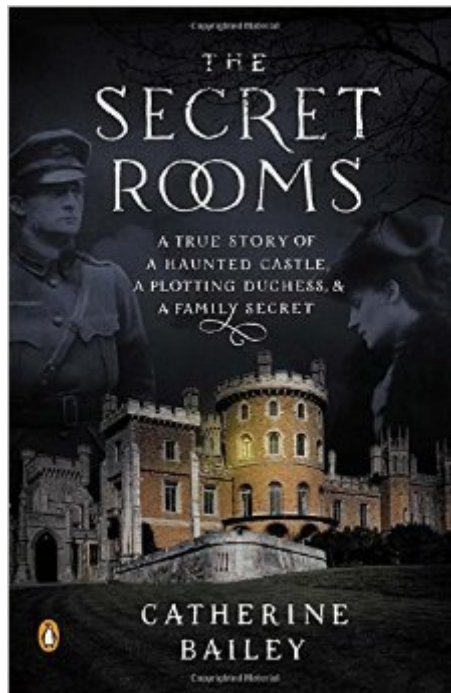


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The Secret Rooms: A True Story Of A Haunted Castle, A Plotting Duchess, And A Family Secret



Synopsis

For fans of *Downton Abbey*, this New York Times bestseller is the enthralling true story of family secrets and aristocratic intrigue in the days before WWI. After the Ninth Duke of Rutland, one of the wealthiest men in Britain, died alone in a cramped room in the servants' quarters of Belvoir Castle on April 21, 1940, his son and heir ordered the room, which contained the Rutland family archives, sealed. Sixty years later, Catherine Bailey became the first historian given access. What she discovered was a mystery: The Duke had painstakingly erased three periods of his life from all family records—but why? As Bailey uncovers the answers, she also provides an intimate portrait of the very top of British society in the turbulent days leading up to World War I.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

Having really enjoyed the authors previous book *Black Diamonds: The Rise and Fall of an English Dynasty*, I was looking forward to reading her new work. *The Secret Rooms* is the story of how Catherine Bailey set out to do some research for a book which ended up taking a completely different direction. When the author came to Belvoir, family home of the Duke of Rutland, she was intending to write a book about the 1,700 men of the estate who left to fight in WWI. However, when she attempted to look at the correspondence catalogued by the Duke, she found that there were three gaps: one in 1894, just before his ninth birthday, the second in 1909 when he was working in Rome and the third in 1915. When she looked at his war diary, the first pages were crammed full of war progress and movements, but after July 1915, it was a blank. What follows is the author first attempting to find what happened to the missing letters and then her search for what happened

during those blank periods becomes the story she wants to write. John Henry Montagu, the 9th Duke of Rutland, was a second son. His elder brother died shortly before the first gap in his edited correspondence. He had three sisters, one of whom was Diana, later the socialite and wife of Duff Cooper. Bailey takes us methodically through her search for the truth. She asks why the Duke died in 1940, locked away in a set of rooms to which only a handful of people were admitted, at his family home Belvoir Castle? What made him spurn a more comfortable sickroom for the spartan one he chose, in order to remain there completing his work, even when he was seriously ill? What, in other words, did he have to hide? This is a work of great research and the author involves you completely in John's life and that of his family.

Ninety-nine years have passed since the beginning of WW1, or as it was called at the time, "The Great War". Nearly a century ago, war was sparked by the assassination in Sarajevo in June, 1914, of Austrian Archduke Franz Ferdinand and his wife. Because of the tangled web of alliances, most of the nations in Europe went to war. In Great Britain and the imperial territories, hundreds of thousands of young men gaily joined up to fight for their king and country in a war that was supposed to last only a few months. Four long, dreadful years later, with the fields of France and Belgium turned into trench-laced killing fields, the war was over. An entire generation of young men and the cities and villages they had come from were starkly reminded of the toll the war had taken. British historian Catherine Bailey has written one of the finest books on WW1 that I've read. Her new book, "The Secret Rooms" is a rather melodramatically-titled book about the Manners family - the Dukes of Rutland - and their castle "Belvoir" (pronounced "Beaver"). Bailey had intended to write a book about the Belvoir estate and the affect the war had on its thousands of tenants. However, once she got to work, perusing the war records at the castle, she stumbled upon a more interesting, more personal story. And that's the story she tells in "The Secret Rooms". John Manners, the 9th Duke of Rutland, died in 1940 in a back part of his huge castle. He had sequestered himself in these rooms for a few months before his death at the age of 54, working frantically on his family's legacy. The British government had sent a huge number of boxes of archives to be protected from the German bombing of London, but it was not these records the Duke was interested in.

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