



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 - Autumn 2024

Dear All,

Sorry we didn't manage to get to the Henley Women's regatta, mainly due to the poor weather at the start of the year and as a result there was a lack of time needed to install the new engine main steam copper pipe which is a great improvement. We did however have a good time at the Trad Rally with some fine weather. Since then Consuta has had a few other outings on the Thames.

Latest News

The Trustees decided to keep Consuta in the water at Kintbury again for the coming winter period. This location had proved most successful and was very safe last year despite all that wet winter weather and extensive flooding.

We then had to remove all Consuta's belongings from Beale Park. This is quite sad because it did appear that we were going to have a Thames Heritage Boat Museum at the park. This would have been a great Thames heritage asset and helped many Thames boating organisations including the Consuta Trust by providing facilities to preserve historical boating archives for future potential public access.

The last items removed from the Beal Park shelter were Consuta's long road trailer (46ft long) and the two sections of the 30ft Saunders hull Ulula, which have now been taken for private storage at Wootton River in Wiltshire. This was an interesting job especially moving the big trailer along the narrow roads over the last part of the journey.

We are now left wondering about the best options for keeping Consuta operational and secure for future years. Without a permanent or affordable base, my own choice would be to have a floating boathouse in the style of an Oxford college barge and use this to house Consuta all year round. Yes I know we had considered this suggestion many years ago, however what are your thoughts about this important topic?

Steam Coals for Consuta

We have recently obtained a ton of Welsh steam coal, no it's not the Ffos Y Fran stuff, but another mine still open in Wales (didn't know there was one?). This coal has been briefly tried and seems OK, plus a ton of the last supplies from the Ffos Y Fran mine. Therefore our current coal stocks are around 3 tons Ffos Y Fran, 1 ton other Welsh steam coal, half a ton of Polish steam coal, and some remaining ecoal ovals.



*Two Welsh steam coal deliveries both one ton each in 25 Kg bags
Left one ton of Ffos-Y-Fran and on the right one ton of Aberpergwm drift mine*

However we urgently need experienced fireman to use these coals efficiently, especially while on umpire work, so must now concentrate on future fireman crew training ready for next year.

Consuta's grate is about 2 feet by 3 feet, so although it may seem large the firebox depth is quite limited so can only accommodate rather shallow fires. It is critical to make sure that the fire is properly lit across the whole grate area. Any dead spots will dramatically reduce the boiler steam output rate, this is an important skill which needs to be learnt while on the job. Firing Consuta during normal cruising is fairly easy, however the fire must be just right for any sustained umpiring work,

Lighting the fire from cold is also another task which needs to be done properly aiming to quickly get the fire into a suitable state for cruising. If you want to know what is involved look at the Consuta video of raising steam here:- <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=muJVUAmo6is>

There have been two steam events after the Trad Boat Rally

The Henley Visitor and Regatta event, I'd not heard of this one before, so maybe some future umpire work for Consuta, then a trip to Caversham, both were well attended by volunteers.

Consuta's base during Winter 2024

The Trustees had decided that Consuta should be kept afloat and moored at Kintbury through the coming winter months. This would allow further adjustments to be made on the new installations.

Consuta was therefore to be moved from Charvil during the last week end of September. Paul and I went to Charvil on Tuesday 24th to get everything ready for the trip. There had however been a lot of rain in the preceding days so we were quite surprised how high the river level was at Charvil and with more rain due in the next few days, the Thames was soon in a red board flood state.

We then kept a close internet watch on Thames and Kennet river levels. Consuta had been steamed in previous years when the river was in flood, the main boating risks were from debris being washed off the weirs as the waters rise. There are several web sites which provided update boating advice for the Thames and also for the Kennet. We had noticed that County Lock usage in Reading varied between cautionary to red warnings so Paul and Mark decided to have a look at this Lock the day before the upriver trip, shown in photos below:-

I wasn't on Consuta for this exciting two day trip, the following photos give some idea of the conditions, however despite some early concerns there were no problems at all.

