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If you have post-election blues, step into the past in wartime London

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15th June 2017

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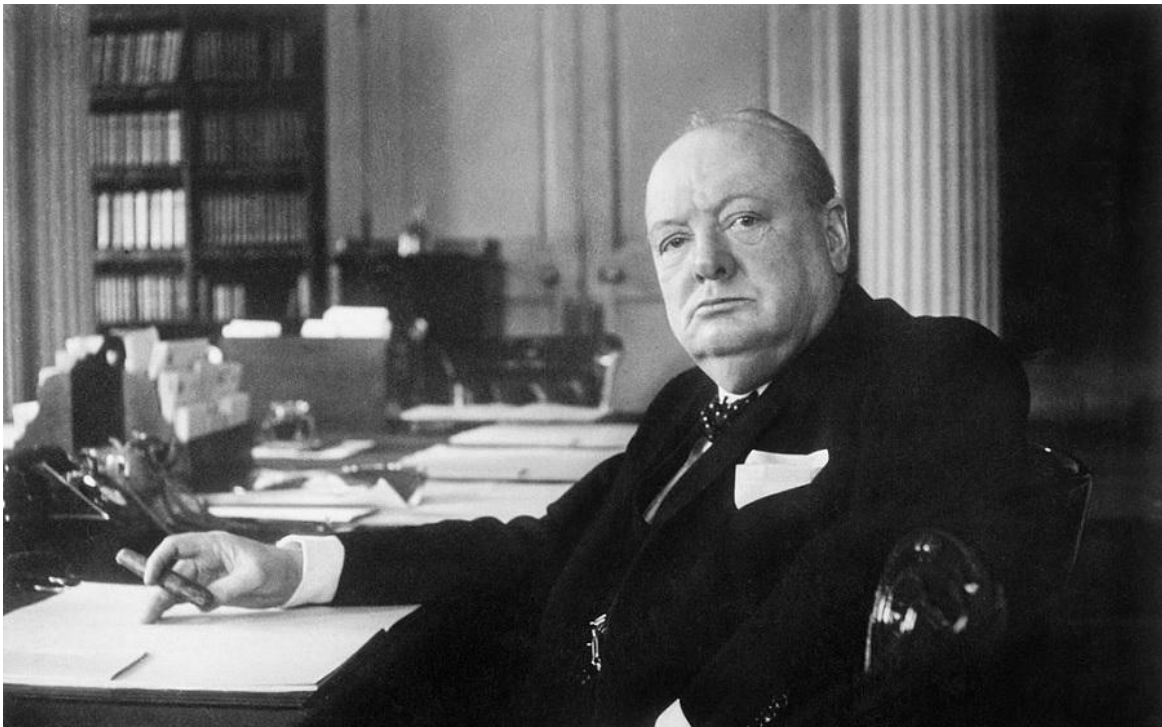


All the talk in the last week, as the fall-out from the 2017 General Election continues, has been rather negative for Theresa May.

People have asked: is she the worst Prime Minister of all time?

Conversely, ask people who was the greatest and the two most common picks would be Winston Churchill and Clement Attlee.





There was a time when both served together in the Cabinet.

In 1931, at the midst of an economic crisis, a national coalition government was formed. This was still the case in 1940, when Churchill became Prime Minister and Attlee was his deputy.

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You can see the room where they sat next to one another whilst organising the War Cabinet at the Churchill War Cabinet Rooms, nestled among government departments in Westminster.

The War Rooms aren't simulations or replicas, but exact copies of the rooms of the ministry as they were in 1945.



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Map Room within Churchill War Rooms

The chairs, the tables, the beds, the ministerial boxes are exactly the same.

The steel beams offering protection still exist, although these defences were useless in the case of a direct hit.

They show the attention to detail that Churchill, Attlee, their fellow ministers, civil servants and the chiefs of staff put into the war effort.

The detailed map room, showing maps of the entire world, is the perfect example of this. The maps feature thousands of holes from the pins used to denote troop and convey positions, which also made the Map Room one of the most secure in wartime Britain.





© IWM CWR 000474

Map room door within Churchill War Rooms

By visiting, you can immerse yourself in the room where several key decisions were made, that saved this country from falling as the rest of Europe had.

The museum, housed on the site, has plenty of different exhibits, such as the original door to 10 Downing Street and the original photograph of Churchill on a visit to Canada, which is currently used on the £5 note.

A stone's throw away, near London Bridge, is HMS Belfast which saw action in D-Day and the Normandy landings.

The ship's deck offers panoramic views of London, being moored on the Thames.

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HMS Belfast, too, is still maintained from its time in action; the bridge and the flight deck remain the same from when they were last in use.





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Navigating Officer chair on HMS Belfast

The ship, which is set to celebrate its eightieth anniversary next year, offers tours just like the War Rooms.

The ship played a pivotal role in sinking the German Scharnhorst at North Cape, being the only ship that was at the battle during its entirety.

Learn the ship's plan to deal with nuclear, biological and chemical warfare and of a sailor who claimed compensation in 1939, but had to wait until 1987 to be paid.

The experience on the ship, which was used to fiercely bombard enemies within a range of around 14 miles, is actually very immersive, as you have to travel up and down the same ladders as the ship's crew over the years.

You can see how the crew lived and worked and explore great stories from ship's past.





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HMS Belfast Exterior

If the guns currently on board were fired, they would be able to hit the M1 services at London Gateway.

Churchill had originally wanted to travel on the ship to the Normandy landings, but was dissuaded by the king. In the landings, HMS Belfast bombarded the beaches to clear the way for troops to be deployed.





This is also the basis for Lionsgate's new film: *Churchill*, starring Brian Cox as Churchill and Miranda Richardson as his wife, Clementine.

Directed by Jonathan Teplitzky, it tells the story of the days before the landings, and an internal conflict Churchill has due to memories of the disastrous Gallipoli landings in the First World War.

The film focuses less on the fighting and more on Churchill's battle with depression following years of war and his relationship with his wife, who gives him the support he needs to move forward in such a decision.

I don't want to give away much about the film's content. If you like a bit of action, then the War Rooms and HMS Belfast are more your scene, the film is less so.

But, if you want to explore the man behind these great decisions, these moments that meant so much in securing the freedom of our nation, then it will be a film in which you can learn and gain new insights into Churchill.

So, if you're suffering the post-election blues, why not make this summer the summer of Churchill and Attlee?





Churchill is out in cinemas on the 16th June.

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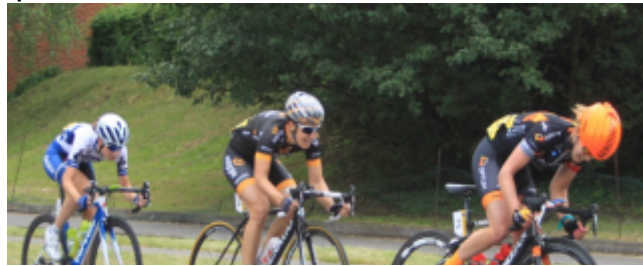


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