



# The Consuta Trust

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

## Consuta Trust Newsletter - Summer 2025

Wecome to our summer newsletter.

### Social Luncheon.

A non boating social event held on Saturday 22<sup>nd</sup> March held at the Butt Inn, Aldermaston. This preseasonal social gathering was attended by 21 people, a very pleasant do although with all the chat we were a bit noisy at times.



### Consuta's Boiler inspection

Conducted at Kintbury on Thursday 10th April. Mark, Paul and myself prepared Consuta for the boiler inspection which was conducted by SBA Services boiler inspector, David Jeffrey.. During the steam raising we had time for a splendid lunch.

Polish coal was used for the test and we noted that this was a bit smoky. Consuta's safety valve started wisping at 160 psi then roaring at 176 psi by using full blower (the pressure gauge red line is marked for 180 psi maximum). All went very well with no issues being identified.

### Consuta steams to Crofton to see the historic beam engines at work.

Two days were needed to move Consuta there and back during the May Day Bank Holiday plus a day stop over at the Crofton on Sunday. Not a great distance, however there are 17 locks and a couple of manually operated swing bridges.

Mark had Consuta ready in steam by 9:00 am on the Saturday ready for the trip to Crofton. It was warm and very sunny, although there was a strong Easterly wind.

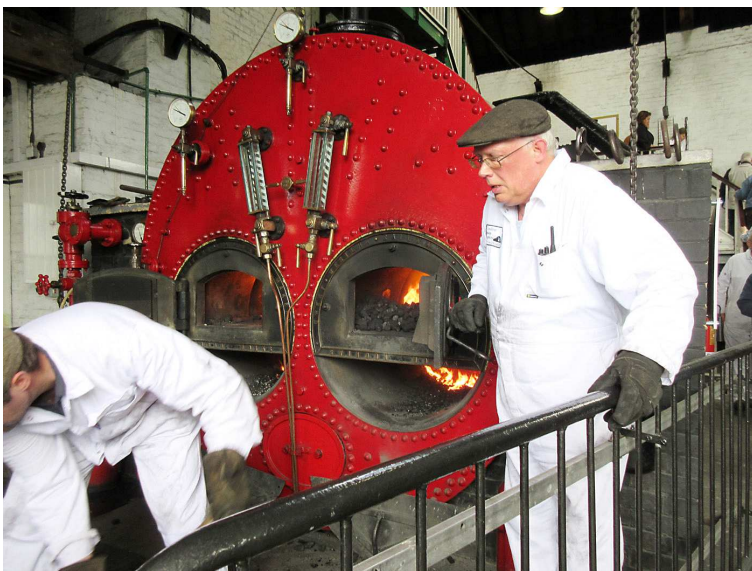
I wasn't on Consuta but took our Land Rover Discovery to key sections preparing a few locks ready for Consuta, finally ending up at the Crofton pound lock ready to take people back to Kintbury.

Consuta completed the trip by 3:30 pm, I was surprised to see that there was no smoke coming from the Crofton station chimney. We later learnt that the pumping station boiler was still warm from the Easter weekend so would only need to be fired up early on the Sunday morning for steam pump operation.





20 supporters booked for our Pumping Station Sunday visit. The weather was cloudy with a cold Easterly wind blowing over the site. Some of Consuta's crew decided to stay with Consuta on the canal mooring chatting to visitors who came along to have a look, even though Consuta was not in steam on the Sunday.



The Monday return trip would require much simpler rope handling going down locks.

I was interested to see how much Polish steam coal we had used on the first day, and was wondering would we need any extra bags brought out to Crofton for the journey back?

Gareth Jones said he would like to donate some Ffos-y-Fran coal and had even brought a bag to Crofton in his car, so the coal issue was solved, many thanks. Actually we had a quite a bit of coal left in the two bunkers when we got back to Kintbury. Each bunker holds about 3 to 4 bags each side, coal comes in 20 or 25 kilo bags.



We were interested to see that Columbian coal was being used at Crofton. This smoky coal seemed to be in rather small lumps, some even falling unburnt through the boiler grate. Crofton has a Lancashire boiler with two furnaces.

I had been rather concerned about turning Consuta at Crofton for the return trip as there was no designated winding place on this pound, especially with the strong wind blowing along the open water. However this pound was wider than it looked so the turning by hand gave no problems at all.

