



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. 58 — Autumn 2014

Dear All,

As I write this some fine late summer weather, sunny and above average temperatures for the time of year is coming to an end.

Consuta has been in steam quite a lot, even though there was no Trad Boat Rally, no Goring and Streatley Regatta and no Steam Boat Association Thames event.

Here is a review of some events that Consuta has attended since the last newsletter, in chronological order:-

The Henley Festival

Consuta had a good mooring spot for picking up passengers during the Festival and did very well for donations on the five evenings in some nice weather – see photo back page.

Boat handling sessions

Our first one was at the Charvil mooring, then Consuta was moved upriver to Beale Park for another session on the lake at Beale Park.

Steve and Dilly Bil, Henley Royal Regatta umpire launch drivers came along and compared the differences of handling Consuta with the petrol umpire launches. The main difference is probably due to the sizes of propellers, Consuta has a 30 inch diameter prop, whereas the petrol launches only have about 18 inches, and the big prop not only provides great acceleration but also has a major braking effect at times when not always needed.



Nuns Acre summer picnic.

This was a lovely garden party with some 30 people from the Goring and Streatley Historical Society at the private riverside gardens called Nuns Acre, only a short distance up river from Goring Lock. The weather was fine and warm and after the splendid picnic lunch provided by our hosts we made three relatively short trips for party guests.



Supporters outing into Reading

This was a special supporters outing onto the River Kennet through Reading, and proved a popular cruise with perfect weather. The distance to be covered was quite ambitious which meant an early start of 7:30am at Beale Park for the crew getting Consuta ready; we did well and were ready to set off by about 9:00 am.

Two additional passengers were picked up at Caversham lock at about 11:00 am, then we set off into the unknown turning into the River Kennet – well perhaps for most, although my own family are well versed in the boating quirks of the River Kennet.

Blakes lock although in EA territory is the first lock on the Kennet and has manual lock operation, the same as the locks above Oxford. This lock was on self service and our crew and passengers liked operating it.

I had looked up the headroom for the Kennet navigation, but there was no definitive answers. Conclusion was that minimum headroom clearance was a little over 8ft – now Consuta needs 8ft plus to clear the funnel so we clearly needed to be cautious. The lowest bridge would probably be the Reading High Street bridge which might be OK, but has a gentle curving arch which if Consuta was off centre would not do at all. Also any river current here would certainly add to the difficulties. In the past this section of the Kennet was much narrower and the river current was always pretty fast – the section was known as “The Brewery Gut” - as a brewery used to be here. The section was fitted with traffic light boat control making it safer with one way system for boats travelling on it, the passage time limit was apparently 12 minutes.

Although the river current was quite light we decided to drop the Funnel just to be safe.



Traffic lights went green on the button push, indicating that nobody else was coming down river. Once under the bridge we were now in the centre of the (relatively) new shopping mall development called the Oracle. Plenty of eating places but no mooring is allowed. There seemed to be a dinosaur theme section, I was told later that it was a children's golf putting area, but equipped with various models of extinct creatures including an animated Tyrannosaurus Rex with roaring sound effects.

After this interesting area we came to County Lock which has a rise of only

about 12 inches – is it really necessary we wondered? The active members in our party all wanted to help work the lock; but had not realised that we needed windlasses. Consuta was now on BW territory or should I say Canal and River Trust waters (CRT). We had tried to get a CRT day licence for Consuta at Blakes Lock but the lock was unmanned so no help here.



After County lock we were passing through the Victorian suburbs of Reading with terrace house gardens dropping down to the river on one side, then suddenly we seemed to be in the country – dragonflies, kingfishers, and clear waters; however not quite country yet as we were actually passing through a recent shopping development area of Reading – however not visible from the water.

After about 2 miles we reached Fobney Lock, this large lock is a remnant of the old Newbury Barge locks; which were 110ft long by 17ft wide; Fobney is also one of the deepest on the river, I think with a drop of eight feet or more. The River Kennet Navigation covered the Kennet between the Thames and Newbury, the Avon navigation covered the Avon between Bath and Bristol, then they were later joined by the K&A Canal between Newbury and Bath.

The next lock on our journey was Southcote which was the standard 72ft by 14ft wide and we were definitely in the

country now. At about 1:00pm we arrived at the excellent moorings of the Cuning Man Inn at Burghfield to stop for refreshments. This was our intended destination and I was pleased that we had managed to get this far on the Kennet.

We started off back at about 2:30 and arrived at our Beale park mooring by 6:30. A wonderful exploratory trip with excellent weather; this was probably the first time Consuta has ever been on the Kennet and Avon Navigation. I can thoroughly recommend a short visit from the Thames, where an EA licence does also cover passage through Blakes Lock into Reading town centre.





