



CLIVEDEN

A classical-style portrait of a woman with voluminous, wavy brown hair, wearing a white, off-the-shoulder dress with ruffles. She is looking over her shoulder towards the viewer. The background is dark and indistinct.

*The* HISTORY of CLIVEDEN

## THE HISTORY OF CLIVEDEN

Cliveden House was initially built in 1666 by the 2nd Duke of Buckingham. A notorious rake, schemer and wit, he created the House as a hunting lodge where he could entertain his friends and mistress. Since then it has twice been destroyed by fire, only to emerge, phoenix-like, more stunning than before. The House has played host to virtually every British Monarch since George I and has been home to three Dukes, an Earl and Frederick Prince of Wales.

Queen Victoria, a frequent guest, was not amused in 1893 when the House was bought by William Waldorf Astor, America's richest citizen. When he gave it to his son and daughter-in-law in 1906, Cliveden became the hub of a hectic social whirl where guests included everyone from Charlie Chaplin to Winston Churchill, and President Roosevelt to George Bernard Shaw.

Harold Macmillan, another frequent guest, when told that the House was eventually to become a hotel, remarked "My dear boy, it always has been." The tradition of impeccable hospitality and extravagant entertainment continues to make any stay at Cliveden the experience of a lifetime.

Stephen Ward and Christine Keeler were staying in Spring Cottage when they triggered the infamous Profumo scandal. So, even the cottage is not without its share of colourful Cliveden history.





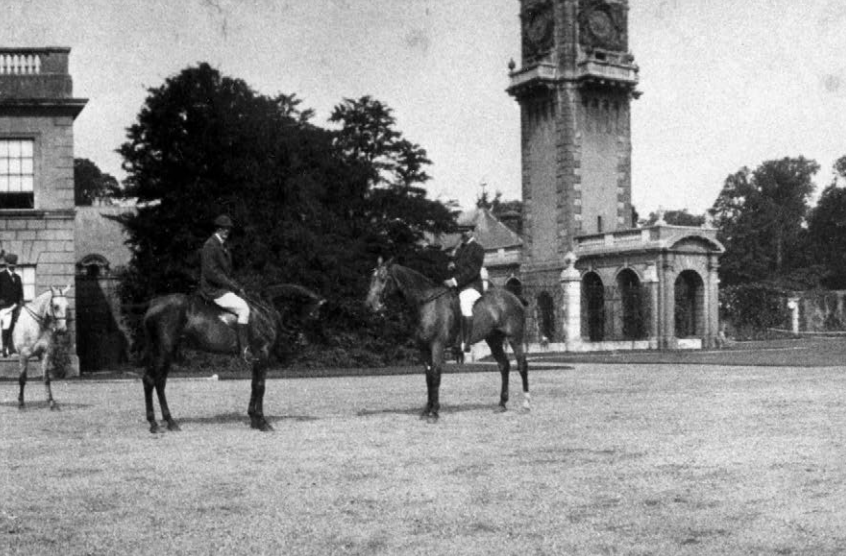
## CLIVEDEN, 1666-1696 - THE 2ND DUKE OF BUCKINGHAM

Cliveden owes its beautiful setting high above the River Thames to the foresight of its founder, George Villiers, 2nd Duke of Buckingham. Villiers' appreciation of the location's natural potential was ahead of its time and predates the landscaping ideas of Capability Brown by more than a century.

The Second Duke built Cliveden to be a hunting lodge and a place where he could entertain his friends, including favourite female company. This is when Cliveden had its earliest brush with notoriety, as – unfortunately for the Duchess of Buckingham – it was where the Duke brought his mistress, the Countess of Shrewsbury, to conduct their affair.

It was said of Buckingham that “a young lady could not resist his charms... all his trouble in wooing was, he came, saw and conquered”. In light of his passionate nature, it is not a surprise to learn that the Duke ended up challenging his mistress' husband to a duel for her honour, which was fought on 21st January 1668. Lady Shrewsbury is reputed to have shown no emotion as her husband received what proved to be a fatal wound.

Buckingham's relationship with the Countess continued, but he never fully recovered from the fall from social grace that it provoked. He eventually left Cliveden for a quieter life away from the royal court, following the death of King Charles II in 1685. He himself died aged 59 in 1687, allegedly having caught a cold while pursuing his second great love after women, fox-hunting. So ended the first famous (and infamous) chapter in Cliveden's history.



## CLIVEDEN, 1696-1737 - THE FIRST EARL OF ORKNEY

Cliveden's second owner, George Hamilton, 1st Earl of Orkney, could not have been more different from its first. Made an Earl by Queen Anne in the same year that he bought Cliveden, Hamilton was a favorite courtier and famed soldier, having fought in several great battles of the time against the French.

Jonathan Swift described Orkney as "an honest, good-natured gentleman", who went on to achieve high political office, including that of Governor of Virginia from 1710 to 1737 (although he never visited America). For himself, Orkney desired a grand and grandiloquent country house at Cliveden to reflect his eminent social position.

