



Lady Almina and the Real Downton Abbey

By Dr. Linda Hancock

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Dr. Hancock has written a regular weekly column entitled “All Psyched Up” for newspapers in two Canadian provinces for more than a dozen years. Over the years, her readers and clients have said that they have benefited from her common-sense solutions, wisdom, and sense of humour. Dr. Linda Hancock, the author of “Life is An Adventure...every step of the way” and “Open for Business Success” is a Registered Psychologist who has a private practice in Medicine Hat. She can be reached at 403-529-6877 or through email office@drlindahancock.com

Published

October 26th, 2014

In 2003 Lady Fiona Carnarvon became the eighth Countess for an estate that includes Highclere Castle. She has been fascinated with the history as well as the ancestors of her husband who have been responsible for Highclere since it was built by the third Earl.

This book tells the story of Lady Almina who was the fifth Countess of Carnarvon. She was the illegitimate daughter of Alfred de Rothschild who loved and cared for her financial needs and wants. As a girl she was blessed with everything she asked for. Her beauty made her an attraction to eligible bachelors and her father's wealth added to the attraction.

When Almina was only nineteen years of age she married George Edward Stanhope Molyneux Herbert who would later, upon the death of his father, become the fifth Earl of Carnarvon.

Almina's father not only provided financial support to the family at the time of the marriage through a large dowry but also gave his daughter money right up until his death. You see, Almina was a spender and her father just wouldn't say no to her when she asked for money.

Almina had only been married for a short while when she moved into Highclere Castle and became responsible for a staff of over eighty. The social life they all facilitated included having parties and house guests on a regular basis. These included members of royalty, politicians from different countries, businessmen and those who were part of "upper class" society.

When World War I broke out, however, everything changed. Family, friends and staff became focussed on the war efforts. Some went to fight while others stayed in England to help support the soldiers. Almina decided that the best way for her to help was to convert Highclere into a hospital that would be available to help injured soldiers. Through this, she discovered her passion for nursing.

Because Almina's husband had been in poor health, physicians recommended that he spend time in a dry climate. For years, he therefore travelled to Egypt where he found his passion in archeology. For years he invested time and money into his search for tombs of the past and was successful shortly before his death in finding the one where King Tutankhamun. This brought much notoriety to the family.

After the death of her husband, Almina had her hands full. She needed to move out of Highclere, settle the estate, and make arrangements regarding the Egyptian artifacts. Besides this, she truly wanted to establish a hospital which she would name in honour of her father.

Almina was a powerful figure who not only made a significant contribution during the war but also helped to ensure that Highclere Castle would survive for generations that would follow here.

Recently Jonathan Fellowes wrote the series "Downton Abbey" which is the alter ego of Highclere Castle. It not only tells the tale of fictional characters who live both upstairs and

downstairs in a historical setting, but also has thrown the present-day Highclere Castle into the minds and hearts of viewers in several countries.