



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

Newsletter No.10

Supported by:-



Supported by the
Heritage Lottery Fund

(12th December 2001)

The Transport Trust
The Steam Boat Association
International Paints

Consuta is operational

The steam trials

Consuta was moved by road from the Henwood and Dean Boatyard to Wargrave by Interboats on their large transporter rather late in the afternoon of Monday 15th October. It was pleasant and sunny during the loading up operation, but then it rained while Consuta was prepared for launching by Paul and David Bushnell with the help of Colin Henwood and team. Consuta was finally placed in the water when it was dark, so sorry no photos. Nor did we have a boat cover for the Monday night – oh well, I suppose we must get used to the boat getting wet.

The weather was fine and sunny the next day Tuesday. The engineering team arrived about 10:00am, to raise steam and make some tethered dockyard trials. The boiler had to be filled before lighting the fire and this was a slow business as predicted by Tony until we discovered that the blowdown valve was partially open.

After the grate was placed in position, Fireman Mark Smith set about lighting up (some call it flashing up). A volatile liquid called 'safety cleaning fluid' was used to help the fire start – I don't know about safety but it went whoomph out of the firedoor, resulting in Mark having a slightly shorter hair style. I should mention that loco boilers are awkward during lighting up, the smoke and flames don't know which way to go and prefer to come out of the fire door when it's opened. Someone suggested lighting a secondary fire in the smokebox, that's when Tony asked had we removed the rag in the smokebox – no we hadn't – what on earth was a rag doing in here anyway?

By 12:30 we were in steam, the Kew Museum contingent started to cautiously warm up the engine, all drains open and steam everywhere. Various fittings were tested, the whistle sounded good, however one of the two water injectors didn't work properly. Eventually the engine was set to turn over very slowly, a truly historic moment.

During these operations, Geoff was clambering over the boat trying out the new boat cover he had made. It is Olive green and looks most professional, many thanks Geoff.

The engineering team then pronounced that we could try Consuta out on the river – you just try and stop us doing this!. Magnificent, we were pointing the right way to set off down river, speed was very sedate, the engine beats ahead were uneven, although they were fine astern. We marked this "for attention at a later date". I don't think the engine revs were taken above 180 rpm, this represents a water speed of about 5/6 mph. Anybody who was expecting a high speed run would have been disappointed, anyway the engine needed careful monitoring and some fine adjustments.

Consuta website is:- www.consuta.org.uk

Trustees: Derek Brown Tony Cundick Graham Lindsay Geoff Newton Brian Smith

Registered charity No. 1076505

All who tried the helm agreed that Consuta handled beautifully both ahead and astern, and the engine was extremely easy to control. By this time everyone was delighted but rather famished, so excuses made, we stopped at the George and Dragon for a late lunch and drink.

Following this maiden trip we have had five more river trials, one with the company of Mythical Maid to celebrate her 100th birthday (she is also a Saunders copper stitched hull).

Many of the problems received pretty quick attention during some non steam engineering work sessions. The result is that the engine now runs very much better and quieter in both directions, both boiler injectors work properly, and we also have a simple rev counter (£6.00 from Halfords). Over the next few days, Consuta was taken down to the Henley reach on three occasions where she created quite a stir.

During these steam trials, several of our more active volunteers have taken the opportunity of having a ride on Consuta – I've listed over 35 people. Please don't feel left out because there should be many more opportunities for rides next year.

How does she go?

So how does Consuta perform? During the last trip on Monday 12th November (a rather damp day), the engine was opened up to 480 rpm, this probably represents a speed of around 15 mph. The bow lifts, the stern exhibits a very clean slipstream, and the crew have wide grins. There is not much wash along the bank – initially almost abeam of Consuta there is a swell, much further behind there is small amount of wash – remarkably clean for this respectable turn of speed. The initial acceleration seems to be slow, but then she starts to go; stopping is superb just put the engine in reverse, and she stops in less than a boat length.

The Winter tasks

On Tuesday 13th November, Consuta was lifted out of the water onto the hard at Bushnell's yard for winter storage. The opportunity was taken to remove the engine at the same time, and this is presently at Kintbury for more work.

So what needs to be done over the winter. Well there is a long list of jobs, some are 'vital' others are 'would be nice to have'. The main problems to resolve are:-

- Improve the boiler steam takeoff, at the moment there is too much water carried over – its called priming and it chokes the engine.
- Select a suitable size of blast nozzle for best boiler performance.
- The engine needs further work to improve oiling and cure those annoying metallic noises.

We knew that Consuta was going to be too heavy, because of this Colin raised the waterline by 2 inches at the bow and 1 inch at the stern, however she floats on this line in working trim but without anyone on board. The boiler which weighs in at 1½ tons is the culprit, the original was probably less than a ton. If we cannot get a lighter boiler then we will just have to raise the waterline another inch, it's definitely the cheaper option.

Winter Social Gathering

The Trustees have decided to have a friendly social gathering for all supporters on Saturday 9th February 2002 to be held at The Bull Inn at Wargrave. Consuta should be under a Poly Tunnel by this time so the programme is to have a quick look at Consuta in Bushnell's yard, fairly close to the 'Bull', at about 11:30am, then move back to the pub into a function room for a hot finger buffet meal plus pudding. There will be lots of informal talk, numerous photos and hopefully some video of Consuta in action. Because we will need to let the pub have some idea of numbers, I have included a return slip with this newsletter, the cost will be £10 per person, payment in advance please.

