



# ENGLAND'S MISTRESS

One woman's astonishing rise  
from poverty to wealth, fame  
and an infamous ménage a trois

**Based on the book by  
Kate Williams**

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## ENGLAND'S MISTRESS

**The extraordinary story of the life of Emma Hamilton; “It” girl, courtesan, dancer, celebrity, artists’ model, double agent, Ambassador’s wife and hero’s mistress.**

In her astonishing rise to fame and fortune she became an icon for her age. Having frequented the underworlds of prostitutes, quacks, madams, rakes and roués, she became the mistress of one leading aristocrat, the wife of another, and the Lady Ambassador to Naples.

But no role was more important for Emma than the part she played in Naples on 19<sup>th</sup> July 1798. She joined the welcome party for Admiral Horatio Nelson, victor of the Nile as his fleet anchored off the Bay of Naples. And there began the passionate affair that would become the most infamous ménage a trois in history.

**Producers:** Malcolm Craddock,  
Julia Stannard

**Writer:** Sarah Williams



**Emma Hamilton**



**Nelson**



**Sir William Hamilton**

Emma Hamilton's is a tale of glamour and heartbreak, rags to riches - an adventure from the lowest of the low to the company of Kings and Queens. She was the first celebrity – famous for being famous. She was the birth of celebrity culture.



We show her story as she lived through great sweeps of war and drama – events that together would change Europe forever.

Emma rose through society to the highest circles. She became a confidante of Marie Antoinette, the bosom friend of the Queen of Naples, the close friend of the Prince Regent (George IV) and his brother (future William IV) and of course she became the most famous woman in Europe as the mistress and so called 'wife' of Lord Nelson.

Emma gained every glittering prize she could desire - and then she threw it all away at the gambling table after Nelson's death. She died in 1815 in penury in Calais, with only her terrified teenage daughter by her side.

If her story were fiction, it would seem ludicrous. But it really happened - and this drama is based on new research into her early life as a maid, an exotic dancer, a courtesan. These made her the woman she was - seductive, vulnerable, powerful, determined and flawed. She was the toast of London's underworld, the glamour-bomb of Europe, her fashions copied, whole books made of her dances. And then she lost it all...

The last big treatment was 'That Hamilton Woman' (1945) with Vivien Leigh and Laurence Olivier. It was an expensive film, but it was really wartime propaganda, with the story pulled around to correspond to Churchillian messages of 'we must not give in to dictators'. It was a story about Nelson. This is a story about Nelson – and Emma, the woman who conquered prejudice and poverty to get to his side. This is a very modern story – about the beauty of fame and the sacrifices it demands.