

CHILDHOOD

Research Guide

When we typically think of childhood, connotations of innocence and pre-adolescent joy spring to mind. However as the likes of [Laura Tisdall](#), [Ada Cohen](#) and [Amy Fish](#) discuss, there is no one set definition of childhood. [Definitions of childhood](#) vary based on different factors, such as years of age, experience or culture, and so cannot be defined simply by age or chronology. As [Suzanne Shanahan](#) summarises 'there is no singular childhood, and childhoods are always changing and being reconstituted'.

Our collections include childhood memorabilia and recollections by notable figures about their younger years. In an attempt to give an introduction to the topic, we have listed our 'Top 10' collections for childhood, featuring:

1. Roger Stevens
2. Rudolph Lambart
3. Winston Churchill & Sarah Churchill
4. Julian Amery
5. Stephen Roskill
6. Ralph Bagnold
7. Nevile Bland
8. Quintin Hogg
9. Edward Spears
10. Mark Abrams



How to find archive material

- Search our collections using the Archives Centre website: <https://archives.chu.cam.ac.uk> or Archives Search, the University search tool for archives and manuscripts held in Cambridge: <https://archivesearch.lib.cam.ac.uk>.
- Book a visit at: <https://archives.chu.cam.ac.uk/visit-us>
- Find out more about our free remote copying service at: <https://archives.chu.cam.ac.uk/copies-and-research/>
- Email archives@chu.cam.ac.uk with any questions you have about our collections. We're really happy to help you on your research journey!

Roger Stevens (1906 – 1980)

During his lifetime, Roger Stevens represented Britain as Secretary of British Civil Secretariat to both Washington (1944-1946) and the Foreign Office (1946-1948). He was also British Ambassador to both Sweden and Persia, amongst other positions such as Deputy Under-Secretary of State for the Foreign Office (1958-1963) and Advisor to the First Secretary of State on Central Africa (1963-1974).



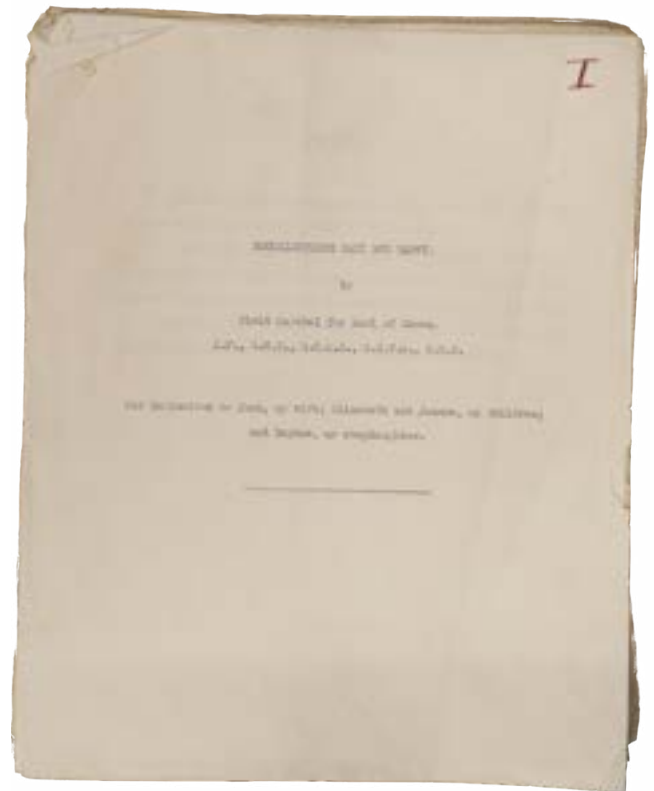
Roger Stevens, STVS 12/4/1.

Roger's papers include a childhood diary, [STVS 8/1/2](#), covering the period from 1912 to 1914, when he was between 6 and 8 year's old. He recounts everyday comings and events such as when his 'mummy' attempted to remove 'a cat in the shrubs' with the garden 'hose'. Though this diary is about the size of a wallet (yes that small), it reveals much about Roger's life, his character, such as his childlike way of spelling 'SATAYDAY' (Saturday). Also take a look at [STVS 1/3](#), a collection of school-related papers and letters which Roger sent to his parents while he was a school between 1916 and 1919.

