65] Churchill claimed that ‘In all the twelve years I was at school no one ever succeeded in making me write a Latin verse or learn any Greek except the alphabet.’[66] This was untrue, as his school reports show. He nonetheless recalled his schooldays as ‘a sombre patch upon the chart of my journey’ and ‘a time of discomfort, restriction and purposeless monotony’.[67] On the day he entered Harrow, 17 April 1888, the boy three above him in the school list was Archibald Campbell-Colquhoun, who lived at Chartwell Manor at Westerham in Kent.[68]

For all his later denials, Churchill was in fact something of a success at Harrow. At fourteen he won a prize for reciting no fewer than 1,200 lines of Macaulay’s *Lays of Ancient Rome* without error, and a contemporary recalled that ‘he could quote whole scenes of Shakespeare’s plays and had no hesitation in correcting his masters if they misquoted.’[69] He enjoyed Macaulay’s tales of heroism set in the ancient world. ‘If I had to make my literary will and my literary acknowledgements,’ he told an acquaintance in 1946, ‘I should have to own that I owe more to Macaulay than to any other

English writer.'[70] The talented schoolmaster Robert Somervell taught Churchill English grammar at Harrow. 'Thus I got into my bones the essential structure of the ordinary British sentence,' Churchill wrote, 'which is a noble thing.'[71] Less noble was his sole attempt at poetry, an ode entitled 'Influenza'. The fourth of twelve stanzas goes:

> On Moscow's fair and famous town,
> Where fell the first Napoleon's crown,
> It made a direful swoop;
> The rich, the poor, the high, the low,
> Alike the various symptoms know,
> Alike before it droop.[72]

Churchill kept himself busy with all manner of eclectic pastimes. He was a member of his victorious House swimming team; wrote for the school magazine the *Harrovian*; collected stamps, birds' eggs and autographs; built a model theatre; played chess; bred silkworms; drew landscapes, and played the cello. In April 1892 he won the Public Schools Fencing Championship Cup at Aldershot, using a foil. Despite being smaller and lighter than the other competitors, he won, according to the *Harrovian*, 'chiefly due to his quick and dashing attack which quite took his opponents by surprise'.[73]

Importantly for later life, Churchill also polished a talent for cheeky repartee. When Mr Mayo, a Harrow teacher, expostulated to a class rhetorically, 'I don't know what to do with you boys!' the fourteen-year-old Churchill retorted, 'Teach us, sir!'[74] Later, when the Headmaster, the formidable Dr Welldon, said, 'Churchill, I have very grave reason to be displeased with you,' he received the less witty but equally brave reply, 'And I, sir, have very grave reason to be displeased with you!'[75] Churchill displayed similar courage when he showed his nanny Mrs Everest all over Harrow, 'to her immense delight', as Wollaston recalled, 'and not content with this, he marched arm-in-arm with her up the high street for all who cared to see.'[76] The story of Churchill and his nanny 'went like wildfire through the school, and did not then, I regret to say, add favourably to his schoolboy reputation', his cousin Shane Leslie remembered. 'When he walked about with her, a few jeering friends followed him down to the station where he had the courage to kiss her.'[77] Churchill was not about to allow the sneers of his snobbish contemporaries to mar the happiness of the

woman who had showed him unquestioning love all his life. As Leslie noted, 'He owed much health and probably his life to her devotion.'

