



THE EMPIRE'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**

Patron: The Rt. Hon. Lord Strathcona & Mount Royal

News Letter No. 22 — April 2005

Dear Supporter,

I don't know what happened about that February anniversary re-enactment racing event at Henley, but it would have been impossible to get Consuta there because Sonning Lock has had a major rework during the Winter and was out of action until the end of March.

As a result we are having a rather lazy late start this year, with the usual variable April weather it is comforting to know that Consuta is safely tucked away in the cowshed at Beale Park, and not at the mercy of the elements. Consuta should however be in the water and operational again very soon in early May. The first event on our calendar is the three day Beale Park Boat Show in early June, this is always well worth a visit. Consuta will be present and probably is steam, but will stay moored up.

Social event

Our Winter Social event at the Crown Inn was well supported – we had about 35 friends who came for an excellent meal and sociable get together. Our boiler inspector even managed to carry out the cold inspection of the boiler earlier the same morning.

So how goes the Boiler Inspection (this is a bit like a car's MOT)

Since the cold inspection we've had the boiler hydraulically tested to 300 psi (the original cold test pressure). Several supporters came along, to see how it was done. The boiler is completely filled with water and the pressure is raised by pumping even more water in with a hand pump. At first the pressure seemed reluctant to stay up, this was a bit of a puzzle until we realised that there was a major leak back through the test pump valves – oops! A steam test is being planned for early May while the boiler is still out of the boat. This test is to check that all fittings are ok under steam, to see if the safety valves work correctly and set them as required by the inspector.

Winter work schedule to date

There has been a slow but steady maintenance work schedule carried on through the winter months. Additional panelling has been fitted under the port side deck which should stop coal and wood bags slipping down under the boiler. Supports have been fitted to hold the firing irons and for the tube brushes when not being used – nice to have proper places for these.

Modifications to the auxiliary steam supply manifold should make boiler removal simpler in future. The boiler lagging has been repaired and improved where required; some of the nicks in the propeller have been faired out; and the hull topsides have been cleaned with a magic fluid so that the hull now looks sparkling. There has been a lot of other remedial work carried out as well. Volunteers please note that remaining major tasks before any outings are to antifoul the hull, refit the boiler and reconnect up the pipework

Future of Consuta

Previously I've talked about the possibility of a lighter replacement boiler, but the trustees are

now thinking that our first priority should be to review the options of providing permanent summer and winter accommodation for Consuta. At present we rely on several friends who very kindly provide moorings and accommodation either free or at very low cost to The Trust. However, there is always the annual lift out and re-launching; this is costly and does give some moments of anguish. The annual expense of just this is about £1,000, mainly due to the crane hire charges; plus of course a requirement for lots of volunteer labour on the days. At the moment we are looking at the possibility of a floating boathouse which could provide Consuta with covered mooring throughout the year – wonderful – and would also make it easy for the winter lift out in the boathouse itself; Tony Cundick has provided some ideas and drawings. The main problem with this, apart from cost, is where could we base such a boathouse? we haven't an answer at the moment. A new trust – The River Thames Trust – has recently been formed which might provide the solution; they are looking at the possibilities of a River Thames Boat Museum – maybe located at Beale Park – what a great idea, let's wish them well with this project!

Our other responsibility is to make sure we have enough volunteers to keep Consuta running and on show to the public. Most of our operational crew are retired people who are not getting any younger. We do have active younger supporters, but they have to take time off from work, and this is often difficult or impossible. We do therefore want to increase the number of skippers and crew, so if you would like to get involved and gain some hands on experience then please get in touch and come along to some of our training cruises.

Coal

Good coal is the key to a successful performance from Consuta. The stocks of the splendid Welsh Steam coal we had last year have all been used up, more is the pity, and at the moment there is no other really good coal unless we've missed something. I gather that Polish Steam coal supplies have also dried up – it's all going to China we are told. There are plenty of man-made reconstituted fuels but they are not particularly successful because they produce lots of fly-ash. One British coal which was good when test last year came from the Daw Mill mine in the Midlands, but is perhaps a bit smoky for our clean Thames air. We've just bought a small stock (10 bags of 25 kg each) from another Midland mine to see if it is any good; we will be checking this out when back in the water to see how this works out.

Calendar 2005 (the early version is included here please note that some events may change)

This programme is still under consideration at the moment. There are three additional outings not shown because the dates have not been confirmed yet. If you fancy something special, why not consider using Consuta for your own private event, please get in touch and discuss the options with us. Crew training sessions are arranged usually with shorter notice. For anyone who would like to take part on a training cruise please contact me. For those who crew please let me know if you are available for any of the outings shown on the Calendar.

Consuta Video

I have compiled a DVD of Consuta activities with selections of video covering moving her from Colin Henwoods yard to Bushnell's in 2001, through to the first steam outings including Tony Hobbs re-commissioning ceremony, Henley Royal Regatta, that Ely outing, and Reading Town Regatta umpiring duties last year, plus much more. These are available at £5 each plus £1 postage – proceeds to our Trust fund of course.

Thank you for your continuing help, whether financial, labour or just moral support

Contacts:- Derek Brown 0118 972 3895 email: derekcbrown@btinternet.com
 Brian Smith 01488 658795, email: brian.smith@consuta.org.uk

29th April 2005.

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2005 Calendar ——— Consuta in steam

<i>Date</i>	<i>Event</i>	<i>Location</i>	<i>Comments</i>	<i>Organiser</i>
10th-12th June	Beale Park Thames Boat Show	Pangbourne	Moored up – in steam	Tony Cundick
June	Re- positional supporters		Pangbourne to Sonning	Brian Smith
19th June	Private Function	Sonning	Sunday based at our Sonning mooring	David Eager
25th June	Reading Town Regatta	Caversham	Under consideration	David Eager
29th June 3rd July	Henley Royal Regatta	Henley	Operational – check details with Derek Brown	Derek Brown
	Reposition – supporters cruise		Sonning to Pangbourne	Brian Smith
16th July	Goring and Streatley Regatta	Goring	To be arranged	Brian Smith
	Repositional – supporters cruise		Pangbourne to Sonning	Brian Smith
16-17th July	Traditional Boat Show	Henley	Sunday only – tripping	Derek Brown
21st July	Swan Upping with EA (Windrush) and the River Thames Trust	Pangbourne	Beale Park to Beetle & Wedge. (This may not be practical because of re-positional requirements)	Tony Cundick
23rd July	Private – Wedding	Shiplake	Shiplake College to Marsh Lock 1500 hrs	Derek Brown
20th August	Private – Wedding	Henley	Henley town centre 1:15 pm	Derek Brown
31st August – 3rd September	Charitable – evening event	Henley	Son et Lumière (not concluded yet but would exclude Consuta joining the SBA cruise based at Beale Park)	
	Re-positional Supporters cruise		Henley to Pangbourne if required	Brian Smith
2,3 and 4th September	Steam Boat Association Rally - Beale Park	Pangbourne	Supporters outing (note clash with the Son et Lumière above).	David Eager

There will be several other private cruises during the summer months, but the details have not been concluded yet. The Trust needs Consuta crew for each of these events, so if you are able to help please contact me at an early stage. Trust supporters are welcome to come along to any of the re-positional steamings, but please contact me first:-

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