



Althorp: The Story of an English House

Charles Spencer

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The great house and grounds of Althorp in Northamptonshire have been home to the Spencer family for nearly 500 years. They first leased farm land in the area of grazing in 1486, and in 1508 Sir John Spencer acquired the 300-acre estate on which he built the first house. Since then, Spencers have lived and died at Althorp for twenty generations, and the Park has now taken on an added significance as the burial place of the most loved princess of the twentieth century.

Charles Spencer, who became the ninth Earl in 1992, has a deep love and knowledge of the house, reflected in the fact that he acted as a guide there when he was just twelve years old and in the tremendous redecorative work he has undertaken in recent years to restore it to its former glories. In 1998 there was further major work with the adapting of the quite beautiful Stable Block--once home to 100 horses and forty grooms--into a center for visitors incorporating an exhibition celebrating the life of Diana.

Earl Spencer has written a fascinating account of the house that combines the details of art and architecture (Althorp has one of the greatest private art collections in the country, including paintings by Van Dyck, Rubens, Reynolds, Stubbs and Gainsborough) with a personal appreciation of all its qualities. He also provides a first-hand description of the many changes that have occurred in recent years. With splendid photography, some of it from Althorp's archives and some of it specially commissioned, this new book offers the perfect guide to one of England's greatest houses.

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