Churchill enjoyed lectures on the battles of Waterloo and Sedan (where Germany had sealed France's fate in 1870 and would again in 1940), on Alpine climbing by the famous mountaineer Edward Whymper of Zermatt, and on natural selection in butterflies, from which possibly stemmed his lifelong love of them. Asked what he intended to do as a profession, he replied, 'The Army, of course, so long as there's any fighting to be had. When that's over, I shall have a shot at politics.'[78] The Harrow Archives contain an extraordinary document written when Churchill was fourteen, a 1,500-word essay set in the future about a British invasion of Russia, complete with six pages of battle plans. Written in the first person by 'Colonel Seymour' and dated 7 July 1914, it is full of military manoeuvres, 'glittering bayonets', 'dark clouds of Cossacks', heroic derring-do and aides-de-camp charging across limb-strewn battlefields carrying vital orders between commanders. 'The fields which this morning were green', Churchill wrote, 'are now tinged with the blood of seventeen thousand.'[79] A quarter of a century before the Great War, he understood that as a result of advances in military technology 'The front line was no place for cavalry now.' Like Churchill's hero Napoleon, 'Colonel Seymour' was nonetheless kept busy on horseback. 'As I galloped off to obey the order,' he writes, 'I looked over my shoulder at the spot on which General C— was standing, even while I was looking a nine-pound shell burst within three paces of him, exactly where I had been standing for half an hour. "Chance," you say, but that was more than chance.'[80]

A brave cavalry charge in which the 17th Lancers and the 10th and 11th Hussars attack the Odessa and Dnieper regiments sees the British lose one-third of their men, especially once 'A crackle of musketry mixes with the cannonade.'[81] There are lots of military commands such as 'With case shot at a hundred yards, fire', 'Action right', 'Independent firing' and other orders he had learned from the Harrow School Rifle Volunteer Corps. Seymour is captured, but, in the chaos of battle, 'Seeing my opportunity I jumped on a stray horse and rode for my life.'[82] In the rest of the campaign, 'The enemy retreated slowly and deliberately at first, but at the River Volga they became broken and our cavalry, light and heavy, executed a most brilliant charge which completed the confusion' and showed 'the superiority of John Bull over the Russian Bear'.[83] The hero of the story was

thus able ‘to sleep tonight under the influence of victory which is the best narcotic in the world’. Churchill finally notes that ‘Colonel Seymour’ died gallantly on 21 September 1914, ‘endeavouring to hold a fortification on the heights of Woronzoff’.[84]

Churchill’s teenage juvenilia might not seem worth recording except that later in life he took part in a cavalry charge of the 21st Lancers (which later amalgamated with the 17th Lancers of the story), was captured by an enemy but later escaped, oversaw the fate of a British Expeditionary Force to Russia and nearly died after a shell landed where he had been standing moments earlier, during a war that broke out within a month of Churchill’s speculative dating of such an event twenty-five years earlier. Stalingrad, where the German invasion of Russia was broken in 1943, lies on the River Volga. ‘Chance, you say …’

This was not his only moment of extraordinary prescience. On a Sunday evening in July 1891, in a basement room of Dr Welldon’s house after evensong in chapel, he was discussing his life plans with his friend Murland Evans. ‘I can see vast changes coming over a now peaceful world,’ Churchill told Evans,

> great upheavals, terrible struggles; wars such as one cannot imagine; and I tell you London will be in danger – London will be attacked and I shall be very prominent in the defence of London. I see further ahead than you do. I see into the future. This country will be subjected somehow, to a tremendous invasion, by what means I do not know, but I tell you I shall be in command of the defences of London and I shall save London and England from disaster … dreams of the future are blurred but the main objective is clear. I repeat – London will be in danger and in the high position I shall occupy, it will fall to me to save the capital and save the Empire.[85]

Evans went on to work in the War Office and was a man whose powers of recollection can be depended on.

‘I am always ready to learn,’ Churchill was to say in 1952, ‘although I do not always like being taught.’[86] He continued to be beaten at Harrow, because, as a contemporary recalled, ‘He consistently broke almost every rule made by masters or boys, was quite incorrigible, and had an unlimited vocabulary of backchat.’[87] On 25 May 1891, for example, he was ‘swished’ (caned) seven times on the backside for ‘breaking into premises and doing damage’ in a disused factory in Harrow. This did not make him unusual; according to the Harrow punishment book, fourteen boys received seven

swishes that month. Churchill kept a bulldog, against school rules, and used to walk him with one of the townspeople. He did odd jobs for Nugent Hicks, the head boy, who gave him a 'whopping' for failing to perform his duties. 'I shall be a greater man than you,' Churchill told him during one of these swishings, with spectacularly poor timing. Hicks, who later became bishop of Lincoln, replied: 'You can take two more for that.'[88]

