



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. 31 — Summer 2007

Dear Supporter,

We are now mid summer but as I write the Thames has been in flood and with water levels dropping may just about be in a navigable state again. Fortunately Consuta was safely moored on a pontoon in still water on the lake at Beale Park. It was just a little tricky to get to the pontoon as the water level had flooded the grassy bank access; should have brought the waders! I hope you have not suffered any flooding or damage.

Going with the Flow at Oxford

The year started well, we took Consuta to Oxford. The trip is some 30 plus miles and 8 locks, and so a long way on a rather cold day, fortunately the sun came out after midday. There was however a major delay caused by a stoppage at Cleeve Lock. The lock was unmanned but operational by boat owner control; supposedly. We arrived to find a narrowboat in the lock with gates closed and all paddles down. The control buttons did nothing. After an hour the Goring Lock keeper arrived and sorted it out; apparently this hang-up is a common fault on this upgraded lock mechanism; how frustrating. The secure mooring provided at Osney Lock in Oxford was splendid, the EA and event organisers did us proud.



Approaching Folly Bridge, Oxford - Salters station on the left

It started rainy on Saturday the day of the show but this was short lived and the sun was soon out; the event although a bit chaotic at times was a great success. The river is of course smaller here and we did have difficulty manoeuvring and turning just above Folly Bridge because of the wind. The return trip was on a wet day but it was a fairly quick trip back to Beale Park. After this outing we wondered if Consuta had ever been any further upriver than Osney lock, anybody know?.



The next event was the Beale Park Boat Show, early June



Beale Park Boat Show

The weather was kind and we shared "our" pontoon with several boats of the Steam Boat Association.

Consuta was then moved down to our Charvil mooring the week following the Show, to be ready for a private event here and also for the Henley Regatta and Henley Festival.

When the time came to move Consuta further down river to Henley there was serious consideration should we do it because of strong stream conditions, fortunately only the yellow warning boards were out at the locks for the down river trip on Wednesday 4th July. The current was strong but there was very little river

traffic so none of the usual queuing at locks. We had the use of a boathouse at the Henley Management College, many thanks for this. This boathouse although not long enough for Consuta did keep us right off the river. It was however rather difficult manhandling Consuta in stern first at 90 degrees to the strong river current, especially as Hobbs' Waterman was moored here when we arrived. Once in it was a very safe mooring, we wondered how Collin would manage to get Consuta out on the Saturday; suggestions of go for it like a cork out of the bottle; fortunately the river flow had dropped considerably by the day.

Consuta made three outings during the Henley Regatta and the Henley Festival, great fun. Time had come once again to move Consuta upriver to Cleeve Lock for the Goring and Streatley Regatta.

This move had been planned for Friday 20th July to meet up with some Venetian Gondoliers who were on a trip from Lechlade to Greenwich. However we found that we needed to move Consuta from our temporary boathouse mooring before the 18th, so the Sunday was hastily chosen for this repositional cruise. The car transport arrangements were convoluted but after some indecision we ended up at the St George and Dragon at Wargrave for lunch while we waited for my daughter to walk from Wargrave station having completed the car moves.



A couple of heavy thunder storms confirmed that perhaps we had chosen the wrong day for weather, however we arrived on the Beale Park lake in sunshine with all our cars in the right place, so a good day after all!

All we had to do now was to steam Consuta late morning on the Friday, travel downstream a short way with the intrepid Gondoliers, then steam up to the Rally site just above Cleeve Lock. Well you know what happened on Friday — torrential rain. Dutifully we went over to the park about 11:30 through flooded roads to the flooded car park; no gondoliers, big puddles and continual heavy rain. So off to the pub for lunch at the Swan in Pangbourne.

When we got back to Beale Park about 2pm; the gondoliers were there, the sun was out, so

we consulted our hardy crew and decided to steam Consuta to move to the regatta site. However a notice said that the Goring & Streatley Regatta had been cancelled, so instead we set off and followed the Gondoliers as far as Mapledurham lock. The yellow caution boards were being replaced by reds, so back to the safety of the Lake. I won't tell you about the return home by car; roads flooded, power lines down, it took nearly 2 hours by country lanes.

Well you know the rest, serious floods in several counties, with all boats on the Thames moored up for many days. Still so as I write now.



Eight oared Gondola on the Whitchurch Mapledurham reach

We were relieved that Consuta was safe at Beale Park, if we had still been moored at the Charvil Mooring this would have been cause for concern.

The Gondoliers made it to the Trad Boat Rally, I wonder how they got on for the rest of the trip. The Trad Rally was a much quieter affair, surprisingly it was still on. However the public had to vacate the site on the Sunday afternoon because the meadow started to flood.

I've put some pictures of the floods on the Trust website.

We had intended that this season would be a less energetic season than last year, but the weather has certainly knocked out even some of our remaining boating options.

The Steam plant

Paul Smith has worked to improve engine valve timing and this now allows the engine to turn over at very low revs. The rev counter stops at 40 rpm, but the engine still turns at even slower speeds. Work on the slide valves has reduced valve clatter which used to be a nuisance at low speeds. The boiler still suffers from water carry over but it can be controlled and is not too much of a problem. In general the steam plant is performing very well.



Engine room looking very smart during the Beale Park Boat Show

Our proposed Floating Boathouse

The design has been more or less sorted. Michael Vicary has sketched out some splendid artistic ideas, and based on these the boathouse should look great, many thanks for this Michael.

Unfortunately the Berkshire Planning Department seemed to decide that because our application to moor a floating boathouse on the lake at Beale Park was an unusual request, it would require some case law referral before even deciding how it should be processed, this has taken two months so far all very frustrating. You may be aware that boats are not subject to planning regs, and it seems that even some long term leisure moorings might not either; the legal guys really love this stuff.

The other major task which we are about to face is to raise funds for the project, currently estimated at needing about £70,000. So if you have a spare cash do please consider helping with the costs of providing a floating Boat House for Consuta, this will be so important to secure our future operations.

By the way if you have any ideas how we should display Consuta in future years please do let us have your thoughts and suggestions.

Thank you for your continuing support. wishing you all the very best for the summer season.

Brian Smith – 01488 658795

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5th August 2007

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

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

Below a copy of one of several splendid water colour sketches provided by Michael Vicary



Our mooring at Beale Park during the floods





Consuta at Oxford just about to go under Folly Bridge

The real college barge at Streatley





Tim Williams sent me this splendid photo of the large Gondola which eventually reached the Dome
David Creasey provided this photo of steamboats taken at the Beale Park Boat Show