Rudolph Lambart (1865 – 1946)

(Frederic) Rudolph Lambart, 10th Earl Cavan, served as Second Lieutenant in the Grenadier Guards in 1885, and was promoted to Colonel in 1911 and General in 1921. In 1932, he was bestowed the title of Field Marshal and led the troops at the Coronation of George VI in 1937.

Of interest is Rudolph's unpublished memoir, particularly part 1, 'Recollections Hazy but Happy' ([CAVN 1/1](#)). It is important to note that Rudolph wrote his memoir at the age of 80 so it is useful for seeing the impact that memory has on past childhood events. Early parts of the memoir give an insight into Frederic's childhood, such as 'the Chair Mystery' and the time he 'emptied the ink bottle out of the boudoir window' forgetting that the 'white stone outside' would be ruined.



An unpublished memoir by Rudolph Lambart.
CAVN 1/1

Winston Churchill (1874 – 1965) & Sarah Churchill (1914 – 1982)

Winston Churchill served as British Prime Minister from 1940 to 1945 and again from 1951 to 1955. The Archives Centre holds a wealth of material on Winston Churchill and his family including the Chartwell Papers (CHAR), the Churchill papers (CHUR) and other additional material (CHAQ), most of which can be found online on [Churchill Archive Platform](#) (accessible via University subscription or in our reading room).



A drawing of Winston Churchill as a boy, CHAR 28/86B/56.

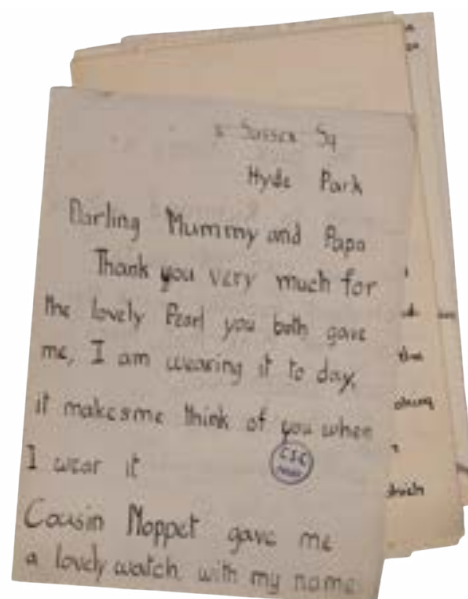
Interesting material includes a letter addressed to a 10-year-old Winston Churchill from Prince Alfred of Edinburgh in 1884, apologising for ‘hurt[ing] your [his] head and I [he] hope that it is getting better’ ([CHAR 1/1/1](#)). Another letter, written 6 years later, congratulates Winston on excelling in his ‘exam’ ([CHAR 1/1/3](#)), while in 1885, an 11-year-old Winston wrote to his ‘dear Mama’, asking that she ‘come[s] and see[s]’ her ‘loving Winston xxxxxxxxxxxxxx’ ([CHAR 28/13/74](#)). Winston also wrote to his nanny ‘Woom’ informing her that her ‘Winnie’ had arrived safely at school in 1890 ([CHAR 28/16/13](#)).



Sarah Churchill as a young girl, holding a book, CSCT 5/2/20.

Sarah Churchill led an extraordinary career as an actress and dancer. To list a few productions, Sarah Churchill debuted in ‘He Found a Star’ in 1940, appeared in ‘Mary Rose’ at Q Theatre in 1941, and in ‘The King and I’ in 1956. During the Second World War, Sarah served in the Women’s Auxiliary Air Force in the Photographic Interpretation unit at RAF Medmenham.

Within Sarah’s papers are letters between Sarah (aged 7-12) and her mother Clementine Churchill, recounting the early-to-mid 1920s. In one letter, she writes ‘Dear Mummie to day it rained very hard and some sleat [sic] also fell; it cleared up too this afternoon.’ ([SCHL 1/1/1](#)). Sarah continued sending these letters up until the age of 17 ([SCHL 1/1/20](#)). It may be interesting to compare the childhood experiences of both Sarah and her father, Winston.



