



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 - Autumn 2019

Consuta refurbishment Project



LOTTERY FUNDED

The refurbishment is ticking along quite nicely. However most work has to be carried out off site due to severe limitations of the present accommodation.

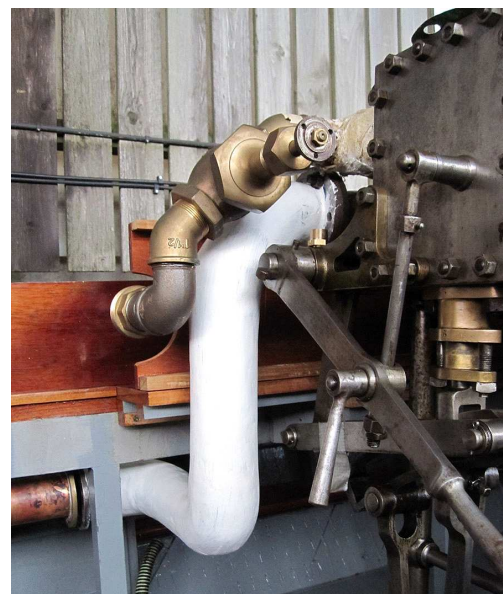
As well as installing a better boiler we are also aiming to replicate the original installation as seen on the many historic photos we now have. I suppose some might argue just get on with using modern shortcuts, but surely it is important to be as original as possible to as built. I'm already conscious that several historical steam launches displayed in UK museums claim originality that is just not correct, this is a shame when they are not representative of the original construction; I'll refrain from naming them. We've also found that published information on some historic vessels can also be so inaccurate. I suppose you might ask does it really matter as long as it is a steamboat.

There are two historically important Thames steam launches which are still virtually as built, Donola from 1893 by Kingdon Yacht, Launch & Engineering Co Ltd of Chiswick and Cygnet built in 1870 by J.I. Thornycroft Chiswick (neither have been modified over time probably because they have not been operational for many years so give a wonderful insight into how builders did things then).

Consuta has had several changes from the original build during it's 121 years of active service, so it is important not to make yet more changes if this can be avoided. Some concessions we have had to make are that the boiler is a welded design, but with the lagging this is not apparent, also we've made use of aluminium, stainless steel and metric screws on much new work, although one must be careful about using stainless steel bolts because of galling problems. Most of the reasons for these changes are that costs would be greater or even impractical for the adoption of some older engineering features.

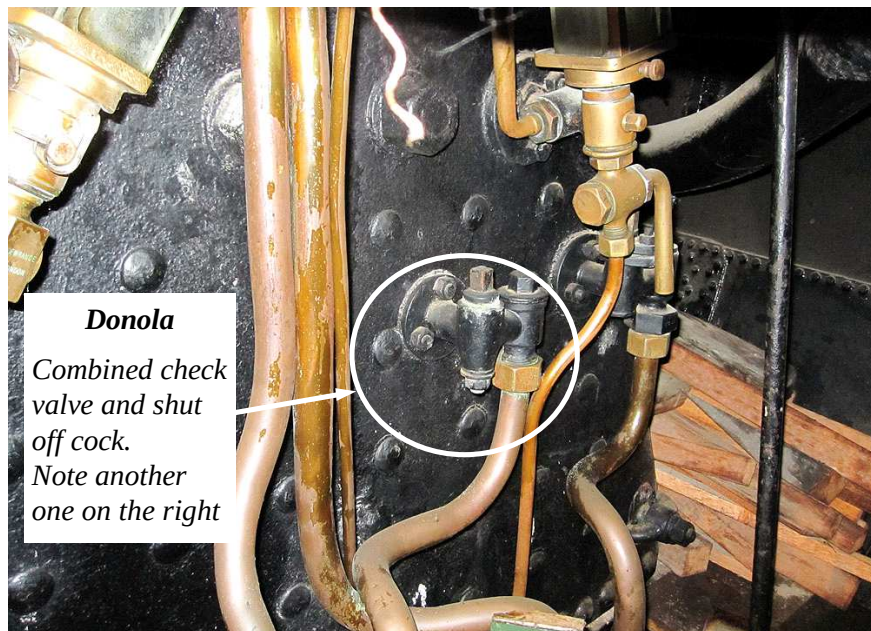
Thoughts about several conservation details.

