



The Consuta Trust

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

Website: www.consuta.org.uk

News Letter No. 42 — Summer 2010



Consuta at the Swan in Streatley – July 2010

The early steaming season 2010

Following a major retubing of the boiler, its final inspection (in steam) was completed just two weeks before the Beale Park Boat Show. Consuta was then re-launched, the boiler refitted and all the piping reinstalled; we didn't have time for steam trials until the Friday of the show.

All was well with our refurbished boiler, and Consuta proved very popular giving lots of rides each day during the Show. Our collection box, supervised by one of our young supporters, did rather well, taking about £275 for the three days. Not bad for providing free trips.

The next event was a combined visit of the Kew Steam Museum supporters to David Amblers lovely rose gardens; or for the mechanically minded a study of David's hot bulb engine collection with of course a few steam trips on Consuta as additional fare. David's farm is only

about half a mile away. As it was such a nice day late afternoon we decided to then take Consuta down river to Charvil ready for the Henley Women's regatta on the following Friday. That was a lovely trip and Consuta was performing well.

One of our engineering team mentioned that there seemed a little bit of play in the reverse gear weighshaft. We already knew that one of the engine reversing brackets needed rebushing but had never got round to this, in fact very little maintenance has been carried out or needed on the engine over the last few years. The engineering team decided to do a little patch up work on this problem during mid week before the Women's regatta. Some white metal refurbishment was also added to the forward die block, as this had developed a few thou play over time. This made me wonder if we don't get our boathouse with its own workshop soon, perhaps we should consider investing in a trailable mobile workshop to make these engineering tasks a little easier.

Henley Women's Regatta

A very competitive event, but quite friendly, this is the rare opportunity to have a bit of excitement running fast following races. Consuta was booked to work as an umpire launch on the Friday and the Saturday of the event (not on the Sunday). The schedule on Saturday was very heavy; we umpired 20 races on the day – no special privileges given for our 112 year old steamer, none needed. Consuta was one of seven umpire launches involved. The Umpire launch drivers club HELP (Henley Elite Launch Personnel) invited the Consuta crew to join them for their social evening meal at the Flower Pot Inn; we were very honoured indeed to join the elite.

During the races fireman Mark Smith took some photos of the readings on our new analogue rev counter and engine pressure gauge; an installation initiated by Robin Wallace Sims. It's interesting to see the pressure required for specific boat speeds (well – engine revs), it's obvious when more passengers are carried, requires an increase in the steam pressure for a particular speed. (ie this means more Horse Power is needed, I suppose this is obvious really).

The whole weekend went well - fire always in the right place. The fireman/engineers starting technique had been modified to avoid coal throwing – some wag asked was the bucket of water seen on the back cockpit seat just a precaution or was it intended to catch any hot cinders. Reported event mishaps were – the rearrangement of a course post, and an attempt to put the Umpire over the bows by starting with the engine in reverse – Oops!. We learned afterwards from one of the other launch skippers that a Time Keeper off the back is worth 10 points, but no one's has ever managed to get an Umpire off the front yet. Fortunately not serious and all on board had a bit of a chuckle when Consuta tried to set off the wrong way from the starting grid.

While we are being open about mistakes, we also had a "lock up" of the reversing gear when coming alongside, I mention this because it can be a trap for the unwary and rather alarming. The best way to avoid this is to always shut the engine throttle before moving the reversing lever, because if there is a steam on the engine and the valve gear is stationary in mid position, pressure will build up on the big slide valves and it then becomes impossible to move the reversing lever at all. It's obvious really when you realise that the valves are about 16 sqin area and with 20/30 psi on them they will not slide easily with a total load of around 400lbs (or more) on a valve; hence a lockup. The reverser can be moved while the engine is rotating but it must be moved swiftly from end to end, so that the oil/water lubrication film under the valve face does not have time to get squeezed out; so mustn't park the reverser in mid gear with steam on.

