



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. 45 — Summer 2011



Consuta – Crane in and boiler inspection



Consuta was craned in late May (23rd), and what a careful crane driver he was, we also helped Beale Park launch their replica Shallop. My wife Lyn has taken a liking to this vessel so she gold painted the lion and canopy and added period trimmings.

After the re-launch we filled Consuta's boiler and raised steam. There were two main purposes for this; the first was to have a test in steam to conclude the boiler inspection and the second was to provide refresher/training opportunities for crew; oh sorry I've just been reminded there was a third reason; to steam to the pub for lunch. All in all a jolly good day.

The Beale Park Boat Show

We had been planning to have Consuta in steam ready to welcome a 1945 fast patrol boat "Garth" which was destined to come to the Beale Park boat show, but apparently the vessel had some engine problem which prevented attendance, so we had to make up for this with other WW2 reminders such as a replica Spitfire and Hurricane. This show is always a great place for anyone



interested in small boating. It's a pity that there were only three other SBA members boats present, but then we were privileged to see one of the rare steaming's of the lovely G.F.G DesVignes launch Pierrette. This launch has recently had a major refurbishment and was in pristine condition; so much so that their crew were not allowed on board wearing any shoes or socks, only bare feet. Crew were dressed for the occasion in white trousers and navy blue tops.

During the show there were two fine sunny days, but the Sunday had constant light rain all day; so we did not even remove the covers from Consuta.

However during the two good days we provided large numbers of visitors with 'free' trips around the lake and amazingly the donation box was impressively heavy at the end of each day, so easily covering our coal costs.

We also helped to look after the static display of Cygnet which as always attracts a lot of attention from the historians. The Thames Boats Trust are currently conducting some detail examinations of the originality of the vessel which is revealing some interesting stuff.



The ten oared Shallop made in the 1960's for the film "A Man for All Seasons" was also in operation. This proved very popular with visitors who were asked to provide the crew. However nobody was prepared to play the part of Henry VIII although there were several ladies and children dressed up in period costume? all good fun. my wife Lyn and sons had a row in a small version of a Viking longship – a short ship!, I was told this was great fun.

On the Monday, Robin Ford had arranged for visitors of the U3A to find out all about boating. Consuta gave several trips during the afternoon but someone must have put a curse on the donation box because it was not very popular. Late afternoon Consuta was then moved downriver to Charvil to be ready for umpire launch duty at the Henley Women's regatta.

Henley Women's Regatta

This is a great place for crew and supporters to see just what Consuta was built for and can still do. On one recent outing someone apparently said to one of our crew members "well she may have been able to follow the eights 100 years ago but wouldn't be able to do it now"; what rot. One of the umpires we carried said "Be ready because this race will be a very fast so make sure you have plenty of steam". Obviously didn't realise that the harder you run the more steam the



boiler makes, and with good coal anything is possible, and oh yes we really do have good coal this year. There was slight degree of smugness when one of the other six petrol umpire launches had a bit of bother (broken control cable) so was out of action for the whole afternoon. Still Consuta only worked on the Saturday of this three day event but Saturday is the longest day with racing from 8:00am to 6:00pm and no tea breaks.

Henley Royal Regatta

Consuta was not on umpire launch service but was present on the Saturday with private parties from the Management College. The Regatta is all about racing but is also a great social boating event. Sorry no pictures.

Henley Festival.

Consuta was here during the evening for all five days, crew were Colin Henwood, David Eager and Lucy Smith, with Lucie Henwood on shore managing some brilliant PR work on our behalf. I don't know the total donations but they are expected to be in excess of £1400. However by Sunday the crew were totally exhausted and I was instructed by my daughter that I was needed to help her take Consuta back to Charvil on the Monday; this was a quite relaxed and pleasant trip which also allowed us the opportunity to repair the leaking blower valve.



Thames Traditional Boat Rally.

