

Media & Event Advisory

Feb. 18, 2016

Lady Fiona Carnarvon, owner of Highclere Castle – the real-life *Downton Abbey* – to attend series finale broadcast at Oak Bay Beach Hotel on Sunday, March 6, 2016

What: KCTS 9 (PBS) has confirmed that Lady Fiona Carnarvon, owner of Highclere Castle, will attend the series finale of *Downton Abbey* at the Oak Bay Beach Hotel on Sunday, March 6, 2016.

When: Sunday, March 6, 2016 from 6 to 10:30 p.m.

Where: David Foster Foundation Theatre, Oak Bay Beach Hotel, 1175 Beach Drive.

Price: \$149, with a portion of the proceeds benefitting KCTS 9 (PBS) and the David Foster Foundation.

Note: Seating is limited to 120 guests.

Additional information:

- The evening begins at 6 p.m. and includes a cocktail reception with welcoming glass of sparkling wine and roaming dinner throughout the main floor by Executive Chef Kreg Graham, and a simulcast of the KCTS 9 (PBS) series finale of *Downton Abbey* at 9 p.m.
- Guests are encouraged to dress in 1920s era outfits to match the theme, décor, and staff uniforms.
- A professional photographer will be taking complimentary guest photos in front of a *Downton Abbey* backdrop

To book, visit <http://shop.oakbaybeachhotel.com> or call 1-800-668-7758.

About The Countess of Carnarvon

As the eighth and current Countess of Carnarvon reigning, the real-life setting for Masterpiece's *Downton Abbey*, Lady Fiona Carnarvon was inspired to share the true story of Highclere Castle's conversion to a hospital during WWI. From diaries, letters and photos straight out of the Edwardian era, she produced *Lady Almina and the Real Downton Abbey*.

Fiona, the 8th Countess of Carnarvon lives at Highclere Castle, the "Real Downton Abbey." Over the course of the last five years it has become one of the most iconic houses in the world and Lady Carnarvon and her husband, the Earl of Carnarvon, have sought to share the stories and heritage.

Born Fiona Aitken, she attended one of the most prestigious girls' schools in London before studying Germans and English at St Andrew's University, which reinforced her love for her Scottish ancestry. Lady Carnarvon qualified as a Chartered Accountant with Coopers and Lybrand (PWC) and gained some insight into a range of business through audit work.

Having run a fashion label she then gave that up to concentrate on the support of her husband's family home, Highclere Castle, following the death of his father in 2001. From 2003 they have taken on the stewardship of Highclere and its estate. The main question Lady Carnarvon has sought to explore is how to make this extraordinary Stately Home sustainable and relevant in today's world.

At the centre of her ethos is to follow her heart, to engage with people and hope they might love Highclere whether locally, nationally or even internationally. Lady Carnarvon has looked for stories: fortunately for Highclere, the 5th Earl of Carnarvon and Howard Carter discovered the

tomb of Tutankhamun and that was the first story and exhibition the current Carnarvon's created in the cellars of the Castle.

Lady Carnarvon began her career as an author by writing the guidebook to Highclere and a guide to the Egyptian exhibition and story transporting visitors in the cellars back to Egypt. The guidebook for example has sold over 100,000 copies. Lady Carnarvon has written two historical books, *Lady Almina* and *Lady Catherine*; the first looks at the First World War when Highclere really was a hospital. The TC series represented *Downton Abbey* as a convalescent home and Lady Carnarvon takes the reader to Egypt where the story ends with treasure and tragedy. The second Book *Lady Catherine* looks at the twenties and thirties and the Second World War through the real characters upstairs and downstairs. There are fascinating comparisons with what is seen on TV through the skilful scripts of Julian Fellow, a friend of the Carnarvons, who has often stayed at Highclere with them.

Highclere seems large in life with nearly 300 rooms, gardens, parkland, a farm, and estate. Lady Carnarvon has usually six or seven property or heritage projects underway as well as helping steer the day-to-day operations of the Castle business. Currently researching further books, she has realised that Highclere has been in business for 1,300 years, but is delighted to be small part of a long story.

Spare time is taken up with her horses, her dogs, gardening as well as her family including her beloved five sisters.

About the Oak Bay Beach Hotel

Reopened in the fall of 2012, the new Oak Bay Beach Hotel has been completely rebuilt on the same spectacular oceanfront lot where the previous hotel sat for more than 80 years. Oak Bay is a residential community with its own village centre, just six kilometres outside of British Columbia's capital city, Victoria. Today, the Oak Bay Beach Hotel offers 100 hotel rooms and 20 luxury residences. Built to five-

star standards, hotel amenities include seaside hot mineral pools, a fitness studio, Boathouse Spa & Baths, The Snug pub, the David Foster Foundation Theatre, Kate's Café and a fine-dining restaurant with a 1,600 bottle tasting room. www.oakbaybeachhotel.com.

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Note to editors: Handout photos of Lady Carnarvon are available.

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