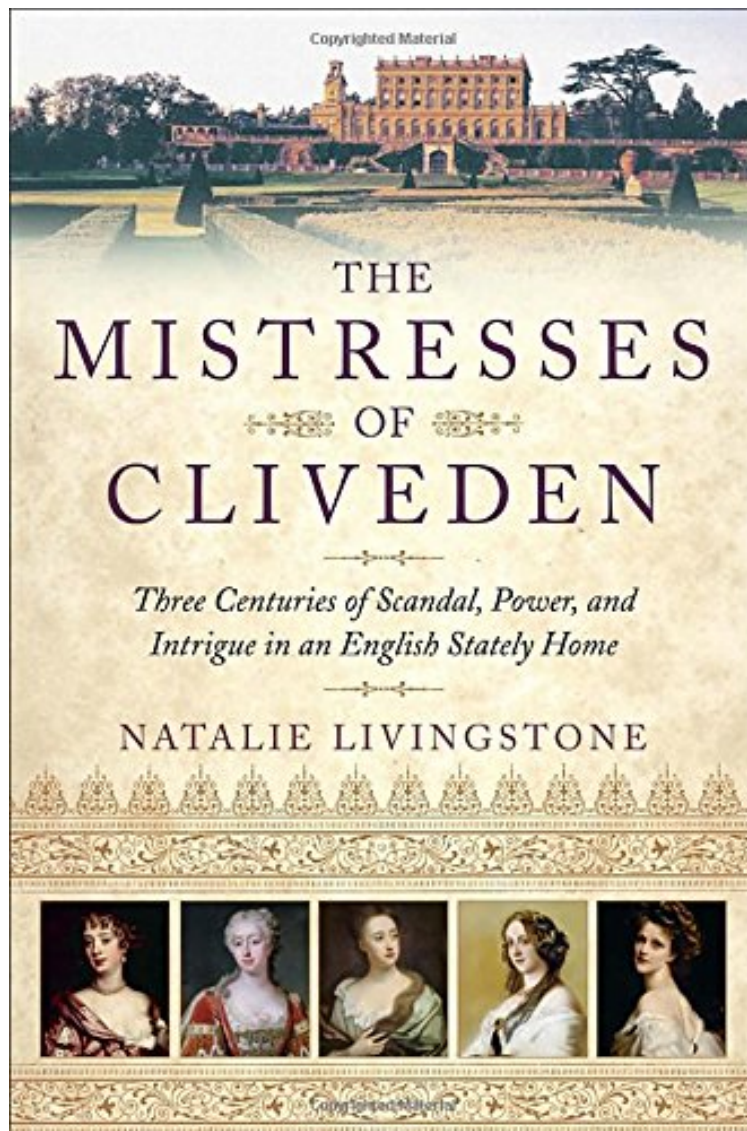


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The Mistresses of Cliveden: Three Centuries of Scandal, Power, and Intrigue in an English Stately Home

Natalie Livingstone

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Natalie Livingstone : The Mistresses of Cliveden: Three Centuries of Scandal, Power, and Intrigue in an English Stately Home before purchasing it in order to gauge whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised

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

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*: Theatrical festivities, political jockeying and court intrigues are deftly described with a verve and attention to domestic comforts that show the author at her best. . . . [Livingstone's] portraits of strenuous and assertive women who resisted subjection, sometimes deploying their sexual allure to succeed, on other occasions drawing on their husbands' wealth, are astute, spirited, and empathetic. *The Wall Street Journal* Missing *Downton Abbey* already? This tome promises three centuries of scandal, power, and intrigue and Natalie Livingstone definitely delivers. *Good Housekeeping* Lively . . . The current chatelaine the author herself deserves no small credit for keeping the house's legend alive. . . . Any of her action-filled chapters would merit a mini-series. *The New York Times Book Review* Though the personal tales and tidbits are fascinating, and the sensational details of these women's lives will intrigue *Downton Abbey* devotees, the real star of the story is Cliveden. *Booklist* Lovers of modern English history and the scandals that infiltrated upper-crust society will find much to enjoy in this work. *Library Journal*