



THE UNFIRE'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. 49 — Summer 2012

Dear Supporter,

Consuta Trustee Geoff Newton died in May – see obituary on page 5 of this newsletter.

General observations about Spring Ops

So what happened to Spring this year? Remember all that talk in April/May about drought and hose pipe bans? The late Spring wet weather was a timely reminder that even our gentle Thames can become a dangerous place for boating. At least there has not been any serious flooding in the Thames valley, but with rain on most June days and early July, the river was continually running with strong currents. As a result two important boating calendar events had to be cancelled – The Thames Trad Boat Rally and the Goring & Streatley Regatta..

Launching after the Winter

Consuta was launched, boiler lowered in then all the pipework connected up during a fine warm sunny day in May. She was to be ready to attend our first event on Monday 4th June, the river pageant part of the Goring and Streatley Diamond Jubilee celebrations.

We had watched the BBC TV coverage of the London river pageant on the 3rd, sadly the BBC's presentation of this event was disappointingly poor. However all who participated said it was a fantastic event, despite the rain.

So it was with some trepidation about the weather that we prepared Consuta on the Monday morning for the G&S event. It didn't rain and the sun came out during the morning but when we went to open the floating bridge we were alarmed to see the height of the river water level; the bridge floats were totally underwater by at least 2 inches. Those acquainted with this wretched contraption will know of the difficulties this poses for bridge operation. Once out on the river the current was flowing strong, this was no problem for Consuta but it did make it hard work for the boats that were rowing, one of which was the Beale Park Shallop. *Photo on last page*

Consuta was due to pick up the Lord Lieutenants of Berkshire and Oxfordshire at the tail of Goring lock. We got there easily in time and Tony, our skipper, decided it would be safer to go through the lock and turn above, rather than risk turning around in the fast flowing narrow section by the public moorings. This was a good idea except after turning we had to wait while the lock was emptied very slowly, so were slightly delayed – but it didn't matter as the parade was also a bit late as well due to slow progress by some boats against the current. This was a lovely event, with appreciative crowds of people all the way along the bank. Why do people like steam whistles?

We had lunch moored at the delightful Streatley Swan Inn and when we returned to Beale Park, the water level had dropped at the floating bridge by some 5 to 6 inches – a large change in a short time, quite amazing. The red strong stream warning boards had been displayed while at the pageant fortunately the strong flow didn't seem to cause any trouble.

Beale Park Boat Show

We had erected a large tent so that the Goring & Sreatley Local Historical Society could place their excellent display covering the history of Sam Saunders, supplemented with some machinery artefacts from the Consuta Trust.

The weather was wet and windy on Thursday so by Friday BP had to cancel public access for the day because the ground had become sodden. However by Saturday the weather was pretty good and after some splendid work by the park staff during the Friday; the site was able to open to the public. Sunday was overcast but no rain at all until after the show finished. Consuta ran trips on both days this made our donation box rattle nicely; so the coal costs were easily covered. *Photo on last page.*

Tony Woodford brought his lovely scale model of Consuta and steamed it by our pontoon to the delight of the crowds – it did go well.

Henley Women's Regatta – Saturday 16th June

Consuta was moved down river to work as one of the regatta umpire launches. Seven launches are used on the Saturday and the race start intervals are only 4 minutes apart; it's a very slick operation. This is a long day, and Consuta was in steam from 6:00am to 8:00pm with no problems at all. David had taken plenty of coal down to the site; too much in fact so at the end of the day I had to remove 11 unused bags by car. Consuta performed faultlessly even though she ran over one of the red marker buoys right by the umpire launch mooring station. Nobody seemed to know what they were for but I think two were picked up by other umpire boats coming alongside during the Saturday. Rather windy but not much rain thank goodness, however the rowers found the head winds rather hard work because some speeds were quite slow, made worse because of the strong river currents. *Photo on last page*

Queens Henley Jubilee Garden Party – Monday 25th June



The Queen and Prince Philip on board Alaska in Hambleden Lock (photo by Ian Rutter)

This event was based at the Henley management school with some 4000 guests. Prompt at 15:00 on a fine sunny afternoon HM the Queen and HRH the Duke of Edinburgh were carried onboard Alaska from Hambleden Lock to the mooring at the college, probably about 300 yards. Some twenty boats took part in the parade, half coming down and the other travelling up river and they were choreographed to pass the podium in time to music and commentary. I don't know what it looked like from the shore, but Paul said we had a wave from Prince Phillip when we passed and blew our whistle.

