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their background, upbringing and education. Their hobbies, pursuits and interests outside politics are mentioned; Clem Attlee, we are told, exuded a 'homely style ... He sucked at his pipe, did the crossword, was driven to his election meetings by his wife Vi in their small car' (p. 238). The authors also have an eagle eye for the short, apt quotation which does so much to enliven their writing (it would be interesting to know the source of some of them). It is notable, however, that the subjects' lives after their retirement from the premiership are given very short shrift. Jim Callaghan was defeated at the polls in May 1979, but lived on until March 2005, yet this lengthy period is dismissed in just five short sentences.

The preface by Lord Butler, who served Harold Wilson and Ted Heath as Private Secretary, and Margaret Thatcher, John Major and Tony Blair as Cabinet Secretary, adds insight into the current workings of the office of PM. A brief, thought-provoking introduction reflects on the changes which have taken place in the nature of the office of Prime Minister over the centuries. Each entry ends with a short list of the more significant biographies and there is a most helpful guide to further reading. The text is also enlivened with portraits and photographs of most of the more eminent and well-known Prime Ministers. The authors have quarried well in particular the magnificent resources of the National Portrait Gallery, but confine themselves to traditional head-and-shoulders portraits rather than family groups or pictures of significant political occasions and events. Some, such as the Karsh portrait of Churchill and the Bassano photograph of Baldwin, are already very well known and have been published many times before.

The general standard of accuracy throughout the volume is extremely high. It is evident

These essays, revealing how each holder moulded the office in response to the situation of the time, make a valuable contribution to the current debate about the nature of the office.

that the authors have checked and counter-checked their facts with scrupulous attention to detail. It is not, however, true to say of Lloyd George that, in his Caernarvon Boroughs constituency, 'his political base was secure' (p. 194). It was anything but secure from his first election to Parliament in April 1890 right through until the general election of January 1906, and there was throughout this lengthy period a very real risk that he might have lost the seat to any one of his Tory opponents. Churchill returned to power in November 1951, not 1952 (p. 231). And is it really true to say that Harold Wilson was the only serving British premier in the twentieth century to retire voluntarily 'without the pressure of ill-health' (p. 254)? It is now widely believed that the cruel onset of Alzheimer's Disease had begun before 1976 and had begun to cloud his judgement and memory, and

that he was aware of this. Hence his sensational announcement of his impending retirement in March 1976. Following on from this, was not Stanley Baldwin generally hale and healthy at the time of his voluntary retirement following the coronation of George VI in June 1937?

This volume has been most attractively produced by its publishers who are to be warmly congratulated on its appearance. It provides the ideal, introductory sketch to the lives and careers of all British Prime Ministers. The study succeeds in being comprehensive and detailed without being at all superficial. It is certain to appeal to academics, college and university students and the general reader alike and will undoubtedly stand the test of time.

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Churchill reinterpreted

Richard Holmes, *In the Footsteps of Churchill* (BBC Books, 2005)

Reviewed by **Dr J. Graham Jones**

WITHOUT CHURCHILL, Britain might have been defeated. I do not say we would have been defeated. But we might have been. He was so perfectly suited to fill a particular need; the need was so vital; and the absence of anybody of his quality was so blatant that one cannot imagine what would have happened if he had not been there.¹¹

Attlee's graphic words are a sharp reminder of Britain's debt to Winston Churchill. But given the spate of biographies and other works covering Churchill and related themes which have poured from the presses over the years, one

might justifiably question the need for yet another biography. Any doubts are, however, at once dispelled by a perusal of this magisterial, highly readable tome – one of many published to coincide with the fortieth anniversary of Churchill's death in January 1965. The present volume was originally produced to accompany an eight-part BBC television series broadcast during the spring of 2005. Its author, Richard Holmes, is Professor of Military and Security Studies at Cranfield University and the Royal Military College of Science, a prolific writer with more than a dozen books to his name, and also a well-known

