



THE UNFIRE'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**

Registered Charity No. 1076505

Website: www.consuta.org.uk

News Letter No. 53 — Summer 2013

Some very sad News – bereavement

Derek Brown - 16th July 1935 to 19th July 2013

Derek Brown died peacefully at the Sue Ryder Hospice at Nettlebed on 19th July from an inoperable brain tumour. As a founder Trustee of the Consuta Trust Derek was a driving force in the Trust and was also treasurer until 2011. Derek had extensive knowledge of Thames boatyards, clubs, and had many useful contacts on the River which proved invaluable during the early years of the restoration.



In the early 1990's Derek helped John Yannigas operate the passenger steam launch Alaska which was used for private functions, Derek was the skipper of Alaska for several years.

Derek was a member of the Steam Boat Association and owned two delightful steam launches, the first Aurora and then later Vanessa. Derek had other hobbies and for many years he was a bee keeper and a bell ringer.

Our condolences to Sandra Brown, family and all friends, Derek will be missed.



Aurora on Windermere



Derek providing tuition on Alaska to a well known SBA member ?

Operational news since the Spring Newsletter

Consuta was re-launched on May and was taken down river for the 2nd May Henley Pageant, then had to be brought back for the Beale Park Boat Show a few days later.

The Beale Park Boat Show. Consuta gave numerous visitors short trips on the lake and in return received some splendid donations. Unfortunately a long polypropylene rope was picked up on the prop during the Sunday morning. Before anyone realised, the engine locked up solid. Nigel started trying to remove the tangle but said the ball was about the same size as the prop diameter (30") and he soon found that it was embedded with abandoned fish hooks.

Three Newfoundland dog handlers in wet suits kindly came to our rescue, it took them over an hour and they also were stabbed by those wretched fish hooks. The rope was $\frac{3}{4}$ inch diameter and was probably about 30 feet long.

The annual boiler inspection was carried out with two visits, there were no serious matters except the pressure gauge reads about 10lbs low at 180 psi, so although the safety valves are set for 180 psi, the gauge only reads 170.

The Henley Women's Regatta As usual Consuta performed well may be due to some engine maintenance throughout the winter by Paul that made the engine smoother, although Mark who was firing said the coal did not seem as good as previously. David thought race speeds were lower than usual. This regatta is a great event for those who like working Consuta hard, there were seven umpire launches at work from 8:30am to 6:30pm on the Saturday with races starting at 4 minute intervals; nice to show that Consuta can still perform this duty efficiently.

Now a bit more of Consuta's history:-

When Sam Saunders proposed this revolutionary hull design in 1898 as an umpire launch for the HRR, some of the Regatta committee were not convinced that she would be suitable, so Mr Clutton who lived at Cleeve Mill stepped in and ordered what was considered at the time as an experimental umpire launch. The HRR are still using the same hull form some 115 years later; clearly a great success. This new hull design spelt the end for the steel hulled umpire launches although DesVignes's superfast Hibernia (steel launch) remained in service for quite a few years to come.

The Henley Festival.

This is a five days (evening) music event with the stage backing onto the water.

This is great place for displaying Consuta and helping to raise funds; so many thanks to all who helped to make it a success.



A small sample of the rope





Loafing around while engineers raise steam

Consuta was then moved upriver from Henley to Beale Park to be ready for the Goring and Streatley Regatta.

The day was very hot but it was great to be on the move. There was quite a lot of river traffic on the day (Monday), but the

locks were favourable.

When we called in at the Charvil mooring Norman Clarke had donated a few bags of vintage coal. We put three of these into the bunker and David C was horrified to see that the coal only seemed to be dust – no lumps. I suppose over the years the coal had broken down and I thought firing with it did not look very promising at all. How wrong we were, David H had taken over the duty of fireman and he soon had us purring along at a cracking pace and it was noticed that the safeties were feathering quite frequently. However the two Tony's in the stern said there was a lot of fly-ash – I'm not surprised.

As the day was to be a scorcher Lyn had brought along some Pimms and ice lumps in a flask – most refreshing.

We then moved Consuta from Beale Park to the Goring & Streatley Regatta site on the Friday after a bit of mid season maintenance.

Goring and Streatley Regatta.

This is a one day event and during the morning it was cloudy with a strong breeze, almost cold, but by the afternoon the hot sun was out.

Consuta was in steam in the morning ready to run trips, but there were few takers, however this all changed by afternoon when we had queues wanting a trip as people were beginning to leave the regatta site.

We finally finished at about 5:30, passing through Cleeve lock, which is only about 200 yards away. The lock keeper asked how many trips had we made? – don't know we lost count, must have been in double figures; all our coal supplies had been burnt. A great event, and good fun.

It's surprising how little is known about the river history by so many of the locals; and when we explained the development of the Saunders 19th century boatyard business in the area it was obvious that many wanted to know more about this history.



Keeping cool on Consuta





The photo here shows Consuta checking out the narrow channel between the lake and the pond. One of the reasons given by the planning officers for rejection was that we had given no details of the works necessary to move Consuta between the lake and the pond.

This test shows that Consuta can use the existing channel by dropping the funnel, although if the water level is a bit low then the propeller does just touch the bottom before entry to the channel.

We will move her onto the pond at a later date and take photos to prove the point.