Time during the project has allowed us to think about some of the details of the conservation.



Re-routed steam and exhaust pipe

When first relaunched in 2001 there was concern that the hull might flex and cause the propshaft alignment to change. Now we found last year that the engine alignment did need to be re-adjusted following the cleaning of the bilges; not sure about why so we decided to check the prop engine alignment again recently and also take the opportunity to make some minor improvements to the engine mounting. Following this the engine alignment was still spot on, However a question asked by some was “does the alignment change after launching”? So to check this, the stern was carefully jacked until well off the trailer; the engine’s shaft alignment didn’t change at all – great to know.



The original injectors have been installed using currently available fittings, however they are not quite historically correct after looking at old photos of Donola’s injector feed pipework (photo left). Note that Donola’s boiler is fired from the side.

We are also studying steam fittings available in 1900’s catalogues and this makes us wonder should we try to replicate this type of fixture, it’s very neat. There are no photos of Consuta’s original steam fittings, so perhaps it doesn’t matter. It’s quite likely that Consuta would have had something similar to Donola’s combined cock and check feed valve, so surely it would be appropriate to

have this traditional design for Consuta. After all Consuta’s steam plant was designed and built by G.F.G. DesVignes just like Donola.

I’ve copied an advert for the type of fittings available in the past; see below. We would need a left hand and a right handed L shape cocks with a screwed mount. These are not available now but I do like the price at thirteen shillings and six pence for a ¾" BSP screwed version.

Anyone fancy re-designing one of these fittings, I can easily provide all measurements? This would also involve an interesting pattern design for the casting, but would be a fairly straightforward machining process. Well if there are sufficient remaining funds from the HLF grant we may look at this possibility.

COMBINED COCKS AND CHECK FEED VALVES
GUN METAL

1930's advert

When ordering please state if the Valve is required to be fitted Left, Right or in Front of Cock when facing Boiler.

No. 177

No.		Size	½	¾	1	1 ¼	1 ½	2	inches
173	Screwed, Male	...	23/6	30/6	37/6	46/-	55/-	94/-	each
177	Flanged	...	28/-	36/-	46/-	57/6	73/6	116/-	"

Locking Guard and Box Key can be fitted to either pattern at extra cost.

Another historic design consideration is what would be appropriate valve handles; moderns ones are very good but aren't historically accurate at all. The bronze ones we used previously were OK; perhaps a little chunky, also hot to handle, and slippery to use with gloves.

The photo shows several with the new style design centre, this feels good and I think looks fine, however they will still be a bit hot to handle with bare hands.



- From left to right*
- Older style
 - Another older style
 - New style
 - Modern Crane type
 - Modern Pegler type

You will be pleased to know that we will not be changing the bronze engine throttle valve handle, but we are looking at the possibility of fitting a DesVignes style reverse gear locking handle for the engine as shown here.



The HLF Project Activities talks

The first of our project talks at the Henley River and Rowing Museum had to be cancelled because of a water deluge problem at the museum, so has now been rescheduled for mid November. Our last project talk will be at the Liston hall Marlow end of November, please look at the programme sheet below. The October talk By Simon Wenham about the rise and fall of Thames pleasure boating was fascinating, and very well attended.

Sorry we've not had any regular working parties at Consuta, mainly due to much of the work being done off site. The work parties will be resumed early next year in order to get everything prepared for the spring operational season.

We will also need skipper/engineer recruitment campaigns for Consuta operations next year. The new installation will involve some retraining/relearning for engineers and the engineers handbook will need an update.

Date	Consuta Project - Talk Subject	Booking
13th November Wednesday 11:30	Rescheduled 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.
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



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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.

