



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 - Summer 2017

Dear All,

Update on The Consuta Project

A project that has Heritage Lottery Funding support to build a better, lighter boiler for Consuta whilst also providing the public with details about the history of steam launches that lead to the design of Consuta.



The core part of the project is to order the new boiler, this has now been done, Manor Farm Engineering have been commissioned for the work. The approved boiler design has needed minor changes to suit build requirements, these changes will be to the requirement of the SBA Services inspector(s).

The other key part of the project was to purchase an exhibition display unit modified for our purposes. We have also appointed an Activities Coordinator to look after this important part of the project, and are looking for a part time Project Assistant to help in the display unit; if you are interested there is a job description on the trust website. The work should appeal to anyone who has spare time, likes talking to people interested in boating and steam; these will be mainly visitors attending Beale Park, who are mostly families with young children.

We would also encourage any trust supporter to come along and see the various activities as they are being developed and chat to our part time staff; if you are really good you might even be offered a cup of tea.

A variety of activities are being designed to interest people of all ages and abilities, which you might also find interesting. Beale Park is in beautiful part of Berkshire complete with a lake, various walks, some to the Thames nearby; and is a delightful place to visit on a fine day.

Some of the activities will involve informal training using Consuta on the lake, covering how to manage the steam plant and boat handling.



Consuta operations

Consuta was relaunched by crane on a warm sunny May day.

This time we decided to tow Consuta on trailer, down to the lake using the car's back hitch; previously we've always done it running the car backwards using a front hitch, which is a bit of a strain on the neck looking backwards. Well it turned out this was a much easier way.

The next task was the annual boiler inspection, again conducted on another nice day and without any problems at all: so we are now fully certificated for the season ahead.



The Beale Park Boat Show was the first event on our calendar. We had decided to display Thornycroft's steam launch Cygnet (static) during the show, and this proved very popular. Most people don't realise just how unique Cygnet really is.

This delightful Thames launch of 1870 is probably the oldest small steam launch in the country (possibly in the world), still complete with original engine, boiler, and fitted with a Gifford steam injector.

Many thanks to all who helped out during the show. Our jetty was given

a major work-over before the show, and looked very smart fitted with a line of rubber mats plus an impressive shore ramp.

As usual the short trips around the lake were very popular, queuing for a ride was the norm, I noted that some people even came back for a second go. Our donation box resulted in record collections for the show, I'm not sure how many trips were made, but someone mentioned 47.

Three days after the show Consuta was moved down river on a very windy day, but at least quite sunny and the wind was mostly behind us all the way to Charvil.



A private outing on the Henley reach for retire steam marine engineers went well during the 14th June, followed by Consuta making its annual attendance (umpire duty) at the Henley Women's Regatta, which for us is Saturday only.

Many thanks to the crew who had to work during this very hot day – over 30°C. I helped take Consuta back upriver which was a delightful evening cruise at the end of the day. Many other boats and a few swimmers out enjoying the river in the evening.



The Reading Town Regatta was next on our schedule.

Consuta enjoyed a very relaxed late morning start from Charvil, up through Sonning Lock and then we are there.

The race channel along the Dreadnought Reach occupies 2/3 the river width so the navigation is left with the remainder. I was told however that all measurements are made from the bank, this results in the width of the navigation

channel being reduced even further because of all the overgrown trees on the Bucks bank. This navigation section is also used by all the race craft rowing down to the start so is quite tricky to navigate.

The day was mainly dry but rather windy which makes the task of turning Consuta at the race start even more of a challenge, Tony Hobb's Enchantress has the same problem which is all due to boat length and poor position of the rudder. The forty foot umpire launches fare much better.

The wind also caused problems for the race boats, who have to keep station while trying to get all three lined up for the start this was very difficult at times.



The Thames Heritage Museum

The final part of the planning application for the Museum, known as the Reserved Matters, was submitted to the West Berkshire Council at the beginning of June. If you remember these are the same council officers who strongly objected to the original outline application which was overturned at appeal.

We don't know why there was this objection, but believe that it is important to have substantial public support for this final stage for it to be accepted.

This museum will not only provide much needed public access to details of the Victorian boating development on the Thames, but will provide a secure and long term future base for Consuta which is so necessary for the future conservation of our steam launch. We therefore ask you to consider supporting the planning application by submitting your own support letter. The planning reference no. is:- 17/01465/REM and the place to send a support letter is the Head of Development and Planning, Council Offices, Market Street, Newbury RG14 5LD. Alternatively you can send your representation letter by email:- planapps@westberks.gov.uk. Unfortunately the WBC planning site can be inaccessible at times apparently due to some maintenance work.

Please note that The Tamesis Trust are the agents for Beale Park for the planning application submission. More details can be found on www.tamesis.org.uk which has a planning link.

This image below is from a collection of over 40 Saunders adverts used in the 1920's. The Consuta plywood patent helped Saunders create an important boat and airplane building enterprise on the IOW. where Consuta plywood was still being made until the 1950's, some of the plywood sheets were 8 feet wide by 60 feet long.

The steam launch 'Consuta' is the original example of this plywood and still in use today.

BWS 9th July 2017

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Patentees and Sole Manufacturers:

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