

бы Россию на борту линкора британского Королевского флота «Мальборо», не встретил бы мою мать, и меня бы не было на свете. Что вызывает во мне некоторую грусть, так это когда я вижу драгоценности дома Романовых на других людях. Моя бабушка, великая княгиня Ксения Александровна, дочь императора Александра III и сестра российского императора Николая II, в 1919 году сумела вывезти часть фамильных украшений. В конце 1940-х она решила устроить аукцион. В ночь перед аукционом лоты купила Мария Текская, супруга Георга V и бабушка Елизаветы II. Теперь эти шедевры часто дополняют наряды британской королевской семьи.

Но Ольга родилась после аукциона, как она может знать эти украшения?

— У бабушки был инвентарный альбом, в котором она рисовала украшения дома Романовых в реальном размере. Я продала альбом, чтобы отремонтировать дом.

**«Кстати, для британских аристократов титулы делятся на два типа — "настоящий" и "ненастоящий"»**

Порой княгиня Ольга продает фотографии и документы. Недавно она увидела несколько проданных писем в репортаже с выставки «Царское Село. 1917.

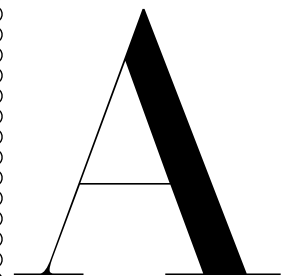
Накануне...». При этом в доме, конечно, есть вещи, расставаться с которыми она не собирается. Среди них — сервиз, изготовленный Императорским фарфоровым заводом для свадьбы Николая II,



tiresome but my mother was into virginity — I wouldn't have been a good bargaining chip if I wasn't a virgin — so all the time the lights kept going on. That's what people were like back then. It was like going to Ascot. In the Royal Enclosure there used to be a certain code: you were not allowed to be divorced, bankrupt or ex-bankrupt or have been in jail. Nowadays, you get all three. They had to change the law about 'divorcees' when the Queen's sister got divorced, didn't they?"

As for Prince Charles' proposition of proposing to Princess Olga, once again, this was the handiwork of her mother, Nadine Sylvia Ada McDougall.

"Harpers Bazaar did a section in 1967 to find a suitable foreign Princess for Prince Charles. I was one of five, or six. There was also a girl from Luxembourg. I was, in fact, the wrong religion — I am Russian Orthodox — so I was out in the first round." She then reflected and laughed, with the carefree nature of an adolescence, "Why on earth, would anyone have wanted to marry me then, let alone now? I had only met the man twice in my life and it would never have worked. I am too selfish, opinionated, and I don't put up with shite. He would not have wanted to marry me, plus I liked bad boys." Her mischievous smile now was wide as a moat. "To go for a nice man like Charles, with all his responsibilities, would never have crossed my mind, although my mother would have been just so pleased... So, no way. It was mother's pipe-dream. I always did admire Prince Charles and Camilla. I thought their publicity as a result of Diana was most unfortunate. I don't believe one should wash dirty linen in public. It was bad for Camilla, and I imagine it was hell for poor old Prince Charles. By the way, Diana wasn't a Princess. It annoys me enormously when people refer to her as "Princess Diana", because, in fact, she was the Princess of Wales."



According to Olga's understanding, you only are Princess by Christian name, if one's father was a Prince. Olga's mother was Princess

Andrew, not Princess Nadine. Therefore, Olga was Princess Olga and Diana would actually have been the Princess of Wales or Princess Charles. "To call her Princess Diana is totally incorrect and annoys me", a bemused Olga exhaled.

"You know, some people buy titles these days. However, what they might not know



is that these titles are not real” said Olga, as she instructed her cute, over excited dog Ronnie to climb down and away from the exciting smells on the table. “I mean, the title might be real, but it means nothing. The titles being sold off are defunct, the families are, generally dead, so it makes no difference. These titles aren’t used anymore. Some people in Britain have more than one title, so they sell off a few and keep the main one. It doesn’t bother them, at all. Hah! That’s an idea., but I can’t sell mine no! It’s my identity.”

