

Historians' meeting 28 June 2024

Mary Bodfish: 'The King's Loose Box'

Mary Bodfish entertained the Members with a lively insight into the life and loves of Edward VII. Born on 9<sup>th</sup> November 1841, he was the second of nine children by Albert and Victoria, who were so enraptured with each other that, in some ways, their children were deprived of parental affection. Edward apparently reacted to this by being disobedient and rude. As he matured, he embraced a life of pleasure, smoking 20 cigars a day, eating 12 course dinners, gambling, drinking, theatre-going and visiting brothels. As if these pursuits were not enough, he also had four long-term mistresses: Lily Langtry (dubbed the Jersey Lily), Lady Randolph Churchill (Jenny), Daisy Brooke (Countess of Warwick) and Alice Keppel.

His lifestyle remained unaltered even after his arranged marriage to a German princess, Alexandra, as she was powerless to stop him, even though she bore him six children. She was slightly deaf, gentle and kind and was loved and respected by both the public and the Royal family. At his coronation in 1902, he had a special place reserved for his bevy of mistresses (the King's Loose Box). He died aged 68 but, as King, he had connected with the people in contrast to Victoria's remoteness and set the basis of the modern monarchy.