



THE EMPIRE'S LAUNCH.

The Consuta Trust

The advancement of education in the history of steam launches, by preservation, maintenance and exhibition of the steam launch **Consuta**

Website: www.consuta.org.uk

News Letter No. 39 — Autumn 2009



Last outing of 2009 Consuta moored at the Swan – Streatley

The Consuta Floating Boathouse

I'm sorry to report that our application for lottery funding for a Consuta Boathouse has been turned down. The main reason we were not successful was that the bulk of our funding application was for what is termed "new build" and this is low priority under the terms of a "Your Heritage Lottery Grant". Another reason was that we had not fully developed the educational and training part of our proposed activities. It was suggested that we could re-apply to a different part of the HLF organisation called The Big Lottery". The Heritage Lottery fund in my opinion is being used for many purposes which are not what I would consider to be true heritage issues, it depends how one defines heritage. Also the HLF "small grants" section seem to have adopted a set of rules which do not allow the case officer much discretion, so this means that the merits of an application are less important and it is more a case of whether it fits the right tick box rules.

We are asking the HLF for more details of the rejection especially the reason why they don't consider providing all weather cover for Consuta important, despite having stated that they recognise the heritage significance of Consuta. The Mary Rose Trust has just been awarded £21m for a new museum building. Also remember The Medway Queen had two HLF application rejections before it received £1.89m grant, for a completely new hull!

An interesting fact which came out of our historical researches for the HLF application is that the invention and development of Consuta Plywood used in Consuta was the key factor which allowed the Saunders firm to prosper and contribute so much to marine, airplane and hovercraft development. If there had been no Consuta then progress on these could have been completely different.

This rejection is obviously a setback but as the saying goes "as one door closes another opens". We do have lots of ideas for how to proceed, one would be to try and raise the funding ourselves, more news on these at a later date. Do let us know if you have any thoughts on this.

A visit from the great grandson of G.F. G Desvignes

I had a telephone call from Mr. Michael Philips (a USA citizen) who was on a three day visit to the UK in October. He said he was the grandson of G.F.G. DesVignes builder of Consuta's steam engine, and he asked would it be possible to have a look at Consuta. Unfortunately Mr. Philips could not be here for our last steaming but we arranged to meet up while the boiler pipework was being disconnected ready for the crane out. On the day we were chatting and I mentioned that there were two other complete DesVignes launches in the UK, but they are not accessible by the public. One is in a private museum and the other is held in reserve storage for the Greenwich Maritime Museum. I found it difficult to explain to Mr Philips why there was no public access to an important part of British industrial heritage. Consuta is one of very few historic launches held in public ownership which is displayed in operational condition and the only reason why this remains possible is because of your support.

Consuta steamings since that last newsletter.

We are always made very welcome at The Goring and Streatly regatta and this year was no exception. On the day before the regatta we steamed Consuta up from Charvil and had a look into the pool below Cleeve Mill. Consuta was based here in 1898, when the Mill was home of Mr. Clutton who had commissioned Consuta from SE Saunders. The water wheel shown in the last newsletter was Cleeve Mill, and the present owner Mr. Scott says he doesn't use it but believes it is still operational. Mr. Scott also has the wetdock boathouse which was built for Laurie Weaver to house Thames Esperanza, he wondered whether Consuta could fit into it. Now there is an exciting prospect that needs further investigation.

I lost count of the number of public trips we made during the G & S regatta but late afternoon we set off back to Charvil in some very nice weather. There followed two days in August at the River and Rowing Museum providing free trips to museum visitors, then after a quiet period we moved Consuta upriver to Beale Park. Unfortunately the day chosen turned out rather wet, but there was compensation with a lovely warm lunch stop by a log fire at the Swan (Pangbourne). The soggy day ended with sunny periods at Beale Park.

After this wet trip a few supporters suggested we should have another outing in Consuta on a nice sunny day. So on 10th October with 14 persons on board we had a delightful trip to the Swan at Streatley. Lovely place to visit and excellent food. This inn of course was the home of the Saunders family in 1850's and we wondered whether this could be an upriver base for Consuta. Magdallen College barge, built in 1927, using ferro concrete is moored at the Swan.



