



# The Consuta Trust

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



**LOTTERY FUNDED**

## **The Consuta Trust wins National Lottery support**

The Consuta Trust has been awarded £99,500 from the Heritage Lottery Fund (HLF) for "The Consuta Project" based at Child Beale Wildlife Park near Pangbourne.

The Trust maintain and operate the Steam Launch Consuta with the help of its volunteer supporters. Consuta was built in 1898 by S. E. Saunders at Goring using a revolutionary new construction process which resulted in a very lightweight launch that was capable of 27 mph on the Thames, only producing minimal wash.

Made possible thanks to money raised by National Lottery players, "The Consuta Project" will undertake a series of works during the next 18 months to install an historically accurate steam boiler and new superstructure, returning Consuta to her original profile and specification, the work will also result in major improvements to her steaming performance and contribute to her long term survival.

The project also provides a unique opportunity to explain and demonstrate this marine heritage to the 150,000 young family visitors who already come to this popular outdoor park every year. To do this the Trust will be establishing a display exhibition with a variety of activities aimed at inspiring, educating and training visitors of all ages by explaining the development and use of these fast steam launches.

The Consuta Trust restored this historically important launch in 2001, which every year since has been displayed at numerous Thames events. Umpire launches are a very special class of boat, first used from 1870 to carry umpires for the popular Victorian river sport of rowing races, and at the time, these launches were some of the fastest small vessels in the world. The traditional style launches, now fitted with petrol engines, are still used at Thames regattas to carry umpires. Consuta, built nearly 120 years ago, is the only working example of a steam umpire launch. Her revolutionary method of hull construction is the basis for modern plywood and was patented by Saunders as "Consuta Plywood".

Commenting on the award, Brian Smith, Chairman of the Trust said: "We are absolutely thrilled to have received National Lottery support for "The Consuta Project", especially as it will be used to encourage younger generations to learn more about the history behind the development of these amazing river launches".

Local MP Richard Benyon says:- "Consuta is an important part of our Thames heritage locally and I am delighted that this grant will see her being given a new lease of life."

**ENDS**

## **Notes to editors**

### **About The Consuta Trust**

The Consuta Trust is a registered charity established in 1998 to restore the Victorian steam launch to full working condition. Consuta still successfully carries umpires at several Thames rowing regattas, delivering the very same service she was designed to do nearly 120 years ago.

Consuta was built by Sam Saunders at Goring in 1898 using a strong waterproof plywood made up of four veneers of mahogany, stitched together with thin copper wire. This patented plywood system called "Consuta Plywood" was developed by Saunders and remained in production by Saunders Roe on the IoW for 50 years. However by the 1950's "Consuta Plywood" was superseded by newer technologies using waterproof resins and glass fibre (GRP).

Consuta is registered by National Historic Ships with "Fleet" status because of her great historical significance and is also listed in the "Guinness Book of Motorboating Facts & Feats" as being the first use of plywood to make lightweight boat hulls.

Because of its strength "Consuta Plywood" was a popular construction method used for building power boat racers and flying boats during the early decades of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. Sir Malcolm Campbell's hydroplane Blue Bird K3 built in 1937 achieved a world record speed of 130mph, using "Consuta Plywood" for her construction.

"Consuta Plywood" was the preferred Admiralty choice for service launches carried on battleships because of its resilience to damage caused by the concussion of the warship's big guns.

### **About the Heritage Lottery Fund**

Thanks to National Lottery players, we invest money to help people across the UK explore, enjoy and protect the heritage they care about - from the archaeology under our feet to the historic parks and buildings we love, from precious memories and collections to rare wildlife. [www.hlf.org.uk](http://www.hlf.org.uk). Follow us on [Twitter](#), [Facebook](#) and [Instagram](#) and use #HLFsupported.

### **For further information, images and interviews, please contact**

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