A letter sent by Sarah Churchill to her mother, Clementine and father, Winston in the early 1920s, SCHL 1/1/1.

You can read some of Sarah and Clementine’s letters on our free online [Access Portal](#), <https://oa.churchillarchives.libnova.com>.

Julian Amery (1919-1996)

Julian Amery had an impressive military career, ranging from his years as a War Correspondent during the Spanish Civil War, to his time in the RAF as well as the Army. Amery also served as Conservative MP for Preston North (1950-1966) and Brighton Pavilion (1969-1992).

Within the papers of Julian Amery is a collection of childhood recollections which appear to have been kept by either his mother or his nanny. From the letters sent by his mother, Florence, it is clear that he was cared for and raised by his nanny for a portion of his childhood; 'You would be very surprised I am sure if you could only see him at Dinner he sits up like a man & feeds himself he needs very little help he just enjoys everything I give him ...' ([AMEJ 8/3/1](#)). Also of particular interest are a series of photographs, as well as a drawing, which give a view of what Julian looked like as a child ([AMEJ 8/3/1](#)).

As Julian followed in the footsteps of his father, the politician and journalist, Leo Amery, it could be insightful to compare the lived childhood experience of father and son, for example with files such as [AMEL 7/1](#), which include one of Leo's notebooks 1890-1891, detailing some of his schoolwork and visits abroad, aged 17-18.

Stephen Roskill (1903-1982)

Stephen Roskill was the official naval historian of the Second World War in the Cabinet Office Historical Section until 1960 and later became both Senior Research Fellow of Churchill College and helped to found Churchill Archives Centre.

Of particular interest are his diaries discussing both his trip to Belgium in 1913 at the age of 10 ([ROSK 1/1](#)) and that of his travels to Touraine in 1920, aged 17, ([ROSK 1/2](#)). This collection, however, is not limited to material on Stephen Roskill, but also includes items relating to his 7 children, Nicholas, Mark, Tessa, Mary, Thomas, Clare and Christopher. Some interesting pieces on the family include a 'Get Well Soon' card from Clare ([ROSK 14/4](#)), Stephen Roskill's version of the Widecombe Fair song, a toast to 'the twins [Mary and Tom] 21st birthdays' ([ROSK 14/1](#) & [ROSK 14/2](#)), and a series of photograph albums ([ROSK 20/1/6](#), [ROSK 20/1/17A](#) & [ROSK 20/1/17B](#)).



A get well soon card from Clare Roskill to her father, Stephen Roskill, ROSK 14/4.

Ralph Bagnold (1896-1990)

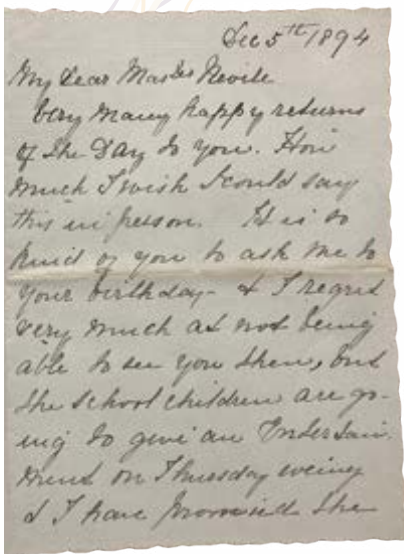
Ralph Bagnold served in the army during both World Wars and was promoted to Captain, Brigadier and Major. He also took an immense interest in science. Fascinated by sand dunes from his time posted in Egypt, he gave a keynote at a meeting on desert landscapes on Earth and Mars for NASA in 1977 and published a paper on random distribution to the Royal Society in 1973. Bagnold achieved numerous awards for his research.

