

A Major Success: The Second Churchill Institute for High School Teachers

Cambridge and London Cannot be Bettered for Firsthand Acquaintance with Churchill and Direct Archival Research



GREAT TEACHERS, GREAT SCHOLARS. *Front Row:* Sarah Evans, Martha Curtis, Donna Sexton, Darlene Mahaney, Elva Card, Zach Garver, Allen Packwood (Director, Churchill Archives). *Row 2:* Sandy Wells, Bev Hart, Courtney Caldwell, Suzanne Sigman (CC Educational Programs Coordinator), Terry Trebilcock, Christine Kadonsky. *Row 3:* Jannette Milligan, Donna Fournier, Elly Kluge, Alana Barton (Professor Muller's research assistant), Kathy Carroll, Maura Capps. *Back row (all males):* Paul Mueller, Larry Gasda, Professor James Muller, Jim Hosford, Chris Krintzline, Harry "Murph" Murphy, Kent Isakson, Mike Baum. Missing: Shondale Pagano.

With funding from the National Endowment for the Humanities (NEH), The Churchill Centre brought twenty-four American high school teachers to England to explore "Winston Churchill and the Anglo-American Relationship." From 13 July through 2 August at the Churchill Archives Centre, Cambridge and in London, Professor James W. Muller directed a full academic program of research, seminars and visits to Churchill sites. Muller, with assistance from Suzanne Sigman, Dan Myers and Richard Langworth, wrote the successful grant application in early 2007. Sigman, the Centre's Education Programs Coordinator, assisted Professor Muller and teachers at the Institute during their three-week stay.

Allen Packwood, Director of the Churchill Archives Centre, with his

professional, kind and gracious staff, was integral to the research phase of the program, where teachers examined primary source material and devised ways of using it in their classroom. All participants are especially grateful to Winston Churchill for allowing them to use a select number of documents in lesson plans for their classrooms. Thanks also to The Rt. Hon. Nicholas Soames MP, for arranging a tour of Parliament, and to Phil Reed, Samantha Heywood and Jocelyn Hunt for providing unique opportunities at The Churchill Museum, Cabinet War Rooms. Jack Darrah, with his Churchill Collection at Bletchley Park, was as always a keen supporter and special friend of the Churchill Centre.

Churchill scholars John Ramsden, Piers Brendon, David Dilks and Paul Addison facilitated the intellectual inquiry through assigned readings,

lectures and extensive discussion, both formal and informal. Jim Lancaster offered a taste of the recent "Churchill and France" colloquium in Paris (page 4).

The teachers were from thirteen states and teach primarily in public high schools. Their teaching experience ranges from one to twenty-five years. Attendees comprised nine males and fifteen females, curiously a reverse of the gender balance in our 2006 NEH Institute held in Ohio. By NEH selection rules, each teacher submitted a cover sheet, CV, essay and two references. A committee of three evaluated the applications.

Almost all the teachers have a long history of seeking professional development opportunities at home and abroad. Four teachers had previously attended a Churchill Centre Saturday teacher seminar, and two had attended local seminars in Alaska, where James Muller was instrumental in the program.

Fifteen teachers had Masters Degrees: Education (7), History (5), Political Science (1), English (1) and Public Policy (1). Many had interesting previous or concurrent careers: business, historical interpreter, fireman, associate editor for a Wall Street publication, political/economic analyst of the Central Intelligence Agency. Six had taught undergraduates as adjunct instructors or lecturers. Perhaps most impressive was their wide participation in professional activities: presenting at local, state and national conferences for educators, serving on curriculum committees and as national (AP) exam readers. Of course we hope teachers will return home and share what they've learned about Churchill.

At the Institute's conclusion, the NEH requires anonymous evaluations from each participant. Here are some:

- "Rigorous engagement with facts and ideas. Fills a hole in my own education, which did not include Churchill outside World War II. This will enable me to teach better, reflecting Churchill's involvement in events over his decades-long public life. I will use texts with

students that were used with me, and have obtained an excellent resource base by delving into the Churchill Archives.”

- “Exposure to experts in their fields represented a unique and substantial opportunity....Discussions allowed free inquiry into Churchill’s historical role and relevance and admitted differences of opinion about him.”

- “I would attend any seminar directed by Dr. Muller—excellent.”

- “Almost humbling in making me realize how much there was to be learned about a historical figure about whom I thought I was well read. It will have considerable influence on my classroom as well as staff professional development.”

- “Allen Packwood went out of his way to be helpful and found documents and sources for everyone. He was engaging in conversations and really knew his subject.”

- “Educators were well-chosen for insightful contributions to discussions. The guest lecturers were impressive, with firmly established credentials. Lectures were polished and interesting. Research at the Archives was gratifying. I was impressed by the groundwork laid beforehand to make our research so smooth and rewarding. Field trips were appropriate, of correct duration, and enhanced the institute’s purpose.”

- “I cannot adequately express how superlative the efforts of Jim Muller and Suzanne Sigman were. For a three-week institute with the complexities of this one to be executed so flawlessly reflects on their tremendous amount of planning and effort.”

- “I expected to learn about

Churchill, but I also came away with a deeper understanding of the British Parliamentary system, and of Britain and the world in the 20th Century.”

- “The perfect balance of group discussion, archival research (an incredible experience!), lectures and visits to fascinating and relevant venues. Professor Muller was knowledgeable and very approachable; he truly wanted to provide the most effective experience possible.”

- “I am certainly a better informed person in the areas of historical knowledge and research. My students will be better educated and better researchers as a result. I also plan to study many topics raised during the institute in more depth, so the experience is not over even at the end of the three weeks!”

- “The opportunity to conduct primary source research at the Archives was inspirational. Handling Churchill’s private papers to create a Document Based Question (DBQ) for my classes was exciting. The insight I received into the British Parliamentary system was life-changing. I now view our U.S. Constitution in a very different light.”

- “In teaching U.S. History I have a more complete perspective. Churchill is now more than a few quick references in the history of WW2 and a nod to the Cold War and his Iron Curtain speech.”

- “The program was well thought out and meticulously organized by Suzanne Sigman. Professor Muller knows nearly everything possible about Churchill and colonial history.”

For a full description of the NEH-funded Churchill Centre program, see <http://xrl.us/oug2j>. ☺