England when I see Romanov jewels on other people’s necks. My grandmother, Grand Duchess Xenia Alexandrovna of Russia, the elder daughter of Emperor Alexander III of Russia and Empress Maria Feodorovna of Russia (née Princess Dagmar of Denmark), in 1919 managed to bring some of the family jewellery to the UK. Most of the jewellery was left in Russia. My grandmother auctioned her jewels in the 1940’s, before I was born. They was bought by George V’s wife, Queen Mary. Which means, occasionally, on a Royal family neck, one sees something one recognises.”

century house from dilapidating, and keep it maintained. However, there are precious heirlooms she will never part with. Among them — a celebrated etching pen her grandfather used to write her father’s birth date on the window of the Winter Palace.

“My father was born in the Winter Palace. When I first went to St Petersburg in 1998 I felt Russian. My father had told me about St Petersburg, it felt like home. It was better than expected. So when in Russia, I feel Russian. The Russians I know suffer melancholia. I suffer too. I hate winters and autumn.

## OCCASIONALLY I have a CURIOUS FEELING in ENGLAND when I see ROMANOV JEWELS on OTHER PEOPLE’S NECKS

The Royal jewellery of Romanov House is also an important part of Princess Olga’s identity.

“When I travel in Russia, I do not feel sour grapes because I think all these palaces should belong to me. After all, I would not have been born, if there had not been Revolution. My father would still be married to his first wife, he wouldn’t have met my mother. Occasionally I have a curious feeling in

How would Olga recognise them, if the auction was before she was born?

“My grandmother had an inventory book and did paintings herself, lifesize. I had it for some time, but had to sell the book. I had to sell a lot of heirlooms to be able to repair this house.”

From time to time Princess Olga sold parts of her family archive to keep this 13th

Although I do not fall into a depression as such, I feel a tinge sometimes. Papa suffered it badly. I can’t say a thing in Russia, I find English hard enough. I know four words in Russian: Da, Net, Spasibo, Dushka. Papa called me “Dushka”. Before the Revolution that was how you addressed your children, or, lover. It’s like “Darling”. Papa spoke five languages ... they used to say about Romanoff men that they could speak five languages and yet were silent in them all.

**T**hey were not great talkers. I love cossack music and I was brilliant in vodka shots! I could do six at once. My daughter and I had competitions at balls. Too old for that, now. Champagne is what I adore these days.”

Having done with the wine, we switch to coffee with dates. When we steer towards the topic of age, Olga recalled her childhood.

— My book “Princess Olga, a Wild and Barefoot Romanov” comes out in October. It is about my wacky childhood and differentiates between running around barefoot here, wild, with my governess, to my father’s childhood, born and bred in the Winter Palace with the pomp and circumstance of old Russia. For the first three years of his life he was dressed as a girl. From the age of four Father dressed in naval uniform and went from a lovely warm nursery with an English nanny to a cold dormitory with a tutor, a hard bed and navy-like treatment. He went from comfort to discomfort, quickly. My mother had had a terrible time at boarding school from the age of 8. This was just after World War I. That school sounded like hell. They were not allowed to hold onto railings, because they would put fingermarks on the polished wood, so they had to walk in the middle of the stairs. They had to carry buckets of water in all weather, because they were used like slaves. They lived in a dormitory with no heating. Bear in mind, these were delicate young children. My mother had terrible chilblains on her hands and feet which were bound with rags, so she could not move properly. She had weak lungs as a result, and was always getting pneumonia. Terrible cruelty, but at the time they thought it was the thing to do.”

Her experiences made Olga’s mother swear if she had a girl, she would not let her go to boarding school.

“In the 1950’s it was eccentric. I had governesses and tutors come to teach me how to write and play tennis. When kids of aristocrats were tiny, they would have a nursery governess, until 7-8 years of age, From 8-11 they would go to the local primary or village school, at 11-12 years of age they were sent to boarding school. In England, all children went to school, except me. All my friends went to school, but I was at home. At times it was lovely, at times it was lonely. I asked my mother to go school, and the answer would be: “No, I want you to stay at home, it is a better education and you

и ручка, которой дед княгини выгравировал на окне Зимнего дворца время и дату рождения ее отца.

