



The Consuta Trust

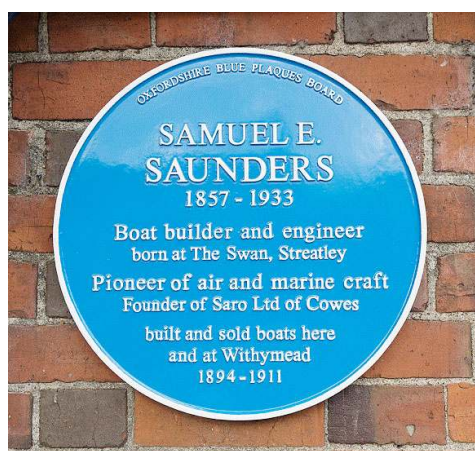
The advancement of education in the history of steam launches, by preservation, maintenance and exhibition of the steam launch **Consuta**

Registered Charity No. 1076505

Website: www.consuta.org.uk

News Letter No. 54 — Autumn 2013

Dear Reader,



A Blue Plaque celebrating Mr Saunders' achievements was unveiled at the Royal Mail sorting office by Goring bridge on the 7th Sept 2013. This building, now owned by Hobbs of Henley, housed Saunders workshop and showroom, where he developed the Consuta method of boat-building.

The event was organised by the Oxfordshire Blue Plaque Board with the help of Mike and Janet Hurst, who had made the application on behalf of the Goring and Streatley Local Historical Society.

Samuel Saunders lived in Goring in the late 1890s and built Consuta as an experimental umpire launch with low wash for Mr. Clutton of the Leander Club in Henley. Sam Saunders later

moved to the Isle of Wight, where his venture became Saunders-Roe, a leading marine engineering company.

Consuta and Mythical Maid (a 30ft Saunders hull built 1902 owned by Peter Sutcliffe) joined Tony Hobbs' 1912 umpire launch Enchantress at the Swan for a buffet with representatives of the Oxford Blue Plaque Board, Raymond Wheeler and his wife Jean, Mike & Janet Hurst chairman and secretary of the local historical society and others.



Members of the history society helped by providing the Goring village hall for exhibitions and displays of various historical information, photos, and artefacts about Sam Saunders and his work with the local community. The Consuta Trust had a display stand here.

The Blue Plaque was unveiled by Raymond Wheeler, retired director of Saunders Roe who has written those two books about Saunders; "From River to Sea" and "From Sea to Air" So next time you drive through Goring remember to look out for the Blue Plaque on the Post Office.





A steam adventure on Consuta – to Oxford and beyond.

The Steam Boat Association Thames 2013 Rally was to be based at the Trout Inn just downstream of Lechlade and for some of us this seemed to offer the intriguing possibility of steaming Consuta to the upper reaches of the Thames navigation.

Now you need to realise that steaming an open boat like Consuta in the rain would not be pleasant so this excursion would only take place if the weather was good and would probably need three days to get to Lechlade then the same again for the return. A week before the SBA event the weather predicted was wet and windy so reluctantly the excursion was abandoned.

A few supporters however were still wanting something special as an end of season outing, so we decided a trip to Oxford and beyond before the end of September might be on if the weather was set fair. After much indecision because of weather issues the timetable was finally set:- upstream on Monday 23rd and return on Tuesday 24th. Consuta had already been upriver as far as Osney lock during our Trust ownership but never beyond that notoriously low Osney bridge; so a passage under this bridge was to be our aim.

7:30am Monday morning in light drizzle (now that wasn't in the forecast; not a good omen) we lit up, then set off from Beale Park at about 9:30 with nine on board picking up another passenger at Goring. The slight drizzle had stopped by about 10:30 but no sun, however it wasn't cold or windy. We were making good time until we reached Days Lock where divers were down making an inspection of the lock chamber, so after about a half hour delay we went through onto the attractive reach up to Clifton lock with the Wittenham Tumps in the background behind. This hill is a lovely place to have a walk and take in the wide panoramic views over the Thames valley.

Above Days the river slowly makes a 180 degree turn over the length of the pound starting north then ending up going south as one reaches Clifton lock. We reached Culham Lock by about 1:00pm and there was another holdup. This lock was full with several boats waiting to exit but the gate would not open. You've guessed it the lock was on lunchtime self service. The

lock keeper eventually came and told us that the time clock for raising the paddles was set at lengthy 20 minutes for raising the top gate paddles fully up? This time sequence is reset if any buttons are pressed early, and apparently catches out most users, so it must be rare for a boat to make passage through the lock during the lock keepers lunch break.



