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40th anniversary of canonization of Royal Martyrs celebrated at Romanov monument on Isle of Wight



With the blessing of His Grace Bishop Irenei of London and Western Europe (ROCOR), on July 2-4, 2021, the Grand Duchess Elizabeth Romanov Society, UK organized special events to celebrate the 40th anniversary of the glorification of the Royal Martyrs and Grand Duchess Elizabeth Feodorovna among the host of New Martyrs of Russia by the Russian Orthodox Church Outside Russia.

The main ceremony took place on July 3 at the Romanov Monument at East Cowes on the Isle of Wight, close to Queen Victoria's residence, Osborne House. A solemn ceremony was held to lay earth from the places where the remains of the martyrs were found in the base of the monument and the installation of a memorial plate recording this. As the chairman of the Society Maria Harwood mentioned in her speech, "the monument stands on British soil and now it has Russian soil inside, in its heart."

Three years after the monument was erected, it became possible to organize the delivery of a small amount of soil to the UK, with the blessing and direct participation of His Grace Bishop Leonid of Argentina and South America, formerly Bishop of Alapaevsk. His Grace sent us an address which was read by Subdeacon Alexander Groves (a founding member of the Society) who presented the program of ceremonies.

The atmosphere around the monument was very warm although the weather was windy and rainy. The audience was quite large, as much as the epidemic restrictions allowed, and diverse. A talk on "The Canonization of the Royal Martyrs of Russia: Its Meaning" delivered by Reader John Harwood, Secretary of the Society, answered many questions from those who knew little about the historical and religious background.

The placing of the earth, followed by a moleben, was performed by the Chancellor of the Diocese, Archpriest Paul (Elliott), who arrived at the southernmost point of Britain from his northern parish which is dedicated to the New Martyr Grand Duchess Elizabeth. The audience stood up to listen to the Gospel and was moved by the beautiful choral singing and Fr. Paul's sermon on the topic of self-denial for Christ.

The ceremony was attended by the President of the Romanov Family Association Princess Olga Andreevna Romanova, granddaughter of Grand Duchess Xenia Alexandrovna, the Deputy Lord-Lieutenant of the Isle of Wight Mary Case, the representative of the Queen, the Chairman of the Isle of Wight Council Lora Peacey-Wilcox, the Mayor of East Cowes Michael Paler, and other notable people who addressed words of welcome to the audience. The Russian and British Royal anthems concluded the ceremony.

The program of the weekend included other important events dedicated to the memory of the august Martyrs of Russia. After the ceremony many guests visited the Royal Chapel of St. Mildred, where Victoria, the eldest sister of Sts. Elizabeth

and Alexandra is buried. The church has icons of the Holy Martyrs on the left altar near the memorial plate which has their names, placed there by Princess Beatrice soon after the tragedy. (The icons were presented to St. Mildred's by GDERS in 2016.)

The group of visitors, including Olga Romanova, climbed to the top of a hill in the countryside to see the high column visible from afar—the monument to Tsar Alexander I, erected there by a local merchant as a sign of friendship between the two nations in the time of victory over Napoleon.
On Sunday, the pilgrims had a prayerful Typika service, organized by John Harwood, in an abandoned chapel of a former Catholic convent. After the prayers, the group of 20 met at Carisbrooke Castle, were King Charles was imprisoned in the 17th century, for talks on royal martyrdom, comparing British and Russian tragic history, by John Harwood and Stephan Roman, the author of a recently published book on Russian-British historical relations (Isle and Empires, Medina, 2021).

The program was successfully concluded at Albert Cottage (on the Osborne estate) where Tsar Nicholas stayed as a child during his first visit to Britain with his parents.
The Society expresses its gratitude to Mr. Alexander Tissot-Demidoff, the President of the International Demidov Foundation, Mrs. Natalia Yurova and Mrs. Anna Andreeva for sponsoring the bronze work and the event, Karl Love, Deputy Mayor of East Cowes, and David Hill for their friendly support, Anna Scriven (Treasurer) for her hard work and dedication, and the other members of the GDER Society and the Isle of Wight community who contributed to the celebration. Especial gratitude to John Newbury from the Portsmouth Orthodox community who presented the Society with a beautiful portrait of the Grand Duchess Elizabeth.











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