

1964/11 Rt. Hon. Earl Attlee KG OM CH

Prime Minister of the United Kingdom from 1945 to 1951

Portrait head

Height 10½"

Bronze

Exhibited Royal Academy Summer Exhibition 1965 Catalogue No. 1551

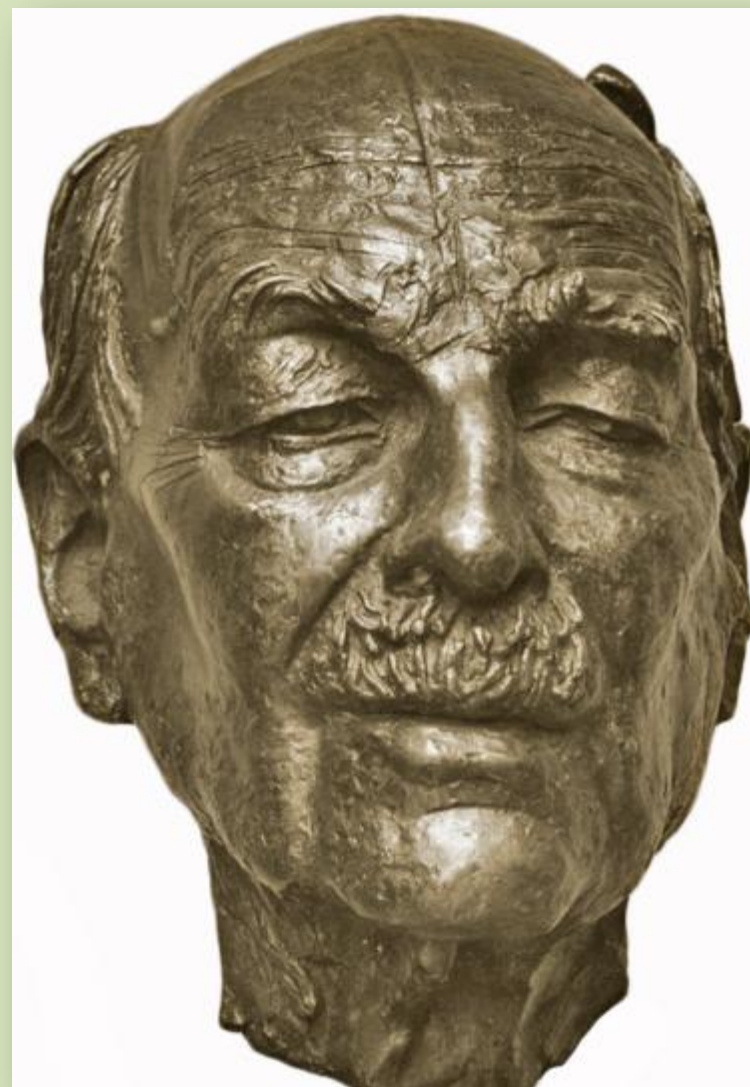
Modelled in 5 sittings at the Duchy of Cornwall Studios
Kennington from 24/6/1964 to 20/7/1964

Casts are in:

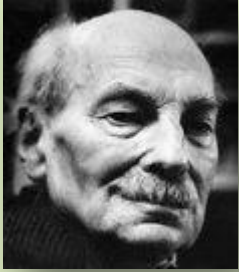
- 1) National Portrait Gallery (ref NPG 4601 Primary Collection)
- (2) Imperial War Museum (cat LD.6110)
- (3) Attlee House

Reference: National Portrait Gallery Catalogue page 20 ref 4601.

Inscription: "Clement Attlee 1883-1967, leader of the Labour Party (1935-55); served in the War Cabinet under Churchill (1940-5) & was Deputy Prime Minister (1942-5); defeated Churchill at the polls in the landslide Labour victory of 1945, bringing to power the first Labour government able to implement the policies of the welfare state. By David McFall (1919-88) Bronze signed 1965"



Clement Richard Attlee, 1st Earl Attlee, KG, OM, CH, PC
(3 January 1883 - 8 October 1967)



