



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**

Consuta Trust Newsletter - Summer 2019

The Consuta Project refurbishment programme is now well advanced but not yet completed.

Public Visits to our workshop during Spring

The Trust shed at Beale Park had two public visits, one was by David Gallagher and his wife who were visiting the UK from the USA, David has made a fine working model of Consuta. We also had some members of the Thames Valley Traction Engine Club who came along on another day to see progress and talk about engineering matters.



Present refurbishment status

The boiler has now been fitted out with some impressive insulation lagging then it was taken to Beale Park early June. The movable gantry has been a very useful asset which makes lifting the boiler from the trailer and then placing it into Consuta quite a simple task.

Important issues arising from the refurbishment

The restoration of Consuta to its original form has given us much to consider during the work. The old boiler from 1985 was obviously too high, too heavy and with several major operational defects as well. The new boiler is intended to rectify these, however there were several other important changes which had also to be decided for the new installation.

One thing that came as a bit of a surprise was that the engine including prop shaft were not quite central in the hull; probably about 1½ inches biased towards the starboard side. Now this is not much but we wondered why. When Consuta was originally restored in 1999, Colin Henwood and Andrew Wolsteinholm spent much time and effort getting the above water hull lines looking just right and we were all very pleased with the resultant hull lines. The Consuta plywood construction of the hull without any bulkheads or ribs make for a very flexible thing. So without the long strengthening side seat sections now fitted, it was possible to change the beam a lot by just lightly pushing at different positions along the sides. I remember being told that although the above water form looked great, the tunnel remained a little lopsided, but was not considered a problem.

Since this earlier restoration we also have the benefit of so many

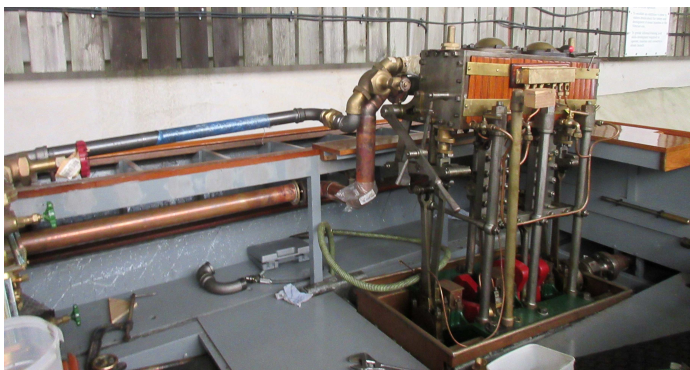


View from the front compartment. The new removable wider side decking in place as a result of a narrower boiler casing which fits over the frames. These have to be removed to lift the boiler out

more historic photos of Consuta and this has permitted several key measurements to be made of the original hull dimensions. One of the conclusions is that the hull is now probably slightly wider than when originally built.

Provision for the new engine steam pipework has also been an intriguing exercise. The old photos clearly show a steam pipe coming from the boiler back head, probably from what is called a piccolo steam take off pipe; a common Victorian feature, also the route of the original exhaust steam pipe is clear from another old photo.

Because of the water carry over problem with the old boiler we had decided to play safe by using a small dome for the engine steam take off. The steam is first taken forward inside the boiler barrel



Note the position of the engine steam and exhaust pipes. These pipes replicate the original routes as seen in old photos

to the smokebox then returns again inside the boiler steam space to the backhead. This is to allow the provision of a steam dryer in the smokebox and only needs a short external steam pipe to the engine, all intended to reduce condensate in the engine steam line.

Currently we have made the steam pipe to the engine out of screwed iron pipe fittings, but once the bends and shape are finally approved as correct, this assembly will then be used as a template for an all copper steam pipe with all the correct angles.

The Henley Traditional Boat Festival



This photo of the exhibition display unit with Cygnet at the side taken on Saturday. Display boards were put out on the grass during the Saturday and Sunday.

We haven't been able to get Consuta completed for any of this year's boating events, all very disappointing; especially as there have been several steaming requests during the year. The Traditional Boat Festival organisers suggested that if we weren't able to bring Consuta, could we

instead provide a shore display, and this is what we did. I think that all agreed that our exhibit at the show had been well worthwhile, although it did need a lot of preparation work.

The display used the exhibition unit and the 1870 Thornycroft SL Cygnet (on a road trailer), plus our own SL Arlette in steam on the water. Arlette is fitted with a similar Thornycroft engine to that in Cygnet and is thought to be over 140 years old but still steams very well.