Little would induce his parents to visit him at school. 'Please do do do do do do come down to see me,' he begged in February 1891. 'Please do come I have been so disappointed so many times about your coming.'[89] They did not. 'Dearest boy, don't be so lazy and neglectful about writing,' Jennie wrote to him in a typical letter. 'You only seem to do so when you want something – and then you are very prolific with your pen!'[90] Her hypocrisy can be measured precisely: in the seven years from 1885 to 1892, Churchill wrote to his parents seventy-six times; they to him six times. The huge majority of Churchill's letters were not asking for anything, except, between the lines, for love and attention. Their letters to him on the other hand contained constant remonstrations. 'I would go down to you – but I have so many things to arrange for the Ascot party next week that I can't manage it,' Jennie wrote in June 1890. 'I have much to say to you, I'm afraid not of a pleasant nature … your Father is very angry with you' (for using a typewriter).[91] Of his schoolwork, 'Your father and I are both more disappointed than we can say … I daresay you have a thousand excuses … You make me very unhappy … your work is an insult to your intelligence … It is that thoughtlessness of yours which is your greatest enemy … I must say that you repay his kindness to you badly.'[92]

When the seventeen-year-old Churchill tried to get out of being sent to a French family to learn French over Christmas 1891, Jennie wrote, 'I have only read one page of your letter and I send it back to you as its style does not please me.'[93] 'My darling Mummy,' he replied, 'never would I have believed you would have been so unkind. I am utterly miserable … I can't tell you how wretched you have made me feel … Oh my Mummy! … I expect you were too busy with your parties and arrangements for Christmas. I comfort myself by this.'[94] As a postscript he added, 'I am more unhappy than I can possibly say … your loving son, Winny.'[95]

There were many more such letters. On 18 December he wrote, 'I am so wretched. Even now I weep. Please my darling Mummy be kind to your

loving son. Don't let my silly letter make you angry. Let me at least think that you love me – Darling Mummy I despair. I am so wretched. I don't know what to do. Don't be angry I am so miserable.'[96] 'I can't tell you what trouble I have had with Winston,' Jennie wrote to her husband, neglecting to bother with a reply to her son. 'Of course it is a great disappointment to him not being home for Xmas but he makes as much fuss as tho' he were going to Australia for two years … I think I have arranged everything satisfactorily.'[97] Jennie did not want her son in London as it would have inconvenienced her in her affair with Count Kinsky. The only person who comforted Winston and supported his bid to spend Christmas with his family was Mrs Everest, who of course had no say in the matter.

The Harrow School Songs, sung by the houses each term and by the whole school annually, were written by masters to encourage pupils to identify with the school, its famous alumni and Britain's glorious past. One of these, 'Stet Fortuna Domus', first performed in 1891 when Churchill was at the school, includes the stanza:

> Tonight we praise the former days
> In patriotic chorus,
> And celebrate the good and great
> Who trod the Hill before us;
> Where Sheridan and Peel began,
> In days of Whig and Tory,
> Where Ashley vow'd to serve the Crowd
> And Byron rose to Glory.

Another song, 'When Raleigh Rose', connected the school, which had been founded during Queen Elizabeth I's reign, to the heroes who defeated the Spanish Armada. In 'Giants', Harrovians were enjoined to remember that 'the hero-race may come and go, / But it doesn't exactly die! … For all of we, / Whoever we be, / Come up to the giants of old, you see.' The most famous of the Songs, 'Forty Years On', written in 1872, had a stanza that ran:

> Routs and discomfitures, rushes and rallies,
> Bases attempted and rescued and won,
> Strife without anger, and art without malice –
> How will it seem to you, forty years on?

