



The Hundred Parishes

Introduction to a famous local person . . .

FRANCES EVELYN MAYNARD, COUNTESS OF WARWICK (1861 - 1938)

Frances Maynard – the “It girl”, Lady Brooke, my darling Daisy, Countess of Warwick and the Socialist Countess are names that sum up her life.

Daisy, as she was called in early childhood, unexpectedly inherited Easton Lodge from her grandfather at the age of three. In the early 1880s her beauty was widely admired in London’s high society circles, but there lurked a streak of unconventionality. She was brought up at Easton Lodge in the parish of Little Easton, enjoying the freedom of riding excitable race horses. In 1878 she was taken to the theatre by the Prime Minister, Benjamin Disraeli, to vet her suitability for marriage to Queen Victoria’s youngest son, Leopold. Daisy refused, then promptly accepted an offer from Lord Brooke, later to become the sixth Earl of Warwick. In 1881, they were married in Westminster Abbey. Easton Lodge became their home in 1882 at a time of acute agricultural depression. She was instantly generous to families suffering in these hard times but wasn’t closely involved.

Swiftly becoming bored with the monotony of country life, dominated by Brooke’s passion for shooting, she sought the company of interesting and influential men. Her ten-year affair with the Prince of Wales, later to become King Edward VII, began in 1889. His passionate love for her was evident in his letters, calling her “my darling Daisy – wife”. Although he was twenty years older, she wrote “I grew to like him very much”.



Her love of entertaining nobility at elegant tea parties and ever more extravagant balls was heavily criticised by the Socialist editor of *The Clarion* newspaper, Robert Blatchford. Incensed at his attack on a lavish ball at Warwick Castle, she rushed up to London to confront Blatchford. His rational and persuasive views on Socialism had a profound effect upon Daisy. She became part of the unfashionable world of trade unionists and socialists, her friends now were Bernard Shaw and H.G.Wells.

In 1935, three years before her death, Daisy held a huge party and pageant for five thousand workers, shop-keepers, teachers and trade unionists in the grounds of Easton Lodge. For all her ardent egalitarianism she was never accepted as a true socialist. The bust shown here is in Little Easton church.

Further Reading:

Life’s Ebb and Flow, by Frances, Countess of Warwick.

The Countess of Warwick, by Margaret Blunden.

Daisy, The Life and Loves of the Countess of Warwick, by Sushila Anand.

A 1926 film includes brief footage of the Countess (right at the end):

<https://www.britishpathe.com/video/to-be-labours-university-aka-to-be-labours-univers/query/easton+lodge>