



# The Consuta Trust

The advancement of education in the history of steam launches, by preservation, maintenance and exhibition of the steam launch **Consuta**

## Consuta Trust Newsletter - Summer 2024

Dear All,

Consuta is now back on the Thames following completion of several major jobs. We are presently based at the attractive private Charvil moorings of Norman and Jen Clarke.

Sorry we didn't manage to get to the Henley Women's regatta, mainly due to running out of the time taken to install the new engine steam pipe. I had planned to get this completed by a local copper specialist company but they had ceased trading. So Paul and myself had to learn some new techniques to do it ourselves. The steam pipe is 1½ inch bore with an overall diameter of 1¾ inches and required some rather precise bends plus some special machined fittings.

The photos on page 5 shows the new pipe being assembled in position. There is a removable section from the boiler steam output flange to the coupling of the engine throttle. The whole run now uses bronze and copper replacing the previous temporary screwed malleable iron pipework. There were so many joints on this old pipe that it had "minor" irritating steam leaks which were difficult to seal.

The new steam pipe took some time to get right, bending the large bore copper pipe although an interesting task was quite tricky. However this pipe before lagging did look splendid so was well worth the effort, we've learnt a lot about large bore pipe bending techniques.

Then there was the question of how could we easily check the pipe for any leaks. Steaming the boiler each time would take too much time, so we used air pressure where the boiler pressure could be quickly and easily raised to 50 psi as required.

Finally our first steam test was to check it and also see if the silencer problem had been cured of that annoying exhaust howl, now two welded stays had been fitted. The result were very gratifying, no problems at all with engine revs up to 460, we didn't go higher because Consuta was after all on the canal and these revs equate to about 14 mph. All was perfect, it was also surprising that there was so very little wash at this speed.



The Steam kettle has been fitted in a new position. Before installing we wondered about the best place to fit this essential operational item. After lots of discussion and consultations, the kettle and its control valve are now behind the boiler bulkhead access door of the bow cockpit.



There had been some engine slide valve reseating work on the forward engine cylinder, Paul then spent time

making sure that valve events were correct, this required very careful measurements of crank angles and valve opening gaps. Details of the particular method used has been published in the SBA Funnel magazine, and provides even exhaust puffs.

During the late spring there were two supporter work days to help get Consuta

ready for the season. The first one was a cleaning and polishing day, and then another one for a first steam test of the new main steam pipe work and kettle.

Following these tests, we decided to check the engine xhead and big end bearings for wear, this had not been carried out for quite a long time, and yes there was a bit of play on one of the big end bearings, which has now been refettled by Paul.

### **Returning to the Thames**

The trip down the Kennet and Avon canal to Charvil had been planned for a specific two day weekend, but as the date selected got closer, the weather predictions became worse and worse. This date was finally cancelled with short notice, probably to the great relief of all involved. Just as well because some 2 inches of rain fell over this weekend.

The two day trip a week later was completed during some pleasant weather (photos page 6), so we were in time for setting up for the Henley Traditional Boat Festival. There was a lovely photo of Consuta taken just after the Newbury town bridge which was published in the local “Newbury weekly News”. You can see this in Consuta’s facebook section.

## The Thames Traditional Boat Festival

We had been invited to bring Consuta along and also had a shore pitch as well. Cygnet needed to be removed from Beale Park, so we decided that this would be a good option for having Cygnet as our display.

Getting everything ready for the show was a busy time. Our marquee with Cygnet was set up on the Wednesday. Consuta was steamed down river from Charvil on the Thursday. The Trad event starting on Friday was a busy three days. The logistics for all the car travel involved was quite complicated and Mark travelled over 500 miles in his car, and I probably did about 400 in the Disco, which was rather useful with its 7 seating capacity.

The Friday of the Festival as usual was a fairly quiet day but the Saturday and Sunday were busy, the weather was perfect during the whole event.

We met several interesting people during the show. An old gentleman had a trip on Consuta, he told us he had been on Consuta in 1949 when used by the BBC for the first live TV broadcast of the Boat Race, he was responsible for rotating the aerial carrying the signal from boat to shore. You have to remember that we didn't have smart phones in those days, also the TV pictures then were only monochrome – so many things have changed. Another gentleman from the Saunders museum on the IoW told us that they have photos of the machines used for stitching Consuta plywood (I hope he remembers to send us some copies, can hardly wait to see them).

One other visitor said that he was delighted to see Consuta floating higher now, because it had never looked right before (interesting that at least someone had noticed this improvement).

There were also lots of queries about Cygnet, this 154 year old original Thornycroft steam launch always attracts attention with lots of questions from the visitors.

Our crew decided to steam Consuta back to Charvil mid afternoon on the Sunday then return to Fawley meadow to derig the marquee in late afternoon. Whew, I think all were quite exhausted by 8pm when we finally got home to Kintbury now with Cygnet in tow.