Then, you will say, not a feverish minute
Strained the weak heart and the wavering knee,
Never the battle raged hottest, but in it,
Neither the last nor the faintest were we![98]

'Listening to those boys singing all those well-remembered songs,' Churchill told his son after he had visited the school during the London Blitz in 1940, 'I could see myself fifty years before singing with them those tales of great deeds and of great men and wondering with intensity how I could ever do something glorious for my country.'[99] His son believed that 'The stirring patriotism these verses evoked abided with him for ever and were the mainspring of his political conduct.'[100] The message of the school and of these songs was strong and clear: it was incumbent on Harrovians to try to become great men. After Churchill had pushed his diminutive fellow pupil Leopold Amery into Ducker, the school swimming pool, not realizing that Amery was in fact in the senior year, Churchill apologized by saying, 'My father, who is a great man, is also small.'[101]

Churchill had a long run of illnesses and accidents throughout his time at Harrow, with a toothache, biliousness (cured by Eno's Salts), a concussion from falling off a bicycle, 'severe fever', measles and an incipient hernia in the groin.[102] In January 1893, playing a game of chase with his cousins at their estate in Wimborne aged eighteen, he jumped off a footbridge, hoping the branches of the trees below him would snap off and break his descent, which they did not. He fell nearly thirty feet on to hard ground, was concussed for three days and confined to bed for nearly three months with a ruptured kidney and a broken bone in his mid-back that was only discovered in an X-ray in 1962. 'For a year I looked at life round a corner,' he wrote.[103]

While convalescing, Churchill visited Parliament. He listened to and occasionally had a chance to meet the leading figures of late Victorian politics, including Arthur Balfour, Joseph Chamberlain, Lord Rosebery, Herbert Asquith and John Morley, introduced by his father. 'Politics seemed very important and vivid to my eyes in those days,' he reminisced.[104] On 21 April 1893, he was in the gallery to witness perhaps the most climactic parliamentary debate of the era, when William Gladstone presented the Second Irish Home Rule Bill to the House of Commons. As a great parliamentary occasion, the drama was only to be exceeded half a century

later, and then by Churchill himself. Churchill's plan was to distinguish himself as a soldier, before entering the House of Commons to further his father's Tory Democrat legacy.

When Lord Randolph agreed to let his son join the British Army after Harrow, Winston believed that 'my father with his experience and flair had discerned in me the qualities of military genius.'[105] He continued in this delusion for several years, until he was told that his father had in fact merely thought he was not clever enough to become a barrister, let alone a help in his political career. 'If ever I began to show the slightest idea of comradeship,' Churchill recalled, 'he was immediately offended, and when once I suggested that I might help his private secretary to write some of his letters, he froze me into stone.' He recorded that in the autumn of 1892 'I had one of the three or four long intimate conversations with him that are all that I can boast.' He found his father captivating, though Lord Randolph ended the conversation in a characteristically self-absorbed way, 'Do remember things do not always go right with me. My every action is misjudged and every word distorted … So make some allowances.'[106] His son later regretted that he had not been able to leave Harrow early. 'I should have got to know my father,' he wrote, 'which would have been a joy to me.'[107] But it was not to be.

Churchill took the exam for the Royal Military College at Sandhurst in June 1893, helped by a crammer because his higher mathematics was so bad. He passed on his third attempt, but came ninety-fifth out of 389, meaning he would have to join the cavalry rather than the infantry. 'My dear Winston,' his father wrote to his eighteen-year-old son on 9 August,

> There are two ways of winning an examination, one creditable and the other the reverse. You have unfortunately chosen the latter method, and appear to be much pleased with your success. The first extremely discreditable failure of your performance was missing the infantry, for in that failure is demonstrated beyond refutation your slovenly happy-go-lucky harum scarum style of work for which you have been distinguished at your different schools. Never have I received a really good report of your conduct in your work from any master or tutor … Always behind-hand, never advancing in your class, incessant complaints of total want of application … With all the advantages you had, with all the abilities which you foolishly think yourself to possess … this is the grand result that you come up among the second rate and third rate who are only good for commissions in a cavalry regiment … You imposed on me an extra charge of some