Consuta's Boiler.

I can own up, now that we have reached the end of the season, there have been a few leaking tubes in the boiler during the later part of the year. The leakage is between the tube and its hole in the firebox tube plate. Tubes are held here by expanding the tube to be a very tight fit in the hole. Unfortunately if this seal does start leaking it can be very difficult to reseal by further expanding to tube; and this is what has happened here. There are two ways of fixing this, one is by putting a light weld around the lip of the tube, the other is to remove the tube and clean the hole, and usually in practice replace with a new tube. As the tubes are now 9 years old I favour the latter, however there 44 tube tubes three foot long by 1.5 inch diameter so will not be cheap, at a guess around £600/800. In addition to the tube cost, there is a lot of manual work to remove and replace each one. So that will be our main engineering winter task.

Winter work additional to boiler repairs

Repairs are needed to the fire damaged varnish work in the aft cockpit, and there are proposals to re-varnish the seats and panels in for and aft cockpits.

The engine has been running well, except that our engineers reported that the reversing gear had developed a bit of a knock. Sure enough the lever was slightly loose on the weighshaft. It

Goring and Streatley Regatta – the polishing team.



Looking upriver at the G & S regatta site





The Thames water seems to have been rather dirty this year. Using an acid cleaner to remove the grime along the waterline



Last public tripping! We decided to move Consuta which involved turning her round. Some visitors at the Swan were invited on board for the short trip.

is held by a combination of a taper pin and a taper key, this is typical DesVignes practice. I personally don't like taper pins in highly stressed components. A new rough size taper key was fitted which cured the fault for the last outing, but this was only a temporary measure so a bit more work is needed here. The problem with these engineering jobs is that they have to be done in the field, no power tools/machines on site. This always complicates the job and the risk is that repairs can take on a makeshift nature.

The Robin Wallace Sims analogue style rev counter has been fitted above the coal bunker, and during the winter months we will be fitting the new valve chest pressure gauge right by it. These will provide the helmsman with a clear indication of engine revs and how hard the engine is working.

Craning Consuta out of the water for the Winter

We are very fortunate to have the use of the Cowshed at Beale Park during the winter months. The lift was made with a 60 ton crane, first the boiler, then Consuta's hull. On the lovely sunny day our supporters were kept busy cleaning the hull down while suspended in the air before being placed on the trailer. Debs Atrans Acid cleaner was very effective for removing the waterline dirt.

Future Activities for Consuta

The Heritage Steamboat Trust (set up by the SBA) in partnership with the Steam Boat Association are looking at ways to establish formal training courses for the operation and management of the steam machinery used in steam launches. Consuta would be ideal platform to provide practical experience and this would fit in very well with the objects of our Trust. There is much to commend this because so far the Trust have treated training in a rather ad hoc way. One problem regarding training on the job is that we are usually raising steam for a specific function so the experienced person gets on with raising steam, only allowing the novice to take over when much of this preparation work has been done.

I envisage training to be in two parts, a theoretical training handbook specifically for Consuta's steam plant, and hands on practical work sessions. If this training activity is developed, it would be a useful attribute for any future HLF application bid.



It's raining so why are they smiling?

The Consuta Social

Saturday 13th February 2010.

Trust supporters and SBA members are invited to The Consuta Trust Winter Social which will be held at Shiplake College near Henley

Full details will be issued with our Christmas posting.

If you require additional/advanced information please contact Derek Brown on 01189 723895.

please make a note of the date

Teamwork



Photo on the left:- repositioning cruise with the help of supporters

The other photos are scenes of supporters helping during the end of season crane out.





These two photos were taken at Cleeve Mill but although Consuta is in the same place the camera was not. Can you work it out. If we had decided to do a re-enactment the camera would need to be in another boat looking in from the river. Must try it some time and see if we can get a matching shot!
Is that the tree with a life belt in the upper picture the same tree as in the lower picture 100 years ago?