Many people came along and had a good look at Cygnet, I wonder how many realised that the hull is a riveted steel hull now clad on the outside with glass fibre by Michael Turk so that he could use it in the 1960's/70's without replacing some corroded hull plates. Once we have a museum we intend to remove this covering, wonder about the best way to do this, and ideas?.

During the weekend Arlette provided trips to our own supporters and also for a group of French visitors including the Mayor of Orlean who had come over prior to their Festival Loire boating event in September.

There were other historic Thames steam launches at the show. We were delighted to see the steam launch Artemis of 1898 that had recently been re-planked to a very high standard, and which was awarded one of the event trophies. The steam launch Elfin built by Constable of Hampton in 1895 was also on display, although sadly not in steam; what a pity. This 35ft steam launch has just been restored and was built for James Restler, Chief Engineer of the Metropolitan Water Board. Elfin has a fine double compound four crank engine designed by James Restler – what a lovely piece of engineering.

Other steamboats at the show were Anna Jayne, Firebird, Naiad, Sunbeam, Surta and of course Alaska running public trips.

I was also pleased to see the 1903 Scolopendra, a displacement motorboat racer by Thornycroft, built in the days before planing hulls were developed; only low horse power engines were available in these times.

The HLF Project Activities talks

Dave Howard was appointed as our HLF project assistant and had arranged several talks throughout 2019 as part of the project activities programme. The first three, during Spring, were held at the Liston Hall in Marlow which has free parking in the evening. The attendance was lower than we had hoped but the talks themselves were very good. Three more are planned for the autumn, two of these will be at the Henley River and Rowing Museum, the other at Marlow, please look at the programme shown on the next page.

Consuta's engine rev counter.

Many of you will know that Consuta had two rev counters. One was a bicycle pedometer, these units can be adapted for use as a rev counter and are very cheap. The other was an analogue style speed indicator fitted in a fine looking polished brass case using a moving coil meter which read the output of a tachogenerator on the prop shaft originally provided by Robin Wallace Sims. This had become unreliable during the last year of service but has since been restored by John Emmett.

Obituaries

During the last few years several of our supporters have died, this year we lost Ken Petipher and Geoffrey St John. Ken was an engineer who had worked at Peter Freebody's on various steam launch projects, Geoffrey, who owned several classic cars, was also involved in restoring several steam launches including the initial work on Elfin.

Recruitment for Consuta operations next year.

I'm a member of several historical marine trusts and clubs and it is becoming obvious that the active membership of many of these organisations is falling, in particular there is a serious lack of younger recruits. Public interest in the mechanical engineering world seems to be waning as the digital revolution advances. I've been in electronics during all my working days – first using thermionic valves, transistors, integrated circuits and microprocessors and then all that software programming business, thoroughly enjoyed it all. Despite all these amazing technology changes I still have a great interest in mechanical engineering and the work that was carried out by our Victorian and Edwardian ancestors, but interest in this heritage seems to be waning. I've also noticed that many museums which conserve our industrial heritage are dumbing down which is disappointing.

The Consuta Trust will need more volunteers to help run the launch in future years and this does need an interest and understanding of mechanical engineering or a willingness to learn. Here is a (mis)quote about our future prospects "A society that does not honour it's past has no future".

If you have any thoughts about how we can attract future supporters interested in this part of our Victorian heritage please do let me know. With all the social media opportunities we should be able to do something to encourage future interest and membership, it has been suggested we should use the current craze of "Steam Punk" here is a definition of this:-

"A genre of science fiction that has a historical setting and typically features steam powered machinery rather than advanced technology".

Looking to the future - Consuta and Thames Heritage Boat Museum

Due to a significant policy change of the Beale Park Trust we are now searching for an alternative site for a Thames Heritage Boat Museum, and also in the interim we need somewhere to keep many of the many associated historical items we already have in our collection (note this includes Cygnet). It is also possible that Consuta will require a future alternative over winter storage base.

If you have any suggestions, ideas or any useful contacts please do let me know.