> £200 a year. Do not think that I am going to take the trouble of writing you long letters after every failure and folly you commit and undergo … because I no longer attach the slightest weight to anything you may say about your own accomplishments and exploits. Make this position indelibly impressed on your mind, that if your conduct and action is similar to what it has been in the other establishments … then … my responsibility for you is over. I shall leave you to depend on yourself giving you merely such assistance as may be necessary to permit of a respectable life. Because I am certain that if you cannot prevent yourself from leading the idle useless unprofitable life that you have had during your schooldays and later months, you will become a mere social wastrel, one of hundreds of the public school failures, and you will degenerate into a shabby, unhappy and futile existence. If that is so you will have to bear all the blame for such misfortunes yourself.
>
> Your affectionate father, Randolph SC[108]

By then, Lord Randolph's judgement was badly clouded by mental degeneration.[109] He was experiencing problems with his speech, hearing, balance and concentration, resulting in depression and violent outbursts, from an as yet undiagnosed illness.[110] Yet his son was able to quote from that letter from memory thirty-seven years later, showing how much its message of distrust and contempt from the man he worshipped had seared him. Nor was it tossed off in a rage, for Lord Randolph had also written to his mother the Duchess four days earlier in similar terms: 'I have told you often and you would never believe me that he has little [claim] to cleverness, to knowledge or any capacity for settled work. He has great talent for show off exaggeration and make-believe … I will not conceal from you it is a great disappointment to me.'[111] Jennie also wrote to say, 'Papa is not very pleased at your getting in by the skin of your teeth and missing the Infantry by eighteen marks. He is not as pleased with your exploits as you seem to be!'[112] Years later, Churchill's closest friend was to observe that Lord Randolph 'discerned nothing remarkable, nothing of singular promise in a very remarkable and original boy'.[113]

That summer, before Winston entered Sandhurst, he and his brother Jack went on a walking tour of Switzerland with a tutor. Staying in Zermatt, they climbed the 15,000-foot Monte Rosa in sixteen hours, as well as the Wetterhorn. They travelled widely before Winston again cheated death in Lake Geneva, when he and someone he described as a 'companion' went swimming alone off a boat in the middle of the lake, and a light breeze

started to blow the boat away from them. 'I saw Death as near as I believe I have ever seen him,' he wrote in *My Early Life*. 'He was swimming in the water at our side, whispering from time to time in the rising wind which continued to carry the boat away from us at about the same speed we could swim. No help was near. Unaided we could never reach the shore … I now swam for life … I scrambled in, and rowed back for my companion who, though tired, had not apparently realised the dull yellow glare of mortal peril that had so suddenly played around us.'[114] The younger companion was in fact Jack, but Churchill presumably did not want his readers to know that he had put his younger brother in such mortal peril.

Churchill entered Sandhurst on 1 September 1893. He was 5 foot 6½ inches tall and had a chest measurement of only 31 inches. He had delicate skin, slightly protruding very light blue eyes and a handsome face. He enjoyed his time at Britain's premier military academy, especially the study of tactics and fortifications, and the constant riding, at which he became highly proficient, taking up steeplechasing, polo and occasionally amateur horse-racing.[115] The pathos of his correspondence with his parents continued. 'I am awfully sorry that Papa does not approve of my letters,' he told his mother on 17 September. 'I take a great deal of pain over them and often rewrite entire pages. If I write a descriptive account of my life here, I receive a hint from you that my style is too sententious and stilted. If on the other hand I write a plain and excessively simple letter it is put down as slovenly. I never can do anything right.'[116] When he accidentally dropped into a stream a pocket watch that his father had given him, he was so terrified of confessing the loss that he launched a desperate salvage operation. This involved mobilizing twenty-three men from an infantry company to search for it, then hiring a fire engine to dredge the stream, before he diverted the headwaters and was finally able to retrieve it. When Lord Randolph discovered what had happened from the watch-repairer, he was predictably furious and scornful.[117]

