



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 Royal

News Letter No. 28 — Autumn 2006

The boating season is now over, the premonition of drought that cause the EA to issue warnings about limiting lock operation never quite materialised. The weather has been very kind for most of the events throughout the year.

August and September have been fairly quiet months as far as our operations have gone. Consuta's appearance at the World Rowing Championships at Dorney Lake did not go ahead. The cost of moving Consuta onto and from the lake was just too much for the organisers.

The big event in August was of course the IWA rally based at Beale Park. Light hull historic boats like Consuta don't necessarily sit easy with heavy steel narrowboats or the even bigger steel barges (Dutch style). The organisers provided an excellent mooring for us, however there was no access for the public which was a shame and partly missed the point of our being there.

We needed to move Consuta from Charvil to the lake at Beale Park before the rally started but not before the pontoons had been set up. We chose to travel upstream on the Thursday before the weekend, this was clearly a blunder because river traffic was extremely heavy, most going to the rally. Some large barges were taking a whole lockful only to themselves; we joined the queue for Sonning lock just about in sight of the moorings which are down river from Sonning Road Bridge. Obviously a pub lunch at Caversham was not going to be possible, so we put some of our crew ashore before the lock cut to see what provisions could be obtained in Sonning. Did you know there are no shops in Sonning? Fortunately the Bull provided take-aways. Despite all the delays everyone agreed it was a jolly good day out.

Paul was our engineer and the engine was lovely and quiet, the only noise was from the ratchet drive on the engine oiler; someone likened the situation to the ticking clock in a Rolls Royce.

A wedding party outing on the Henley reach during August

Photo by David Creasey

The IWA rally was opened by David Suchet. The ceremony started with a boat procession from Whitchurch Lock headed by Windrush, followed by Consuta, and then L'Orange with Raymond Baxter on board astern. Consuta carried the VIP group: David and his wife, IWA chairman John Redmond and others.

Consuta also had two accordianists in the stern cockpit



making our trip a musical affair. There were boats after boats along the river bank; 600 – 800 I was told. John Redmond asked us to continue up passed the Lake entrance for the benefit of boats moored upriver. The musicians stopped playing as we went past the entrance and queried why we had not turned in. They said they had timed their music to finish at this point. We continued upstream and the line of moored boats carried on for another half mile before we turned.

It certainly was a triumphal entrance through the cut onto the lake.

I looked at the IWA report of the event on their website and there was no mention of this procession, even worse the boating press didn't even mention that David Suchet performed the opening culminating with a speech of welcome, and David is a vice president of The Waterways Trust!

After lunch we gave a group of Irish IWA committee members a trip onto the river.

Our secure mooring meant that we were not in contact with the public, which was a shame! However as the weather was so fine we raised steamed on the other two days of the event and moved to moor alongside the steam narrow boat Emily Anne while the show was open to at least be on public display. My impression is that the IWA only seem to think in terms

of narrowboats, as apart from the opening ceremony they made no use of Consuta at all.

We enjoyed the whole event and made several outings onto the river for supporters and friends.

The final outing of the year was to take Consuta

David Suchet and guests arriving at the IWA Rally.

Photo David Creasey



Re-positional cruise upstream of Whitchurch Lock, not far to Beale Park now photo David Creasey



to the Steam Boat Association event based at Benson.

Consuta had the use of a splendid private mooring in the weir stream just above the lock. This was the first time Consuta had been this far up the river since restoration, and on the Saturday went as far as Clifton lock, returning to Beale Park on the Sunday. I attended the rally in my own steam launch San Toy and we travel down river a short way with Consuta and Sabrina on the Saturday.

Unfortunately Consuta had a minor contretemps with the Park swing bridge when returning on Sunday; nothing too serious but it has created an extra bit of winter maintenance. I think a head or two might be hung in shame; but then we all make mistakes!

Trustee meeting.

A recent Trust meeting has seen some interesting business in progress. The Trustees are actively looking into the possibility of a floating boathouse. The idea is that this would provide all year covered accommodation to house Consuta when not steaming; have the capability to lift Consuta up and out of the water during the winter months; and would also have a crew room for our supporters. We could even have Consuta on limited public display when not in steam should we wish. The boathouse is being designed to be within the navigation dimension limits of the Thames this will permit it to be moved anywhere on the river. There are various sites which are currently under consideration. Beale Park is one of these, although I suppose we would prefer a location nearer Henley. If you have any ideas or contacts that could further these aims now would be a good time to let us know.



Accordianists on board – L'Orange dead astern – photo Dave Creasey



Obituary

Raymond Baxter who was one of our supporters during the restoration years died in September, our condolences to family and friends. Raymond with John Snagg was involved during the very first televised coverage of the

*Consuta in steam
alongside Steam
Narrowboat Emily Anne*



Consuta and San Toy waiting to enter Days Lock – Wittenham Tumps on the skyline – photo Lyn Smith

Oxford and Cambridge boat race by the BBC in 1949. The BBC used Consuta as the camera platform, and this continued for several years until the 1960's.

Winter Social

The Trust are intending to arrange a social luncheon in the new year, details have still to be prepared.

Consuta and Sabrina framed in Clifton Hampton Road Bridge — photo taken by Lyn Smith from San Toy