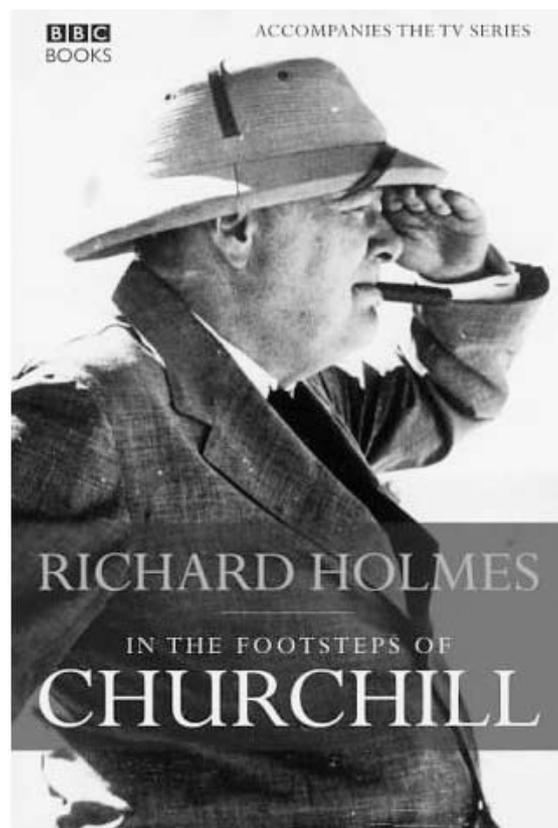
presenter of several BBC television series. His predilection for military history, and immensely detailed knowledge of its minutiae, are at once apparent from the present tome, with its immensely searching analysis of military developments during the Boer War, the First World War and the Second World War. But he also has a good awareness of the political history of these years and of his subject's personal and family life. All three are intermingled to great effect to produce an unfailingly stimulating read.

Here we have two books rolled into one: a full, thoroughly researched, well-written biography, and an in-depth study of the character of a truly extraordinary man. Richard Holmes goes right back to basics, looking at the early formative influences which shaped Winston Churchill – his parents, upbringing and education at Harrow School. As a soldier in the Boer War at the turn of the century, Churchill was twice recommended for the Victoria Cross. As a politician, his career straddled more than the first half of the twentieth century; he first entered the House of Commons as the Conservative MP for Oldham in the 'khaki' general election of 1900, twice changed parties, serving as the Liberal President of the Board of Trade (as successor to David Lloyd George) and Home Secretary and later as Baldwin's Conservative Chancellor of the Exchequer, 1924–29, and as wartime premier from May 1940 until July 1945 and later peacetime Prime Minister from 1951–55. He remained the Tory MP for Woodford until October 1964, within weeks of his ninetieth birthday and subsequent death.

Readers of this *Journal* will perhaps be most interested in the period after 31 May 1904 when Churchill crossed the floor of the Commons to sit on the Liberal benches. Holmes provides his readers with sparky accounts of

such episodes as the famous siege of Sydney Street (pp. 106–07) and the 1910 Tonypany Riots (p. 105), when the belligerent Home Secretary sent in the troops to smash strike action in the Rhondda valleys. In his brief concluding chapter, 'Death Shall have no Dominion' (pp. 347–55), the author concludes, 'The explanation is that Winston was a natural liberal forced by circumstances to join the Conservative Party, which only grudgingly accepted him' (p. 354).

The outstanding characteristic of the text is the author's uncanny knack of rolling out an array of absorbing historical facts and details about his subject's life and times, all of which are apparently at his fingertips, seemingly subject to effortless recall. We can read fascinating detail of the construction of the Churchill family's ancestral home at Blenheim Palace (p. 27), while at school the young Churchill, we are informed, was 'beaten for stealing sugar from the pantry' and 'took the headmaster's favourite straw hat and kicked it to bits, knowing very well that he would be flogged again' (p. 36). As Home Secretary, Churchill's civil uniform had 'more gold lace (and of course more medals) than anyone else's. Always a fastidious man, Winston bathed at least once a day and exuded the mingled odours of clean linen, cigar smoke and ... cologne. He was every inch the young man who had arrived.' (p. 102) As Chancellor after 1924, he proudly donned his father Lord Randolph Churchill's official robes which had been carefully preserved in tissue paper and camphor for more than thirty years (p. 40). His ever-devoted wife, Clemmie Churchill, we are informed, continued to vote Liberal throughout her life (p. 165), while her husband lost his substantial life-savings in the Wall Street crash of 1929 (p. 186). As one of his many leisure interests, Churchill was well capable of laying a brick a minute



(caption to picture between pp. 240–41), while during the war years he and President Franklin D. Roosevelt exchanged more than 1700 letters and telegrams, on average almost one per day (p. 286). In 1951 he shuffled around noisily in his seat in the Commons during a speech by the Labour Chancellor Hugh Gaitskell, proclaiming to bemused fellow-MPs, 'I was only looking for a jujube' (p. 338). Extra fascinating facts and delightful snippets of information are presented in the footnotes which are genuinely helpful and informative.