By 1894, Lord Randolph was starting to die of what much medical opinion today believes to have been a rare and incurable brain disease, but which, because it shared some symptoms with syphilis, was diagnosed as that by his doctors. Lord Randolph left with Jennie on a round-the-world tour in June. Churchill later recalled, 'I never saw him again, except as a swiftly fading shadow.'[118] After he had spoken to his father's doctors,

Robson Roose and Thomas Buzzard, and was given the probable diagnosis, he wrote in early November 1894 an alarmed letter to his mother, who was by then in Singapore: 'I asked Dr Roose and he told me everything and showed me the medical reports. I have told no one … I need not tell you how anxious I am. I had never realised how ill Papa had been and had never until now believed there was anything serious the matter … Do, my darling mamma when you write let me know *exactly* what you think.'[119]

Churchill understandably did not speak or write about the possible cause of his father's illness, and only on a single occasion did he ever mention it. In 1951 or 1952, he told his private secretary, Anthony Montague Browne, 'You know my father died of Locomotorataxia, the child of syphilis.'[120] In fact Locomotorataxia is a general descriptive term for a neurological disturbance and is certainly not unique to syphilis. It is likely that Churchill laboured for a lifetime under the shame of his father's death of a disease from which he did not in fact suffer. Yet it never lessened his hero-worship of this proud, aloof, disdainful man. 'He embodied that force, caprice and charm which so often springs from genius,' Churchill wrote of him.[121] As Churchill's great friend Violet Bonham Carter (née Asquith) was to put it: 'He worshipped at the altar of his unknown father.'[122]

While his parents were on the other side of the world, Churchill gave his first public speech, on the most unlikely of platforms. That summer Mrs Ormiston Chant, a member of the London County Council, led a social purity campaign directed against the promenade of the Empire Theatre in Leicester Square, a bar area behind the dress circle where young men drank and met unchaperoned young women, some of whom were ladies of easy virtue. The outraged Mrs Chant had managed to get wood and canvas partitions put up to keep the sexes apart, which on 3 November 1894 a crowd that included Churchill rowdily destroyed. A witness recalled that Churchill and his friends 'broke down the palisades separating them from the ladies of the town and addressed the rioters. He and a future general drove off in a hansom [taxicab] waving trophies.'[123] The speech he made on top of the debris was sadly not recorded, but began with the pun, 'Ladies of the Empire, I stand for liberty!'[124] Someone else present recalled him 'dodging about in the foyer', slapping women on their bottoms, with a bouncer in hot pursuit.[125] It was an unlikely inauguration to the public-speaking career of the greatest orator of the coming century.

Churchill graduated from Sandhurst in December 1894 ranked twentieth out of 130 cadets,[fn7] and second in the arduous riding competition. By then Lord Randolph was too ill to notice, let alone congratulate his son. 'My father died on January 24 in the early morning,' Churchill recalled thirty-five years later. 'Summoned from a neighbouring house where I was sleeping, I ran in the darkness across Grosvenor Square, then lapped in snow. His end was quite painless. Indeed he had long been in stupor. All my dreams of comradeship with him, of entering Parliament at his side and in his support, were ended. There remained for me only to pursue his aims and vindicate his memory.'[126] Half a century later, he told his daughter that his father's death had left him utterly prostrate with grief for a whole day and night.[127]

Despite being largely separated, Jennie had nursed Lord Randolph faithfully in his final illness, resolutely if absurdly blaming his death on the Tory leader, Lord Salisbury. 'There is not the slightest doubt that worry and overwork started the disease,' she told a friend, 'and I know you will agree with me that Lord S. has a lot to answer for. There was a time a few years ago when a generous hand stretched out would have saved everything and R would now be with us as he was. But Lord S. and the others were too jealous of him – I feel all this deeply – and hope one of these days it will be known.'[128] Churchill was fortunate that his father died while still an MP. Had he lived long enough to retire from the House of Commons after the election that came six months later, he would almost certainly have been awarded a peerage, which would soon have devolved upon his eldest son – meaning that Churchill could not have had the career he did in the Commons, with a correspondingly small chance of his becoming prime minister in 1940.