I joined Consuta at Great Bedwyn on the Monday for the trip back to Kintbury. There was very little sun and a cold wind throughout the day, so everyone except for engine crew were well wrapped up for the journey, Kintbury was reached about 3:00pm. Sitting in the bow I had an interesting chat with Allan Winn and Bruce Gauntlet. Allan was able to provide a lot of detail about the original development of the railway when first built as a broad gauge line, he had worked for the GWR and Bruce knew the local area very well, his family owned land around the canal where Consuta's trailer is stored.

### **A maintenance day at Kintbury**

Paul decided that the engine valve gear still needed one last minor adjustment and he also



had a good go at removing the chalk discolouring along the lower part of the hull white paint. We tried several cleaners but the best by far was Deb Janitol Altrans cleaner. My stocks of this useful cleaner are quite low and unfortunately it is not available now.



### **Steaming Consuta from Kintbury to a mooring on the Thames**

This journey was covered in two stages, Kintbury to Aldermaston on the Saturday then the final part to the Charvil Thames mooring on the Sunday.

We needed to decide which coal would be best to use, the Polish steam coal was perhaps a bit too smoky and also required frequent boiler tube cleaning. So six 25 kg bags of the Aberpergwm Coal Mine steam coal were loaded for the Saturday trip.

This coal was as clean burning as the Foss Y Fran coal (unfortunately no longer obtainable) and easily produced a good supply of steam, so another two bags were loaded on Sunday for the second part of the journey from Padworth Lock, just downstream from Aldermaston.



We had a good crew plus helpers for both days, Sunday was cooler than Saturday. Several people joining and leaving Consuta at various sections of the journey.

There were a couple of incidents during the two day trip. First a bit of scrape passing through the Woolhampton swing bridge on Saturday, and then during Sunday the need to go astern through the Reading Oracle (previously known as the brewery gut), this must have been a bit embarrassing for our crew to explain.

The scrape damage from the Woolhampton bridge was mainly on the brass rubbing strip thank goodness.



There were no engineering problems. The big injector did become a bit tricky when passing through Newbury, but a check on the water intake filter revealed this was due to weed blockage.

We also had decided that the front cockpit steering wheel coupling needed to be disabled for safety reasons, as baby Adam took a great delight in playing with the wheel.

The helmsman reported that the steering after this change felt much lighter and more precise, so a good result all round.



Above:- **Aldermaston lock** is about 110ft long and 18ft wide with a rise of 9ft, Originally a turf sided lock but was restored to full side height by BW in 1986 and is now a listed structure.



Polishing work while steam raising on Sunday morning.



Above :- **Consuta** now with Funnel down, travelling backwards through the Brewery Gut and carefully approaching that tricky Reading street bridge river bend



Above:- **County lock** in Reading only has a rise of 1ft the gate had a CRT apology notice to boaters on the rotten beam stating to be repaired soon.



The next lock, in the EA managed section of the Kennet, had a non working gate? but fortunately is wide enough to give a 9ft width for passing through with just the one gate used.

On the left Consuta now safely moored up at Charvil all sheeted up. Discussing best options for collecting cars. Paul kindly brought his van to supplement our Disco seating.

# Work parties and steaming options during 2025

Various activities which are possible options to use Consuta. Running Consuta at any of these can only be possible if we have people to manage and crew Consuta. Where possible we will try to choose days when weather is good.

## Summer 2025 events

**Steam training outings on the Thames**

14th June.

**Henley Women's Regatta**

20th –22nd June

We will be attending on the Saturday only. This gives us a chance to test our fireman engineer and helmsman and is always very exciting

**Reading Town Regatta June** a short 800m course Sat 28th June

Not sure if they still use umpire launches but a great event.

**Henley Traditional Boat Festival**

18th to 20th July

Consuta is booked to attend all three days

**Henley Town and Visitor regatta**

Sat 2nd August

We always need your help and encouragement to keep Consuta operational as a historic steam umpire launch.

Best wishes to all,

Brian Smith and the Trustees.

June 2025

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## Henley River Rowing Museum

You may have already heard that the Henley River Rowing Museum needs to reduce its operational costs so will shortly have to reduce the range of exhibits. We understand that this could mean that the historic Thornycroft steam launch EVA will probably have to go. Our sister trust "The Tamesis Trust" is keeping a watching brief on the developing situation.



*Eva on Windermere shortly following restoration in 1980's*