Other Outings

Some days later after the Women's Regatta there were two further steam outings to Henley. A third outing, a private party booking, unfortunately had to be cancelled because the weather was

not very good. In fact the weather deteriorated over this week so we had to wait until Friday 16th July before we could move Consuta upriver to attend the Goring & Streatley Regatta held just above Cleeve lock. The forecast for the Friday did not look good and thought that we were bound to get wet, but no not at all. There were strong winds but the glorious sunshine made this a really super trip. It did rain but only after we had packed up and on our way home, brilliant timing.

The weather was fine and sunny the next day for the G&S Regatta, we provided over twelve trips (lost count) along the race course, and the donation box did very well. All the Consuta's Beale Park lake mooring pontoons had been moved to the regatta site because somebody had assumed that Consuta was not going to overnight at the park. Oh dear, now this presented an interesting challenge when we returned to the lake on the Saturday evening, because it is quite impossible to safely moor Consuta on the lake without them – we did try to no avail.

Fortunately one pontoon had been left out on the river, so we finally dragged this in for temporary service. The next day the Crofton branch of the Kennet & Avon Canal Trust had an outing from the park and our pontoons were safely towed back in time for Consuta's return.

Consuta had developed a leaking gasket on the main steam line, so a work party went out mid week to Beale Park and repair this and attend to a few other maintenance tasks.

The next weekend Consuta was steamed for a Saturday wedding day anniversary outing at the Swan in Streatley. The trips were confined to the pound between Goring and Cleeve locks which although very short is most attractive. Several supporters then joined Consuta in the afternoon for an enjoyable downriver trip back to Charvil, about 16 miles, this was to have Consuta ready for several steaming operations on the Henley reach during August.

Boathouse News.

Unfortunately there is nothing to report, we still have two serious options on the table but they are both on hold for the moment, I find this all very frustrating.

Supporting Consuta and providing an Operational crew

Thanks to all crew volunteers who have helped out this year, however the Trust do need more people to join in and help run Consuta. We have produced an engineering handbook which is presently being evaluated before publication, and have advertised formal engineering training courses for Consuta in the spring edition of the SBA Funnel magazine so far we've had six enquiries.