County Lock only has a rise of about 18 inches, and the weir is just beside the lock. There is a row of large fender type booms to stop boats going over the weir. These were under water?

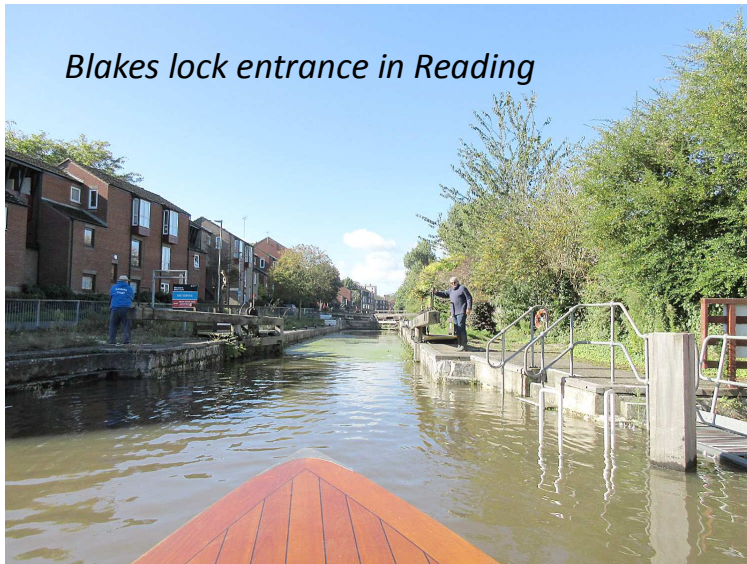
*Top photo shows bottom lock gates with water overflowing, but the lock sides are still above water. Paul is having a look at the notice board but it only says about a disruption earlier in the year
The lower photo is taken from towpath on the other side.*



The top two photos show the Charvil mooring with about 5 inches over the landing stage edge, the other is in Sonning lock. with water overflowing the lock sides when full. Some wellies, kindly provided by our mooring host Jen, were essential for the operating crew