Disappointing weather, a disappointing rally mooring position, but a good steaming display for the TTBR. Unfortunately however our donation box remained unused. We steamed in company with Pierrette on several display runs, but only at a rather slow speed so I suppose the boy racers were disappointed.

Engineering matters.

My son Paul keeps reminding me that we must do things to the engine to make it quieter. Most old steam engine have what is known as a total loss oiling system, this means that the oil is fed to the bearing and then allowed to run out into the sump for disposal. So you can see if there is play in any of the moving parts then the oil will run away quite quickly, ideally tolerances should be less than 1 thou of an inch and if the play in any bearing more than this then there will probably be a knock or thump as well. Most modern IC engine have pressure lubricated bearings where the oil is just kept pumped around again and again.

Over winter, work was done on the crosshead slippers so we were hoping for a quiet engine. It was better but there was still a bit of a thump running slow. This was quickly identified as end float on the forward cylinder big end bearing which on measurement seemed to be about 4thou play. The bearing was dutifully removed and a bit of whitemetal added to the bronze and then scrapped in to resolve this. There still remained one more slight knock which was identified as about 2 thou end play in the aft big end – current status is that it is to be done later. Another issue which we would like to resolve is that when running ahead valve events are not quite even, although they seem perfectly fine astern. This will be just a question of adjusting the valve timing, easy to say but a bit more difficult to access the adjustments.

The boiler seems fine, although various minor valve leaks are always annoying, the worst feature is the water carry over on the steam supply to the engine which necessitates drains to be kept partially open at all times, the only cure for this will be a replacement boiler. Some work has already started on drawing up the design of a better and lighter boiler for Consuta; more information on this shortly.

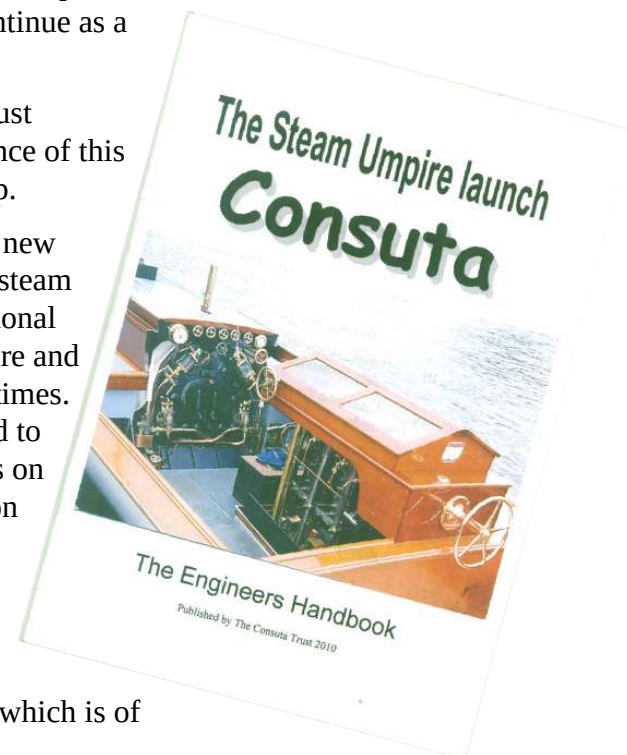
Trust Management News

Derek Brown who has resigned as Treasurer of the Trust has been our guiding hand with the finances ever since the trust was set up in 1996 (a registered charity in 1998). Derek has agreed to continue as a Consuta Trustee.

We are delighted that Tiki House has now taken over as Trust treasurer. Tiki is Tony Cundick's daughter and has experience of this sort of work also being treasurer of the Burbage Scout troop.

An Engineers handbook has been produced specifically for new recruits (or even the old hands) providing details about the steam plant management on Consuta. We are hoping to add additional sections; such as details of the best way to start the boiler fire and techniques for firing and maintaining steam pressure at all times. A couple of our crew are brilliant at this so these skills need to be passed on. One of our recruits has asked for more details on how to ensure the engine is being oiled correctly so a section on this will also be included.

