

WINSTON CHURCHILL

Rodney Legg

In this new mini-biography of the Greatest Briton, author Rodney Legg adopts a unique year-by-year approach to the life of Winston Churchill, from his nursery to the grave, with quotes and photographs from all stages of his long career.

A war correspondent in Cuba, then a cavalryman in South Africa, he became the consummate leader, holding most of the high offices of the British state from First Lord of the Admiralty to Prime Minister – twice over in both those cases.

The voice of Britain alone in 1940, whose commanding rhetoric inspired national resistance, his skill as a wordsmith has never been equalled in the public domain.

As a warrior, politician, writer and artist, he brought an infectious enthusiasm and skill to all that he did. Never to be under-estimated, he remained at the heart of national and world events from his twenties through to reluctant retirement from Downing Street at the age of 80.

This handy, pocket-sized, hardback biography provides the ideal introduction in words and pictures to Churchill, his life and the places where his remarkable spirit can be felt even today.



ABOUT THE AUTHOR

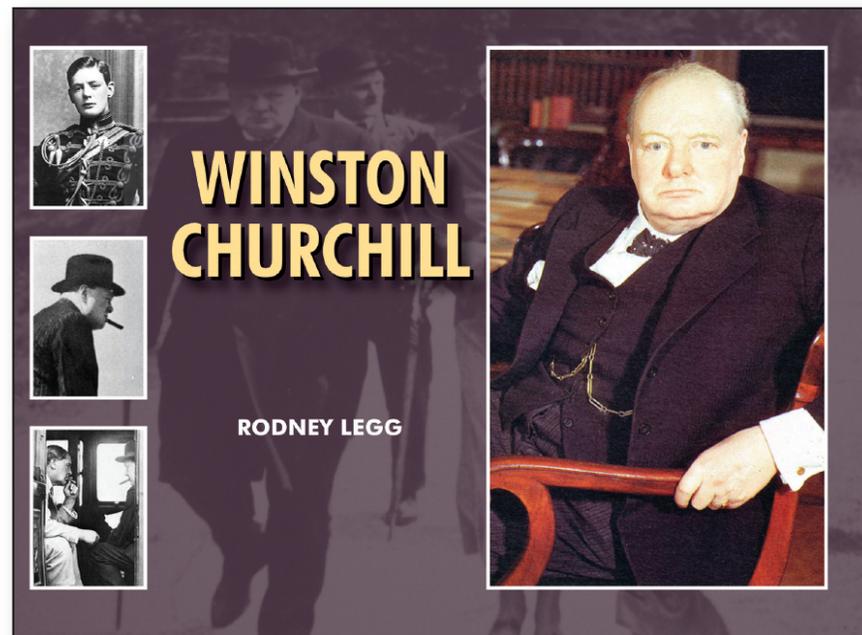
Rodney Legg is a prolific author and historian who has specialised in the Second World War. Nationally he is active in the environmental movement having been chairman of the Open Spaces Society since 1989 and a member of the ruling council of the National Trust from 1990 until 2009.

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WINSTON CHURCHILL



England alone - Winston inspecting South Coast defences in July 1940



Second-Lieutenant Churchill of the 4th Hussars at Sandhurst in February 1895



Official portrait of the Big Three - Churchill, Roosevelt and Stalin - at the Yalta Conference in the Crimea, February 1945



General Sir Alan Brooke with Winston in Normandy, visiting General Sir Bernard Montgomery (right) at his field headquarters near Bayeux, 12 June 1944

Villa Virilio, beside the Bay of Naples. From the destroyer HMS *Gidley* he watched the Operation Dragoon landings of American troops along the French Riviera.

Winston was reluctant to accept that with Eisenhower firmly across the Channel, Allied forces in Europe were now under United States leadership, and he was no longer the decisive war leader - even in his own land. He was close to exhaustion and a constant source of confusion, frustration and interference to the Chiefs of Staff as they ran the war. They were often at the hearing end of his 'black dog days' of clinical depression. On the other hand, Winston frequently found President Roosevelt's indecision insufferable, and protested at endless calls for consultation.

Action is paralysed if everybody is to consult everybody else about everything before it is taken. Winston to President Roosevelt

On 6 September Winston sailed from the Circle on the Queen Mary, escorted by the cruisers HMS *Dawid* and *Kent*, for a

conference in the Frontenac Hotel, Quebec. Arrangements were confirmed for the war in Italy, progress towards the Ruhr, and a projection that the war against Japan would go on for 18 months after that against Germany had ended. He returned to London for the state opening of Parliament on 26 September. Then he was off by air in the York from Norfolk, on 8 October, to Naples, Cairo and Moscow. Arrival proved doubly hazardous as the undercarriage of the Prime Minister's York was damaged in landing at Cairo and he transferred to Field-Marshal Brooke's aircraft. The undercarriage of this jammed on coming into Moscow. An emergency crank release mechanism had to be used to lower the wheels.

Drink flowed continuously, day and night, between banquets. Stalin pledged Russian help to end the war with Japan but wanted to know what he would get out of it and discussions concluded without the future of Poland being resolved. The Soviet dictator saw off his guests in the rain from Moscow Karadone on the 19th. They stopped off at Saratov, in the Crimea, and landed at Coon on the 20th. They flew on to Naples in a big crane via Benghazi, to avoid passing near German-occupied Crete, and

then across southern and western France, to arrive at Norfolk after covering 10,500 miles - on the 22nd.

On 10 November Winston hosted a dinner at the Quai d'Orsay in Paris, reflecting that the last time he was there, in 1940, the French were burning their archives on abandoning the city. The following day, with General de Gaulle, he passed through the Arc de Triomphe to continuous cries of 'Churchill, Churchill'. The year ended with German General Rundstedt mounting a last offensive through the snow forests of the Ardennes, the Italian campaign dragging, and Winston setting off from Norfolk in the Skymaster, to spend Christmas in Greece, resisting a communist take-over, from the cruiser HMS *Alix*.

"Why didn't they fight the Germans like they are fighting us now?" - Winston on the Greek positions

1945 On 3 January, Winston flew from Norfolk to Paris, to meet Eisenhower and de Gaulle in Versailles. On the 5th he was at Montgomery's headquarters - after Manley claimed to have



Official portrait of the Big Three - Churchill, Roosevelt and Stalin - at the Yalta Conference in the Crimea, February 1945

saved the Americans from the Adenmas debacle - and flew back from Bessala to Norfolk. The next major trip was to Russia. Winston arrived by Skymaster in Malta on 30 January, just before dawn, with a temperature which kept him in the aeroplane for the rest of the day and night. He transferred in the afternoon to HMS *Orian* in the Grand Harbour at Valletta.