



# 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 - Summer 2021

Dear Supporter,

Summer is now here following a rather cold and wet late spring. It seemed sensible not to invite helpers to come to the Consuta's workshop at Beale Park until at least the lifting of Covid restrictions, sadly infection rates are currently rising yet again and the mid June 21st date has been delayed until July 19th. We had intended to have Consuta in steam on the water by July this year, but with the situation as it is and with so few river gatherings this is not seen as a sensible option now, sorry.

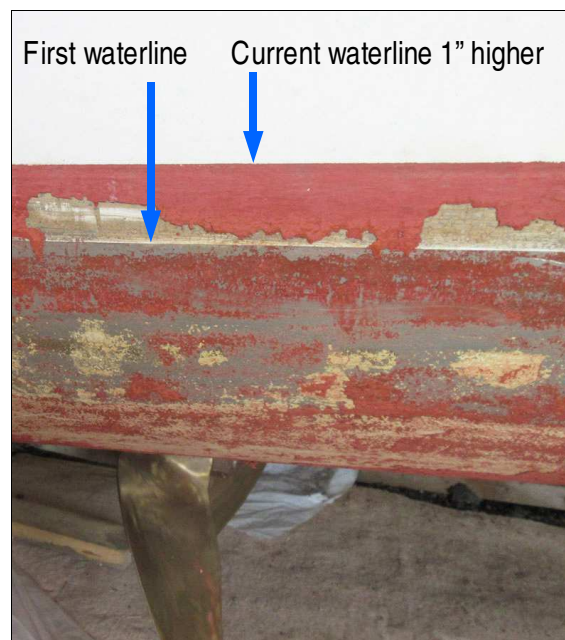
There are other distractions this year. The 50th anniversary of the Steamboat Association is taking place at Windermere during the beginning of August, and the family had booked a week's holiday for this, my son Paul also has his wedding to Ann planned in mid August (this was rescheduled from last year) and he is currently busy with their house renovations.

### A quick review of final completion work.

Work needed to get ready for relaunching this summer had included making adjustments to the boat cover (the funnel has moved back by about 8 inches and also has a slightly smaller diameter). The support for the cover also needed major changes to the props which support it because the boiler and engine casing has changed.

### Whether to remove and redo Consuta's Antifoul.

This has taxed our thoughts for several years now. The old antifoul looks a bit flaky in places and is also thicker in some areas, but the question is how to remove it easily without damaging the under surface of paint and resin. We've tried various tests using rotary disk tools which do work but make too much red dust so not really suitable in our shed. An ordinary hand scraper works OK except it also produces a lot of debris. The main problem however is that most of the underwater anti foul surfaces have poor access while Consuta is on the trailer. It seems that a pressure wash using Soda (Baking Soda), is a recommended method, and most advice is that this is best left to the professionals because of the dirt created and the special equipment required; so something to plan in the future, especially because Consuta will need to be lifted off the road trailer.



While trying out hand scraping we came across the waterline following the first restoration in 2001, some might remember that Consuta's waterline had to be raised by one inch because Consuta floated lower than expected due to the extra weight of the boiler with its large water content. For the future we intend keeping the repainted waterline at this higher level because there should hopefully be less river dirt collected on the white upperworks.

## **Other bits and pieces**

Refitting some of the important operational parts of the machinery did require further unforeseen work. For example the steam oiler needed replacement rubber seals and a new sight gauge glass (it's plastic actually, the glass originals had cracked over winter some time ago probably due to frost damage). Also when we filled up with oil to prime and test the oiler, there was an oil leak but where from? The pump drive shaft is held on with screws right into the oil tank, also same fixing with the ratchet pawl, so seven potential sources of the leak. We hope to have cured this using a sealant on all the screws, time will tell.

The engine throttle spindle had needed to be lengthened, the blow down will be a new type of operation using a pull handle to open the blow down valve. There are many other ancillary changes which will all need to be thoroughly checked out once Consuta is afloat and in steam.

Various supporters have offered to have a go at making period fittings; we are very grateful for these offers of help. The main castings already provided were for the two bronze steering pedestals, these have polished up lovely after some filing and sanding prep work by Paul. Other future casting and machining for the pipe work will be to provide a couple of historic style check valves and a steam manifold, but only once the installation has proved itself.

## **We really do need a future base to keep Consuta safe at all times of the year.**

A floating boathouse in the shape of an old College barges would still be my favourite option; fitted with tackle for raising Consuta out of the water for the winter and with good machining facilities installed ready for any maintenance work. The main issue stopping us progressing this option at present is the question of where such a boathouse could be moored. If you have any ideas, suggestions or any thoughts at all on this please do some initial research first then let us know.

## **Active supporter recruitment is now urgently required**

I now accept that due to advancing years I am less able to carry out some of the intensive work effort needed to keep Consuta operational, so will have to take a lesser work roll in future operations. The Trust therefore need to recruit some additional supporters keen to get involved, also we must consider appointing additional trustees to help take on the work of organising Consuta operations for the future. Your thoughts and suggestions on these important issues would be most welcome.

## **A new River Thames book titled "Boat Locks and Bridges"**

A comprehensive book about the Thames history covering the reaches of Benson and Wallingford river reaches has recently been published by John Dalton. John has kindly offered a donation to the Consuta Trust for each purchase made by a Trust supporter; see the last page for Johns review this splendid book.

## **Major work on the umpire launch Enchantress (Hobbs 1912)**

Some of you will know this umpire launch built by Hobbs yard at Goring in 1912; which although of similar lines and size of Consuta, does not use the patented Consuta plywood method of construction. Clive Hibberd purchased Enchantress from Tony Hobbs in 2018 and is now carrying out a major hull rebuild; she may be operational this summer.