By the way if anyone would like a copy of the Engineer's Handbook please let me know and I will post you one, a small donation towards printer and postal cost would be appreciated. Note that the detail is specifically for Consuta which is of course coal fired.



A base for Consuta or perhaps even a Thames Boat Museum

This objective remains as elusive as ever. However we do have one very exciting option on the table, but I can't give any details at present. This base would be perfect and in the right area near Henley, it would have all the facilities required for the long term future of keeping Consuta operational and provide all year public access, so we shall have to wait and see.

Most still believe that Beale Park would make the ideal base, but all discussion on a permanent base here for Consuta is on hold while their Trustees are conducting a major review of what development is required to ensure the future prospects of the park. We have to understand and accept that this might not include Consuta.

We had hoped that we could form an alliance with the Swan Hotel in Streatley especially as this is the birth place of the Sam Saunders company, but unfortunately the current hotel owners do not seem to have any feeling for these nostalgic ideas.

Now about Donola



This photo of Donola was taken by David Harding in the late 1960's before she was removal for static display at the National Maritime Museum, Greenwich. Now currently held in storage.

Just recently some Trustees from the Consuta Trust and the Thames Boats Trust (Cygnet) paid a visit to the Science Museum store at Wroughton for an inspection of the steam launch Donola, currently kept here. Donola was built in 1894 as Lodona for Mr Palmer of the Reading Biscuit firm of Huntley & Palmer. In 1920 she was purchased by the Thames Conservancy who renamed her Donola and used her as their upper Thames inspection launch until 1969. Donola was then retired from service and given to the Greenwich National Maritime Museum for display in their Neptune Hall. About 12 years ago the museum had a major refurbishment and Donola was no longer required for display so was put into storage, and has languished here ever since.

The two Trusts realise that she would make an excellent exhibit for any Thames Museum. Lots of detail photos were taken during our visit, but reproduction of these is currently limited by Museum copyright policy. One feature of Donola which was a pleasant surprise was a rather nice semi spiral stair decent into the forward cabin, another feature which surely must cause comment is that Donola has two very large Windermere Kettles but no obvious toilet. This lock inspection business must have been thirsty work .

Donola is a very attractive gentleman's steam launch with a remarkable history of service while owned by the Thames Conservancy and really should be placed on public display. Trustees of the two trusts agreed that Consuta and Cygnet plus Donola would provide splendid core exhibits for a future River Thames museum.

Also About Cygnet

As I've mentioned Donola, I need to include a bit of information about Cygnet owned by the Thames Boats Trust. This pretty little 29 ft launch was built by J.I. Thornycroft in 1870 at Chiswick, so it is some 28 years older than Consuta. Cygnet was reputed to have been supplied to a Reading biscuit maker (is this the same Mr Palmer who later owned Lodona?). Conservation work has been started on Cygnet to make her ready for public exhibition, and this work has revealed some fascinating build details because Cygnet has retained most of her original fabric intact. Some examples:-

Cygnet was originally tiller steered only, the steering wheel is a later day addition; the hull is built of blued steel plating about 16 swg; the fore and aft decks are laid teak planking with cotton caulked seams sealed with pitch; the engine throttle works in reverse of modern valve operation ie clockwise is fully open; Cygnet is fitted with an original style Giffard injector, this injector is quite unlike modern steam injectors. I'm hoping that a full report of our findings will be available later in the year.



Summary

The public display of Consuta during the first ten years since restoration has been most successful; a credit to the Trust and it's supporters. We keep costs in control by a total reliance on volunteers for the various work tasks plus the generous financial support from our own supporter group, but without a proper base this task is made much harder. If you have any suggestions or ideas please do let us know.

If at any time you wish to take a more active role in the operation of Consuta please do not hold back. I know at times it can look as if our ops department is only for specialists; but I assure you that nothing could be further from the truth.

Thank you very much for your continuing support.

Brian Smith; 30th July 2011