Many thanks to all who have helped steam Consuta this year, and the much appreciated support provided by the Trad event organisers.

During the event Consuta was using proper Welsh steam coal which was fine, but we probably need some refresher firemen training for the new boiler, however she does steam very well though.

The mooring provided at the Trad was excellent, although it needed some really good fendering against the steel jetty. There were 10 SBA steamboats taking part, plus the superb Alaska. Windsor Belle, looking, very smart did put in a brief appearance, but unfortunately had to withdraw due to a major steering chain fault.

Tim, one of our volunteer skippers, told us that he had driven all the Henley umpire launches and that Consuta handled just the same as Amaryllis, he said some of the modern ones weren't so good turning even though their rudders were closer to the prop.

Amaryllis was built by Hobbs in 1927 with a carvel construction (ie not stitched ply) and has the rudder hanging out at the stern, same as Consuta (she is the Cambridge University umpire launch). Apparently her hull was used as the mould for the modern GRP umpire hulls.

A lovely surprise during the show was Colin and Lucie Henwood giving us the Kings Cup medal which they had collected on our behalf at the Kings Cup party in Windsor this year.



The Kings Cup was first awarded after a eight nations WW1 celebration race at

Henley in 1919. Consuta may have been there as an umpire launch.

### **Keeping update with Consuta's steaming activities**

If you want to be kept informed about Consuta's operations during the late summer please make sure you are on our active members circulation list, contact Mark if you are not sure if you are [mark@consuta.org.uk](mailto:mark@consuta.org.uk). If you would like to see some recent photos of Consuta, please take a look at the Consuta facebook section, easily accessed from the Consuta website (it's the bottom tick box on the website menu).

Best wishes to all, Brian Smith and the Trustees.

31st July 2024

*More photos next page - - - - -*



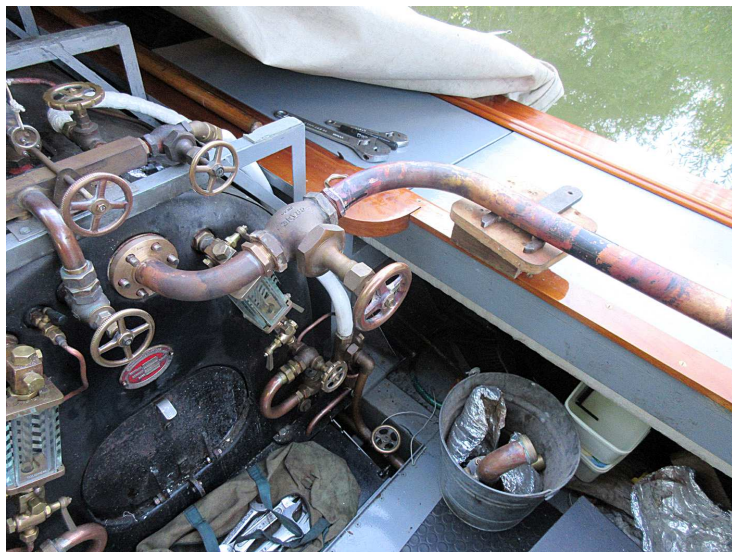
*The Rose Toop museum is taking shape*



*The long part of the engine steam pipe*



*The main stop valve now fitted*



*The last pipe section from stop valve to boiler*



*The wood cover over the engine steam pipe*



*The engine pipe now lagged, lower pipe is engine 3" exhaust*

**These photos show the stages in making up the new engine copper steam pipe.**

The copper pipe is 1.5 inch bore with a one eighth inch thick wall.

The precision bends were made in stages. The large steam valve is the boiler main stop, the engine throttle is under the engine casing.

There has been some discussion about its position/orientation because it slightly interferes with current access to the port side coal bunker.

## Some photos taken during trip from Kintbury to the Thames



**Top photos:-** waiting for a lock on the way, and the river section in Newbury at West Mills.

**Mid two:-** descending in the Aldermaston lock. This lock was originally turf sided, but with the original scalloped side was built up to full height during restoration. The lock is 110 feet long by 17ft wide, (Newbury Barge size).

**Bottom:-** The turf sided Garston lock and the misnamed High Bridge in Reading, quite wide but I think a bit lower than a similar bridge in Newbury. It's tricky to manage coming downstream because of the strong river current.

## Photos taken at the Henley Traditional Boat Festival



**Top:-** Alaska with a full complement of passengers. She was very busy during the show.

**Middle:-** The impressive 1934 twin screw motor yacht Llanthony. She had recently had a major refit and is looking great.

**Bottom:-** Windsor Belle was to also do tripping but unfortunately had a major steering cable fault.



## More photos from the Henley Traditional Boat Festival