The funeral was held at Blenheim Palace's parish church in the neighbouring village of Bladon. The congregation sang 'Rock of Ages' and 'Now the Labourer's Task is O'er', and heard the words 'Man that is born of a woman hath but a short time to live, and is full of misery.'[129] The 5th Earl of Rosebery, who had become prime minister in March 1894, delivered the eulogy. Afterwards, Churchill, Jennie and Jack stood at the snow-covered grave and scattered lilies-of-the-valley on the coffin. 'Over the landscape, brilliant with sunshine, snow had spread a glittering pall,' he later recalled.[130]

The neglect and emotional cruelty at the hands of his parents that could have crushed a lesser person instead gave Churchill an unquenchable desire to succeed in life, not only in general but in his father's chosen profession of politics. His father-worship extended to learning several of Lord Randolph's more famous speeches by heart; visiting his father's friends such as Lord Rosebery and Lord Justice Gerald FitzGibbon principally to listen to stories about him; adopting his characteristic speaking pose of putting his hand facing down on his hip. As we shall see, he also wrote a filial two-volume biography; mentioned him regularly in speeches; wore his father's chancellor of the Exchequer robes when he assumed the same office; named his only son Randolph and wrote about a daydream in which he met his father over half a century after his death.

Churchill told the parliamentary lobby correspondent A. G. Gardiner that he had copied his father's practice of using pauses while speaking, even of deliberately fumbling in his pockets for a note he did not want or need, in order to concentrate his listeners' attention.[131] It might have been understandable if he had rebelled against his harsh, distant father, but part of his greatness of character is that instead he regarded his life's work as promoting his father's Disraelian and Tory Democrat ideas, based on *Imperium et Libertas*. 'I took my politics almost unquestioningly from him,' he wrote in 1931, saying that although his father lived and died a loyal Tory 'He saw no reason why the old glories of Church and State, of King and Country, should not be reconciled with modern democracy; or why the masses of working people should not become the chief defenders of those ancient institutions by which their liberties and progress had been achieved.'[132] Winston wanted, if possible, to wreak a terrible revenge on what he regarded as the Tory Establishment cabal whom he blamed for bringing his father down.

It was said of Emperor Napoleon III that he bore a name that was simultaneously his making and his undoing. Winston Leonard Spencer-Churchill similarly carried a name that marked him out among his contemporaries and created expectations that only a very remarkable person could fulfil. 'A medal glitters,' he once wrote, 'but it also casts a shadow.' That was also true of his name. It is notoriously hard to be the child of a famous parent, yet among his many achievements Churchill succeeded at that too.

Churchill believed he had only a short time to live, and regularly referred to his father's death at forty-five as the explanation for his own thrusting nature. His contemporaries thought him pushy, and so he was, but there was a cold actuarial reason behind it. Three of his father's siblings had died at ten months, two years and four years old, and his father's sisters were to die aged forty-five and fifty-one, and their brother the 8th Duke of Marlborough at forty-eight. His ever-present fear of an early death suggests that Churchill believed that it might have been a non-sexual form of Locomotorataxia that had killed his father. Whatever it was, he felt he did not have long to make his mark.

If there were ideal conditions for the creation of a future hero of the Empire, by the end of January 1895 Churchill had fulfilled all of them. A famous name, selfish and unimpressed parents, a patchy but patriotic schooling that taught him how great men can change history by great feats, a first-class military education, a schoolboy ambition to save the Empire, not enough money to become indolent, appreciation of English prose and a reverence for the British history that he felt ran through his aristocratic veins. Above all, an aloof, famous father who had annexed Burma aged thirty-six and was dead at forty-five. Now twenty and freed from his father's stultifying influence, Churchill was about to make his own name. Few have set out with more cold-blooded deliberation to become first a hero and then a Great Man.