



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. 57 — Summer 2014

Dear All,

The floods finally cleared by spring and we are currently basking in the summer sun (with showers); however these floods had an effect on summer boating as the Thames Traditional Boat Rally and the Goring and Streatley Regatta had to be cancelled because the ground would not recover in time.

The proposed Museum

The great news of course is that the planning appeal for the Thames Heritage Boat Museum has been upheld and overturns that refusal decision by the West Berkshire Planning officers. The planning appeal decision makes great reading, the various points made by appeal inspector Ken Smith in the decision do match our own view of what the local planning policies are all about. Thank you to everyone who has given support in various forms. So how did the local officers get it so wrong? we don't know. The appeal result has created quite a bit of news in the local media.

Despite the planning application taking much longer than expected; the significant public support we had during this phase has been most encouraging; thank you to all who have sent their congratulations.

We now need to raise monies needed to build the museum, interestingly a few owners of historic boats have already asked us if there could be a place for their own historic boat in the museum.

The Goring Gap Boat Club had also submitted an application last year for a large boathouse just above the Gatehampton railway bridge only about half a mile upriver from Beale Park. The same WBC officers had told the club in pre application discussions that there would be no objection in principle to their proposal, strange this was quite contrary to the treatment of our application. The club have been granted planning approval by the planning committee – good luck to our neighbours.

The planning process for the museum took up a lot of our time (and effort) so we are now looking at all ways of raising the funds for the building. This is an exciting project and the planning appeal has shown that there is a lot of support for the museum but we will need all the help we can raising the funds needed. Currently we are looking at potential grants from land fill tax organisations (BIFFA is one in our area), the LEADER grants for heritage and rural enterprises provide funds from DEFRA and the EU, there are others. If you have any knowledge/experience of grant giving organisations please do let us know. We are also working on an HLF application following our encouraging meeting with their officers last year.

If you are prepared to provide funding support then please do let us know. If we are successful with an HLF grant we will need what is known as partnership funding – this can vary between 5% to 20% of the total grant requested.

Consuta re-launched.

Consuta was craned into the water on a rather damp May day at the same time as a contractor was putting out the pontoons for the Boat Show – so there was a little congestion round the slipway. We also had to lift the boiler back into Consuta once she was afloat; the boiler is all painted up and looking great. After the re-launch Consuta was moved to our pontoon and the covers put in place because the weather was not suitable to get all the pipework connected up. The final piping up was carried out the next day during some fine weather. It always takes quite a time to get all the bits back in place – hardest is to remember where all the bits go – a bit of a worry when someone asks where does this valve go. The only bits missing this time were a few machine screws – the whistle and its cord. The whistle was found later but new screws had to be ordered, so the installation was completed with most items refurbished. We then carried out a successful boiler steam test with only minor leaks on the hand hole doors these soon stopped while in steam – amazing the efficiency of these modern non asbestos gaskets. The steam test for the boiler inspector was carried out on the Friday of the Beale Park Boat Show. No problems at all; the gauge was in correct agreement with the inspector's test gauge, the safety valves blew at the red line on the gauge and all the fittings tested out fine. The boiler was passed as OK for service. During the cold inspection we had taken several metal thickness measurements on various parts of the boiler (this gadget was Brian's new Xmas toy) and only very slight wastage was shown at the points measure; the inspector asked for the details to be attached to the certification report.

Beale Park Boat Show and other steamings

Consuta was very busy carrying passengers for short trips on the Friday afternoon during some lovely weather. However on Saturday there was heavy rain in the morning and when we eventually raised steam after the rain stopped, oops! the fire went out at first attempt – tut tut – more training needed; the afternoon was again very busy with tripping.

