

Alice Frederica Keppel, nee Edmonstone; b. 29 April, 1868; d. 11 September, 1947.

Society hostess, mistress of King Edward VII, Great-Grandmother of Camilla, Duchess of Cornwall (wife of Charles, Prince of Wales).

Alice Keppel was the daughter of Sir William Edmonstone, a Scottish nobleman and 4th Baronet; and a remarkable woman whose position at court is often overlooked. She married the Honorable George Keppel in 1891 and an interesting and surprisingly open relationship ensued. With Alice established as a society hostess in considerable demand, the Keppel family's lack of relative wealth resulted in her having affairs with the well-heeled of the day in order to maintain the lifestyle to which she had become accustomed. George seems to have been unconcerned by the state of his wife's affairs (pun intended) and the two carried on with their various relationships while remaining surprisingly attached to each other.

Alice's fame as a hostess was legendary. Beautiful, witty, intelligent, kind and charming, not surprisingly she was to attract the attention of Albert Edward, Prince of Wales. The two met in 1898 and Bertie apparently instantly made her what courtiers of the day referred to as his "La Favorita". She was to remain so until his death in 1910.

It is said that Keppel was one of the few acquaintances of the King who would actually have a calming effect on his otherwise vulgar temper and be able to make him see reason. And it appears that even the long suffering Princess Alexandra liked her and put up with the goings on. Certainly, Keppel was more discrete than the overly vocal Daisy Greville.

Alice and George benefitted considerably from the relationship, both financially and in status terms – as did other members of her immediate family. And after Edward became King, she was often sought out by politicians who knew that he would be more inclined to listen to reason from her than any member of the government. Despite this, she used considerable discretion and tact in her intermediary efforts and never seemed to have "played" politics with the trust which Bertie placed in her.

Following the King's death, Alice and George reunited and spent two years touring the Far East. Unable to be comfortable in a rapidly changing Britain under the new conservative monarch, George V, they ultimately moved to Florence, Italy where Alice died in September 1947, two months after the birth of her Great Grand-daughter, Camilla, Duchess of Cornwall – mistress and now wife of Charles, Prince of Wales.