— Отец — единственный из семи детей, родившийся в Зимнем. Он не имел права на титул великого князя, но когда он родился, чтобы порадовать бабушку императрицу Марию Федоровну, у которой появился первый внук, был дан 21 пушечный залп, которым обычно возвещают о рождении великих князей.

## КОГДА Я ЕЗЖУ ПО РОССИИ, ТО ВООБЩЕ ЧУВСТВУЮ СЕБЯ ОЧЕНЬ РУССКОЙ

Я столько всего слышала от отца про Санкт-Петербург, что когда приехала туда впервые, почувствовала себя дома. Очень комфортный для меня город. Когда я езжу по России, то вообще чувствую себя очень русской. Хотя... в Шотландии — шотландкой, в Дании — датчанкой. Во мне столько кровей намешано! По-русски я знаю четыре слова: да, нет, спасибо, душка. Но влияние русской крови заметно: я меланхолична, ненавижу зиму и осень. Не могу позволить себе настоящую депрессию, от которой страдал папа, но часто бываю подавлена. Отец говорил на пяти языках, но о мужчинах дома Романовых тогда шутили: «Они могут говорить на пяти языках, но обычно на всех пяти молчат». Из веселого — люблю казачью музыку и не откажусь от рюмочки русской водки. Раньше мы с дочерью на балах соревновались, кто больше рюмок опрокинет, — смеется Ольга. — Я могла выпить шесть-семь. Теперь предпочитаю шампанское.

**В**ино закончилось, и мы переходим на кофе с финиками. При всей внешней простоте быта, носить кофе по дому княгиня запрещает. При упоминании о возрасте вспоминает детство.

— В октябре вышла моя книга «Princess Olga, a Wild and Barefoot Romanov» («Дикая босоногая княгиня Ольга Романова») о детских годах членов моей семьи. Мой отец вырос со всей помпезностью и церемониями, на которые была способна Российская империя того времени. Первые три года его одевали как девочку и держали в комфорте, так было принято.

В четыре — приставили учителя, английскую няню, переделали в военную форму и поселили во что-то типа общежития для морских офицеров с жесткой кроватью. Мама тоже не была тепличным растением. В восемь лет ее отдали в частную английскую школу. Из ее рассказов выходило, что это был ад: отопления не было, в любую погоду детей заставляли носить ведра с холодной водой, ходить по ступенькам разрешалось только посередине и не дай Бог дотронуться до отполированных

перил! Бедная мама отморозила пальцы и застудила легкие, поэтому постоянно болела пневмонией. При этом родители того времени мечтали отдать ребенка в частную школу. Так было принято.

Именно поэтому, когда пришло время отправлять в школу саму Ольгу, родители быстро сошлись на идее домашнего обучения.

— Звучит неплохо, но в 1950-е это было весьма эксцентрично. Все дети Англии ходили в школу, а я сидела дома под маминым надзором. Это было утомительно, и мне было одиноко. Я даже просилась в школу, но мама говорила строгое «нет». Причина? «В школе тебе не понравится». Поэтому я проводила много времени на природе, каталась на пони, играла с петухами. Мама разводила бойцовских петухов. Когда через много лет моя дочь пошла в школу и сказала учителям, что ее мама никогда не ходила в школу, они подумали, что я «особенный ребенок». В Великобритании обычно не ходят в школу не те, кто учится дома, а те, у кого большие проблемы.

**Первый бал, отель «Дорчестер», 29 июня 1968 г. Princess Olga Romanoff, at her coming-out ball at the Dorchester Hotel, 29th June 1968**



Итей у княгини Ольги четверо. Младший сын умер в возрасте двух лет. Княгиня говорит: «Детей четверо, но выжили трое». Ее сын, Френсис Мэтью Романов, в 2012 году принимал участие в шоу «Холостяк» на украинском телевидении. Но и Ольга времени не теряла. Пока сын снимался, она объездила Крым, чтобы посмотреть дворцы своей семьи. Левадия, Массандра — места исхоженные. А вот во дворец деда княгини в Ай-Тодор ее сначала не пускали!

