



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

News Letter No. 24 — October 2005

Dear Supporter,

The second part of the summer's operational season has been a bit quieter which I think was a relief for our skippers and crew.

One pleasant outing was to take out a party of the late Graham Lindsey's friends and relatives. Consuta made the trip down river from Charvil to Henley and the party called in at the Henley River and Rowing museum to see Eva which of course had been restored by Graham and is now on permanent display there. Graham's niece Ann Wisker rang me to say that they had had a wonderful time and thought Eva was quite delightful, but what a shame that it was not operational— I quite agree.

After another private outing on the Henley reach, Consuta was then moved up river to our mooring at Beale Park ready for the Steam Boat Association rally based here during the first weekend in September. I was the organiser for this event and I wanted to take my own steamboat the 34ft San Toy along the Kennet and Avon Canal from Kintbury as well. This involves 30 miles of the river Kennet with 29 locks, all worked by the boat crew just to reach Blakes lock in Reading, then a further three Thames locks to the park and it takes two pretty active days. Always a delightful river journey with many contrasts.

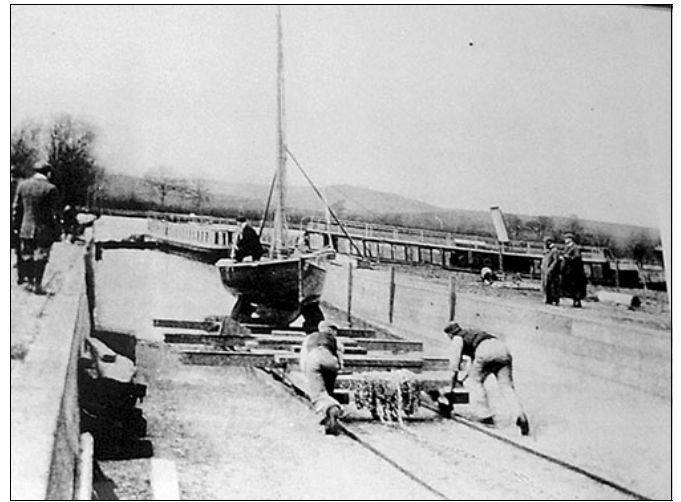
Consuta travelled upstream with the SBA steam boats on the Saturday of the rally, but then had a private party function on the Sunday, based at the Beetle and Wedge Inn. The crew on the Sunday was David Eager, with Richard McGuinness and my own daughter Lucy who suddenly decided that a deck hand on Consuta would be more interesting than working the navigation swing bridge at Beale Park. My recollection of the Sunday was helping to haul out several of



Moored up adjacent to the site of the Springfield site. The gentleman on the left was a retired employee of Saunders Roe and had decided to visit the Swan at Streatley (the birthplace of Sam Saunders). He then decided to see if he could find the Springfield Works and was astonished to find a steamboat there as well

the trailed steam launches followed by an alfresco meal with plenty of drink supplied by the participants and a wonderful selection of Indian dishes brought from a Pangbourne take away. We set up San Toy's table on the pontoon for the buffet meal in the evening dusk — great fun and most sociable. We had a visitor 'Myron Givets' from New Zealand, who was in the UK and doing a grand steamboat tour.

We had arranged a Trust visit to the Springfield works on September 28th and decided to steam there with Consuta with a full party, Tony came by car. We were made most welcome by Brian Shaw manager of



These two pictures above are looking down the same slipway, the stone capping is still intact on the left hand side. The site is now overgrown with trees and shrubs.



the Trust Estate and had a look around this interesting site. 100 years ago this was a very large works site but most of the buildings no longer exist, however two slipways still had their rails with the remains of a boat haul-out trolley. There is no clue from the river that anything ever existed. Robin Sims made several measurements and proclaimed one set of rails as originally from Brunel's broad gauge track. There is a lot of this old rail along the K&A canal it's used for strengthening various

Above: One of the workman's lodgings, we think these are just left of the big shed sloping roof in front of the house see below.





canal structures. Brian Shaw told us that one of the workshops had a wooden floor and Anne Carpmael had used this as a tennis court. After the tour we decided to take Consuta straight back to Beale Park to get her undercover before the forecasted afternoon rains, followed by a late lunch at the Swan (Pangbourne) A great day out. It is a pity that the Objects of the Anne Carpmael Charitable Trust only covers nature and not river heritage otherwise the site would make a super place for a base for Consuta.

