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Churchill’s visits to Epsom

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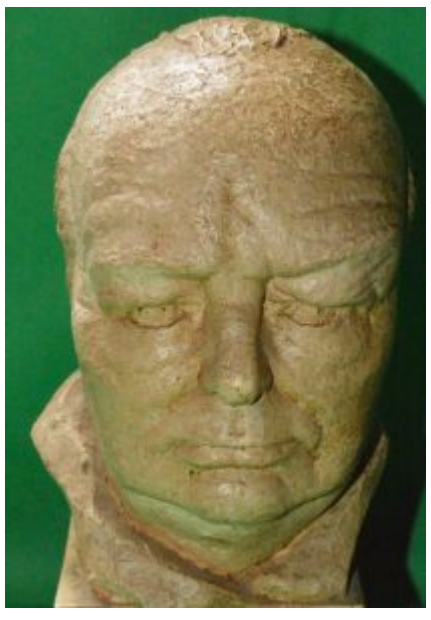

In 1903 Winston Churchill, then the MP for Oldham, visited Epsom College and unveiled a memorial stained glass window in memory of the Old Epsomians who had died in the Boer War. The memorial stained glass window was commissioned and paid for by Old Epsomians and designed by Francis Oldaker. Oldaker was an Old Epsomian and stained glass artist, he lived locally and is buried in Epsom’s Ashley Road cemetery.

Unveiled by Winston Churchill. Image courtesy Epsom College

Winston Churchill was a fan of horse raising and attended the Epsom Derby on 4 June 1949 with his wife Clementine. He became Sir Winston in 1953.

I’m hoping that readers will be able throw light on a plaster bust of Churchill created by Churchill’s only female cousin, Clare Sheridan in 1943.

Clare Sheridan was a “colourful” character who established herself as a successful sculptor of portrait busts; her sitters included her then lover, the actor Charlie Chaplin together with H G Wells, Lord Asquith, Trotksy and Lenin. Her involvement with prominent Russians led to her being placed under surveillance by British intelligence much to the embarrassment of Churchill and his political colleagues who urged him to stay away from her.

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Sheridan's bronze busts of her first cousin Churchill were created during World War 2, but only after Sheridan threatened to commit suicide outside 10 Downing Street if Churchill failed to allow her to sculpt him. Examples of her bronze busts of Sir Winston Churchill can be found at Churchill's former home, Chartwell as well as at Blenheim Palace, Harrow School and Hastings Town Hall, but the whereabouts of a smaller bust created by Clare Sheridan especially for Churchill's wife, Clementine is not known.

References to Clare Sheridan's bronze busts of Sir Winston Churchill can be found in quite a few of Churchill's WW2 letters, but having studied all the relevant letters in great detail, I have not been able to find out anything about the smaller plaster bust which I purchased at a London estate sale.

Could it be that the 9-inch-high plaster bust of Sir Winston Churchill that I acquired at an estate sale is the small bust of Sir Winston Churchill that wartime letters confirm was given to Churchill's wife, Clementine by Clare Sheridan?

Please contact The Epsom and Ewell Times if you have any information about Clare Sheridan's small plaster bust of Sir Winston Churchill.

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