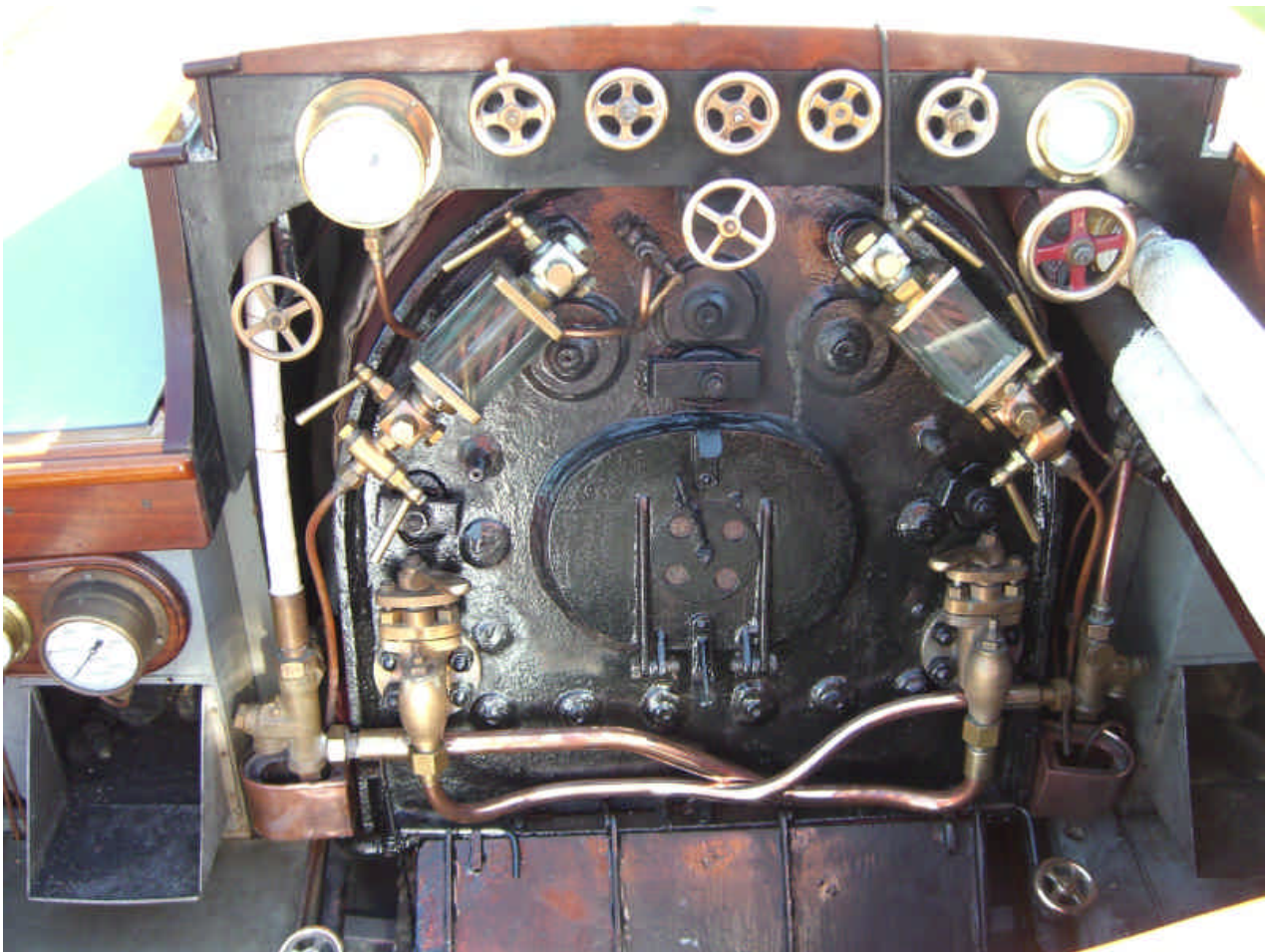
Thank you to everyone who helped us keep Consuta steaming each year, the annual costs are high, sadly there are no special fee concessions or grants for operating our historic boat. It's a shame when you think that most museums don't try to show off their historic boats in working condition; sadly some vessels are even held in store with no public access at all.

Running Consuta on the River does create lots of public interest, and it's quite obvious that we do have something which is quite special and worth looking after – long may it continue. ■

BWS 28-7-10



*Beale Park Boat Show Jun 2010
Giving public trips on the lake*



Engineering controls on the boiler – it looks complicated, but not really – our new engineering handbook should help



Our supporters do help in other ways.
Polishing, varnishing, moving pontoons and re-
installing parts of the steam plant as required.





Above Four Photos taken during Henley Women's Regatta 2010.

Top left is the helms man's view of a race.

Top right – the engineer preparing the fire for the next race.

Lower left – the engine pressure gauge (45 psi) and engine revs (400 rpm = 12 mph) taken while following a race.

Lower right some of the support crew – yes in case you are wondering we do have women engineers.

Bottom left – Some engineering equipment needed on site for the occasional maintenance work.

Bottom right – A quiet time during the Goring and Streatley Regatta



If you not already doing so but would like to make regular monthly contributions to the trust please contact Derek Brown and ask for a bank standing order form. These are also available as downloads from our website.
If you receive this newsletter by post but can take it via email please contact: brian.smith@consuta.org.uk



Speeding down the race course during the Henley Women's Regatta. Looking towards Henley, church can just be seen in the distance.

Photo by Lyn Smith

Variety

Tranquil river scene just past Gatehampton railway bridge.

Consuta on its way to the Swan Inn at Streatley.

Photo by David Creasey



Consuta returns to it's home.

The Swan, birthplace of the Sam Saunders boat building business in the Victorian era.

Photo by David Creasey