Our skippers have reported various minor faults, one of which was that the steam valve on the Windermere kettle apparently didn't shut off properly. I don't know why, but some valves shut off well and some are always troublesome and leak. Sure enough we boiled the kettle and shut of the steam but it continued to boil quite lightly, even turning off another valve which should really have stopped everything — how very strange. The penny dropped, the discharge pipe of the kettle shares the same pipe run as the engine drains, they are both taken to the ashpan. Cure was to close the engine drains which happened to be open and stop this putting steam to the kettle, I still find this hard to believe, but Robin confirmed he had had a similar problem on his small steam launch Elidir.

There are a few minor faults on Consuta that will need some winter work

We've bought another ton of the small Polish coal, I personally think the large variety would have been less smoky, but the coalman said he would have difficulty bagging it in closed bags.

Plans for Wintering Consuta

The winter schedule this year will be quite ambitious. Time for a re-varnish and possibly a re-paint of the topsides. We are planning to do this in the Cowshed at Beale Park. Tony is rather upset that we may need to lift the boiler out yet again, and we are all still trying to figure the best way to get Consuta into the Cowshed and remove the trailer from underneath — reason can't paint the topsides with the cradle in place.

How is that new boiler design going

Answer slowly, its very difficult to get everything in place with limited head room on the boiler. We all agree that it will be very desirable to reduce the weight, estimates on my drawing show something like 3/4 of a ton saving in metal and reduced water content, that would mean the hull would be 1½ inch higher in the water, brilliant.

What events should Consuta take part in next year,

If you have any views please let me know.

We do need more skippers and crew. Skippers and crew love doing the Reading Town regatta, my family enjoy the Goring and Streatley Regatta, and everyone enjoys taking out parties who are appreciative – and most are. We need to put in a regular appearance on the Henley reach especially during regatta time. Donations from private wedding functions does produce useful donations to our funds.

Consuta Trust Donations

Derek asks me to remind you that we are always looking for donations which if you are a tax payer can be “*Gift aid it*”. We are currently trying to build up sufficient funds for a permanent covered boat house to allow Consuta to be on public display when not steaming. We’ve been told that this aim would be a good project for HLF funding, but of course we will have to put in a percentage of the costs. The other major costly item is a lighter boiler, I’m hoping to get this costed shortly. Other annual costs are mooring, and fuel, this year we have purchased some £800 of coal, over three tons. It’s not too bad we haven’t burnt it all yet there is still about 3/4 tons remaining.

Next year we will probably not have our free mooring at Charvil, so we are currently having to look at alternatives around the Henley area ; there is the likelihood that there will be a cost. If you know of anywhere that could be suitable for Consuta please let us know.

Visit to Mc Alpine Standard Gauge Railway - Sunday 21 May 2006

Our application for a party to visit the this museum and private railway has been confirmed for a max of 35 people, we will probably offer invitations to others outside the Trust.

The charge, or in reality a donation, is £4.00 per head. There is no bar but tea/coffee and soft drinks are available, no food is offered, so you will need to bring your own picnic. Open, strictly, from 12 noon to 5 pm.

The railway and museum at Fawley are part of Sir William McAlpine’s private collection of artefacts collected from all over the country and as such they are not open to the public except for invited groups of railway enthusiasts. The railway itself runs for 2 miles in the grounds of Sir William’s stud farm (breeding Llama, Emu, Deer, Peacocks and even Zebra and Wallabies) and includes a formidable gradient of 1 in 14, up to the main station.

If you want to come you must book now, places are offered on first come basis. Tickets will issued during early March. Contact Derek Brown ASAP with your payment if you wish to book? Contact address for this event and all Consuta Trust donations is:-

Derek Brown, Wingfield, Wood Lane, Kidmore End, Reading, RG4 9BE

Telephone:- 0118972 3895

*Consuta on umpiring
duty at the Reading
Town Regatta*

*Photo by David
Creasey*