After about 2 miles from the lock there is the very pleasant reach through Abingdon. We passed John Schofields half size puffer Magic Dragon at its mooring; John waved as we went past but we didn't stop. From Abingdon Lock we were now only about 8 miles and two locks from Oxford.

The Kings Arms is a very nice looking inn at Sandford Lock with some excellent pub moorings, but we didn't stop. Next lock was Iffley then onto the hallowed Oxford College barge territory; sadly we only saw one of these iconic vessels but it did look very smart. The colleges have some 1960's built Spartan looking boathouses set in an uninspiring row, no doubt functional but not very attractive.



Coming up to twin channels at Folly bridge is the terminus base for Salters steamers and as we approached the river looked blocked, but no there was just enough room to get past the passenger boats, we were now into the Oxford suburbs which sadly is virtually ignored by the city.

Several twists and turns in the river channel and we arrived at Osney Lock.

Just above the lock are some attractive riverside moorings downstream from the Osney Road bridge; but we are not stopping, and even those who had planned to get off here to catch a train back from Oxford were persuaded to carry on because it seems that there was a bus service further upstream to get back to the station. Actually they didn't need much persuasion; so it was a quick funnel down – mustn't forget to remove the ensign and we are through under the bridge.



Gosh the river seemed narrow now, just before Bossom's boatyard we were surprised to see the old Edwin Clarke ex steamer Gaiety built in 1887, one of the first steamers for the Salters company. Gaiety now seemed to be in use as a house boat but looking pretty good.



Just past Gaiety is Bossoms boatyard with an interesting collection of craft.

After Bossoms the river becomes remarkably wide with open views all around; but a sign warns not to go too close to the banks where it is shallow.



We reached Godstow Lock by about 5:30pm. The lady lock keeper gave advice on moorings; why not try the public moorings by the old Godstow Abbey ruins – brilliant so we moored up for the night. When Consuta was sheeted up those camping on board (three) and by tent (one) decide to go over to the local Trout Inn for an evening meal.

We asked the proprietors if they did morning breakfasts, what a pity the answer was No. Sleeping on board Consuta was Ok although in the quiet countryside the noise of the Oxford bypass was just noticeable.



Tuesday morning about 7:30, there was a thick mist all around so after breakfast (porridge) we lit up and were soon in steam, the boiler was still quite warm from yesterday.

Let's try passage through Godstow bridge, I don't think we need to drop the funnel; the bridge is a very old stone twin arch bridge but with only 8ft 6 inch headroom. We had about 2 inches headroom spare, then we were soon on our way in the mist to the next lock.



The river map had shown some acute river bends and it wasn't wrong. Even though the river looked fairly wide there were navigation buoys indicating that the bends had some major shallows. Further on I was astonished to pass an old Harbour Service Launch hull now in use as a houseboat and wondered how on earth had it managed Osney Bridge. We soon reached Kings lock just as the lockkeeper was coming on duty.

There was no time to go through the lock, because we had arranged to pick up those coming by train to Oxford around 10:00/10:30am. The return passage across the Medley Meadows reach was very strange because of the mist, there were times when it was almost impossible to see the river banks abreast of us.



As we passed Bossoms a phone call asked where are you? so we blew our whistle, then in a few minutes later we were picking up some of our passengers by the channel leading to the Oxford canal which is just above Osney Bridge.

The extra hands made short work of lowering the funnel. More passengers were picked up after the bridge then we were on our way back down river.

It became clear (well to me) that we would need more coal; we had loaded 12 bags on board at the start but seemed to have burnt more than I had expected – don't ask why.

Now Abingdon is a large river town so surely coal or charcoal should be readily obtainable here. The local marine chandlery people said no chance, so we pressed on.



We arrived at Culham Lock again at lunch time so while waiting for that very slow self service lock operation I phoned my daughter and asked could she bring a couple of bags by car to the Shillingford Bridge hotel, Lucy had already agreed to do this if needed.

Once through Culham the sun came out and the rest of the day was warm and sunny with not a cloud in the sky.

After picking up the coal (two bags) at Shillingford we were off again with only about 12 miles to go.



