



THE EMERALD 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

News Letter No. 35 — Summer 2008

Dear Supporter,

Our planning appeal for a Floating Boathouse at Beale Park – has been refused

On 15th August we received the decision on our planning appeal for the floating boathouse at Beale Park. The full text of the inspectors response is available on the Consuta website. This refusal has stunned and shocked the Trustees. The following are key extracts from the decision:-

“However important though Consuta and the need for protection are, I consider that a large and prominent floating boathouse of the type and in the location envisaged would not outweigh the importance, also national significance, of protecting the character and appearance of the surrounding area, part of an AONB.”

We had stated that no authority had been consulted about the historical importance of our proposal as it concerns preservation of a listed historic vessel. The inspector said that “*National Historic Ships were not a statutory consultee*” so did not need to be consulted. Yet if our application had involved a listed historic building then English Heritage would have been a key statutory consultee.

The Town and Country planning laws are well intended and seem to offer a very sensible control on land development. However I have been saddened to see the rigid and perverse way in which these rules can be (mis)interpreted by planning officers contrary to all public opinion. The appeal inspector does not make any reference to the third party support given (we had 47 such letters). Our application was an case which needed a pragmatic approach particularly because it is questionable whether the mooring of boats is a planning issue. This appeal decision represents the very worst in local government bureaucracy and is a setback for the continuing survival of Consuta as an operational launch. (A definition of bureaucracy “government administration chiefly through departments staffed with non elected officials”).

I came across an interesting piece in a planning development paper from the local government of the IOW about creating a conservation area in East Cowes. One of the factors documented was the important commercial activity by Saunders (later Saunders Roe) brought about by the use of Consuta plywood, apparently much valued by the MOD during WWII and used until the 1960's. How ironic that the future protection of Consuta is not considered of importance, but the industrial archaeology that developed from this plywood method of construction is a factor for a future planning policy on the Isle of Wight.

The Trustees will be taking no further action regarding this application, but are now considering some exciting alternative options. More news on these will be provided at a later date. Regarding our present use of Beale Park; the recorded planning condition (use of the lake and cut) does not look enforceable, so the Trust intend to continue using this lake for the mooring of Consuta as and when needed.

Consuta operations during 2008

The season started with a successful launching of Consuta at Beale Park on 6th May and the refitting of the boiler. She was then taken down river to Teddington to take part as a chase/umpire boat at the Twickenham regatta. On the way down river Consuta stopped at the River and Rowing Museum to ferry the Duke of Kent across for the opening of the new canoe centre just upstream of Henley Royal Regatta headquarters.



Extracts of a report about the Twickenham Regatta 25th May by David Eager:-

We were fortunate to be allowed to use a splendid mooring at the Lensbury club while in this part of the river. On race day we arrived at the Lensbury in order to raise steam in heavy rain, hoping that the weather forecast of sunshine later in the day would prove to be accurate. The regatta itself was about a mile downstream of Teddington lock, a lock so cavernous that I took three attempts to get alongside - well that's my excuse - Mark and Stuart will correctly point to helmsman incompetence.

We umpired a race every 30 minutes starting at 10am and our last was just before 5pm - a pretty long day to be following frail boats in 4 tonnes of energy, but a pretty exciting one. The new coal is very good and we umpired everything from singles to eights without any issues - well - apart from when we wondered why we were struggling to keep up with a slow race with the throttle wide open, discovered that the main steam valve was not fully open, opened it and had to shut down the throttle valve very quickly to avoid winning the race whilst collecting half the oars from each competing crew. Two Consuta crews would be a good idea on future occasions.



The eights were especially exciting - we had to start from one side of the course and then swing into the middle whilst accelerating from sluggish rudder speeds to very responsive rudder speeds.

We hosted 4 different umpires during the day, all of whom made point of showing off their complimentary cup of Consuta tea to their colleagues clinging to the smaller umpire boats. Many comments about the sound she makes as she accelerates. The first umpire tied one of the mooring lines between the two front cleats so they he could hold on during the acceleration. The last umpire said she'd heard that Consuta could not keep up with eights but was going to laugh from now on at anybody who expressed that opinion.

