

## **Stamps depict dramatic story of former trawler's whaling and war exploits**

A Beverley-built ship which worked as a trawler, a whaler and a warship has won official recognition from the Government of its current resting place even though it could be heading back to Hull.

The exploits of the steam trawler *Viola* – which fought in the Great War and also had a role in the start of the Falklands War – have been commemorated in a set of stamps to be released next month in South Georgia, where the vessel has rested for 50 years. They are expected to attract a great deal of attention and be sought after by philatelists across the world.

Meanwhile efforts are continuing to bring the ship back to the Humber, from where she sailed off to war in 1914 with a crew of fishermen, a voyage in which the vessel was involved in sinking two U-boats.

Dr Robb Robinson of the University of Hull's Maritime Historical Studies Centre, said initial discussions have taken place with businesses about the logistics of securing the *Viola* and transporting her to Hull, and with Hull City Council about presenting the vessel on permanent display.

A book, "*VIOLA – The Life and Times of a Hull Steam Trawler*", co-written by Robb with Ian Hart, was part of the inspiration behind the decision of the Governor of the Falklands, Colin Roberts, to commission the stamps which will be released on June 21.

The book was presented to the Governor by surveyors who visited South George last November to examine the *Viola*, now named the *Dias*, and assess whether it was feasible to bring her to Hull.

Robb said: "The Governor was so taken by the story of the *Viola* that he commissioned a new set of stamps. As a result, I was approached by the company Creative Direction Worldwide which subsequently produced the stamps. The book publishers, Lodestar Books, supplied the images.

"I also advised on the artwork and we came up with four stamps and a first day cover which represent different stages in the vessel's history as depicted in the book."

The 70 pence stamps show the *Viola* steam trawler working as part of Hull's Hellyer boxing fleet far out in the North Sea in around 1907 and then on patrol off the Farne

Islands on the Northumberland coast in 1917. The 80 pence stamp has the vessel rigged as a Norwegian whaling vessel working off the coast of Africa in about 1925 and the £1.25 version shows the vessel working as a sealing ship at South Georgia in about 1961.

The £2.50 first day cover is a graphic illustration of the vessel when it was involved with a number of other ships and the airship R29 in the sinking of the UB-115 off the Northumberland coast in September 1918.

Robb said: "The vessel is unique in so many different ways. It is the last surviving purpose-built steam trawler with its steam engines still intact – the last surviving vessel of that huge fleet of ships that brought fish and chips to the nation's plates.

"It is one of the only vessels still around to have seen close action with the enemy in the Great War and the only one left to have been involved in the sinking of U-boats.

"The spark for the Falklands War was the landing of Argentine scrap metal merchants on South Georgia in 1982. One of the things they were due to cut up was this vessel but instead they ran up the Argentine flag and the rest is history."

Costs of the survey last November were underwritten by a number of Hull-based maritime businesses led by SMS Towage and Robb said the next step will be to continue our positive discussions with Hull City Council about finding a permanent home for the Viola if the money can be raised to bring it back.

He is working with Paul Escreet, Chairman of SMS, and Admiral Nick Lambert, former captain of the HMS Endurance which replaced the Falklands War Endurance and adviser to the University on marine and maritime matters. Support has also come from MPs of all political persuasions.

Robb said: "We have carried out a lot of work already and there is much more to be done but it is encouraging to see that so many people are so enthusiastic about a project which showcases our proud nautical heritage and our current marine engineering expertise.

"The commemoration of the Viola's exploits with the stamps is a wonderful way of raising the ship's profile and telling its story, and we want to write the next chapter about the little ship that sailed off to the Great War in September 1914 and has still to return to its home port from that voyage."

"The national media have recently made much of saying that only three British ships survive from the Great War at sea. Well these stamps tell the story of the fourth ship and the one with the most amazing story."

Ends.

**Further information**

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