There was a short stop at Nuns Acre between Cleve and Goring locks for an exchange of a few passengers.

Finally arriving back at Beale Park by about 5:30pm. What a great adventure, and I can confirm that sleeping onboard Consuta is quite comfortable.

Sorry I cannot remember the names of all who came along but Consuta was full for both days.

Two of Salter's fleet moored at Oxford



End of season News

Consuta make over progress

Consuta was craned from the water by Hobbs at Henley and then moved to Henwood and Dean's boatyard on the 7th October. The boiler was lifted out at the same time and is now at Kintbury undergoing a winter servicing.

All brassware on Consuta was then removed at the boatyard ready for the sanding down, repaint and revarnish makeover. We also took the opportunity of cleaning out the bilges – they were in a **filthy condition**. From now on we must be very much tidier when running Consuta, so watch out, I'm going to be very annoyed if anyone doesn't help keep her clean and tidy from now on.

Consuta is due to be moved to Beale Park and into the barn at Beale Park November 11th.

The continuing winter work schedule (more likely to be early Spring now) will be used to thoroughly clean the engine and repaint all deck and floor boards. A lot of items have already been taken away for work at home. I would also like to move the steam bilge suction box so that it can make a better job of clearing out bilge water, the present arrangements are not good enough, although the hull shape doesn't help. We will also investigate the possibility of a suction takeoff directly from the ashpan; this can get over filled at times, so becoming a potential source of dumping dirty water into the bilges.

Planning and the proposed Museum

Our (refused) planning application for the museum at Beale Park will shortly be registered for appeal. Those who sent representation letters should receive notification of this. We have been offered useful help from a London firm of architects to further our proposals.

New boiler – progress

More work has been carried out on the new boiler design and we are now waiting for an estimate of costs to build this. The design looks pretty good to me and it would be great to have a better and lighter boiler which is more suited for Consuta. We will however need to raise funding for this, although we already have some funds in a Trust allocated for a new boiler; thank you those who have already provided donations and help.

Consuta Winter Social

Our Social has being arranged as a three course hot buffet meal at the Swan in Streatley for a Saturday midday in February 2014, date still to be confirmed. The Swan as you will know was the birthplace of Sam Saunders so we will be joined by members of the Goring and Streatley Local Historical Society for the event. The new owners of the Swan have a great regard for their Saunders history, so have been very helpful with arrangements. Booking forms will be distributed during Christmas.

The Trustees wish to thank everyone for your continuing support, which is so essential to help keep Consuta operational

From the Consuta Trustees

All Shiny and New

Over the last few weeks Consuta has been transformed with two coats of varnish and two coats of white hull paint at Henwood and Dean. This work has been meticulously carried out by some of Colin's most experienced craftsmen and we must make sure we look after her and preserve their work for a good many years.

Rules – some do's and don'ts

- As a general rule, only flesh or cloth should touch the varnished surfaces please.
- Standing on the rear deck in hob nail boots is likely to lead to an impromptu water skiing lesson at 60 rpm.
- Appropriate footwear should provide good grip but not have the sort of tread that can trap stones.
- We should not be using the seats to store hard metal components or as a tool tray.
- The grey coal bunker covering boards and floor boards are usually full of scratches by the end of the season, but are easily repainted every year with Danboline. The varnish needs to last much longer and we need to look after it.
- We will be replacing the rubber matting in the engine compartment and providing better oil can storage so that the cans don't get put on the floor where they leave oil rings that are then spread into other compartments.

The pictures below can't do justice to the superb condition Consuta is now in. We hope you'll be really impressed when you see her for real.

Moving Consuta to Beale Park has been set for Monday the 11th November. All are welcome to come along and watch; or perhaps even help

Refurbishment Costs

Colin has very generously done all the work at cost but the trust will be paying for some time and all materials and ancillaries. We would be very grateful for any donations to help cover this. A litre of varnish is £20 and we have used many litres, not to mention paint, brushes, sandpaper, degreaser and hours and also the transport costs!

If you are able to help with donations towards these costs please send a cheque to our treasurer, and if you are a tax payer, we can claim a further 25% from the Tax Man. Payment to:-
The Consuta Trust, Treasurer, 39 East Sands, Burbage, Marlborough, Wilts., SN8 3AN.



Difficult to take photos to do justice to the finish