Blakes lock entrance in Reading



Reading High Street bridge

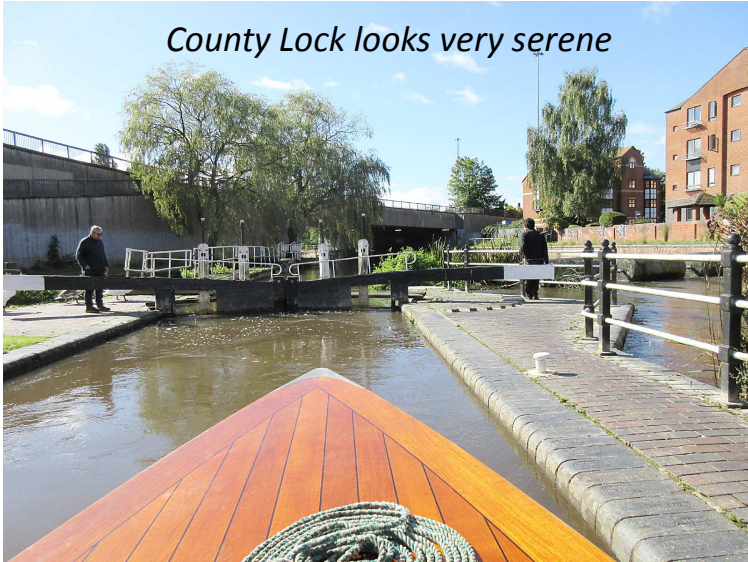


Consuta waiting to enter County Lock



Consuta's funnel had been dropped after Blakes lock for passage through Reading

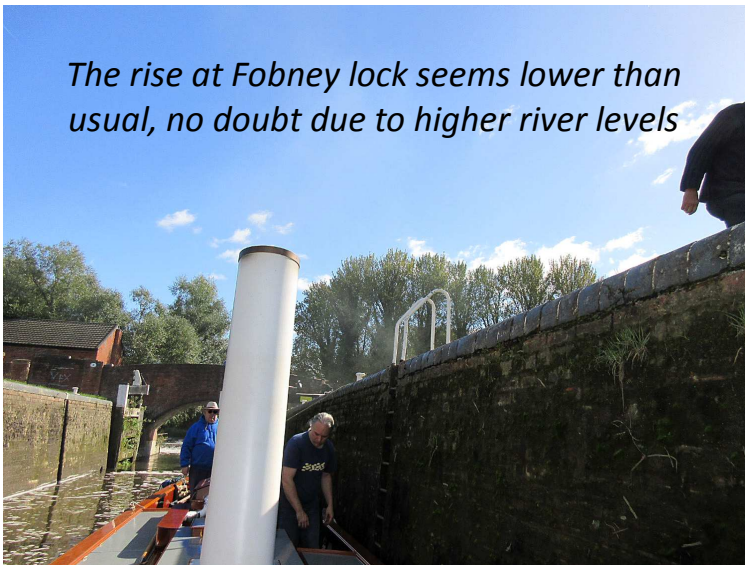
County Lock looks very serene



Raising the funnel and safety escape pipe while in County Lock



The rise at Fobney lock seems lower than usual, no doubt due to higher river levels

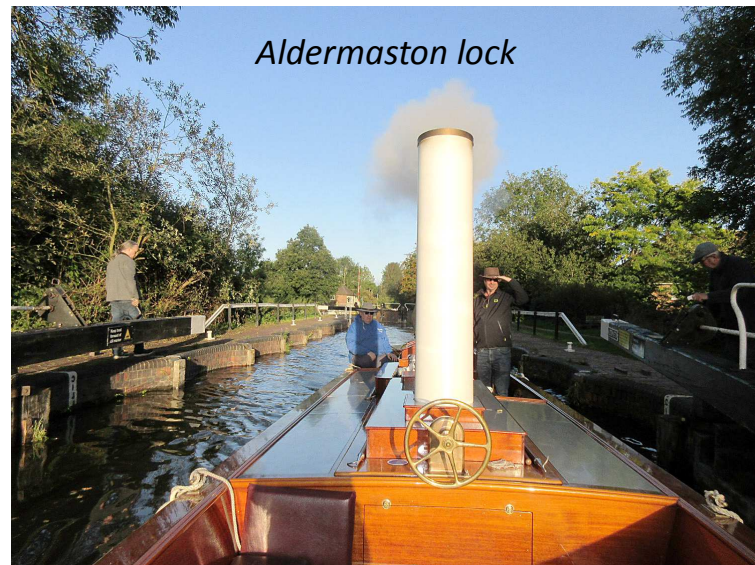


Sheffield Bottom swing bridge

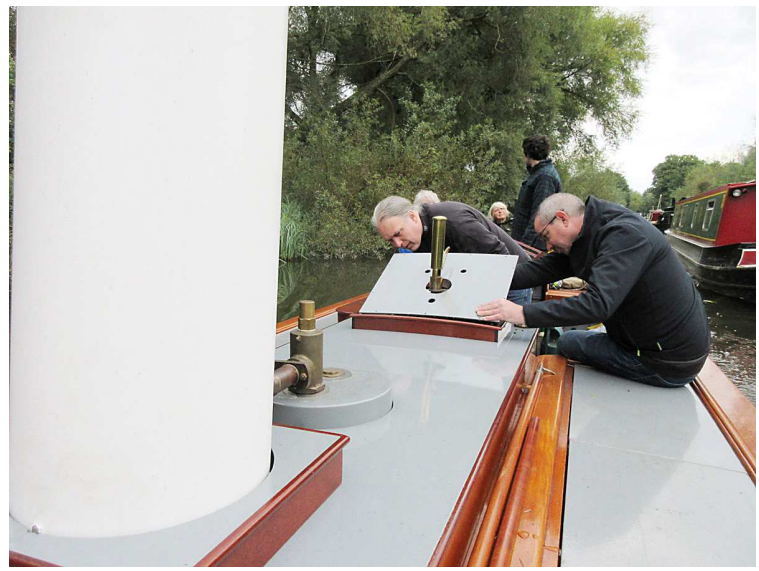
Aldermaston Lift bridge



Aldermaston lock



Sheffield bottom swing bridge is the first swing bridge from the Thames and is one of several hydraulic powered, there are also a few other minor hand powered ones.