Sunday was a great day, numerous trips on Consuta; the fireman came over about 2:00pm and said we've used all our coal – I thought that's impossible. This needed a rush purchase from the local garage; two 10Kg bags of house coal and two 10 Kg bags of homefire (or something like it) I estimated that this would keep her going for at least another hour. After the last trip around 5:00pm I was told that there was still some coal left in the bunkers. So Homefire is obviously just the job for this type of operation and it leaves very little ash. However it would be no good for serious running as an umpire launch, and I'll bet there would be a lot of fly ash from the funnel when working hard.

The Boat Show was managed by a new organiser; one major change which seemed to be very sensible was to move the position of the visitor entry point. This was a great improvement because everyone who came into the show now passed our stall, this contributed to the added numbers of people who wanted a trip on Consuta.

Many of you will know that the Steamboat Association arranged a novelty event during the show – a steam outboard competition. Some amazing contraptions were tried out including a twin cylinder atmospheric paddle engine – this had a few bugs to be sorted out. Perhaps the most enterprising was the simple conversion of a lawn mower petrol engine into a steam engine in only two weeks. There was a delightful four cylinder radial poppet valve engine which ran perfectly; altogether an amazing variation, I wonder what the public thought of it all.

The Henley Womens Regatta

This regatta was next on our event list and uses seven umpire launches including Consuta. Racing starts at 8:00am and continues until after 6:00pm. I was told that races during the



Three of the photos above show the fitting of the boiler on launch day then piping up. The photo in the sun was taken the next day during the finishing off the work.

Below Consuta loading trippers for a trip on Consuta. The strange contraption on the right is an atmospheric engine outboard entered into the Steam Boat Association steam outboard competition.

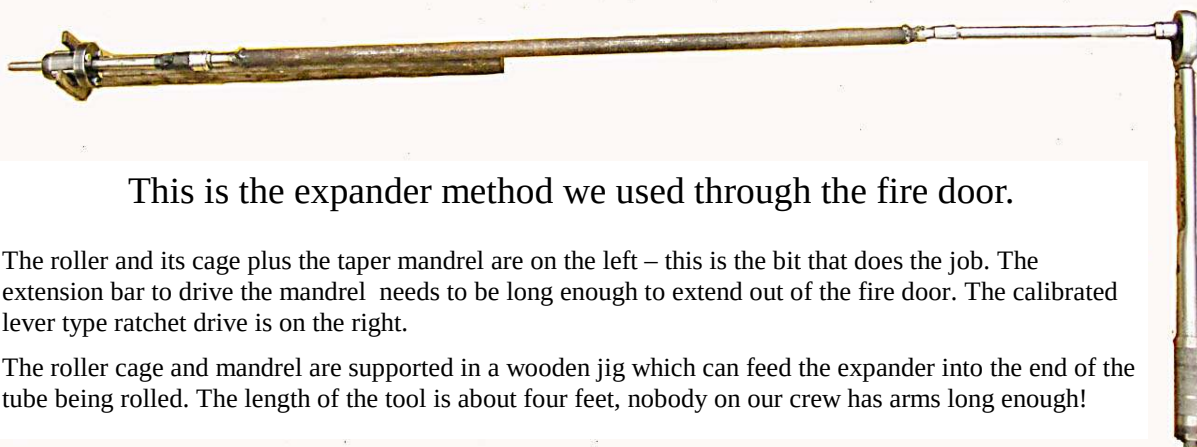


morning were starting at three minute intervals; a new race starts before the previous one has even reached the finish. Hard work for the crew on Consuta and also I'm sure for the other launches. Consuta needs relief crews to keep up this pace and burns a lot of coal; David had brought 20 extra bags which were kept on the shore although at the end we had to take seven of these back to base. Crews were David Eager, Nigel Gourley, Nathan Girdler, Mark Smith, David Hubbard, Paul Smith and self. Lyn brought some folding seats which were set up by the race start area; these were much appreciated by the crew and supporters.

Engineering problems on Consuta

Paul who had fired in the afternoon reported; the boiler tubes in the firebox are leaking badly. OH NO NOT AGAIN! We got back to Charvil OK, but it was clear that all was not well, everyone was tired so she was just put to bed while we pondered options.

