



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

Consuta Trust Newsletter - Summer 2016

Dear All,

Operations so far this season

Consuta's boiler inspection is an annual requirement but this time there was something new because the lower rows of firebox tubes had been welded to stop re-occurring leaks, therefore in addition to the standard inspection this needed a hydraulic test; so the inspection took almost a whole day.

For those who are not familiar with the procedure. The boiler was first made ready with all mud inspection doors taken off, there are nine of these, also some of the fittings were removed.



Water pressure at 270 psi

The inspector first examines the internal condition (as far as is possible to see), and checks the condition of the stays using the hammer test. The boiler washout doors are then fitted with new gaskets, blank plugs are screwed into the safety valve holes, the boiler is then totally filled with water – this took about half an hour – the boiler needs some 100 gallons to fill it. A hydraulic water pump is used to force water into the boiler, and provided there is little

air inside, the pressure will soon rise to the test pressure at 270 psi which is 50% above the working pressure (180 psi); this pressure is then held for 30 minutes to check for any leakage, there was none at all.

The hydraulic pressure was then released and some water let out to normal working level, the safety valves were replaced and the fire lit to raise steam for the steam test. Steam raising takes about one and a half hours. The inspector fitted his precision pressure gauge so that the boiler safety valves were adjusted to work at the max working pressure of 180 psi. When the safeties release, the blowing steam was quite noisy, the fire was brought up to a fierce state using the blower. This test was the accumulation test and is intended to confirm that the safeties can keep the pressure from exceeding maximum working pressure. The water gauges are also checked for correct operation.

Once the inspector was happy that the safeties were coping, the fire was damped down and extinguished, the boiler was then blown down empty, and the boiler was passed for another year.



The boating season.

Consuta was relaunched on 24th May, the boiler lifted into the boat, then all piping coupled up. We had some lovely weather for this. The crane moved off site just after 10 am, we must be getting good at this, I did wonder if this was a time record?

June and July are always very busy months in the Consuta boating season. First on the calendar was the **Beale Park Boat show** which was blessed with some splendid weather. We had a 10ft x 30ft pitch set up with an ambitious display showing several potential future museum exhibits including a 120 year old Thornycroft compound steam engine – this engine attracted lots of admiring interest from visitors.

Consuta was very popular with show visitors providing circuits on the lake – a short burst of power demonstrating the acceleration potential is always very exciting, and passengers loved this.

We then only had a week after the boat show to move Consuta down stream to the Charvil mooring ready for the **Henley Womens Regatta** (Saturday 18th). The weather however was a bit changeable during the week, and it did rain lightly on this re-positional trip. Umpiring duty is hard work for the crew, but at least there was no rain on the Saturday, and as always, this work makes for an exciting day.



Now in Henley there is a very select club and Consuta's crew have been privileged to be members for a few years now. This group is named the **HELP club** with Tony Hobbs as the Patron; "**Henley Elite Launch Personnel**" Every year, just before the Henley Royal Regatta starts, the Bil family organise a club social meal at The Flower Pot Inn, where some 30 members attend. Each year the club award a small engraved silver cup to a member in recognition of personal achievement. I was very surprised and delighted when Tony Hobbs announced that the trophy was awarded to me for

managing to keep the historic coal fired steam launch Consuta working on umpire duty each year. Well this was an honour and although the trophy was presented to me, I'm sure this is also a recognition of the work carried out by all the team.

Reading Town Regatta We are not asked to carry umpires at HRR, however we do at the Reading Town Regatta. The regatta committee clearly like to use traditional umpire launches, and although Consuta carries Savills guests we are also asked to carry the umpire as well. The Reading regatta is very reminiscent of all those other early Thames rowing regattas which have now mostly disappeared.

The course is very short at 800 metres and presents a major challenge when turning Consuta at each end of the course, this year made a bit more difficult because of a significant river current. If done properly with Consuta it can be completed as a three point turn, but the weight of passengers does material effect boat turn handling – so I found it quite tricky.



The weather forecast had predicted the probability of heavy showers, well there was only one but it rained stair rods for half an hour – this is an expression which is frequently used at Windermere – the phrase Cloud Burst also came to mind. The racing had to stop because the crews couldn't see where they were going.

For the rest of the day the weather was great.



A check on the tubes showed all was well, also the three fabricated stainless firebars which were on a trial, were perfect and seemed to indicate that they could be a possible choice for the future.

