

Leather treasures from 18th century wreck go on display

Historic artefacts and Russian leather recovered from the wreck of the Danish Brigantine Die Frau Metta Catherina von Flensburg are to go on display at Mount Edgcumbe House and Country Park thanks to a lottery grant.

The Metta Catherina foundered off the Cornish coast in 1786. She was carrying her cargo, including tanned reindeer hides, from St Petersburg to Genoa. She lay almost completely buried in a deep tomb of silt off Mount Edgcumbe until she was discovered by divers in 1973.

Now Mount Edgcumbe House and Country Park has secured £41,000 from the Heritage Lottery Fund to conserve and display the artefacts. The total cost of the project will be £60,500 with additional funding coming from the Friends of Mount Edgcumbe, the Metta Catherina Trust and Mount Edgcumbe.

A team of divers from the Plymouth Sound branch of the British Sub-Aqua Club, recorded and excavated the wreck over a period of 32 years. Some of the leather recovered from the wreck proved to be extremely well preserved and was sold, with the kind permission of its owner, HRH The Prince of Wales, to help finance the following archaeological research.

The exhibition will include interactive displays, an introductory film and outdoor activities including shoreline walks and a Seashore Finds day so people of all ages can learn more about the Metta Catherina, her cargo and crew. Learning resources will be developed for schools and pupils will be invited to an intergenerational oral history session with members of the Metta Catharina Trust and other local dive teams.

Ian Skelton, Chairman of the Metta Catharina Trust and one of the divers who found the wreck said: "It is wonderful news that after 32 years of diving and research, the story of the Metta Catharina can be told. Mount Edgcumbe is a fitting location for the artefacts to be displayed."

Gordon Crocker, Chairman of the Friends of Mount Edgcumbe said: "The Friends of Mount Edgcumbe Country Park are delighted to donate funds to help with this worthwhile project and add to the attractions at Mount Edgcumbe."

Councillor George Trubody of Cornwall Council and Councillor Terri Beer of the Mount Edgcumbe Joint Committee commented: "We are grateful to the Heritage Lottery Fund and the Friends of Mount Edgcumbe and the Metta Catharina Trust for their support with this important project which will tell the story of this historic wreck."

Commenting on the award, Nerys Watts, HLF's Head of South West, said: "International trade played an important role in the past prosperity and identity of the United Kingdom and the 18th century was the period in which Britain rose to a dominant position among European trading empires. This project provides a fascinating insight into that time and will enable people of all ages to better understand and appreciate its importance."

The project is also supported by ProMare, a not for profit organisation, which promotes marine research and exploration throughout the world.



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