Next day I dug out our tube expander and all the bits needed to do the work through the firedoor. Paul made up a useful tool to hold the expander gauge while inserting through the firedoor; our arms just aren't long enough to reach in. After studying the photos taken on Saturday we decided to go to the mooring on Monday before a Trustee meeting in the evening and have a go. We did 16 tubes then made an hydraulic test to 40 psi – success no leaks – whew, now ready for the Reading Regatta.



This is the expander method we used through the fire door.

The roller and its cage plus the taper mandrel are on the left – this is the bit that does the job. The extension bar to drive the mandrel needs to be long enough to extend out of the fire door. The calibrated lever type ratchet drive is on the right.

The roller cage and mandrel are supported in a wooden jig which can feed the expander into the end of the tube being rolled. The length of the tool is about four feet, nobody on our crew has arms long enough!

Various theories why this problem has re-occurred, an old photo of the original tubes leaks before (in 2010) were replaced showed that the leaks were from tubes in the same position on the tubeplate in both cases? So we now think the problem is because the coals are too close to the tube nest – sometimes even over the bottom row when fired by an over enthusiastic fireman, there were other factors. Perhaps fire brick protection on the throat plate would help, some has now been put in place.

Consuta sponsored by Savills took part in the Reading Town Regatta during the afternoon 28th June. The day started with a rather wet and miserable short cruise upriver late morning but the sun came out by early afternoon. This was a very relaxed event with some VIP trips, although the crew got carried away and worked as umpire launch for six races. This race course is short at 800m but very fast – great fun, I understand that the rev counter indicated that we were travelling at 16mph at the start on one race – very exciting.

As some tubes were still leaking, just a little, so we had another go at tube expanding, this time with the ratchet torque set up correctly. It had been set too low previously so the



David wonders – maybe I did bring too much coal



Some of the crew:- David, Mark, David, Nigel and Nathan



These photos were taken during the Henley Women's Regatta – a long day and the weather was glorious.



tubes should be good for anything now. To give you an idea of what torque effort is needed on the expander the torque gauge was set at 28ftlbs for the 1.5" OD tubes.

So what is the long term solution? yes I know a new boiler, this is still under review. Perhaps next winter we should consider seal welding the tubes in the firebox (and I suppose the smokebox tubeplate as well).

Future events for Consuta during 2014

The programme of activities for Consuta after the Henley festival are looking very light – in fact nothing on the calendar. The recent trustee meeting has authorised the arrangement of some boat handling training sessions in late July and August when Consuta is returned to Beale Park. We have an engineers handbook, but it was felt that there was a need to train people on the procedures for handling Consuta such as when coming up to a mooring, and turning in the river. On Consuta the helmsman has to instruct the engineer about what is required from the engine; so this needs to be clear and not open to misinterpretation. For example a command such as "stop engines" can result in a steam throttle shutoff, leaving engine to rotate in the water flow, or shut off steam and put the reverser over which does stop the engine – this has a significant braking effect on Consuta, or even put steam on when the engine is in reverse to stop the boat in the water – these variations can serious upset the helmsman's judgement so clearly this instruction is not precise enough.

Consuta outings for the rest of the year

If you have any ideas about using Consuta for the rest of the season please do let us know. We try to arrange outings which fulfil our trust objectives although the occasional private outing can be acceptable. We've just completed a wedding function at Bisham Abbey and will be taking part in the Henley Festival. Currently no information has been published about an SBA Thames event. There is the possibility of a couple of other events later this month or in August.

If you have any queries about any of the trust activities or future plans please do get in touch.

Thank you for your continuing support to help Consuta operational. Brian 9th July 2014

The photo below shows Consuta moving off the umpire pickup pontoon at the Reading Regatta just as a race was coming up; I think the telephoto makes it look closer to the race coming along the course than it was.

