



# 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 - Spring 2025*

**Wecome and best wishes to all.**

**This is newsletter number 100, WOW!** The first one was summer 1999. So many changes since then, some good others less so, however Consuta is still steaming. All newsletters are available from our website:- <https://www.consuta.org.uk/workshop/Photo%20Album.html>

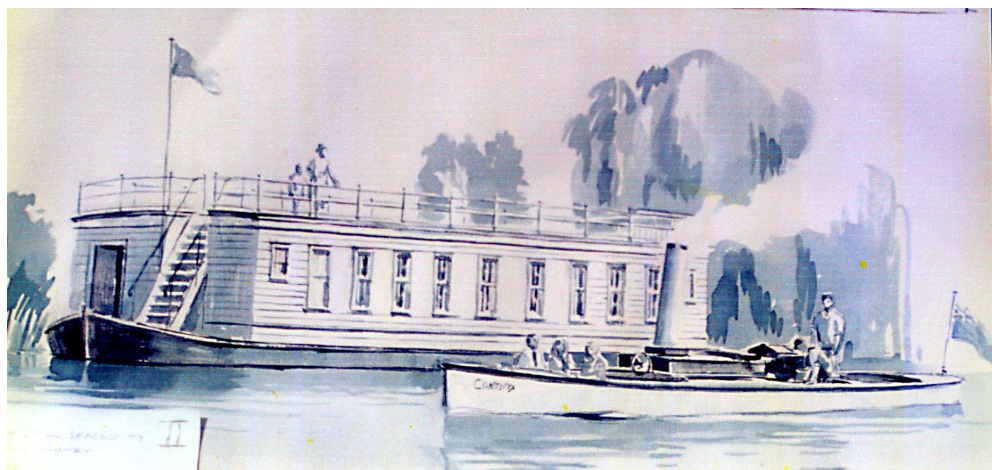
### **A future base for Consuta**

Since losing use of a shed at Beale Park we have been looking around for a new affordable base. This can be quite a challenge for boats using the Thames because marina rates based on length are so very high. Even Thames lock moorings, which usually have less services than marinas, can also be quite costly and of course may not always be readily available.

My own family have also been looking at various potential private Thames mooring plots. Some of these have been quite interesting, they are however always very expensive or have major limitations. One site we recently inspected was the old Dreadnought Inn plot on the southern bank of the Thames opposite the Thames & Kennet marina. This inn apparently closed in 1952, then the site was rented out by the Reading University to the Thames Valley Park Rowing Club. This plot has since been sold at auction for £424,000.

Many will remember that we once hoped to have a floating boathouse on the lake at Beale Park. Unfortunately West Berkshire planning surprisingly objected to this, so sadly we weren't able to go ahead with the idea. The boat house was to have used twin hulls with space for Consuta between them thus capable of storing Consuta afloat during the summer and also allowing her to be lifted out of the water for the winter. There was to be a small front section on the barge which would have facilities for simple maintenance and a bit of active member socialising. The great advantage is that Consuta would always be kept under cover for the whole year.

Now my own personal view is that the Consuta Trust should rethink the floating boathouse option because this would provide much better facilities than we have at present. The boathouse exterior would be based on those old college barges which used to be moored just below Folly Bridge in Oxford. I've included a few drawings which had kindly been





provided to the trust by Michael Vicary in 2006.

Built in steel plate the overall dimensions would be kept to a size that would allow moving the boathouse by water to anywhere on the Thames down river from Oxford. So overall dimensions would be limited to a max width of 17ft providing 9 ft of water space between pontoon top walk ways, say 3ft wide for each side. Lift beams with sufficient height to allow Consuta to be raised from the water onto removable supports placed at key places along the boat length.

The overall length would be no more than 80ft including a workshop/crew section, total displacement weight about 25-30 ton (Consuta currently weighs 3.5 tons).

