



The Mistresses of Cliveden: Three Centuries of Scandal, Power, and Intrigue in an English Stately Home

Natalie Livingstone

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For fans of *Downton Abbey* comes an immersive historical epic about a lavish English manor and a dynasty of rich and powerful women who ruled the estate over three centuries of misbehavior, scandal, intrigue, and passion.

Five miles from Windsor Castle, home of the royal family, sits the Cliveden estate. Overlooking the Thames, the mansion is flanked by two wings and surrounded by lavish gardens. Throughout its storied history, Cliveden has been a setting for misbehavior, intrigue, and passion—from its salacious, deadly beginnings in the seventeenth century to the 1960s Profumo Affair, the sex scandal that toppled the British government. Now, in this immersive chronicle, the manor's current mistress, Natalie Livingstone, opens the doors to this prominent house and lets the walls do the talking.

Built during the reign of Charles II by the Duke of Buckingham, Cliveden attracted notoriety as a luxurious retreat in which the duke could conduct his scandalous affair with the ambitious courtesan Anna Maria, Countess of Shrewsbury. In 1668, Anna Maria's cuckolded husband, the Earl of Shrewsbury, challenged Buckingham to a duel. Buckingham killed Shrewsbury and claimed Anna Maria as his prize, making her the first mistress of Cliveden.

Through the centuries, other enigmatic and indomitable women would assume stewardship over the estate, including Elizabeth, Countess of Orkney and illicit lover of William III, who became one of England's wealthiest women; Augusta of Saxe-Gotha, the queen that Britain was promised and then denied; Harriet, Duchess of Sutherland, confidante of Queen Victoria and a glittering society hostess turned political activist; and the American-born Nancy Astor, the first female member of Parliament, who described herself as an "ardent feminist" and welcomed controversy. Though their privileges were extraordinary, in Livingstone's hands, their struggles and sacrifices are universal.

Cliveden weathered renovation and restoration, world conflicts and cold wars, societal shifts and technological advances. Rich in historical and architectural detail, *The Mistresses of Cliveden* is a tale of sex and power, and of the exceptional women who evaded, exploited, and confronted the expectations of their times.

Praise for *The Mistresses of Cliveden*

"An utterly fascinating and completely beguiling account of three centuries of high living, high politics, and high drama at one of Britain's most famous stately homes. A page-turner from start to finish, it's history with all the good stuff left in."—**Amanda Foreman, author of *A World on Fire***

"A wonderful voyage through the fascinating history of Cliveden—this is a brilliant book full of gripping personalities and beautiful detail."—**Kate Williams, author of *Ambition and Desire***

"Well-researched, well-written and narratively enthralling . . . Romance, sex, scandal and political intrigue

have been central to the history of the house for more than three centuries and Mrs. Livingstone . . . has chronicled it all with scholarship, readability, wit and a fine eye for telling detail.”—*Evening Standard*

“[A] wide-ranging and deliciously enjoyable biography of one of England’s grandest country houses . . . Livingstone interweaves the huge panorama of three centuries of British history. . . . But at the heart of the book, the seductive power of the house itself affects each generation of women.”—*The Telegraph*

“Her scholarship is considerable and yet she wears it lightly, producing a book which is always lively, entertaining and immensely readable.”—*Daily Express*

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