

COURTESY NATIONAL TRUST/ROBERT MORRIS



Embrace Winston Churchill's Cat Love at the Chartwell Estate

Sir Winston Churchill was prime minister of the United Kingdom twice. Hailed as one of the greatest wartime leaders of the 20th century, he was also an acclaimed artist, historian, winner of the Nobel Prize in literature, and the first person to be made an honorary citizen of the United States. Here's a lesser-known fact about this truly great man, which, in my opinion, unequivocally endorses the accolade that he was "the greatest Briton of all time": Sir Winston loved cats.

In fact, his family requested that a marmalade-colored cat named Jock, with four white socks and a white bib, always reside at Chartwell, his home in Kent, England, now a popular tourist attraction and visited by cat fans from around the world.



COURTESY NATIONAL TRUST/ANDREAS VON EINSIEDEL



COURTESY NATIONAL TRUST/HENRY JARVIS

Jock I was an 88th birthday present given to Sir Winston by Sir John "Jock" Colville, one of his private secretaries. Sir Winston was so attached to the cat that the feline often attended important meetings and even accompanied Sir Winston on road trips to London, cuddling into him in the back seat of the car. And, rumor has it, meals in the Churchill household did not start until Jock was present at the table.

Jock I was only 2 years old

when Sir Winston passed away in 1965. The following year, Chartwell was given to the National Trust, a conservation charity that protects historic places and green areas in the U.K. The original Jock lived until 1974, when he was laid to rest in the pet cemetery on the estate.

The Trust continues to honor the feline request, and the home even has a green cat door for the feline that has the approval of the historic buildings inspector.



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COURTESY NATIONAL TRUST/KATHERINE BARNETT

Jock VI, the current feline resident, lives in the top-floor flat at Chartwell with Katherine Barnett, the house and collections manager. He took office in March 2014, when his predecessor, Jock V, retired from public life and went to live with a former house and collections manager in the Scottish countryside.

"It's a modern day rags-to-riches story," Barnett said of the current Jock, who was adopted from a local animal rescue. "Jock VI has had a difficult start to his life. He was found trying to get into a shed to escape the cold winter weather. But as the saying goes, 'A cat will always land on its feet.' I'm delighted with Jock; he's a very caring, loving cat, and visitors get lots of enjoyment from seeing him."

With free rein within the home (well, a couple of state rooms are off-limits in case he gets over-enthusiastic about the treasured furnishings), he loves mingling with visitors, especially the cat lovers who come specially to visit him.

Some of Jock's favorite places to hang out for tummy rubs are by the ponds on the 80-acre estate. He loves "giving tours" of the garden (aka being followed) and is often found on the croquet lawn chasing butterflies or strolling across the driveway in front of the house.

"He gives visitors a glimpse into the private life behind the public statesman," Barnett said. "The rooms at Chartwell remain much

as they were when Sir Winston was in residence, with pictures, books, and personal mementos evoking the career and wide-ranging interests of a great statesman, writer, painter, and family man.

"Also, Churchill was very fond of all animals, and, along with his request for a marmalade cat to be in residence, we also have many other animals that are a part of his animal-loving legacy, including two black swans on our lake and his golden orfe in the pond."

This year has been a very busy one for Jock VI, as it marks the 50th anniversary of Sir Winston's death. Lots of special exhibitions showcase Sir Winston's "finest hours," and the marmalade tabby is proving to be a fabulous feline ambassador and docent.

Apart from an inherent skill at being able to spot a good suntrap, he's also skilled in media relations, and has turned out to be a real pro when it comes to posing for dozens of photographs on a daily basis. In between, he loves to snooze in the office under the pretext of ensuring that all his social media accounts are kept up-to-date. Check out his Facebook page at /chartwellnt.

For visitors to Chartwell, no tour is complete without stopping



COURTESY NATIONAL TRUST/IAN CARTER

by the gift shop, where there are shortbread biscuits, fudge, and, of course, marmalade with Jock's face on the packaging.

You can also find a range of jewelry, including a necklace, cuff links, and a key ring that are unique to Chartwell, as they feature Jock's face and are made from wood from the estate.

"New for this year is a lovely mug and coaster featuring Jock and Churchill, and to commemorate the 50th anniversary of Churchill's death, Royal Crown Derby have created a limited edition statue of Jock," Barnett said.

With only 750 statues produced, they are the ultimate collector's treasure.

i For more information on Jock VI and Chartwell, visit www.nationaltrust.org.uk/chartwell. Address: Mapleton Road, Westerham, Kent, TN16 1PS



Ziggy (pictured) and Fudge "work" as feline muses for Sandy Robins, an award-winning multimedia pet lifestyle expert and pet industry personality. They have helped "write" three books, including *The Original Cat Bible* (I-5 Press, 2014). When he is not lying on her desk blocking the computer screen, Ziggy likes to play fetch with his wand toys and direct food operations in the kitchen to ensure the kibble is always topped up. Learn more about Sandy at sandyrobinsonline.com.