He and Lady Orkney developed ambitious plans to remodel the House, most of which came to fruition. These included adding East and West Wings, and building the Blenheim Pavilion (1727) and Octagon Temple (1735). Much time and effort were also spent on the gardens, and the plan as it exists today is mainly as a result of his vision. The gardeners to Queen Anne, George I and George II were all involved in the work.

The earliest recorded royal visits to Cliveden took place during Orkney's ownership, namely by George I in 1724 and Queen Caroline in 1729. Sadly neither Lord or Lady Orkney were to live much longer, the Earl passing away in 1737. Reports record that he was buried 'without funeral ostentation whatsoever' at nearby Taplow Court.

## CLIVEDEN, 1737-1751 - FREDERICK, PRINCE OF WALES

Frederick, Prince of Wales, was the eldest son of George II and the father of George III. Heir to the throne, Frederick died before he had the opportunity to become King, but the years of his residence at Cliveden firmly established it as a centre of royal life second only to Hampton Court.

Frederick never owned Cliveden, but leased it from Anne, 2nd Countess of Orkney, in 1737, at a rent of £600 a year. It was a convenient arrangement for the Prince, not least because of the growing animosity between himself and his estranged father.

Although at pains to disagree on almost everything, one taste shared between King and son was the music of Handel. Cliveden became the setting for many great musical fêtes and masques featuring the work of Handel, Thomas Arne and others. Most famously, Cliveden is the place where 'Rule Britannia' was first performed in 1740. Handel subsequently borrowed it as the opening strain of his Occasional Oratorio in 1746.

Towards the end of his life, the Prince's thoughts turned towards taking the throne and he was determined to become the 'Patriot King', ruling by common consent. Frederick had even prepared his first speech to Parliament as monarch. Sadly, just as his father George II was terminally ill, Frederick himself died in March 1751. The succession passed to his eldest son, George III, who had been brought up, alongside Frederick's seven other children, at Cliveden.



## CLIVEDEN, 1751-1824 - THREE COUNTESES OF ORKNEY

Cliveden entered a period of relative decline following the death of Frederick, Prince of Wales, though its royal connections remained intact through the 4th Earl of Inchiquin, descended from the Kings of Ireland and husband to the 2nd Countess of Orkney.

The earldom of Orkney was subsequently passed on through the female line for three successive generations – thought to be the only such instance in British history. It was in Mary, 4th Countess of Orkney's tenure that Cliveden burned down for the first time, in July 1795. Only the two wings of the House survived, in which the Countess continued to live for more than 20 years after the fire.

The death of Mary's son, the first Viscount Kirkwall, in 1820 provoked an auction of the entire Cliveden estate, which was purchased by Sir George Warrender in 1824. Thus ending a somewhat ill-fated and undistinguished period in Cliveden's history.

## CLIVEDEN, 1824-1868 - SECOND FIRE AND REBIRTH

Sir George Warrender, bon viveur and property heir, commissioned the rebuilding of Cliveden following the first disastrous fire in 1795. With Sir George as host, Cliveden soon regained the splendour of its earlier days and he also established the tone of relaxed hospitality for which it is known today. Sir George is quoted as saying, "My rule is to say to my friends, 'We breakfast at 10 and dine at 7, and all the rest of the time you do as you please'".

Following his death in 1849, Cliveden was inherited by Sir George's brother John, who in the same year sold it to the Duke of Sutherland for £30,000. Bad luck was to strike very quickly, however, and Cliveden suffered its second catastrophic fire in November 1849.

The architect Charles Barry, responsible for designing Big Ben and the Houses of Parliament, was chosen to draw up and rebuild Cliveden for the third time. The resulting Italianate villa – the majestic building we see today – is considered to be one of Barry's masterpieces. He clearly took inspiration from much earlier designs for the House, together with Somerset House in London, built by John Webb in 1662.

Barry's successor on the Cliveden project was Henry Clutton, responsible for the striking 100-foot tall Water Tower which stands to the west of the House (completed in 1861). The gardens also underwent a transformation at the hands of John Fleming, one of the leading garden designers of the day. The Parterre remains laid out in the same style that Fleming introduced in 1855. In the 1860's he planted massed spring flowers in the adjoining woods, including swathes of bluebells for which Cliveden remains noted today.

It was also during this time that Cliveden began a long association with progressive, Liberal politics, as embodied by the Duchess of Sutherland's close association with Prime Minister William Gladstone.

What is more, Queen Victoria visited Cliveden eight times during her reign, on one occasion with an entourage of no less than 90 people. The widowed Queen always brought two portraits of her beloved Prince Albert with her, one placed at the foot of her bed on an easel and the other, much smaller one by her pillow.