Next Year's boating scene

We will need supporters to help crew Consuta and also help with various ongoing maintenance tasks. This operational crew needs skippers, engineers and deckhands. I suppose that Consuta could be managed by one person in an emergency, but for any passenger trips we will definitely need two, possibly three on some occasions. The engineering tasks are very easy once the basics are understood, the machinery is quite docile. Consuta at 51ft long does need care while maneuvering, however the handling is very simple. Many supporters have already put their names down for these duties, and we will shortly be sending you a questionnaire about your preferences and experience, if you haven't done this and would like to participate, give me a call – there is no obligation. Don't worry if you have no experience at all, we all had to start somewhere, help and training will be given. At the moment we cannot offer any payment for time or expenses incurred, however if we are successful in finding substantial funding for operational use we may be able to introduce this in the future.

So where is Consuta to be kept. It is our preferred option to have a base at Beale Park, but the navigation onto the lake is still not confirmed and we have no idea of any mooring costs. We are currently considering the option of a full length covered wet dock. This would have the advantage of housing the boat on the water without the need of a cover. Firm decisions will have to be taken early in the new year, sorry I cannot give you any more information at the moment.

Consuta will probably be relaunched some time in March, and we are currently planning a grand commissioning day possibly on the Henley reach during April. Our plans are still under consideration and I will let you know more later.

Financial matters

I must mention that we did overrun our restoration budget so we are still looking for a further £5,000 to clear our debts – if you can spare any cash, now is the time. The minimum realistic annual running costs are likely to be between £5,000 to £6,000. The boatyard bills up to March next year are costing £2,000, these have nearly been covered by the monthly donations many have been making using bank standing orders. If you are not already signed up for this please consider using the enclosed form. If you indicate that this is a "Gift aid donation", we can claim your tax payments back from the Inland Revenue at the rate of 28p for each pound you give the Trust.

During the winter months I will try to collate the complete statistics and costs of the restoration, but money spent while managed by the Trust is well over £150,000, if I'd been told that we needed this at the start I might have had serious doubts – but we've done it. So thank you everyone for your support.

Consuta Supporters friendly winter gathering.

The Trust have arranged for an informal buffet lunch at the Bull Inn at Wargrave on Saturday 9th February 2002. We can gather there from 12:00am

See Consuta on the hard at Bushnell's before going to the Bull, suggest get to the boatyard by 11:30.

Have a look at the many photos we have of Consuta, historic, those taken during the restoration, and those of the recent steam trials on the water.

We may be able to show some of the video that was taken of the recent trials.

The Trust will have the use of a function room at the Inn, the luncheon will be a finger buffet style (hot food) with a pudding.

If you want to come along (partners welcome) please let us know if you want meal(s) and please include a payment cheque made out to The Consuta Trust. The meal is £10 per person.

January 31st is the deadline for booking meals, and is needed to give indication of numbers to the Pub.

Future Newsletters

It has been suggested that the cost of posting the newsletters could be reduced if they are sent by email. So if you have an email and are prepared to do this please let me know at:-

brianws@ukonline.co.uk.

The Trustees wish everyone a happy Christmas and a Prosperous New Year.

We need a Boat Safety Certificate for Consuta. Do you know a friendly inspector who could help out?



Photo: Taken by Ian Cross

To book meals for the Consuta Supporters lunch on Saturday 9th February 2002, the Bull Inn at Wargrave, please return this slip before 31st Jan 2002 to:-

Brian Smith, 19 Mill Bank, Kintbury, Hungerford, Berks., RG17 9UW

Tel: 01488 658 795 or email: brianws@ukonline.co.uk

please enclosed your payment cheque, payable to The Consuta Trust

Number of meals required, £10 each cheque enclosed £.....

From Name:-

Address:

Statistics

Idle thoughts and some number crunching on a calculator.

The top engine revs were 480 rpm, my estimation of the steam chest pressure was 70 psi. Speed was about 15 mph say 13 knots.

This gives an estimated IHP of about 37 HP.

Applying this data to the propeller charts gives a propeller efficiency of about 78% and a prop or brake HP of about 35.

If the revs can be taken to 630 rpm the HP needed rises as the cube of the revs so will be 80 at the prop and about 86 ihp at the engine. These engine revs will give a speed of about 19 to 20 mph.

So 20 mph looks a strong possibility.

The boiler will have to produce about 3,000 lbs/hr at 120 psi to sustain this output.

Items required for Consuta

- Firing irons:- Rake, and slicer (bent poker), hand shovel
- Boiler cleaning rod and steel tube brushes, 1¼ inch size.
- Metal buckets – two minimum
- Oil cans – thumb pump action. – at least two.
- Suitable tools for an onboard toolkit. For anyone who fancies there is an opportunity to make a nice wooden tool chest to fit on Consuta. If you have visited the Steamboat Museum at Windermere, you may remember that the SL Otto has a lovely wooden tool case. Now this really would be something special.
- Tins of Brass polish.
- Cleaning and polishing rags.
- Mops
- A mechanical driven oil pump for the steam supply to the engine.
- Boat hooks. Probably two a short one and a long one.
- A brass megaphone for coaching duties (I jest!)
- Fenders We think the best size would be say 7 inches diameter, tubular type with rope eyes at each end, 6 to 8 off needed, and 4 off of bottle fenders diameter about 9 inches.
- Mooring Lines.
- Anchor and chain – folding fisherman or folding Thames type – say 20 to 30 lb.

This list is not a definitive list, if you think I've missed anything off let me know. For example I've not included consumables such as kindling, coal, lub oils, packing material etc. If you think you can help with any of these items, please let me know:- Brian Smith 01488 658795.