Consuta made good progress from Charvil on Saturday reaching the Aldermaston bridge in time before it is locked out at sunset, this enabled Consuta to easily reach Woolhampton. The crew had been wondering if the Aldermaston lift bridge would operate so late in the day? However the sun hadn't yet set, and yes it worked fine, there was just a delay because a boat ahead had passed through setting a 10 minute time out before the next raising of the bridge.

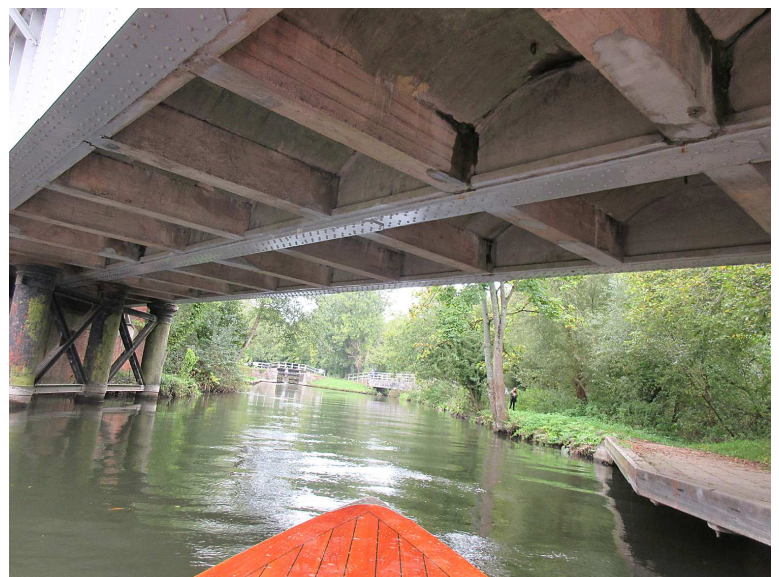
Consuta was then moored just below Woolhampton swingbridge and the Rowbarge Inn for the Saturday overnight stop. The two photos above show the splendid mooring and some inspection of a minor steam leak around the steam kettle shut off.

I was called out with my car to take drivers back to their cars at Charvil while it was still daylight, which was great. Although that road distance is not far, the 50 mph speed limit on the busy M4 does seem to add extra time.

Sunday

Mark had arranged for a 9:30am "in steam" for the Sunday move from the Woolhampton swing bridge mooring (an early start then?). The current here was quite strong and once through the bridge, rope handling was needed to get Consuta safely out of the fast river current into Woolhampton lock, the river comes in at 90 degrees to the lock entrance.

Photo on the right, main line rail crossing the river, ahead is Bulls lock, the first lock into Newbury.



Newbury lock ahead



Consuta in Newbury lock



West Mills Newbury



I suppose the last part of the trip was a bit of an anticlimax after the flooding lower down the Kennet and on the Thames.

Consuta's hull was looking very clean in Dreweatt's lock (lower right photo), thanks to Paul, who once on the Kennet went all around the waterline cleaning off the dirt

Keeping updated with Consuta's steaming activities

If you want to be kept informed about Consuta's operations, please make sure you are on our active members email circulation list. Contact Mark if you are not sure:- mark@consuta.org.uk..