The Museum – so what’s has happened

Update – some very positive and some not so good. You will probably know now that our Outline Application for the museum at Beale Park has been rejected by West Berkshire Council planners this despite some 52 support letters, and unanimous Basildon Parish Council support; there were no public objections from anyone. The West Berkshire planning officers clearly don’t place any value on this part of the Thames heritage not only that, they somehow even contrived to change their published procedures during the application to stop the application going to the planning committee. This all seems wrong to me because it means that one person (the planning officer) then makes the decision and it was contrary to the views of the public response letters. There seems little point in having a consultation procedure if the results are ignored. Government guidelines say that where there is significant public interest an application should be made by the committee and not by the officers. I suppose if they are only guidelines then these can be ignored by the council.

I was very heartened and encouraged to read some of the support letters, thank you to those who did send in a response; also the feedback from the HLF for funding looked promising; they have asked to be kept informed of developments despite this setback. We learnt from a London based architect firm that West Berkshire planning officers have a reputation of being the worst in the country to deal with. There does seem to be something strange about the way planning procedures are applied by the West Berkshire Council.

Beale Park have now agreed that The Consuta Trust can act as agent to take this application forward. To date, we have approached planning offering answers to all the rejection concerns and suggested a re-submission of the application; but received a negative email response from the planning Officers, so it appears that this application will need to go to appeal. We will be taking planning advice on this and would like the appeal to be conducted at a public hearing. This means that there would be public access with an option to speak for anyone who has an interest in the outcome.

If you know of anyone who has any experience of planning appeals and would like to help please do give me a call.

Goring on Thames is to be awarded Blue Plaque status by Oxford County Council

This is interesting development and you may already have heard about it. The award is to celebrate the contribution made by Sam Saunders (builder of Consuta) to the prosperity of the two villages of Goring and Streatley during the 19th century. The formal presentation is to be

on Saturday 7th September, and Consuta will be attending. Tony Hobbs has promised to have Enchantress there, and Majestic a 40 foot Saunders launch of 1902 owned by Chas Newens may also come upriver from Putney. Several other boats will be taking part, and it sounds like a great event so why not come along on the day and see for yourself.

Mike Hurst, Chairman of the Goring and Streatley Local History Society, is making the arrangements. The new owners of the Streatley Swan Inn original home of the Saunders family have a keen interest in the Inn's heritage and have refurbished the College barge moored here and this will be used for visiting VIP's. Some interesting visitors who are coming along are Raymond Wheeler and his wife. Raymond was MD of Saunders Roe and compiled the two excellent books covering Saunders history from 1850's to 1960's (From River to Sea, and From Sea to Air). We understand that the MD of the GKN company (previously Saunders Roe) is also to be a visitor as he is interested in the history of the company. Some of the boats will move up river from the Swan at Streatley to take VIP's to the site of the Springfield works (just above Cleeve Lock), this site is now a nature reserve but some of the original boatyard facilities can still be seen.

If you are interested in this part of Thames history then the event should be on your calendar, all very exciting, let's hope the weather is kind.

The SBA Thames Rally this year is based at Lechlade. If the weather and river conditions are favourable we hope to take Consuta to the upper navigation limit of the Thames – what an interesting challenge. There is the low bridge at Osney where the funnel would have to be dropped, and I think Godstow will also require the funnel to be lowered. The other challenges are that some of the upper reaches are quite twisty so may need a bit of careful handling to navigate. This cruise which would probably take two/three days each way, and will only be undertaken in settled weather.

Refurbishment of Consuta for 2014

This winter – autumn actually – Colin Henwood has offered to spruce up the paintwork of the Consuta. For those who can remember the work parties here in 2000 during the original restoration; volunteers will once again be allowed (encouraged, or even conscripted) to help with some of the prep work; this will be good work learning experience if you like working on classic boats.

Consuta will probably be lifted out of the water at Hobbs in late September, the boiler removed, and Consuta transported by road to the boatyard at Dairy Farm. She will only be there for a few weeks, then will have to be moved into Winter storage either at Beale Park or perhaps somewhere local to the Henley area. If you have any suggestions about suitable Henley based local storage please do let us know.

Without a proper covered home base the task of looking after Consuta as an operational boat at a realistic cost is quite difficult. The annual running costs alone are around £4,000 at present and this figure is kept low by the generous support of many individuals and organisations. Without a easy accessible base throughout the years it is difficult to encourage new volunteers to join, I suppose that we might seem to be a bit of a closed shop; however nothing is further from the truth and we do need more to help to maintain and run Consuta.

Our ambitious plans for a Beale Park base are still ongoing but the obstacles put forward by planning are disappointing to say the least, so one always has to consider other options just in case things don't work out. If you have any ideas on this please do let us know.

Brian Smith



Some late news. We needed to go to Beale Park to meet the Museum Development Officer from Berkshire Oxfordshire and Buckinghamshire (BOB) so decided to remove the covers on Consuta, to give a good impression. Because it was such a nice day we then decided to move Consuta over to the small pond (by paddle power) and see if we could get her under the bridge.

Yes it can be done provided we dropped the funnel and remove the ensign. The photo above is looking towards the carpark and we are having lunch in some welcome shade – funnel and ensign restored for photos.

The pond is quite deep all over, 6ft or more. Consuta was then moved right up to the proposed entrance to the museum and photographed again (not shown).

After lunch Consuta was turned round then taken back for passage through the bridge. The photo below shows the need to drop the funnel, this was done and we returned Consuta to our pontoon on the lake.

We took the opportunity to replace the blower valve which had been leaking, so ended a very hot day.