Best wishes to you all,

from The Consuta Trust

August 1019

Date	Consuta Project - Talk Subject	Booking
25 September Wednesday 11:30	A morning talk by Bill King (Historian) at Henley about the "Upper Thames Patrol and the waterborne Home Guard" during WW2. Held at the Henley River and Rowing Museum, 11:30 hrs	Cost is £7.00 Booking is essential.
24 October Thursday 19:00	An evening talk by Dr Simon Wenham at Henley about "More than 3 men and a boat, the rise and fall of pleasure boating on The Thames". Held at the Henley River and Rowing Museum, 19:00 hrs	Cost is £7.00 Booking is essential.
26th November Tuesday 19:30	An evening talk by Neil Garside (Boat Builder) about "Boat Building History on Upper Thames Including restoration work on Alaska and Streatley" At the Liston Hall, Marlow, 19:30 hrs	Free entry



LOTTERY FUNDED

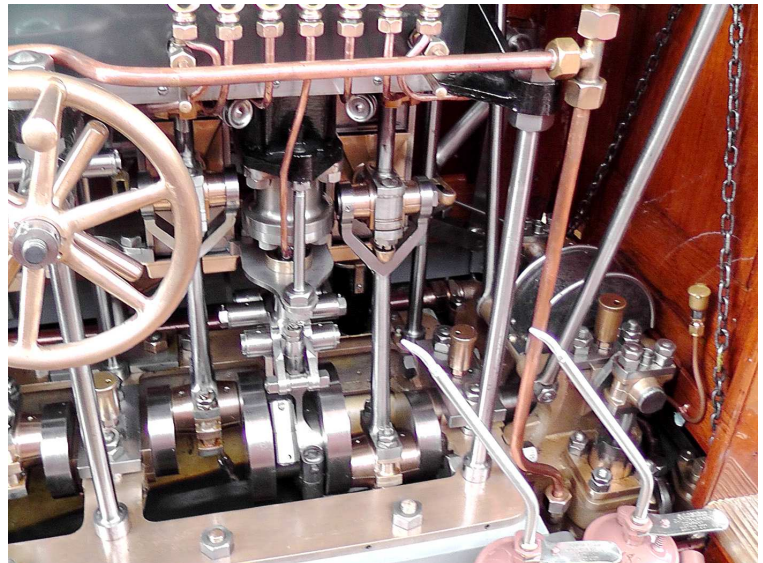
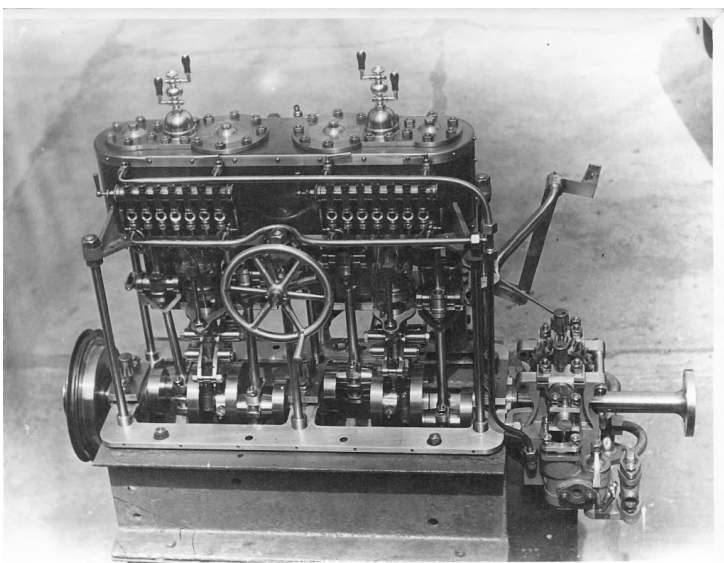
If you have any queries about any of the talks please contact us via email:-
activities@consuta.org.uk or phone:-

To book a talk at the River and Rowing Museum either book via the form on the museum website or telephone 01491 415600.



Steam launch Elfin

*The above photo shows the helmsman controls – steering with a repeat rudder position indicator, engine throttle and I think a lever operated reverse. The boiler is an oil fired Lune Valley type
The photos below shows the engine – it was difficult to take a photo as installed, so the black and white photo is of the complete engine, the other gives an idea of the finish.*



At the Thames Traditional Boat Festival – 2019



*Steam Launch **Artemis** above was built in 1895 as a tender for the steam yacht Artemis, The launch has recently been re-planked but still has her original Simpson Strickland steam engine.*

*A view of **Arlette** at the Festival looking towards the steamboat moorings.*



At the Thames Traditional Boat Festival – 2019



***Scolopendra** above built in 1903 by Thornycroft with a 24 HP Thornycroft petrol engine running at 800 rpm. However it currently has a more powerful engine until an original can be fitted*

Below Vintage racing hydroplane – hydroplanes were first developed around 1910 by Henri Fabre and soon dominated the motorboat racing scene from then on.





*A few of our supporters came to our shed to clean up **Consuta** ready for a visit by members of the Thames Valley Traction Engine Club.*

*Lifting the boiler into **Consuta** - this has now been carried out on a couple of occasions.*

