

FRIENDSHIP

Churchill was devout in his friendships. He enjoyed swimming with Foreign Secretary Sir Edward Grey at the Royal Automobile Club pool in its lavish new clubhouse on Pall Mall. No one, however, was closer to him than the Conservative MP F. E. Smith, a brilliant, wasp-tongued former barrister from the port city of Birkenhead. Two years older than Churchill, Smith also had failed the entrance examination at Harrow, but lacking the Churchill connections, had not been admitted. The two became friends in the wake of Churchill's crossing of the floor of the House, despite Smith's staunch Toryism. Clementine believed him to be a bad influence on her husband as a drinker and as a gambler. He was, however, in every sense, Winston's equal.



Churchill, in his painting smock and clutching a pair of paintbrushes, poses at Hartsbourne Manor with Sir Frederick (F. E.) Smith, circa 1916.



Albert Einstein first came to Chartwell in the spring of 1933 to seek Churchill's help in getting Jewish scientists out of Germany and safely to England. Churchill encouraged Prof—who was present for Einstein's visit—to travel to Germany and seek out Jewish scientists and to find places for them at British universities. Prof did so, and through this intervention, many did leave. Einstein returned to visit Churchill at Chartwell again in 1939, where this picture in the rose garden was taken.

After virtually a lifetime of drinking Pol Roger champagne, Churchill finally met Madame Odette Pol-Roger, the doyenne of his favorite champagne-making family, at a British Embassy Armistice Day party in Paris in 1944. He would later say that he was as captivated by Madame Pol-Roger's elegance and beauty as he was by the champagne served at lunch that day, his favorite vintage, Pol Roger 1928. Churchill instructed the British ambassador, Alfred Duff Cooper, to invite Madame Pol-Roger to the embassy every time Churchill was in Paris. Over the ensuing years he would dine with her as a fellow guest at Buckingham Palace, host her at Chartwell and 10 Downing Street, and visit her at the Pol-Roger chateau at Epernay ("the world's most drinkable address," according to Churchill). He even named one of his racehorses after her, and she, one of her champagne vintages after him.



Tête-à-tête with Madame Odette Pol-Roger.