

Trip to the Isle of Wight, June 2025

By Maria Harwood



On 30th June 2025, a small group of members of the Grand Duchess Elizabeth Romanov Society and parishioners of the All-Merciful Church in St Leonards led by Father Aleksandr (Groves) travelled to the Isle of Wight. The purpose of the visit was to serve a moleben (a service of intercession) at the Monument to the Holy Royal Martyrs and the New Martyr Grand Duchess Elizabeth Feodorovna, which was unveiled in July 2018 to mark the centenary of the tragic events of 1918 in Russia.



Local residents of East Cowes joined the group for the service. Flowers were laid, and the Romanov Imperial flag was placed beside the monument. Following the moleben, the pilgrims visited the Church of St Mildred, built by Prince Albert for the local residents and the Royal Family. The church's side altar, the Battenberg Chapel, features a commemorative plaque with the names of the last Imperial family and Grand Duchess Elizabeth, installed by Princess Beatrice shortly after their execution, unique for Europe. The Russian icons of the Martyrs displayed on the altar were presented to the church by the Grand Duchess Elizabeth Romanov Society in 2017. The group laid flowers, prayed, and observed objects related to the lives of the saints and their visits to Osborne.





The pilgrims also visited the grave of Princess Victoria (elder sister of Empress Alexandra and Grand Duchess Elizabeth) and her husband, Louis Mountbatten, grandparents of Prince Philip. Flowers were laid at their resting place, and prayers were offered for the repose of their souls.

Earlier that morning, the group had visited Osborne House — Queen Victoria’s summer residence — located less than a mile from the Romanov monument. The palace was frequently visited by members of the Romanov family. In 1894, Tsarevich Nicholas was received there by Queen Victoria and had his last meeting with Princess Alix before their wedding. The group spent time in the seaside grotto where the couple shared their last moments before Nicholas’ departure to board the Imperial yacht.



Within Osborne House, many portraits and images depict Princess Alice — Queen Victoria’s daughter and mother of the two saints — alongside her husband and children. Six months after Prince Albert’s death, Alice was married at Osborne, changing from mourning attire to a white dress only for her wedding day. She was her mother’s closest companion and support during this difficult period. Princess Alice was widely respected in both Britain and Hesse-Darmstadt for her charitable work and served as a great inspiration to her children. After her early death in 1878, her children often spent time at Osborne with their grandmother, Queen Victoria.



The group also visited the Swiss Cottage, which was built by Prince Albert to provide the royal children with hands-on gardening experience and practical education. There, the children were encouraged to collect artefacts related to history, art, geography, and nature. Among the displays, we spotted an icon of St Nicholas and several small items from Crimea.



This was not our first pilgrimage to the Isle of Wight, but once again we were struck by how deeply such journeys — combining historical knowledge and spiritual reflection — connect us with both British and Russian royal heritage. They reveal the lives and spiritual depth of historical figures and saints in ways that make their portraits and icons part of our personal and shared experience.