The selection of craft was an interesting mix of boats with passengers onboard in appropriate period costume:- two Thames working hopper barges, a Viking longship, a punt, a traditional narrow boat, two rowing eights, two umpire launches, another steamer and more. The pageant parade was entitled "Time and the Thames" and lasted about 15 minutes, and was great fun. *Photo on last page*

Henley Festival 4th – 8th July

Consuta was in steam each day despite the weather and river conditions, so was able to provide many public trips at the event; thank you to those who put donations in our collection box. Unfortunately on the Sunday the river flow had increased and red boards were now out on the Henley reach, so it was deemed wise not to do any public tripping, instead Consuta returned safely through the two locks back to our Charvil mooring.

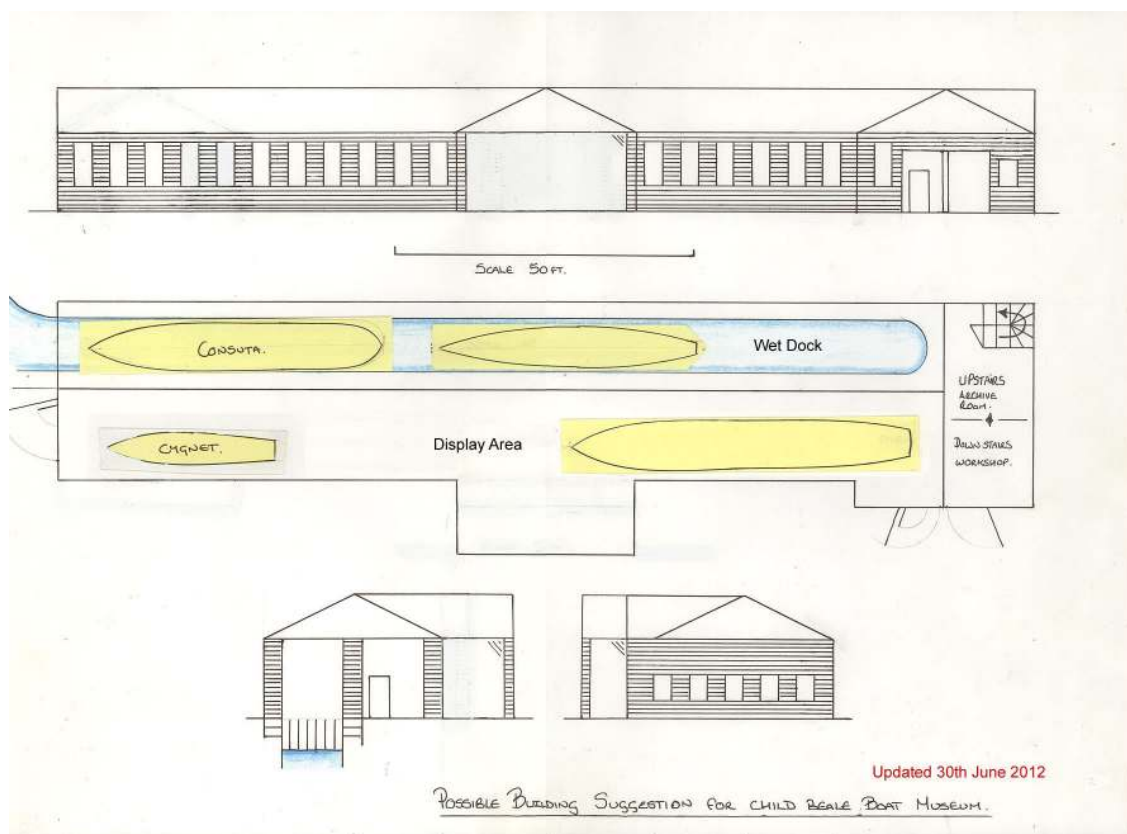
Consuta engineering report

The boat is running well although there have been a few minor problems. Both injector check valves started to stick, surprising really because they had been thoroughly cleaned at the start of the season. The problem was due to excessive chalk/mud build up on the check valve wings stopping them from closing properly, perhaps this was due to very muddy Thames river water this spring.

Another problem is a persistent steam leakage from the main steam stop valve. Leaks here are not always apparent, probably because the valve is hidden under the boiler top and is not easily accessible when in steam. However the valve needs to be examined while in steam to find the cause. Yes it's the same valve that required replacement studs during the winter, it has three gaskets plus a rather badly designed packing gland – so in my opinion not a very good valve at all.

What news about a base for Consuta at Beale Park

This project is moving slowly and we have now commissioned architects to prepare a planning application. I've included a simple sketch of our initial thoughts on the requirements and you will see this is a large building.