— Мы подошли к высокому забору с огромными воротами. Долго звонили. Открылась маленькая дверца и выскочила грозная babushka, которая нас прогнала. Тогда мы узнали, что находится за забором, нашли телефон директора, позвонили, объяснили, кто я такая, и нас с переводчиком пустили внутрь. Это был детский санаторий имени Розы Люксембург, где на тот момент, как я поняла, реабилитировали детей от 8 до 17 лет, переживших насилие. Но дети выглядели довольно счастливыми. Налево от главных ворот — маленькое кладбище. Там раньше была часовня, где поженились мой отец и его первая жена. В столовой сохранились фрески. Пару лет назад санаторий переделали в спа. Между ним и Левадией есть тропинка. Когда мы там гуляли, за нами увязалась бродячая собака, и переводчик очень волновался, что мы подхватим блох. Я шла и думала: «Иду по тропинке, где гуляли мои бабушка и ее брат, только блох мне не хватало...» А еще все постоянно извинялись за погоду, потому что лето было холодным. Это так по-британски!

Кстати, а что в княгине Ольге британского? Ведь, несмотря на гремучую смесь кровей в ее венах, она родилась и выросла в тихом Кенте.

— Люблю смотреть самые ужасные британские передачи и мыльные оперы. Сериал «East Enders» (о малообразованных жителях восточного Лондона) смотрю с первой серии, потому что герои еще большие идиоты, чем я сама. Это повышает самооценку. Мои дети смеются надо мной. У меня есть фотография с бала, где я стою в мехах. Она мне очень нравилась, пока дочь не сказала, что я выгляжу на ней, как Drag Queen. Еще я охочусь на лис. Когда в молодости жила во Флоренции, у меня был бойфренд — художник.

В 70-е он был известен благодаря картинам с лошадьми и женщинами, разрисовывал потолки во всех ресторанах, эдакий Микеланджело... Сейчас ему 93, но 15 лет назад мы встретились, и он захотел посмотреть, как я охочусь. Приехать не получилась, и я послала ему фото с охоты, где я сижу на своей черной лошади. В итоге он нарисовал интерпретацию этого фото, и теперь я шучу, что на картине на мне совсем не охотничья одежда, но повезло, что я вообще одета, поскольку в последние годы его работы стали несколько порнографическими.

В этот момент княгиня делает глубокий вдох и предлагает выйти в сад на воздух, потому что в кухне стало жарко. Сад в имении Провендер-Мэнор занимает три акра (12140,56 кв. м).

**«Мой отец был чудным поваром и садовником. Однажды он посадил грецкий орех, и из него выросло дерево. Остальные деревья грецкого ореха в саду посадили белки. Здесь часто проводят свадьбы».**

Тут я замечаю, что дом кое-где кривится, чего совсем не видно с парадной стороны.

— Его начали строить 700 лет назад, — говорит княгиня. — Тогда еще не изобрели фундамент. Это, конечно, дополнительные траты. Поэтому, помимо походов на балы, охоты и ухода за пони, я занимаюсь продажей себя — со мной можно провести выходные. Но за деньги. Потому что надо будет нанимать повара и быть веселой! А когда-то моя прабабушка держала тут двадцать слуг!

wouldn't like school". When my daughter started her primary school in Scotland, she told the teachers her mommy never went to school, and they thought that I was a special needs individual. So when I attended parents evening, for the first time, to see my daughter's work, there was relief from the teachers that I looked normal, even though they suspected there might be huge flaws underneath! After WWII, unless a child had severe problems, it was unheard for kids not to go to school."