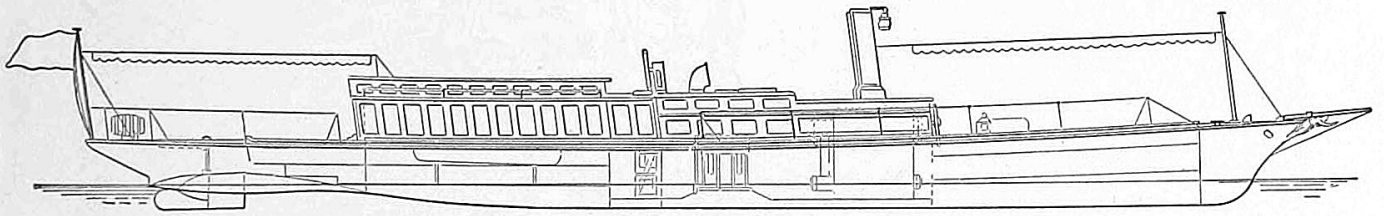
Also if you would like to see more recent photos of Consuta, please take a look at the Consuta facebook section, easily accessed from the Consuta website (it's the bottom tick box on the left hand website menu).

Best wishes to all,

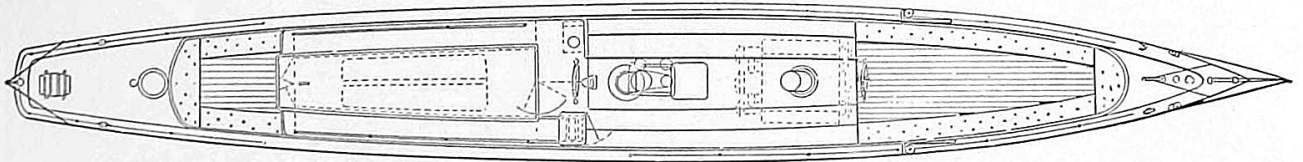
Brian Smith and the Trustees.

October 2024

The "Aurora" a Thames Steam launch



Aurora, no.266, 60'6" LOA, 46.7 IHP, 10.82 knots.



In May we were contacted by the Thornycroft Society Ltd based in Basingstoke who were having a clear out. They asked us if we would be interested in acquiring the original figurehead of the 1889 Thornycroft steam launch Aurora for a small donation. We already have Aurora's original compound steam engine, so had to have a look and then said yes please.

The history of Aurora is interesting and it does have a connection with Consuta because it was fitted with a tunnel stern. The following is a description of Aurora from a Cassier engineering publication of 1897/8.

The Aurora, a launch of shallow draught, built for use on the Thames. It is fitted with one turbine propeller only, has compound condensing engines and a water-tube boiler, and has attained a speed of 15 miles. Experiments were made with this vessel by putting heavy weights in the extreme bow, so as to raise the stern much above its intended position. By this means the draught of water at the propeller was reduced to about ten inches, and the back of the tunnel was so lifted as to be quite clear of the water. Notwithstanding this unfavourable position, the propeller, when turned very rapidly, drove out all the air and propelled the boat at a high rate of speed. The speed of the engines could then be reduced until the boat was moving only slowly, without breaking the column of water from the propeller.

This experiment is interesting as showing how large a part of the propeller may be above water so long as air cannot mingle with the stream of water going to the propeller, and has led to building some vessels for towing with single turbine propellers, their axes nearly at the water line. An incidental advantage of this construction is that it gives great facilities for inspecting the propeller. A door situated over the propeller, when opened, allows the water to fall to the level of its external surface and exposes to view half the propeller above water.

Consuta as most will know also has a tunnel stern, basically to accommodate large diameter steam propellers without increasing boat draft too much. Several Victorian steam boat builders fitted tunnels sterns on vessels for use in shallow river waters. Clearly you can see that on Aurora the bottom of the propeller is no deeper than the vessel's draft. Consuta does have a deep tunnel but the large 30 inch diameter prop does extend well below the bottom line of the hull. The modern GRP umpire launches have a small tunnel because they only use quite small diameter props.

More of this later ———