

Daisy Greville, Countess of Warwick b. 10 December, 1861, d. 26 July, 1938.

Mistress to Albert Edward, Prince of Wales, later King Edward VII

The strikingly attractive Daisy Greville was born Francis Evelyn Maynard and inspired the popular music hall (English “Vaudeville”) song “Daisy, Daisy (give me your answer do)”. Her family traces its lineage back through King Charles II on her mother’s side as a result of the infamous Royal affair with courtesan Nell Gwynn. Having been passed over as a wedding candidate for Prince Leopold, son of Queen Victoria, Daisy married Francis Greville, Lord Brooke, the eldest son of the Duke of Warwick.

The list of affairs ascribed to Daisy (also known as “Babbling Brooke” Greville for her inability to be discrete in her personal life) began in 1886, with her and her husband’s “membership” of the so-called “Marlborough Set” – the intimate confidantes of the Prince of Wales whose official residence was Marlborough House. Her paramours included Lord Charles Beresford (which resulted in a near-scandal that was only kept subdued by the intervention of the Prime Minister of the day, Lord Salisbury); Joseph Laycock, a former Army Officer and millionaire; and the Prince of Wales himself.

Struggling financially following the death of Edward VII in 1910, Daisy tried to blackmail the new King, George V, threatening to make public love letters written by his father – a move which was stopped under a legal ploy that claimed their copyright belonged to the Crown.

In later life, she became involved in politics, joining the British Labour Party and supporting the tenets of socialism.

Perhaps the last word on Daisy is best summed up by no less an individual than the notorious lothario, cad and bounder, Sir Harry Flashman, V.C. . George MacDonald Fraser, in his editing of the Flashman Papers, reproduces Flashman’s view that “Daisy, who was known as Babbling Brooke, was a sort of mad socialist — even today, when she’s Countess of Warwick, no less, she still raves in a ladylike way about the workers, enough said. At the time of Tranby she was a stunning looker, rich as Croesus, randy as a rabbit, and Prince Bertie’s mount of the moment — indeed, I ain’t sure she wasn’t the love of his life .”

Flashman and the Tiger, p.223, Harper Collins, paperback edition 2000.