



PAPER

Sir Winston Churchill

Summary: Winston Churchill – celebrated war-leader.

Sir Winston Leonard Spencer-Churchill was an illustrious politician, army officer, great traveller, talented painter, prolific writer and orator, *and a Freemason*.¹ A world statesman, he was renowned for *'his bulldog-spirit, for his love of cigars, brandy and Pol-Roger champagne his distinctive dress sense and his famous V for Victory salute'*.² He was twice Prime Minister of the United Kingdom (1940–1945 & 1951–1955), became a Knight of the Garter (1953), won the Nobel Prize for Literature³ (1953), and was awarded Honorary US Citizenship (1963).

Born into privilege⁴ on 30th November 1874 at Blenheim Palace in Oxfordshire,⁵ educated at Harrow and Sandhurst, and commissioned as a cavalry officer in the 4th Hussars. He later served in Cuba, the North-West Frontier of India, and the Sudan. To raise his profile and fund his lifestyle, he recycled his exploits as newspaper articles and books, but failed in his bid to follow father into politics in 1898. Not deterred, he became a war correspondent, and following his capture and miraculous escape from the Boers, became a household-name and got elected as the Conservative MP for Oldham in 1900.



Sir Winston Churchill by Yousuf Karsh
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His subsequent political life was both dazzling and controversial. He enjoyed high-office, becoming President of the Board of Trade in 1908, Home Secretary in 1910, and First Lord of the Admiralty in 1911. Then failure followed upon his disastrous campaign in Gallipoli. He resigned and joined the war as a soldier. By 1924, he was back, having been appointed the Chancellor of the Exchequer. Then came defeat in the 1929 election, followed by eleven years out of office. The outbreak of war changed everything, and following Neville Chamberlain's departure in 1940, Churchill became Prime-Minister. It was truly his finest hour, though at times both he and the nation struggled to survive. In 1945, his political fortunes changed again, with the election of his rival, Clement Attlee and he again fell back upon writing and public speaking. By 1951, his fortunes had changed again and he became Prime Minister for a second time, though in the words of Roy Jenkins, *'He was gloriously unfit for office'*.⁶ He resigned in 1955 and retired to his beloved Chartwell.⁷

Sadly, Churchill's Masonic career never blossomed. He joined the Studholme Lodge No. 1591 in London on 24th May 1901⁸, following the family tradition.⁹ He completed his Second Degree two months later, and was made a Master Mason¹⁰ on 5th March 1902.^{11,12} In 1912, war with Germany was on the horizon. As First Lord of the Admiralty, Winston, was charged *'to put the fleet into an instant and contact readiness for war'*.

Knowing that time was precious and that he must devote all energies to the nation, Churchill resigned from Studholme Lodge and became an unattached Mason.

In a Masonic paper,¹³ Yasha Beresiner argued that Winston's overall Masonic activity was perfectly captured in a quote by Sir Sidney A White, the Grand Secretary (1937–1957)

'Winston Churchill was Initiated as young man, but never progressed in the Order and has taken no part for many years.'

Beresiner added,

'that this does not, detract little from the pride we as Freemasons derive in the knowledge that Winston Churchill was a Freemason and descended from a long line of active and distinguished Brethren of the Craft.'

Sir Winston Churchill died on 24th January 1965, aged 91. He received the greatest state funeral given to a commoner, since that of the Duke of Wellington. He was buried beside his parents within sight of his birthplace in Blaydon churchyard. He was survived by his dear wife Clemmie,¹⁴ whom he had married in 1908, and three of their five children; Randolph, Sarah and Mary.¹⁵ One of his many quotations may act as his epitaph:

*'of living, if it not be to strive for noble causes and to make this muddled world a better place for those who will live in it after we are gone?'*¹⁶

