



Sir Winston Churchill

Born: 30 November 1874

Blenheim Palace, Oxfordshire

Died: 24 January 1965

28 Hyde Park Gate, London

Winston Churchill was a politician, a soldier, an artist, and the 20th century's most famous and celebrated Prime Minister. He was educated at Harrow and at Sandhurst Royal Military College, after which he saw service in India and the Sudan, and acted off-duty as a war correspondent.

Churchill left the army in 1899 to take up politics, but first travelled to South Africa as a journalist. Although taken prisoner by the Boers, he made a daring escape and returned to safety despite the price on his head.

Churchill was instinctively independent, willing to work with any side agreeing with his goals. His stand against protectionism led him to join the Liberals in 1904. As President of the Board of Trade in Asquith's Liberal government he set up labour exchanges and unemployment insurance. As Home Secretary in 1910 he improved safety in the mines and prevented the employment of child miners, though disappointed radicals by deploying troops in Wales during a miner's strike.

In 1911 he was appointed First Lord of the Admiralty, and ensured the Navy was ready for the outbreak of war in 1914. However, he was blamed for the failed Dardanelles Campaign in 1915, and was demoted in the coalition government. He resigned his post and went to the Front.

In 1916 he was appointed Minister for Munitions, in which post he developed the use of the tank in warfare. In 1918 he took responsibility for demobilisation. He returned to the Conservative Party in the 1920s and spent five years as Stanley Baldwin's Chancellor, but again fell out with his party. Unpopular and ostracised for a decade, his warnings from the backbenches of Fascist imperialism went unheeded. His influence, it was said, had fallen to zero. However, Chamberlain's policy of appeasement failed, leading to his resignation and to the vindication of Churchill's position. George VI asked Churchill to form a government in 1940 at the age of 65. Asking the House of Commons for its confidence in his small War Cabinet, he said:

"I have nothing to offer but blood, toil, tears and sweat."

His evocative and stirring rhetoric, employed in many famed speeches, is seen as representing the spirit of wartime Britain, and was essential to raising national morale.

He was renowned as a great leader with astonishing vision, bringing Britain to victory against Germany on the 8th of May, 1945. Following the Labour landslide in the post-war 1945 election, Churchill found himself leading the Conservative Opposition. He then served four years as a peacetime Prime Minister.

He resigned in 1955, aged 81. Following his death in 1965, Churchill's body lay in state for three days at Westminster Hall before his state funeral.

In recognition of Churchill's illustrious lifetime achievements he was named the 'Greatest Britain Of All Time' in a nationwide vote during 2002.



Bladon

Sir Winston Churchill's Final Resting Place



St. Martin's Church - by David Phipps



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Bladon

Bladon lies on the south side of Blenheim Park and is named after the river Evenlode, originally called the Bledene. Bladon's history can be traced back to a Roman settlement in the third century, and in 1086 is recorded in the Domesday Book as Blade.

Much of the early history of Bladon focuses on the quarrying of stone, known as Bladon stone, the last of the quarries closing only in 1952. There are references to Bladon stone in 1378 in the building accounts of Merton College, Oxford and of the Sheldonian Theatre in 1666.

Bladon was also renowned for its contribution to glove making, which continued well into the twentieth century. In many of the older houses to be seen in the village, gloves were cut by hand and stitched for the industry which was centred in Woodstock.

Other sources of employment have included farming, and since the eighteenth century Blenheim Palace has extended its influence over the village. A number of Bladon residents still work on the estate and the children still attend the school founded by the Duchess of Marlborough in 1858. Enlarged in 1889 and again in 1894, the school maintains a high reputation.

Today, gloves are made elsewhere by machine and most employment is sought outside the village. Much of the village itself, however, remains unchanged.

St. Martin's Church

The Church of St. Martin, Bladon, was the parish church of Bladon-with-Woodstock until 2002, when the two parishes were separated. Before the separation, St. Martin's was the mother church of St. Mary Magdalene in Woodstock, which had originally been a chapel of ease.

There has been a church on the site for over 800 years. In 1804 the medieval building was replaced, and the new church itself was reconstructed in 1891, since which time it has remained largely unaltered. Many of the gravestones in the churchyard date back to the eighteenth century, and are mostly of local stone. Bladon has been the burial place of the Dukes of Marlborough and their relatives since 1895.

St. Martin's is famed for being the resting place of Sir Winston Churchill, who in January 1965 was buried here at the head of the grave of his mother, Lady Randolph Churchill who lies alongside his father, Lord Randolph Churchill.

The 24th January 2005 marks the 40th anniversary of Sir Winston Churchill's death. In 1965, after his burial, Bladon bellringers marked the occasion by ringing St. Martin's bells. A notice in the church porch records the event: a peal of 5040 Plain Bob Minor was rung half muffled. The peal lasted two hours and forty minutes.