The overall length would be no more than 80ft including a workshop/crew section, total

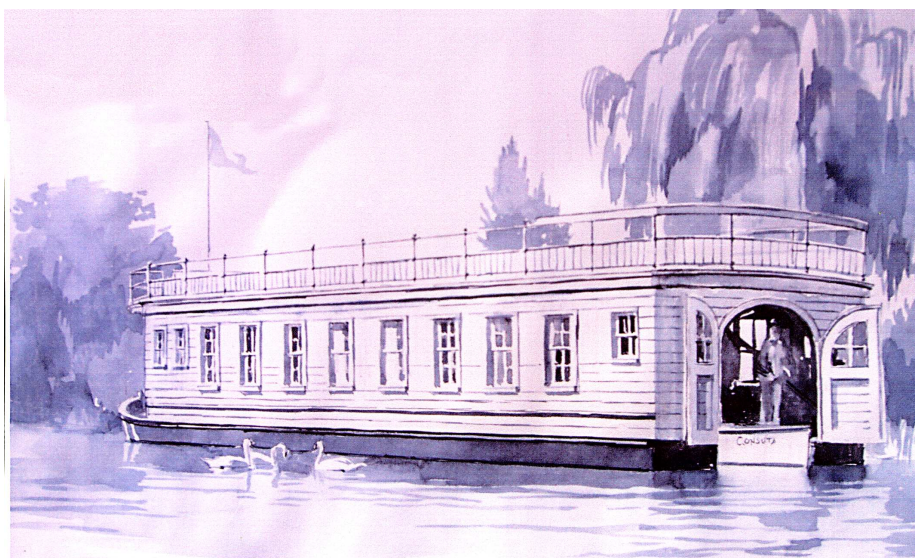
displacement weight about 25-30 ton (Consuta currently weighs 3.5 tons).

Michael Vicary's sketches show stairs to an upper deck fitted with an attractive surround railing. While these features would be nice to have, they only need be provided if sufficient funds were available. Probable costs for the basic design requirements would be about £100,000. There are various possibilities for mooring this type of boathouse on the Thames, annual costs for this could be quite high. However these costs might be considered affordable as there would be no annual costs for winter craning and off water storage for Consuta.

I hope that the advantages for this type of undercover home for Consuta are fairly obvious, and Consuta surely deserves a secure future and kept steaming?

Please note that these are only my own views, however your feedback would be very welcome.

There are a few surviving examples of original college barges. The one moored at the Swan Inn in Streatley, ex Magdalen college of 1927, has recently been sold off and moved to the Hardwick estate. There is also a fund raising effort – "gofundme" - for restoration work of the top wooden deck which is in a poor state. This example has a ferro concrete hull (probably why it has survived).





## **Winter work**

Consuta has been safely moored afloat in the Kintbury Mill Stream throughout the Winter whilst the Thames was in flood. We had again placed extra waterproof tarps over the hull and used a dehumidifier to keep condensation inside as low as possible. This worked well except the unit overboard drain pipe fell into the hull after some high winds over the Xmas period then depositing the extracted water into the hull. Oops!!, about two inches of this was removed from the bilges a few weeks later and fortunately there was no harm at all.

There had been no road flooding to Kintbury this winter, we notice that the Canal and River Trust are now regularly controlling river levels using the Kintbury mill sluices which they hadn't done last year. Somebody must have had a word?

## **Consuta Social Luncheon**

Mark has arranged our Consuta gathering for 22<sup>nd</sup> March in the Butt Inn at Aldermaston. This pub is off the main A4 to the A340 Basingstoke main road found just after crossing over the canal lift bridge. We hope to see you at our gathering if you can make it.

