



Lady Catherine 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

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Highclere Castle is a Jacobethan country house that sits on 5,000 acres in Hampshire England. The eighth Earl and Countess of Carnarvon live in the castle on a part-time basis are very much involved in the daily operations of it which involve farming and tourism.

The present Countess, Fiona Carnarvon, is the author of this book which tells the tale of Lady Catherine, a beautiful American woman who captured the heart of Lord Porchester, son of the fifth Earl of Carnarvon. They were married in 1922 and less than a year later, were shocked by the death of the fifth Earl which immediately caused them to be transported into the title and roles as the sixth Earl and Countess.

Catherine was very young at the time. Her inherited title forced her into a situation where she was responsible for a large staff and hostessing for large parties and social events.

Debts incurred by the previous Earl threatened to bring down the entire estate so plans needed to be made to ensure that Highclere Castle could continue.

A number of things happened to Catherine that changed her forever. Her brother died and her husband was distracted by life in London. Then the war broke out and Highclere was needed as a refuge for others in the surrounding area.

All of these events led to problems in the marriage of the Earl and Countess who eventually moved on with separate lives while continuing to have contact and support for their two children.

The author of this book has used documents and photographs from the archives of Highclere Castle to write what is a fascinating historical novel that depicts both the glory and the struggles associated with this beautiful castle as well as the people who lived and worked in it. There are many references to political and royal figures who had relationships with the owners of Highclere Castle and were often invited guests at the Castle.

In this book, Countess Carnarvon has focussed primarily on the times between 1920 and the end of the Second World War. She has provided enough detail that it is easy for the reader to have a clear understanding of both the characters and events that occurred during that time. The 354 pages are not just filled with facts but also cover the emotions that were experienced by the individuals whose lives are documented.

In recent years, Highclere Castle has become known to thousands of individuals around the world since Julian Fellowes has written the award-winning drama entitled "Downton Abbey". He used Highclere Castle not only as an inspiration for his work but also as a filming site for the popular television production.

As a result, Highclere Castle is not only financed through its farming operation but also attracts thousands of Downton Abbey fans who travel to the estate during the few weeks that it is open to the public each year. Ticket sales, souvenirs sold at the gift shop as well as high tea services also contribute to the estate income.

I was fortunate to be one of the visitors to this beautiful castle in September and purchased my autographed copy of this book when I was there.

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