We took the Mayoress of Twickenham and some club officials out on our last race; a needle



match for two veteran crews. Unfortunately one crew initially forgot to turn up so we sat for some time at the start in the sunshine and drank tea. The leisurely trip up to the start and afternoon refreshments lulled our passengers into a very relaxed state prior to being catapulted after some very fast, if forgetful, gentlemen. I think the Lady Mayoress rather enjoyed it!

The organisers have asked if we would like to do the same next year. I do wonder if they are planning to run the Twickenham surfing championships at the same time. The river shelves to a beach rather than a bank at half tide conditions and we did create breakers, especially when carrying more than 4 people. Unfortunately they were launching all the boats from half way along the course and we tried slowing up for the slipway and then accelerating again after it. Despite this equivalent to noise abatement procedures from Heathrow and warnings from officials to those on the slipway, I do think we caught some crews out and I do wonder about that lighter boiler.

Steaming back to Home waters and other local outings.

The return trip back to Charvil was an exiting venture. The crew/passengers from Kintbury caught the 6:13am train arriving at Twickenham by 8:15. A short taxi ride to the Lensbury club to join Consuta. It takes a while to raise steam so we finally set off up river at about 10:00. The

river current was quite strong and most locks were displaying the yellow stream increasing boards. There was a delay at Bell Weir Lock because it was lunch time and one of the gate paddle down sensors was faulty so the self operation controls didn't respond. I forget where now but around Boveny Lock we were informed that there were red boards at the next lock and we should moor up to wait for the stream to subside! Not really a practical option for Consuta, anyway there were many other boats also on the move.

Ian Rutter had kindly donated about 1 ton of coal, so we were able to call in at his Winter Hill riverside house and pick up some extra supplies for the final part of the journey home; this was around 6:00pm. The decision was then taken to continue on our way to Charvil; Nigel Gourley had brought navigation lights for such an occasion. Travelling up past Marsh Lock we enjoyed a spectacular red sunset, arriving back at Charvil by 10:00pm. The distance was about 51 miles and all agreed what a wonderful adventure.

Consuta was due to be taken to Beale Park for the boat show the following week, but river conditions had deteriorated so much that the access bridge to the park could not be opened, so Consuta was forced to stay at Charvil.

On June 21st we steamed Consuta at Beale park as a combined event with an open day at David Amblers Farm, he was displaying his vintage farm machinery and lovely rose gardens. The farm is only about ½ mile from Beale Park. David is a volunteer at Kew Bridge engine Museum and it had been arranged for Consuta be in steam so that members of the Kew Bridge supporters club could have a boat trip on the same day as the garden party; many had been involved in the restoration of Consuta. The weather forecast predicted rain but it didn't. This event was enjoyed by everyone, although the Consuta crew missed out on the cream teas on offer at David's during the afternoon.

The Goring and Streatley Regatta is now a regular on our event calendar; last year you may remember it was rained/flooded off. No problem this year, plenty of sunshine and lots of trips for grateful members of the public (donation box gained some good takings).

Engineering Matters

One problem we have had recently is three leaking tubes in the firebox, perhaps due to higher usage of boiler treatment. Such issues normally respond to the operation of a tube expander but one tube did not. We even purchased a new expander for the job. But fear not the problem has now been resolved (trade secret).

The new coal is certainly good and very economical which is just as well, costing over £6 per 20 kilo bag (we bought two tons for Consuta). Only problem is that it's a bit smoky, so no firing up in locks.

Davide Creasey brass polishing in the rain but at least it's under cover.





Above: The glorious sunset at the end of the return trip from Twickenham *Photo by Lyn Smith*
 Below: Kew Bridge Museum supporters outing from Beale park. *Photos by David Creasey*





Two photos taken during the Goring and Streatley Regatta
 Trainee umpire perhaps? No shouting to dad on the bank to take a picture please!
 The bow steering wheel is very popular with children *Photos by Lyn Smith*





On display at the River and Rowing Museum during August

Above: The equivalent of clearing ones throat, I hope the passengers were not too frightened. Good for cleaning the boiler tubes though.

Below: Much more genteel behaviour befitting the 110 year old lady *Photos by David Creasey*





Raising steam at the Lensbury Club moorings.
Taking on more coal at Ian Rutter's riverside property