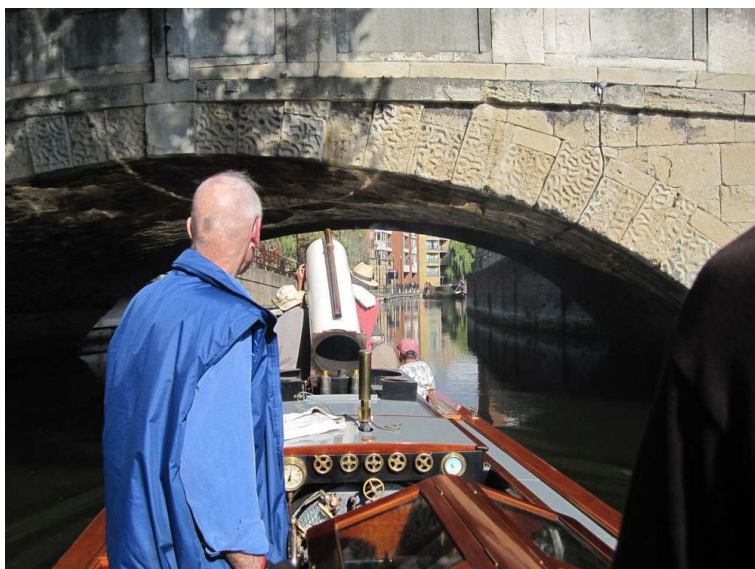
Above:- The Dinosaur theme area in the Oracle

Below:- Dropping the funnel for the low bridge on the return



Consuta moored at the Cuning Mann Inn at Burghfield

All that remains of the Huntley and Palmer factory complex



This was a great trip and we could make an excursion into Reading again next year if there is sufficient interest,

There is a very small museum in Reading called Blakes Lock Museum, this is by the Bel and Dragon Inn just above Blakes Lock; also of course Reading was home to the largest biscuit and cake manufacture of the world Huntley and Palmer who at one time had over 5000 employees. Mr Palmer was a boating man and he owned Lodona built in 1884, later renamed Donola which then gave long service with the Thames Conservancy as their VIP inspection launch. Donola is now owned by the National Maritime Museum and is current in storage at Swindon.

During the recent good weather we had arranged two further outings with Consuta; one was for the friends of Sir William McAlpine's Fawley Museum and the other was for our own supporters. Both excursions were up river. There are many photos of Consuta's activities this year on the Consuta facebook pages – these are publicly accessible from the trust website home page, click the F symbol – there is no need to be a “face book” user.

More about the heritage side of Sam Saunders

While we were at the Nuns Acre garden party we were looking at the boathouse next door which is known as the Nuns Acre boathouse. There was a full length narrow boat housed here so clearly the wet dock is quite long, also there was a dovecote style ventilator on the roof. We wondered could this have been an original steam launch boathouse and the ventilator used for the boiler smoke emissions?.

Now Salters publicity of 1905 states that Mr F.C. Strick kept his steam launch in this boathouse above Goring Lock, and we know that Mr. Strick owned Maritana which was a 54ft version of the Consuta hull design also used for umpire duties. So it is fairly certain that the Nuns Acre boathouse had been used for the steam launch Maritana 110 years ago.

Another part of history.

Graham Lindsay had obtained a 30ft Saunders hull which was named Ulula. This copper stitched launch had been chopped into two parts and was used as an example of a Consuta

plywood construction at Henwood & Deans to examine the methods which might have been used to stitch these hulls using copper wire. Now we had understood that this hull had been burnt; but no it hadn't, so we picked it up and moved it to Beale Park to be stored for future use as an museum exhibit, or perhaps for possible future restoration, you never know.

We don't have any history of Ulula except it is probably the same size and shape as Victoria; there are signs that she had been fitted with a petrol motor.

If anyone has any information about this historic launch please do let us know.



Photos of the stern part of Ulula, there is a centre section of about four feet missing.

The Museum

Work is continuing to prepare an HLF grant application for the cost of building the museum. One point which had been made by the HLF officers was that we would need a charitable organisation with appropriate objects for the museum, and they had pointed out the Consuta Trust objects were not suitable.

The Consuta Trustees have decided that it would be best to establish a separate charitable Incorporated organisation (CIO) to take responsibility for the museum project. The Thames Boats Trust does have the right objects but unfortunately it is not a corporate organisation and it cannot be converted to a charitable company under the present Charity Commission rules. A CIO is now being registered with the Charity Commission named The Tamesis Trust, we anticipate this will have been completed by the end of this year.

The name Tamesis Trust is derived from the Roman name for the Thames and it is quite distinctive. The Thames and the Isis were historically considered as joining just south of Dorchester, also the river at Oxford was often referred to as the Isis.

Our museum building design brief is currently being developed by two architect friends this will have the details required for a lottery grant application. We have already received several fund donations from friends, including just recently a significant cash donation; thank you all for this help. Early approaches to several grant providers are proving encouraging; as you may know partnership funding is needed for a HLF lottery grant, this can be a requirement for anything between 5% to 25% of the total grant requested.

Thank you to those who have provided goods, and offered help and suggestions about fund raising. Also thank you all for your continuing support for Consuta.

Our late winter social has not been arranged yet more news on this before Christmas.

Brian Smith on behalf of the trustees 4th October 2014

