



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 - Autumn 2017

Dear All,

Consuta operations

Consuta's summer season this year has been fairly quiet apart from the regular events attended every year. This may have been due to the diversion created by sorting out some of the many details needed for the Consuta Project programme and also The Tamesis Trust work on planning application for a new museum at Beale Park.

Sorry that we only arranged a few private outings this year, this has been partly due to rather variable weather conditions during the summer and autumn months.

Consuta attended the Henley Traditional Boat Festival. The late Robin Ford had always made the detailed arrangements for Consuta to attend, so this year didn't have a pitch ashore which was a pity because we had aimed to show off Cygnet here.

The mooring arrangements this year however were excellent which allowed Consuta to make several display runs with passengers on each day. The weather on Friday started rather wet in the morning but brightened up in the afternoon, the Saturday and Sunday were great.



Showing how Consuta plywood is made – later on stitching was by machines

Impressive LIFU engine installation on SL Michelle



We need to train them young – a bit damp on Friday.





Time for a cuppa tea while raising steam



An iconic building just upstream of Caversham Bridge

During the week following the Henley Festival we had a pleasant repositioning run up river to Beale Park. It had been arranged to have Consuta at the Goring Gap Regatta, however the weather forecast for the Saturday of the event didn't look good. Sadly we decided that the field and bank edge would be too boggy so had to cancel our participation. This was a shame because this event was one of the years when dates didn't clash with the Henley Festival.

There was only one other event during August which was a private steaming for the Berkshire branch of the Cambridge society. Three one hour trips were made from Beale park during some fine summer weather.

The final trip of the year was a supporters outing of a fairly short up river run to The Boat House Inn at Wallingford. The outing was very well attended by 13 people and the weather was quite sunny although a light northerly breeze kept temperatures a little low. We had some excellent food here sitting outside in the warm sunshine.

The Boat House restaurant just upstream of Wallingford Bridge





Warm enough to sit outside for lunch



Cleeve Lock on the way up river

Engineering

A few of the remaining minor knocks on the engine have been identified and will require some winter work. There is wear in both cylinder valve rod spindle glands, allowing slight sideways movement due to a push from the Stephenson link as it vibrates. Temporary improvement can be made by tightening up the packing gland but this is not a long term solution. So the gland boxes need to be reworked (rebushed?).

The brass engine revs counter and the engine valve chest pressure gauge need work. I think the small bore steam pipe to the pressure gauge has become bunged up with thick oil, another job for the winter. The Stainless Steel firebars fitted a couple of years ago have proved excellent with no corrosion, bending or distortion; so it's probably SS bars for the new boiler.



Releasing the mud doors on the boiler backhead

The Thames Heritage Museum

The Tamesis Trust as agent for the Museum planning application at Beale Park had submitted the full application in late May.

The council set a decision date for late July (eight weeks) which is normal procedure to allow responses. However we were asked if we would extend the date and submit revised plans because the museum was 4 metres longer than the approved outline application, despite scale being a reserved matter. We decided that changes would compromise good visitor access, so declined. This obviously caused problems for the case officer because the decision date passed and several emails from ourselves were not acknowledged. It therefore came as a pleasant surprise when the case officer came back at the end of August to say that she would be recommending approval and we would have the decision in a week's time. Prior to this I personally had thought we would need to take the application to an appeal.

Thames Heritage Boat Museum



Brilliant decision and many thanks to all who have given support to this project over the years.

I quote part of an extract from the case officers report

“..... the proposal provides a unique opportunity to display maritime artefacts and boating memorabilia which is of historic value and an educational asset. Given that the site is currently used for tourism the proposed use complements this and will deliver both a social and economic benefit. “

We think this is very well put, don't you?