The Museum will be a large building located within a re-defined park visitor boundary and will need to be well screened from the lake and river. The building is to have wet dock and dry stand areas, laid out with a public viewing access walkthrough showing a comprehensive display of operational and static historical Thames boats. We also plan to exhibit a collection of boating artefacts with explanation displays to provide visitors with information about early pleasure boating development on the Thames, covering the 19th and early 20th century.

When you study the history of pleasure boating on the Thames it becomes clear that boat building developed very quickly during the second part of the 19th century; some boat builders prospered to become major boat and ship builders to the world, for example names such as Thornycroft, Yarrow, and Saunders. After the second world war GRP hull building methods soon started to displace the older traditional boat building ways, and the wooden boat building industry went into decline. Most boat builders on the Thames have gone now, and we are only left with a few specialists who cater for the traditional market. We believe that this history period of Thames boating is worthy of a public museum centre by the River. The Thames with its large numbers of surviving classic boats should have a museum to remind us of this important part of Thames history, and what better place is there than Beale Park for such a museum.

The Consuta Trust have agreed to underwrite the initial costs of making a planning application. The building plus all the site prep work to complete the project will require substantial funds which the Trust does not have. An HLF Grant is an obvious source and we are currently preparing an application for an HLF grant. The HLF grants provide excellent opportunities for volunteer effort to be used for unskilled work on the project, this can be useful because the work can count towards our part of the partnership funding. However the first main hurdle is whether planning will permit our development in this area of “outstanding natural beauty”.

If you are able to help or offer guidance in any way with fund raising please do contact us – we certainly need some expertise for this work.

What about that lighter boiler

Oh not that old chestnut again? Well we’ve done a bit more work on this (actually I have) and I’m hoping that we will soon be in a position to find out the cost of a replacement lighter boiler.

Weight is an important consideration because the key feature required of any fast displacement boat is to keep the boat as light as possible. Sam Saunders knew this and his monocoque construction using Consuta plywood meant that when built, Consuta was much lighter than other umpire launches of that period, thus creating much less wash. Initial weight calculations show that a new boiler could be made lighter than the present one by about 860lbs. What does this extra weight mean? Here is an interesting comparison:- it’s equivalent to permanently carrying around 19 bags of coal (they are 20kg each) all the time. This is before anyone even gets onboard - put like this, doesn’t it sounds awful and so we shouldn’t continue to put up with it.

Finally

Thank you for your continuing support, the help provided by your donations and physical help with maintenance and crewing of Consuta are essential.

Please note that there are options open for your own private outings. Why not try contacting us with your request.

Parts of the Consuta website has now been updated; one page marked “Future plans” gives further info about a Beale Park base plus our thinking on a possible replacement boiler.

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Geoffrey Newton

Died May 16th 2012 at the age of 81



Geoff was an eminent orthopaedic surgeon who, as well as being one of the pioneers of knee replacement surgery, developed new techniques for treating people with neck fractures; his reputation in the profession was so high that surgeons would travel from London to watch him operate.

In 1960 he spent a year in Antarctica with the Australian Antarctic National Research Expedition as a medical officer and photographer, based at Mawson. Mount Newton, a peak in the Prince Charles Mountains mapped by the expedition, is named after him after some amazing survival experiences.

He applied his surgeon's skills to woodwork and converted an old school at Bretby into a lovely home. After retirement in 1992 he taught himself metalwork and built a steam launch complete with machinery named Suilven with which he won the amateur boat building competition at the Greenwich Boat Show.

Geoff became a trustee of the Consuta Trust in 1999 and his contribution was considerable.

In the early years of Consuta's restoration, I remember telephoning him to ask if he would like to be a trustee. His immediate answer was to ask how much money did we need – what a response.

His contribution was extensive; do you remember the full size wooden copy of the DesVignes steam engine with its



Geoff on paint removal work using a hot air gun and scraper



rotating crankshaft, and the wooden boiler – these were most useful during the fitting out work at Colin Henwood's. Geoff made the first boat cover for Consuta, he was a dab hand at the stitching. He helped with a personal donation and also by raising funds from his boiler commissioning projects.

Geoff was a great guy to know and have on the team helping get things done. He will be sadly missed by the Trust and his many friends.

Our condolences to wife Pat and daughter Sarah

Photo montage

Top:- Saturday during the Beale Park Boat Show
Middle A typical race start at the Henley Womens Regatta
Bottom left Goring and Streatley Pageant – The Beale Park shallop
Bottom right Consuta ready to show off at the Queen's Henley Garden Party