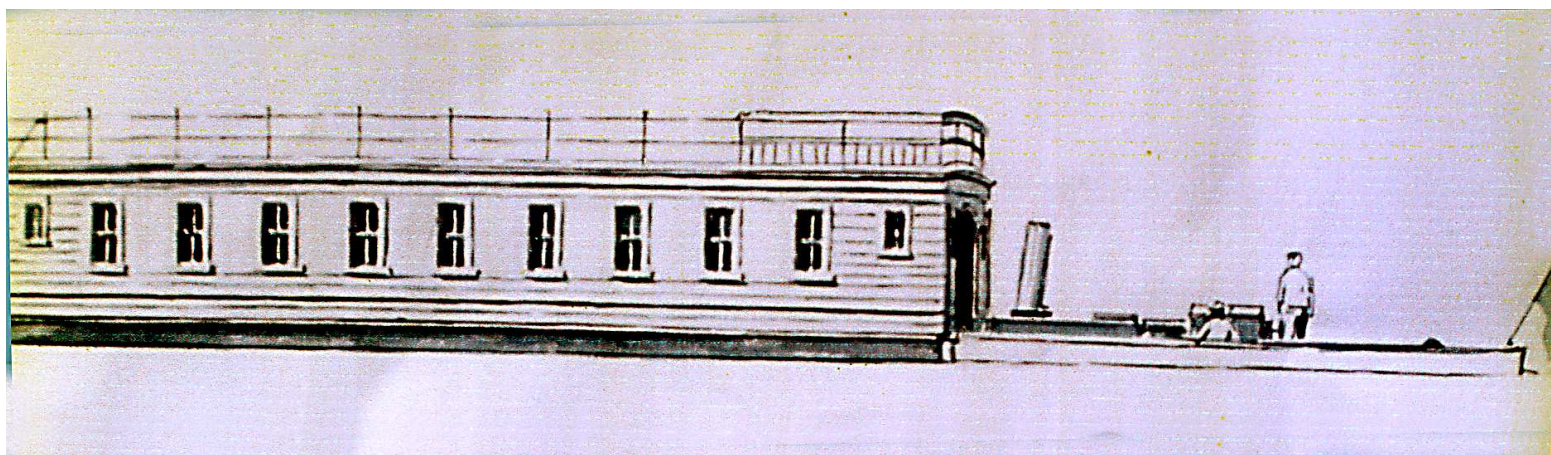
## **Consuta's boiler inspection**

The inspection has been arranged at Kintbury with David of SBA Services for Monday 7<sup>th</sup> April. We are hoping the weather will be fine on the day. I don't think there should be any certification problems.

## **Henley River and Rowing Museum problems**

We were very sorry to learn that the museum is having to severely reduce it's public activities due to ongoing financial problems.

As most will know the museum currently houses the historic 1874 Thornycroft steam launch Eva. She was used for a couple of years on umpiring work in 1870's without the cabin and probably also only had tiller steering which is as shown on the original Thornycroft builders drawings.



*Many college barges had quite elaborate sterns The design for Consuta would have the access doors here instead.*

# Work parties and steaming options during 2025

Various activities which are possible options to use Consuta. Running Consuta at any of these can only be possible if we have people to manage and crew Consuta. Where possible we will try to choose days when weather is good.

## **Social Luncheon.** Non boating social event

Arranged for 22<sup>nd</sup> March in the Butt Inn at Aldermaston. Please contact Mark if you are able to come along.

**Boiler inspection** for 2025. At Kintbury on Monday 7th April. This should only take one day provided no problems are identified.

## **Steam Consuta to Crofton and back to see the beam engines at work.**

This would be a two day there and back trip during the May Day Bank Holiday plus the Crofton steaming day (Sunday). Not a great distance, but there are many locks.

## **Move Consuta from Kintbury to a mooring on the Thames**

This is a two day weekend trip chosen when weather looks good.

**Steam training outings on the Thames** during late May and early June.

## **Henley Women's Regatta**

20th –22nd June

We in the past have attended on the Saturday only. This give us a chance to test our fireman and is always very exciting

## **Reading Town Regatta June** a short 800m course Sat 28th June

Not sure if they still use umpire launches but a great event.

## **Henley Traditional Boat Festival**

18th to 20th July

## **Henley Town and Visitor regatta**

Sat 2nd August

We always need your help and encouragement to keep Consuta operational as an original steam umpire launch.

Best wishes to all,

Brian Smith and the Trustees.

March 2025



*St John's College Barge, at Voco Oxford Thames Hotel, Sandford. College barge sterns were often quite elaborate. A design for Consuta would not have this feature.*