Sir Winston Churchill

References

1. Famous Freemasons, <https://www.ugle.org.uk/about-freemasonry/famous-masons>
2. Winston Churchill memorial Trust - www.wcmt.org.uk
3. NobelPrize.org. *'For his mastery of historical and biographical description as well as for brilliant oratory in defending exalted human values'* Nobel Media AB 2019, <https://www.nobelprize.org/prizes/literature/1953/summary/>
4. His father, Lord Randolph Churchill, was the second son of the Duke of Marlborough, and his mother, Jeanette 'Jennie' Jerome, was the daughter of Leonard Jerome, a business tycoon and owner-editor of the New York Times.
5. Blenheim Palace is a 17th century, monumental country house, built in the Baroque style. A world Heritage site set in 2000 acres of grounds and gardens designed by Capability Brown, and the principal residence of the Dukes of Marlborough.
6. www.gov.uk/government/history/past-prime-ministers/winston-churchill
7. Chartwell House and Garden is the home of the late Winston Churchill. It is set on a hill with magnificent views over the Weald and includes a golden rose walk created in 1958 by his children. <https://www.greatbritishgardens.co.uk/england/item/chartwell-house-and-gardens.html>
8. Studholme Lodge amalgamated in 1959 with United Lodge No. 1629 to form the United Studholme Lodge, and amalgamated again in 1976 with Alliance Lodge No. 1827 to attain its present status as Studholme Alliance Lodge, retaining its original number 1591.
9. Winston's father, Lord Randolph Churchill, and his uncle George Charles Spencer Churchill, the Marquis of Blandford, were both initiated into the Churchill Lodge on 9th February 1871 and his cousin, Charles Richard John Spencer Churchill, ninth Duke of Marlborough, was similarly initiated on 7th May 1871. <http://www.mqmagazine.co.uk/issue-3/p-08.php>
10. Churchill's personal masonic apron is held on public display in the [Museum of Freemasonry](http://www.museumoffreemasonry.org) at Freemasons' Hall, London.



11. Charles Clive Bigham, Viscount Mersey, whose entry in the Studholme Lodge register, next to that of Churchill, has caused some confusion about his taking his third degree in Rosemary Lodge, gives an insight into the scene on the day. In his autobiography, published by John Murray in London in 1941, *A Picture of Life 1872-1940*, he states on page 188: *'that month I was initiated as a free mason at Studholme Lodge (1591). While waiting for the ceremony I walked round and round Golden Square with Winston Churchill, another candidate'* Within two months, on 19 July, Winston was passed to the second degree, and on 5 March 1902 he became a Master Mason; all three ceremonies being conducted in Studholme Lodge. An unfortunate communication in 1955, by the then librarian of Grand Lodge, W I Grantham, to his counterpart in Iowa, USA, has led to the erroneous reports that Churchill was raised in Rosemary Lodge No. 2851. This occurred because the Studholme Lodge register has the name Geoffrey C Glyn above, and Charles Clive Bigham below that of Churchill. Further along the line against both these names is the entry *'Raised in No 2851, 11th Nov 1901'*. This entry was also wrongly attributed to Churchill. <http://www.mqmagazine.co.uk/issue-3/p-06.php>
12. His raising was by special dispensation applied for by the Lodge secretary, Henry James Fitzroy, the Earl of Euston, Provincial Grand Master for Northamptonshire and Huntingdonshire, and conducted by the Master, J C F Tower. It was not by chance, that as a promising politician, he be invited to join the Studholme Lodge. Its summonses read like a 'Who's Who' of the aristocracy and social elite. The guest list for the Lodge's 21st Installation Banquet in 1897 included 15 Members of Parliament and numerous Lords, Earls, Knights and high-ranking members of the armed forces. <http://www.freemasons-freemasonry.com/beresiner7.html>
13. Yasha Beresiner, *Winston Churchill - A famous Man and Freemason* in Petrie stones www.churchillarchive.com/collection-highlights/churchills-first-world-war
14. Clementine Ogilvy Spencer-Churchill, nee Hozier, Baroness Spencer-Churchill, GBE
15. Mrs. Christopher Soames
16. www.biographyonline.net/politicians/winston_churchill.html.
17. Harper, Paul, *Famous Freemasons - A Prologue*, <https://solomon.ugle.org.uk/mod/resource/view.php?id=2084>



Recommended use of Nuggets

Nuggets offer a short, simple and readily absorbed means of progressing Masonic knowledge and an easy way to introduce learning to Lodges and Chapters. It is hoped that they will become a regular feature of Lodge and Chapter meetings as well as a source for private-study.

Nuggets can be included as an item in the summons and read at most Lodge/Chapter meetings. They can be:

Read by either a new or an experienced Mason with the minimum of preparation and practice; though ideally, they need to be read a few times beforehand.

Themed with the meeting or activity.

Used to initiate a discussion within a Lodge/Chapter, LOI/COI, or group.

Read at home and shared as a topic for a future discussion.

Used as a focus for an unplanned, informal discussion.

*Note: All biblical passages are taken from the Authorized King James version unless otherwise specified.

For further papers and other learning materials visit *Solomon* at <http://solomon.ugle.org.uk>

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