



The Consuta Trust

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

Patron: The Rt. Hon. Lord Strathcona & Mount Royal

News Letter No. 32 — Autumn 2007

Dear Supporter,

Consuta Steamings

It's been a very quiet late summer boating season for our steam umpire launch. Consuta was moved from Beale Park to Charvil after the July floods to be within striking distance for the SBA Rally based at the Henley Sailing Club (Wargrave), and she was steamed on three days over the weekend of the event.



Above:- Danesfield just above Hurley Lock with the ex steam yacht Chrysaphrase on the right
Below left:- Whistle blowing when meeting other steamboats at the Steam Boat Association Rally
Below right:- An evening special outing seen from the Henley Sailing Club





Above: Sunday last day of the SBA rally Consuta on the Dreadnought Reach (Reading)
 Below left: Crew and supporters in the café at the River and Rowing Museum
 Below right: Passing Wisp on the way to Henley



After this event we had one last steaming for crew training and supporters. This was a splendid river trip down as far as Hambledon Lock, then stopping for lunch at the River and Rowing Museum.

We then had a look at our other favourite Victorian steamer Eva which is on display in the museum. Everyone agreed she was a very pretty boat and it was a great shame that Eva could not be seen in use on the river.

I count myself fortunate because I have seen her running in the late 1980's both on the Thames and also on Windermere. If you would like to see what she looks like in steam get a copy of "The Sign of Four" one of the Granada TV Sherlock Holmes series with Jeremy Brett in the lead. There are some excellent scenes of a steamboat chase with Eva as the chase boat. DVD's of this series are available on public sale.

The final trip of the year was to steam Consuta from Sonning to Beale Park ready for craning out

for the winter. This was a fine sunny day, but there was a cold north wind, so the engineers compartment was popular. I was surprised to see that the yellow stream warning boards were out at all the locks with stream predicted to increase because of some heavy rain at Lechlade during the night, and red boards were out the next day.

Winter Tasks

There aren't too many this year, although Tony says it is boiler lift out time. The steam plant is performing well. The engine needs some work on the aft crosshead to cure the last remaining knock. There are a couple of steam valves that don't close completely (steam leaks). Robin volunteered to make a more period looking rev counter to replace our bicycle digital device. This failed on the last trip and our skippers were heard to requested engine revs below hull resonance or above hull resonance. For those who have not been on Consuta the hull has a slight longitudinal wriggle over a small range of engine revs (230 to 270 rpm). We try not to drive in this range.

An understanding of engineering and hydrostatics is needed to successfully open the bridge at Beale Park

Our Boathouse plans

We have had some fruitful discussion about an agreement to have the boathouse based at Beale Park. The design of the steelwork has now been finalised by Tony Cundick and the exterior features will be based on the artistic sketches provided by Michael Vicary. We are looking forward to making our application to the HLF, although we have been warned that their disposable funding is short – we all know why. There other possible funding organisations which we may have to approach, but.....

The West Berkshire Planning office don't seem to be looking very kindly on our proposals to have Consuta and it's boathouse based on the Beale Park lake, this despite our application having received no objections at all from the public nor the other myriad of consultees. What can I say? all our friends and supporters are stunned. However we are still at the early stages of the bureaucratic hoop jumping routine so I'm still very confident that a bit of common sense will prevail in the end.



Supporters

Consuta needs an active group of crew volunteers to remain in operational service, so it is very important that we encourage new members to join our group. However it seems that supporters for these types of activities are becoming harder to recruit from the younger generations. Even preserved steam railways have trouble recruiting volunteers and are sometimes faced with having to have paid crew. This is not something which I would wish to see with Consuta. Unfortunately the UK no longer has a large engineering manufacturing base which used to employ great numbers of apprentices, also modern youth has so many other distractions, all leading to a decline of interests in engineering and mechanics, and even the history of our technological inventiveness and success.

Our other group of supporters is made up of the very important armchair variety who are happy to contribute funds to help pay all our bills.

Those who are involved with the operation of Consuta finding it very rewarding because there is always enthusiastic interest from so many members of the public either from those in other boats, or at locks or when we moor up. It's nice to be constantly reminded that Consuta

creates such interest and so is well worth keeping active. By contrast when visiting Eva in the museum, although a very pretty object which has been preserved in splendid condition, she is really just a dead piece of history, perhaps meaningless to all but the expert historian or a steam enthusiast. I wonder do visitors notice that the propeller is behind the rudder, do they wonder why or just assume that the Victorians didn't know any better!

Winter Social

Several supporters have asked are we going to have a winter social. Yes of course, always a good place to have a nice meal and a chat with our friends and supporters and find out what is going on. This social will be in the new year and the forms will be sent out with the Christmas posting.

Other future work

I'm occasionally asked when are we going to have a new boiler. Well of course we still want to do this, but have had to put it on hold until we have our floating base. Most will know that there are some good reasons for a replacement boiler. The first priority is to reduce weight, the second is to improve steam take off and the last but still important is to allow the boiler casing to be lowered to look the same as those early photos.

We have already had a few donations earmarked for this, however I should point out that a new boiler will be a major task because it will also require some changes in the boiler casing superstructure. The present casing is about 3 inches higher than the original, so this and the pipework will need to be modified.

Many thanks to all for your continuing interest and support.

Brian Smith – 01488 658795 brianws@ukonline.co.uk 26th October 2007

————— Financial contributions and donations —————

to:- Hon Treasurer:- Derek Brown, Wingfield, Wood Lane, Kidmore End, Reading, RG4 9BE

The Beale Park Mooring, at the very end of the 2007 steam operations