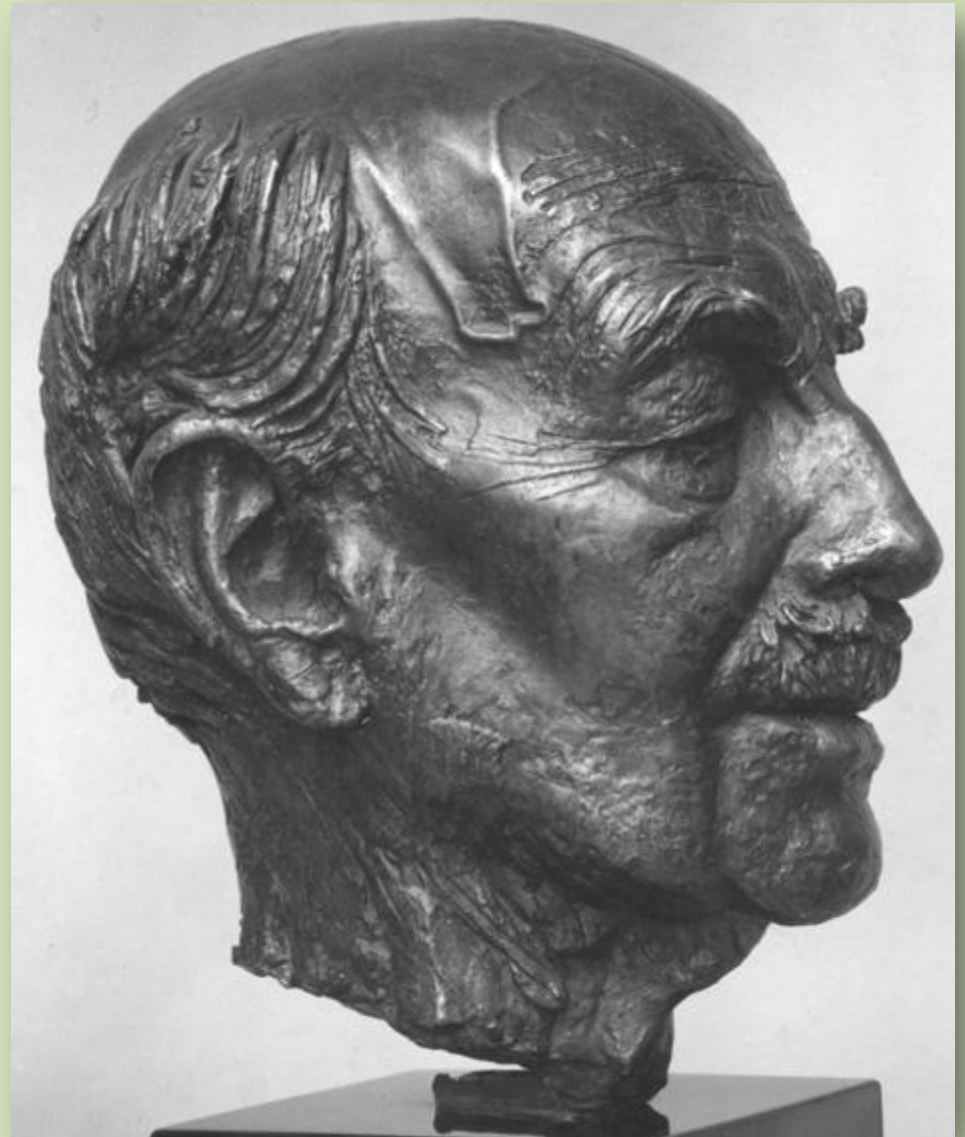
was a British politician, who served as Prime Minister of the United Kingdom from 1945 to 1951, and leader of the Labour Party from 1935 to 1955. He served as Deputy Prime Minister under Winston Churchill in the wartime coalition government, before leading the Labour Party to a landslide election victory over Churchill at the 1945 general election. He was the

first Labour Prime Minister to serve a full Parliamentary term and the first to have a majority in Parliament.

The government he led put in place the post-war consensus, based upon the assumption that full employment would be maintained by Keynesian policies, and that a greatly enlarged system of social services would be created -- aspirations that had been outlined in the wartime Beveridge Report. Within this context, his government undertook the nationalisation of major industries and public utilities as well as the creation of the National Health Service. After initial Conservative opposition, this settlement, generally known as the post-war consensus, was by and large accepted by all parties until Margaret Thatcher became leader of the Conservative Party in the 1970s.

His government also presided over the decolonisation of a large part of the British Empire, a process by which India and the countries that are now Burma, Sri Lanka, Pakistan and Bangladesh obtained independence.

In 2004, he was voted as the greatest British prime minister of the 20th century in a poll of professors organised by MORI.