**O**lga had four children. The youngest did not survive. It is hard for her to talk about this, but she does, while she speaks about her second son Francis Mathew. "When my son Fran took part in the Ukrainian "The Bachelor" TV Show in 2012, he lived in Kiev for 18 months and I used to stay with him. I agreed to go to Crimea to take part in the documentary about my family's palaces, because I had actually never seen them. They took me to Livadia Palace, which was interesting. We got kicked out of the chapel in Livadia, because I was lighting candles and saying a prayer while the crew was filming me. Out came a priest from behind the altar who was livid with me. Massandra Palace, I found fascinating, as it was built by three different architects. It had a real English rose garden. The house I wanted to see most was my grandfather's place, "Ai-Todor". Upon arrival, it had a huge wooden fence all the way around and an enormous gate with a little door. We rang and rang until a babushka came out and told us off. I then asked to see the director, and I explained to him who I was, and was allowed in. It had been turned into an abused children's home. Upon entry, we walked into the woods and saw many graves. There used to be a chapel here, where my father and his first wife married under house arrest. When entered the house, the rooms were packed with bunks for children, looking quite happy. In the dining area we saw the old frescos which had the same decor. It was amazing. Now, this place is a spa. We went to walk on the path between Ai-Todor and Livadia, and found a stray dog, it was trying to lick me. I thought: "God, that is all I need — to get rabies on a path, where my family had long walks and talks". It was May and very cold, the crew kept apologising for the weather. So British..." she laughed.

**"My FATHER PLANTED this WALNUT TREE from the NUT in 1964 and SEE HOW BEAUTIFULLY It's GROWN! The SQUIRRELS PLANTED the OTHER WALNUT TREES" she laughs.**

So what about Britishness of Olga herself? Born and raised in a quiet Kent, what typical British stereotypes apply to her?

"I like reading newspapers and watching TV with a dog on either side. I like soap-operas. I have watched "East Enders" since its very beginning. I find it always nice to see people far worse than yourself, makes one feel better. My children think my taste is appalling. Here is photo of me at one of the balls with a fur. I used to quite like that photograph, but my daughter said: "You can't used it for your book, 'cause you look like a drag queen". So I didn't. I fox hunt. When I lived in Firenze, I had a boyfriend, now 93. I went back and saw him 14 years ago. He planned to come

over and see me fox-hunt. However, he could not eventually make it, so I send him photos and he made a painting of me on my little black horse. He was famous for his horses and nudes in the 60's and 70's, they were all over the restaurant ceilings in Italy, a bit like Michelangelo. In the 30 years between knowing him and seeing him his nudes have literally become pornographic. There I am wearing weird colours, but I always say: "It's lucky I am clothed, because otherwise this picture would have had to stay in the trunk... forever!".

When Olga reminisces about the men in her life, it suddenly feels hot in her kitchen, so she suggested we get some fresh air at the garden, up to three acres of it!

"My father planted this walnut tree from the nut in 1964 and see how beautifully it's grown! The squirrels planted the other walnut trees" she laughs. Pa was such brilliant gardener and chef. As we have three acres of wilderness, we often have events here. It is a nice, peaceful and serene location, because small children and dogs can't run astray. We can prepare any type of banquet, I actually have my team of caterers."

As Olga discussed her event planning, I notice the house was becoming a bit lurchy, or lop-sided.

"Well, they started building it 700 years ago. The basement was not there then. This means I have had to keep an eye on it and this means more running costs. As a result I invite paying guests to spend weekends here. I hire a chef and a 'Smile' ! Ha, just imagine my great grandmother, when she lived here, had as many as 20 people here as full-time staff - butlers, kitchen maids , you name it!"

With this last thought she bundled her dogs in to the passenger trunk of her old jalopy, and drove me to the station. As we engaged in these whirlwind memories of Romanov past, of its golden hey-day, a beautiful world of manners and society, peculiarities and eccentricity she got carried away discussing her memories of the golden pedigree of the times and accidentally dropped me off at the wrong station. As intriguing, eccentric, and funny as her ancestors, Princess Olga: an true Romanov.

Работа художника Альфио Раписарди / The work of the artist Alfio Rapisardi



УСАДЬБА КНЯГИНИ ОЛЬГИ РОМАНОВОЙ:

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