Consuta steamings were now coming thick and fast. There was a private party outing down river to Hurley on the Sunday, then on Thursday 30th June we had a private members outing from Leander immediately followed by two days of short tripping from Phyllis Court (1st and 2nd July). Our coal supplies at Charvil were going down fast.



Our most recent steaming was at the **Thames Traditional Boat Festival**.

We had a splendid shore pitch which was used to promote the Tamesis Trust Thames Museum project and future home for Consuta. This traditional boating gathering lasts three day – 15-17th July – with lots to see for all members of the family.

During the show we met many interesting people, most told us that they very much liked the idea of a Thames boat museum.



The experts discussing details of the new boiler

Work on the museum project is slowly progressing; I never knew that there was so much needed with all these Town and Country planning requirements. Everything takes time and is very costly. I'm hoping that we will have all this settled by the end of the year.

Consuta's new boiler.

I'm pleased to report that the new boiler design has been completed, and has now been approved for construction. We are very grateful to David Eager for all the hard work that he has been put in to achieve this result.

The cost of building the boiler probably could be covered from present Trust funds, but there will be a lot of additional changes needed to install the boiler.

I am currently investigating the possibility of obtaining an HLF grant to help cover the cost of the work. Pre application advice has already been provided by the HLF which was very

helpful. In general terms an HLF grant for any heritage project needs to have significant people and public outcomes. In our case the HLF project would be to build and fit the new boiler in Consuta and we would need to use this to stimulate public interest in the heritage. The HLF use terms “project activities” and “project outcomes” all are part of their grant aims. This type of an HLF grant application opens some interesting possibilities, and we are presently considering the use of an exhibition trailer at Beale Park as part of the project. If we are successful in obtaining a grant it would be possible to start the new boiler project by the beginning of 2017 aiming to complete the installation in Consuta ready for the 2018 season. More on this in later newsletters.

Consuta has performed well so far this year and the only minor problem noted by the operational crew is the occasional light smuts coming from the funnel. This is not new and usually only occurs when cruising slowly. Present thoughts are that at low engine power there may be condensation in the silencer or connecting pipe to smokebox. Potential cures might be to insulate the silencer and/or make a new silencer out of thinner metal – something to think about over the winter season.

Many thanks to all for your continuing support and encouragement. Incidentally if you would like to take a more active role in the Trust you can either come along to the work parties or a cruises on Consuta, or perhaps you might consider becoming a trustee. Contact me if you would like to know more.

If you received this newsletter by post but have an email, please do let us know so that we can save the print and postage costs and send you all future newsletters (in colour) by email.

Best wishes from The Consuta Trust

Brian Smith, July 2016

*An interesting comparison of two umpire launches built at the Springfield Works near Goring.
Consuta of 1898 and **Enchantress** of 1912 at the Henley Traditional Boat Festival this year.*



Photos from the Henley Traditional Boat Festival of 2016



Thornycroft 44 hp compound steam engine built 1889 for a shallow draft steam launch Aurora, 60ft long with a speed of 11 knots, exported overseas.

This compound steam engine is slightly smaller than the more common 2nd class torpedo boat engine, and is fitted with a worm driven water pump and direct driven air-pump for condensing work.

Four pole electric motor probably made by Submersible Motors Ltd of Hounslow about 1912. Possibly the F1 type rated at 2 HP with 60V.

Originally built for the navy, but by the 1920's they were being used in electric canoes

Your editor at the steering wheel of Consuta used when fitted with a Gray Marine petrol engine.

The engine casing gives an idea how big that engine was.

Looks like tea is up.

The background scene in the marquee is of the old Saunders workshop at the Springfield works South Stoke.



Photos from the Henley Traditional Boat Festival of 2016



Raising Sabrina's funnel after Henley Bridge

Four Steamboats Anna jayne, Sunbeam, Surta, and Firebird



Photos from the Henley Traditional Boat Festival of 2016



Coastal Motorboat of WW1 with torpedo launched (dropped) over the stern



Motor Torpedo Boat 102 from the 2nd WW launches torpedoes over the bow



Dunkirk Little ships



Sea plane tender, also used for air sea rescue.

The ensign flag on the right fitted to Consuta is issued by National Historic ships for historic craft with fleet status - deemed as important historic vessels.

Consuta is but we don't normally fly this prestigious flag.



Photos from the Henley Traditional Boat Festival of 2016

