

Consuta Trust Newsletter - Summer 2015

Dear All,

It seems to have been a very busy late spring early summer. Consuta was re-launched safely in May by R.J. & Sons (Crane Hire). Roy always provides an excellent and careful service which is much appreciated. The weather on the day was perfect.

Boiler inspection time

The final part of the preparation work needed to get Consuta ready for the season is the annual boiler inspection. I suppose we always take it for granted that there will be no problems; and this was to be the case again this year. However our boiler inspector scolded us because the pressure gauge was reading a bit low throughout the range.

We promised to get this checked and adjusted using a dead weight gauge test set – our thanks to Crofton Engines for letting us use their equipment – photo on the right.

Yes the gauge needed correction as it was about 8 psi out throughout the whole range, so this was an easy problem to resolve by removing the pointer with the miniature puller and repositioning correctly.

I believe that standard Bourdon pressure gauges are not normally guaranteed to be more than 5% accurate but it's nice to have ours within 2%.



The Beale Park Boat Show

The weather was perfect for this three day event and the new organiser did a good job at short notice. Lyn provided a new substantial display marquee 3 x 9 m that housed the two sections of an old Saunders 30ft hull "Ulula" which we thought had been scrapped – this hull clearly shows the unique Saunders plywood construction technique and created a lot of interest. A few visitors even asked was it an original part of Consuta's hull.



Our marquee was also fitted out with an excellent display of photos including some of the proposed museum and potential exhibits. We met many people during the show and it was clear that the prospect of a new museum at the park was of great interest.

A few pictures of some of the Boat Show exhibits. This photo is the Napier Railton built for John Cobb in 1933. Engine is a Napier Lion 24 litre engine which develops 580 hp at 2,600 rpm, fuel consumption is 5mpg.. John Cobb set a speed record for Brooklands of 143 mph in 1935.



The second picture is an interesting idea. Sam Saunders also had a baby cot made using Consuta plywood over 100 years ago; so an intriguing use of a boat builders skills but not a new idea.

Our volunteer workforce had Consuta in steam for each of the three days, and the short trips around the lake were very popular. Estimated we carried over 800 visitors during the three days, our donation box provided nearly £600 to trust funds. Great credit to all who helped make this event such a success.

As the weather continued fair into Monday we took the opportunity of moving Consuta down river to the Charvil mooring. These re-positional trips are always very relaxing with some lovely river cruising.

Umpire work

The next two public events on the calendar were the umpiring duties on Saturday for the Henley Women's regatta, followed the next Saturday by umpiring at the Reading Town regatta. These two regattas provide an excuse to run Consuta on umpire service and at the speeds she was originally designed for – it is quite thrilling as well; also there are occasional opportunities for supporters to experience this and have ride on Consuta during a race.

Consuta attends the Women's Regatta but only on the Saturday. We had a slight mishap during this event when she picked up the cable from one of the channel marker buoys. David bravely dived over the stern so after about 30 minutes, Consuta was free again. This problem was probably due to having such a large prop with a diameter of 30 inches, the modern launches have much smaller 18 inch props; therefore drifting Consuta over the buoys is definitely to be avoid at all costs.

The weather was good during the Henley races except at the very end of the day when there was an unexpected torrential downpour. As a result in the haste to do the last race, our crew were caught out without waterproofs, they then immediately set off back to Charvil in the rain. I had volunteered to drive our car, and was surprised at how much water was on the roads, causing a lot of traffic chaos.

For the Reading Regatta the weather was perfect. It was interesting to see the wide variation of race speeds, our engine rev counter provides an easy conversion to boat mph. Some races were as low as 7 mph but others were up to 16 mph. Fireman Nigel however always had the boiler fire ready for all these eventualities. Clearly our participation is much appreciated because we have been invited to the Reading event for 2016. The regatta is sponsored by Savills who arrange the provision of lunch for the Consuta crew, and also drinks at the Company's hospitality pitch.



When we were packing up Paul, who was raking out the fire, said “sorry; I’ve some bad news – those wretched tubes are leaking again“. Oh dear not serious perhaps, but enough to declare that Consuta was out of service until the tube fault was cleared.

Curing leaking tubes (again).

Too busy to take pictures – sorry, but you will know the principle from earlier newsletters.

We decided that it would be worth re-expanding the tubes again – there is a limit to this but not yet. However we needed the next larger size of expander, this expensive tool was ordered from Wicksteed Engineering on the Monday and arrived by Tuesday – quick service.