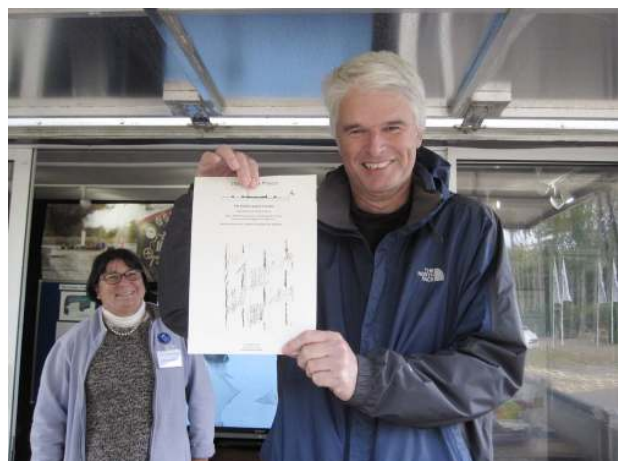
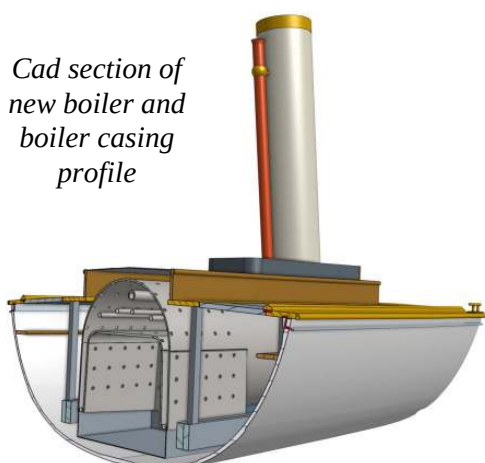
It has been an interesting experience to obtain planning approval. Also I've been surprised how costly Planning applications can be; architects fees, a plethora of specialist reports required and plans which need to be drawn up on a CAD system. We had architectural quotes for the work which would have totalled over £90,000, in fact the works costs less than £20,000. Funds for this were provided from the Consuta Trust and a few private donors. Currently the Tamesis Trust has £13,000 reserves although it does own quite a lot of assets, so the build costs for the museum estimated at £1.25m will all need to be raised.

We did ask the HLF for funding but they stated that they do not support the costs of new build. We have some ideas about how to raise this sort of funding but would welcome any suggestions or help for this major task ahead. The museum can be built in stages which makes the fund raising task a bit easier. It is an interesting thought but rather sad reflection that the HLF are willing to provide funds for Consuta's refurbishment even though the future sustainability of Consuta cannot be guaranteed without a safe base.

Exhibition display at Beale Park

Have you visited the exhibition display yet? We now have a splendid range of historic Thames films displayed on an enormous 70" TV.

The display is open on specific dates, check the calendar of the Consuta Project page. If you come along during a quiet time you might be offered a cup of tea. Following a slow start this year we have a lot in the pipeline for next year, special talks and various visits, and also of course the fitting out Consuta with the new boiler and boiler casing. Exciting times ahead.



Obituaries **Dick Bradford** and **Robin Ford** both passed away earlier this year.

Dick had been a long time supporter of the Trust (supporter during and since the restoration).

Robin became a trustee of The Consuta Trust in 2010 and was invaluable for dealing with other Thames clubs and Trust promotion work.

More engineering matters

The Consuta Project of course is a HLF grant programme for providing a lighter and lower profile boiler for Consuta, where the refurbishment will provide a lower boiler casing as in original Consuta photos. Other very important advantages are that the boat will be lighter and the boiler will be easier to manage and wear on the engine will be reduced.

We have some good coal these days but even the best fireman would admit that the current boiler does have problems at times, the replacement work should resolve this.

Following the Wallingford outing the boiler was prepared for lifting out on the 20th October. This three hour task involves removing several steam pipes, including the main steam and exhaust pipe. Both are very heavy items, the steam pipe is 1½ inches internal diameter thick walled copper tube and the exhaust is about 3 inches diameter, all with flanged joints.



Above are a couple of photos showing Consuta riding higher than usual when there is no water in the boiler. If all goes to plan this will be the normal riding height in service with the new work.

The engine cyclone silencer was also removed, and to our surprise we discovered that there were two small holes in the bottom – so how can steel rust with all this oil around?. Consuta had been suffering from oily bilges for the last two years, and at the time we had concluded that there was probably a leak from the ashpan; however it is now clear that the leak was in fact from the silencer. So all the steam oil pumped into the engine went into the bilges – oh dear what a mess which now needs a wet vac pump out with suitable detergent.

The New boiler

Some of the new boiler plates ready for assembly

Consuta Winter Social

This is currently being planned and will probably be in February next year, more in the Christmas newsletter.

Brian Smith - October 2017