The future of Thames rowing umpire chase boats

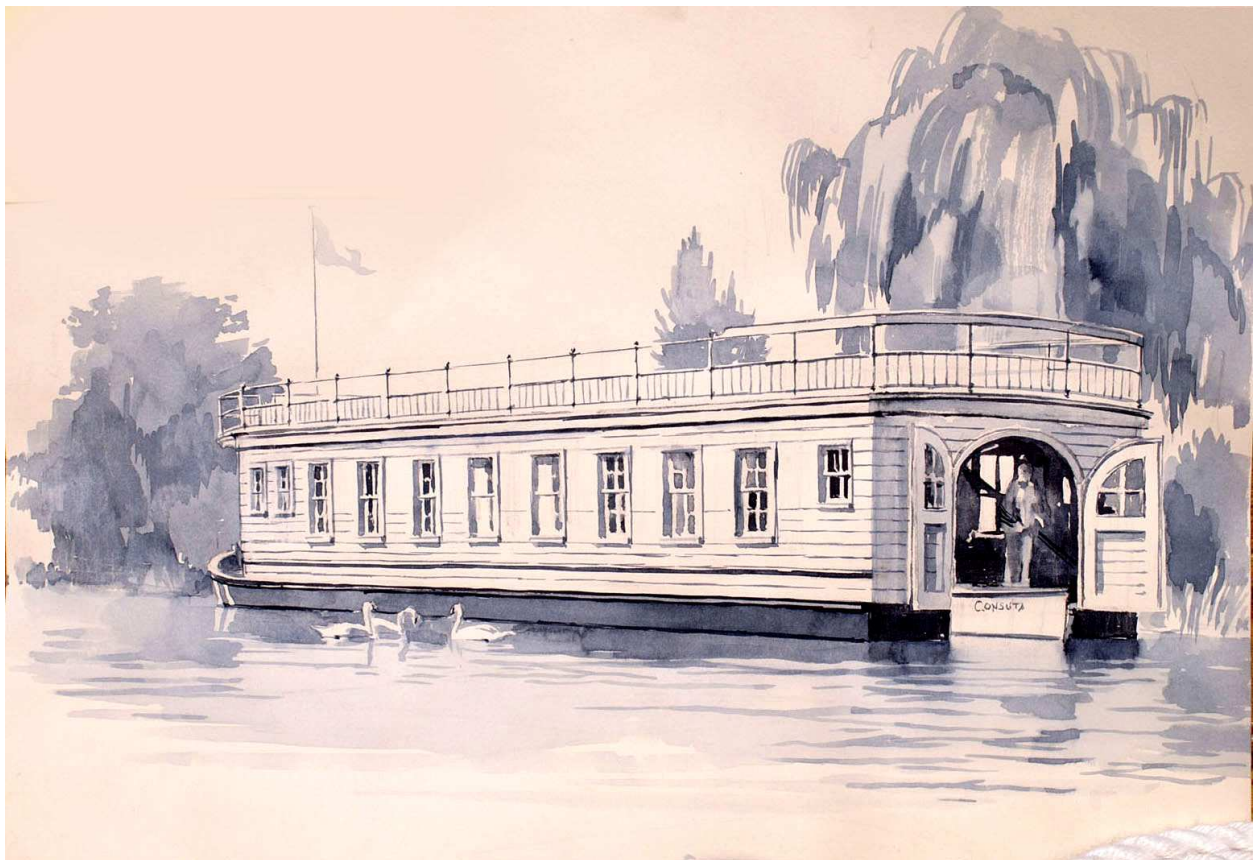
I've heard that the traditional umpire launches (ie the Consuta hull form) no longer take part in the annual boat race which is a shame. This is probably due to the new PLA regulations on the tideway which do not allow petrol engine use in commercial boats. Also some of the umpire chase boats that used to take part in the Reading Town regatta and Henley Women's regatta have been retired from service.

Another issue which might have serious concerns for future Consuta operations is about the continued use of coal for firing steam boilers. Hopefully the UK's steam heritage will be allowed some concession on this. The Trust have recently purchased 2 tons of Welsh steam coal from the Ffros Y Fran coal mine, however its future commercial operation is uncertain now that many coal fired power stations have closed.

A base for Consuta

During 2019 we investigated two alternatives to Beale Park as possibilities for a future Consuta base, unfortunately these will not be possible for a several reasons.

Some will remember our original idea of providing a floating boathouse based on the outline of the once numerous College Barges, however any form of mooring on the Thames which can permit public access to Consuta would either be exceedingly costly or not practical. If you have any ideas or suggestion please let us know. A floating boathouse styled on the old college barge is probably the best option, but it would need a mooring base. The sketch by Michael Vicary below shows the idea.



Finally how about a winter social ie early 2020, any suggestions about location?

Best wishes to all,

Brian Smith and The Consuta Trustees 1st Nov 2019