So we travelled over to the Charvil mooring on the Wednesday armed with all the tools and gadgets in the boot of the car. The weather forecast for the day promised that it was going to be the hottest day of the year, fortunately the morning was cloudy while the expanding work was being carried out, so not too bad.

A low pressure hydraulic test confirmed that the leaks had stopped. Made a note must do something to the boiler when it is removed at the end of the season.

The Henley Festival (Music)

This is a popular event and we were lucky to have the use of a good mooring during the evenings. Consuta ran short trips during three of the days, good returns in our donation box. Saturday was a day off, also the weather on Sunday was rather wet so Consuta made an early return to Charvil.

David Creasey supplied the photos below – all steamers at the Festival – great to see them.



*Above Alaska
Below Consuta*



*Above Streatley
Below Windsor Belle*



The Henley Traditional Boat Festival

After missing a year (remember those floods during early 2014 ?) this popular event has a new committee, so we were looking forward to taking part with Consuta, also this time there was no date conflict with the Goring and Streatley Regatta.

Sir Malcolm Cambell's 1937 hydroplane Bluebird K3 was the star exhibit at the show and was on the water ready for a slow speed run.

The hull bottom and frames are Saunders Roe Mahogany plywood (Consuta plywood presumably). The bottom is five ply (Consuta is four ply) and the frames were cut from 7 ply.). There is much information about this fascinating craft in Raymond Wheeler's book "From River to Sea" (The maritime Heritage of Sam Saunders).



Sadly there was a technical problem which prevented the run, but her 37 litre V12 cylinder engine was started and run twice during Saturday – wow – the exhaust flames; also ear defenders would have been useful. The Rolls Royce R type engine apparently can deliver 2150 hp and is geared up to a 14" diameter prop which runs at 9,500 rpm this is intended to reduce the effect of prop torque on the boat.

I was interested to see M102, this naval vessel was one of an early WW2 experimental motor torpedo boats, restored now and operated by a charitable trust.



My interest stems from personal memories when working at Southern TV (ITV service of Southern England). Southern TV during the late 1960's owned a slightly larger MTB 506 of 72 ft which had been converted for use as a waterborne Outside Broadcast unit providing TV coverage of many summer sailing and powerboat water activities on the South Coast.

Southerner was fitted with three large monochrome video cameras plus all the equipment needed to either record or transmit TV via microwave links back to the studio, ie live programme material and quite an innovation in its time.

Sorry couldn't resist the temptation to include a photo of Southerner in her TV days.

A collage of photos taken at the Traditional Boat Festival



Goring and Streatley Regatta. *Photo shows a general scene with Consuta in shot*



This regatta is one of my favourites, although the weather on Friday was very wet we were promised a sunny break on Saturday before the rains returned again on Sunday. So it was, after a sharp early shower the weather throughout the Saturday was excellent.

Before WW1 this regatta used to be one of the largest on the Thames, but did not resume after this war. The regatta was revitalised about 20 years ago by the Goring Gap Boat Club now in the form of a river style village fete. The Club also managed to gather many of the magnificent silver trophies from the early years, this collection made a most impressive display.



Model of the Goring Gap Boathouse

Throughout the day Consuta made numerous public trips along the regatta course resulting in a well filled donations box.

When the crew returned Consuta to Beale Park, we were faced with tying up to a very old weedy pontoon, because our usual mooring pontoon had been taken for the Regatta use. The photo above shows some of the weeds which needed to be cut back before we could safely dis-embark.

The Museum Project

It was interesting to hear all about the fund raising progress for the new club facilities for the Goring Gap boat club. The club had put an interesting scale model of their proposed building on display and it looked most impressive. I was told that the clubhouse was going to cost over £1½m and that the club was still short of funds needed to complete.

Numerous people were also asking how we were getting on with the Thames Heritage Boat Museum project – and I must say that it is greatly encouraging to have such positive interest from so many in the local and river communities.

Unfortunately we have not been successful with our initial grant application, however the HLF have given details for the reasons why; and we now believe that these minor hurdles can be overcome.

We have however received several large donations from individuals and also from another grant trust – many thanks for this. The Consuta Trust and Beale Park have now agreed that the new Tamesis Trust will take the museum project forward, and we have also agreed a revised method of management with the park needed to re-submit the application for an HLF grant.

All founder Tamesis Trust trustees are also trustees of The Consuta Trust, so on a co-ordination basis there will be no problems.

We have had some minor problems with Consuta during the season, but otherwise she has performed very well this year. Many thanks to everyone for supporting our work with donations and/or by providing unpaid help.

Brian Smith - July 2015