'Attlee's life was moulded by what Christianity taught'

Frank Field considers the paradoxes in the life, work and heartfelt social commitment of an exemplary Labour leader

The political life of Clem Attlee, Prime Minister from 1945 until 1951, is characterised by a marvellous series of paradoxes. One of the greatest is that, though he couldn't be doing with the mumbo jumbo of Christian dogma, there has rarely been a prime minister for whom the Christian ethic so dominated his life. During his stewardship, this "unbeliever" became one of the most effective proponents of Christian ethics in this country's history. None of his political friends or acquaintances could have been in any doubt that Attlee's life was moulded by what Christianity taught.

These values were not limited to the evangelical tradition of daily prayers and Bible readings that characterised Attlee's early home years. Attlee absorbed the values of duty, loyalty and responsibility and built his own personal and political life upon them.

Herein lies a second paradox. Attlee was reared in late-Victorian, upper-middle-class security. His conversion to socialism was essentially a conservative move, yet he became Britain's most radical Labour prime minister. He saw socialism as the sole means by which the advantages that had been bestowed on him could be made universal.

The paradoxes do not end here. Attlee is Labour's most successful leader but one whose deepest sentiments were tradition and an unbounded love of his country and its place in the world. Yet he spent the first 16 months of his premiership attempting to revise radically our country's defence and foreign policy which, if successful, would have marked a drastic cutback of our budget and defence commitments.

The first great public event that moved and excited him was the public celebration of Queen Victoria's Jubilee. Although he went to Haileybury, he never thought it necessary to deny his old school, or his privileged background. Indeed, the reverse was true and Attlee took an interest in the careers of old Haillbarians in the House.

Interestingly, given what is happen-

ing in today's Parliament, when Attlee retired as Leader of the Opposition in 1955, he was worried that the greatest love in his life, his wife Vi, would be left without adequate financial support. So he picked up his pen in order better to provide for her. He died leaving less than £7,000.

Ironically, Vi died first, but in his wish to look after her Attlee has provided us with an unparalleled series of portraits of his colleagues. I have brought them together, adapting a title of Churchill's book on his great contemporaries for it helps to underline the contrast I draw between these two great political titans who were joined at the hip.

Churchill determinedly created an entire industry to ensure that his rightful claims to greatness were never in

He wanted to avert the damaging public shame of paupers' funerals

question. In stark contrast, Attlee could not have been more uninformative in the record he left of his life. Hence the importance of these 30 portraits that shine a new light on Attlee and the quality of the Government he led. Each is crafted with affection and understanding. I challenge anyone to find a better short essay, for example, than Attlee's portrait of Churchill as that great warrior died, delineating both his faults and glories.

Attlee's essays stress the importance for governments of the Left of the moral character of their political leaders, and Attlee's *Great Contemporaries* fixes character at the centre of the political stage. These studies are not just about individual character or personality. They are, rather about understanding the collective nature of leadership in a free and, in particular, social democratic society.

Attlee found his vocation after abandoning a legal career that never really started. He began serving the poor in the East End and this commitment explains not only why Attlee became



Respect: Attlee raises his hat to his constituents before the 1950 elections

Labour leader in 1935, but is also one of a number of characteristics that allowed him to keep it for 20 years. He was the only middle-class challenger for power who had so openly and sacrificially committed his life to the poor. It was a commitment that moved him until the end.

Could any of us envisage another prime minister acting as Attlee did during the passing of his Government's Bill founding the modern welfare state? Attlee asked the permission of his minister introducing the Bill, if he, as Prime Minister, could present the clause introducing the death grant.

Attlee had seen the public shame of a pauper's funeral ricocheting into the lives of the decent families of the boys that came to his club in the 1920s, and later affecting the lives of his Limehouse constituents. He acted in their defence just as soon as he could.

Attlee was an intensely shy man who wrote, paradoxically, that he was never alone even if he did not have any books. "I recall in World War One, I would spend long nights keeping awake (by) repeating ... a hundred lines from so many poets ... or writers."

He loved books and among his collection of poetry and literature he reserved a sacred space for his books on Gallipoli. When he handled these books the memories of "the lads with whom I trained ... so many of whom lie there in the Peninsula" would come flooding back to him. When it was decided to evacuate the peninsula, Attlee was part of "the final lines" defending those leaving and was the last person but one to leave — the last was his commanding officer.

It is this series of paradoxes that helps to make Attlee so interesting among British prime ministers. He was a man who never forgave Germany, yet to war-worn Britain, longing for a better life, he introduced bread rationing so that the Germans and Indians facing starvation could be better fed.

Is it only a hopeless dream that we may see someone like Attlee lead our country again?

Attlee's Great Contemporaries, edited by Frank Field, MP, is published by Continuum at £16.99 (or £15.29 inc p&p from Times Books First, 08701 608080; timesonline.co.uk/booksfirst)