For those wishing to explore Ralph's childhood and family life, [BGND A.35 - A.42](#) (1896 - 1914) includes letters between a son and his parents whilst away at school: 'Dear Mummy Thanks so much for the cake, it is quite as good as Emma's if not better' and 'Dear Mummy My cold is practically nothing. I haven't had any temperature since Tuesday.'



Ralph Bagnold, BGND E.2.

Nevile Bland (1886-1972)



A letter to Nevile from his parents on his 8th birthday, BLND 1/2.

(George) Nevile Bland entered the Foreign Office in 1911 at a young age and served on Peace Delegations in Paris in 1919. Nevile worked as a Private Secretary to several notable figures and later was Counsellor in the Foreign Office by 1935, Envoy Extraordinary and Minister Plenipotentiary to the Netherlands in 1938 and Ambassador in 1942.

The Archives Centre houses much juvenile-related material on Nevile's childhood ([BLND 1/1 - BLND 1/20](#)) including family letters sent during the period from 1888 to 1905. Of particular interest are letters from Nevile's parents, appearing to recount their days without him during his early years, aged 4-9, one of which was sent on his 8th birthday: 'It is so kind of you to ask me to your birthday - & I regret very much as not being able to see you ...' ([BLND 1/2](#)). This part of the collection offers an interesting perspective from the parent-point of view, rather than that of the child's.

Quintin Hogg (1907-2001)

Born Quintin Hogg, Lord Hailsham was Conservative MP for Oxford City, 1938-1950 and St. Marylebone, 1963-1970. Throughout his political career, Quintin held many positions, including Minister of Education (1957), Deputy Leader of the House of Lords (1957-1960) and Lord Privy Seal (1959-1960).

A transcript of Quintin's contribution to the 1950s 'Some Horrors of Childhood' BBC Radio series ([HLSM 3/7/10](#)), gives an insight into his childhood, which he described as for the most part as a 'happy childhood - secure, comfortable, protected'. However, he also details moments of horror when he was embarrassed or frightened, such as when his mother tried to 'convert' him to rid him of his fear of bees, as well as his dentist's 'torture chamber'.

Edward Spears (1886-1974)

Edward Spears worked at the French War Office in Paris and with British agents in Belgium during World War One, until his retirement from the Army following a nervous breakdown in 1920. Amongst other achievements and positions, Edward stood for Parliament, as both a National Liberal MP for Loughborough, 1922-1924 and Conservative MP for Carlisle, 1931-1945.

One place to start for information on Edward's childhood is [SPRS 2/2](#) where he reflects on his childhood, for example, 'my grandfather died when I was 2 years old, I remember him clearly on two occasions', and remembering a 'simple [Christmas] present' from years ago as a child. Similar to Rudolph's memoir, the reliability and accuracy of Spears' childhood memories must be considered. Other material of note includes [SPRS 2/12](#) and [SPRS 2/11](#) which includes juvenilia relating to Michael Spears, Edward's son. It could be interesting to compare the childhoods of both father and son.

Mark Abrams (1906-1994)

Mark Abrams is perhaps best known for his fundamental work and studies on research and opinion polling. Mark pursued a career in market research, having worked for the London Press Exchange as of 1933, up until the Second World War where prior to working for the Psychological Warfare Board, he worked in the BBC Overseas Research Department. Following the war, he returned to the London Press Exchange in 1946 and established Research Services Limited, producing research material until 1970, when he became Director of the Survey Research Unit at the Social Science Research Council. He later became a Research Director for King's College London and the Vice-President of the Policy Studies Institute.



ABMS 5/5

Unlike the other people included in this research guide, Mark's papers do not give an insight into his own childhood or that of those close to him, but rather that of an observer and researcher interested in childhood. Of interest is [ABMS 5/5](#), a collection of working papers on children dating 1951 -1966, consisting of pamphlets, reports and newspaper cuttings by Abrams on social habits and changes of children on topics such as the media e.g. relating to comics, cinema and television.

Although not all of this material has been written by Mark himself, his papers give an insight into his reading material, including causes for concern, such as how children of the time typically behaved and how they were perceived e.g. through looking at survey documents relating to 'Boys and Girls' reading habits' for 'W.H. Smith and Sons'.