Nor does Professor Holmes always stick to the accepted wisdom. He challenges the accepted view that Lord Randolph Churchill fell victim to syphilis in 1895, suggesting instead that he probably suffered from a left brain tumour (p. 38). Whereas most biographers point up the long-term close friendship between Churchill and Lloyd George, Holmes quotes his subject's private opinion of LG in a letter written in December 1901, 'Personally, I think Lloyd George a vulgar, chattering little cad',

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then commenting bluntly, 'It is unlikely that his assessment ever really changed' (p. 94). He also later comments, 'His [Churchill's] letters to Clemmie reveal rising impatience with Lloyd George' (p. 164). He revises, too, the traditional view that Churchill was 'in the wilderness' politically during the long 1930s (pp. 222–23), and underlines the considerable long-term reluctance within both the Conservative Party and the civil service to accept Churchill as party leader in 1940–41 (p. 239 ff). The accepted view of Churchill's rule is also questioned; far from being 'the Dictator', he generally 'refus[ed] to exercise arbitrary power', insisting that none of his orders was valid unless committed to writing (p. 249).

Generally, the book is detailed for a single-volume biography, with the author skilfully cramming in as many points of detail as possible, but the discussion of the post-1945 period, including the coverage of the Conservative government of 1951–55, is much more cursory. These years, according to Holmes, saw 'replays of familiar themes' (apart from a marked development of Churchill's skill as a painter (p. 336)). He also protests (p. 342) his anxiety not to 'duplicate the details of Winston's physical decline' already delineated so evocatively in the monographs by Lord Moran, his medical adviser, and Montague Brown, his last private secretary.

The volume is enhanced by liberal quotations from Churchill's many volumes (several from his *My Early Life* (1930, reprinted 2002)) and by the inclusion of maps and a marvellous selection of illustrations and photographs. Richard Holmes's mastery of his sources and knowledge of his subject and his times are awesome. But he is probably wrong to assert that Lloyd George by December 1916 had 'felt strong enough to make a deal with the Tories to replace Asquith' (p. 156). And there was

'The explanation is that Winston was a natural liberal forced by circumstances to join the Conservative Party, which only grudgingly accepted him'.

certainly no general election during 1920 (p. 335).

But the volume is a marvellous, captivating read from beginning to end, scholarly, engaging, well written, balanced in its judgements, scrupulously fair in its assessments, a really sound reinterpretation of a great man, warts and all. This book has earned its place among the many volumes of

Churchilliana and will surely stand the test of time.

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- 1 Lord Attlee, 'The Churchill I knew' in Charles Eade (ed.) *Churchill, by his Contemporaries* (London, 1953), p. 35.

ARCHIVES

Project to catalogue the papers of Richard Wainwright (1918–2003) and Lord David Steel (1938–)

by **Becky Webster**

THE COLLECTIONS held by the Archives Division at the British Library of Political and Economic Science at the LSE include a wealth of information regarding modern British political, economic and social history. The material dates mainly from the last quarter of the nineteenth century to the present day and is accessible to all. As part of a drive to improve access to Liberal collections held by the Archives Division an externally funded project to catalogue two major collections commenced in September 2006.

The project began with the listing, sorting and re-boxing of the papers of Richard Wainwright, Liberal MP for Colne Valley 1966–70 and 1974–87. This catalogue will now be made available via the Archive's online catalogue. The collection comprises fifty boxes covering aspects of Wainwright's political career, as well as some interesting files regarding his education, personal interests and non-political work.

Papers regarding the administration of the Liberal Party refer to central policies, annual assemblies and Wainwright's work for the Liberal Party Organisation. A significant part of the collection relates to Wainwright's work as spokesman for the party on key subjects including finance, trade and industry, the economy and employment. Speech texts, press releases and articles written by Wainwright on these and other subjects, including local government, electoral reform and devolution, provide a real insight into Liberal policy during this period. There are also some smaller series of files regarding the alliance of the Liberal Party and the Social Democratic Party, and the subsequent formation of the Liberal Democrats, with particular reference to the leadership of the new party.

Another large series relates to Wainwright's work within his own constituency. There is a wealth of information regarding his general election campaigns