*The Great Hall in Lord Astor's time*

## CLIVEDEN, 1868-1966 - THE DUKE, THE ASTORS AND CLIVEDEN'S 'GOLDEN AGE'

On the Duchess of Sutherland's death in 1868, Cliveden was sold to Hugh Grosvenor, 1st Duke of Westminster, who fell in love with the place after spending his honeymoon there. The Duke went on to spend 25 happy years at Cliveden with his first wife Constance, followed by his second wife, Katherine. It ended when he reluctantly sold the House in 1893, using part of the proceeds to maintain his ever-increasing expenditure on charities.

Queen Victoria was famously 'not amused' at the Duke's decision to sell up, and wrote to him in April 1893 saying curtly "The Duke must excuse the Queen if she says she thinks he has built too much at Eaton [the Westminsters' main residence] and that if that had not been so, Cliveden might have been retained".

However, little did Victoria guess that the chapter was about to open on what is commonly thought to be Cliveden's golden age. 1893 was when the House became the home of one William Waldorf Astor, a fabulously wealthy American entrepreneur. The asking price he paid for Cliveden – a breathtaking US\$1.25 million.

William's legacy at Cliveden is more architectural than social – he himself was an awkward and austere figure, ill at ease in company of any sort. Instead, he let loose his artistic taste all over the House and grounds. Most famously of all, importing every last facet of a Louis XV wood-panelled room from the Château d'Asnières near Paris in 1897, for what has become known as the French Dining Room. Cliveden also became the setting for his extensive collections of sculpture, tapestries and furniture.

But it was in 1905 when Cliveden's overwhelming physical splendour was matched by social sparkle in the shape of the beautiful and captivating American, Nancy Langhorne. William made Cliveden a gift to his son, Waldorf Astor, upon his marriage to Nancy in 1906. To Nancy, he gave a magnificent tiara containing the famous 55-carat Sancy diamond (now kept in the Louvre).

## NANCY, LADY ASTOR

As soon as Nancy moved in to the House, she was a figure of great interest. Among her earliest guests were the Prince of Wales (the future George V) and Princess Marie of Romania. But it was after the First World War that Cliveden really came into its own as centre of social and political influence, when Nancy decided to enter Parliament. She made history in 1919 when she became the first ever woman to take her seat in Westminster as an MP.

From then on, Cliveden was a social whirl of important entertaining, mixed with life as a family home for Nancy's five children. When Waldorf and Nancy travelled abroad, they were treated like royalty, particularly in the United States, where they were regarded as unofficial ambassadors from Britain.

The Cliveden Visitors Book is a 'Who's Who' of the period. Writer and playwright George Bernard Shaw made the first of many visits in 1926. Winston Churchill became an occasional guest, as did Charlie Chaplin, aviator Amy Johnson, King George, Queen Mary and the young Joyce Grenfell, Nancy's niece, who spent several idyllic Christmases at the House.

Perhaps the earliest sign of what was eventually to become of Cliveden came in 1942, when Waldorf's concerns over the cost of the House's upkeep prompted him to give the entire estate to the National Trust. The arrangement provided for the Astor family to continue living at Cliveden for as long as they wished to remain.



Like for many country homeowners, the post-war years for the Astors were tough, not helped by a distancing of relations between Nancy and Waldorf. Waldorf himself died in August 1952, while Nancy outlived him by another 12 years. The death of her eldest son, Bill, the third Viscount Astor, two years after hers, spelt the end for the 73-year long reign of the Astors at Cliveden.

## CLIVEDEN AND THE PROFUMO AFFAIR

Any history of Cliveden would not be complete without reference to the Profumo affair, which mired the House in scandal during the 1960's in the same way it had been 300 years earlier. The seeds that triggered a series of unhappy events were sown in July 1961, when Bill Astor invited a group of guests to stay that included John Profumo, British Secretary of State for War. Other guests were Lord Mountbatten of Burma and the president of Pakistan.

Elsewhere on the estate, Stephen Ward, a society osteopath and friend of Bill's, was staying at Spring Cottage with his guests, including nineteen year old Christine Keeler and Captain Yevgeny Ivanov, an assistant Soviet naval attaché who was also a spy.

Reputedly one of the hottest weekends of that summer, Ward and his party were noisily enjoying the Astors' outdoor swimming pool, which still exists today. Drawn by the commotion, Bill and his dining companions strolled out of the House to the pool, where (the married) Profumo and Keeler met for the first time.

It was a fateful encounter, sparking an extra-marital affair between the two which went on for some months afterwards. Moral questions were joined by those of national security when it became clear, after Keeler had sold her story to the papers, that she had also been sleeping with Ivanov at the same time as seeing Profumo.



The press had a field day, prompting Profumo to make his biggest political mistake in March 1963, when he gave a false statement to the House of Commons denying any impropriety in his relationship with Ms. Keeler. A scapegoat was made of Stephen Ward, who was tried on trumped-up charges relating to immoral earnings and who tragically killed himself during the court case.

Profumo's career lay in tatters and the whole sorry episode is thought to have factored heavily in the defeat of the then-Conservative government in 1964, supposedly exhausted by scandal.



**1965** *The Beatles film part of 'Help' the movie at Cliveden*

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