



Photographic portrait, inscribed



[London: Vivienne, 20th Century Studios Ltd., 1950].

1 original print, signed "Vivienne, London"

A rare photo portrait given by Winston Churchill to his personal secretary at 10 Downing Street, Peter Geoffrey Oates. This man of confidence had been Prime Minister Clement Attlee's personal secretary at the beginning of 1951, before Winston Churchill's election to office in October. Churchill kept him on throughout his years in office and became close to the Churchill couple, as numerous letters attest.

The inscription is dated 1954, one year before he handed over the premiership to his successor, Anthony Eden.

Florence Vivienne Entwistle got her start in photography by helping her husband, Ernest Entwistle, and her son, Antony, to take photographs in 1934.

She set up her own studio in the late 1930s and specialised in portraits of public figures. The relationship with the Churchills went beyond the professional realm, as in October 1949 the Churchills' daughter Sarah married Vivienne's son Antony. The Churchills 'learned of the marriage ... from the newspapers and were very upset ... especially Clementine, who took it very badly'. Nevertheless, on 19 December 1949, the Churchill couple met the Vivienne couple and, 'after a pleasant lunch together, Florence Vivienne painted the portrait of Winston Churchill in her Piccadilly studio' (Gilbert, Vol. VIII, p. 496). Churchill liked the portrait so much that he used it in the following year's general election campaign in February 1950 and it became one of the Prime Minister's most famous portraits. Florence Vivienne was known for demanding that her subjects come into her studio and the dust jacket of her autobiography (*They Came to My Studio*, published in 1956) is illustrated with this photograph. **Vivienne recalls (p. 16) how iconic this image has become, and that it was the only one she took of Winston Churchill at the time.**

As the relationship with the Churchills became a family affair, Florence Vivienne "is perhaps the only photographer to have had the privilege of photographing the whole family" in the private setting, taking one of Clementine a few weeks later. The National Portrait Gallery holds 214 of Vivienne's portraits, including this one, falsely dated 1951, 14 of which are of the Churchill family, most of which were taken at their country home, Chartwell.