## **Fire at Platts Eyot Historic boatyard ( J.I. Thornycroft)**

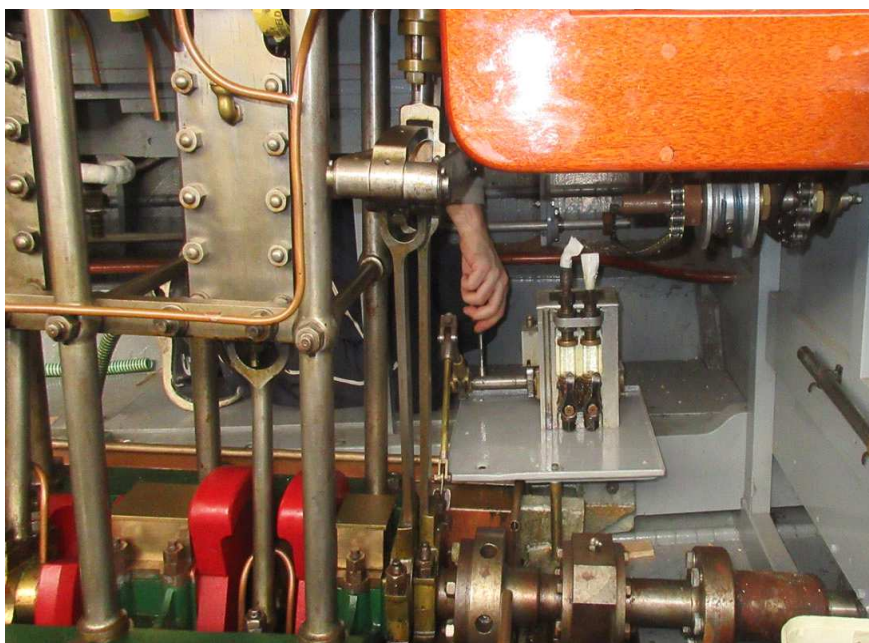
Platt's Eyot, an island in the Thames near Hampton, was ravaged by a fire in May which was thought to have been caused accidentally by a stray ember from rubbish being burned nearby. The island is home to a great number of boats, some historic vessels including a few Dunkirk





*Photos above show the fitting of the boiler water gauge cocks and lining up ready to insert the gauge glass tube. The holes in the backhead are 3/4" BSP which needed cleaning before installing and sealing in position. We had not fitted these earlier to avoid exposure to damp air and losing their nice polished finish.*

*Photos below show the twin ram engine oiler giving a feed for each cylinder steam inlet. The oil rises on a wire inside each sight gauge. Haven't counted the number of teeth on the ratchet but probably gives about one oil drop for every 50 engine revs. The amount of oil is controlled by an adjustable wheel on each pump ram.*



little ships. The fire destroyed the Grade II listed boathouses and slipways built by Thornycroft in the early 1900s which had remained virtually unchanged since the Thornycroft closure in 1960's.

I remember attending a special gathering there in the 1990's arranged for those with an interest in the history of J.I. Thornycroft here. This is a sad loss of part of our Thames boating heritage.

Many thanks for your continuing support.

*Brian Smith* on behalf of the Trustees.



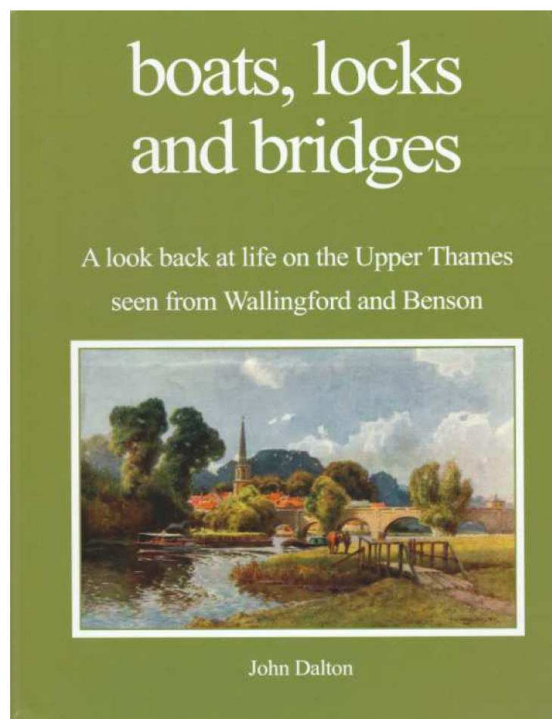
# boats, locks and bridges

by John Dalton

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28.5 x 22 cms.

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Concentrating mainly on just six miles of the Upper Thames around Wallingford and Benson, this book is able to look closely into the history of that part of the River - its ferries and bridges, locks and weirs, development and activity on the water and along the riverbank - and recall some of the much loved 'characters' who have been part of that scene. But this detail is also typical of the River and its surroundings along much of its entire eighty miles through Oxfordshire.

The development of boating for pleasure – from Victorian times to the present day – is described and illustrated comprehensively ... especially, river steamer services, the growth in river cruising holidays and, in the second half of the twentieth century, the rapid transition to the use of new materials for boat building. The history of Benson Lock and its unique cast-iron 'trough' construction is examined, together with that of Benson Weir and how it was rebuilt in 1970/71. There are fascinating notes about many of the Lock Keepers of the 1900s and how they coped with difficult conditions at their isolated island homes.

Further chapters describe times when flooding or ice caused both fear and excitement for many and how the Thames community (with its own water-borne 'Home Guard') – and the boatyards – contributed so much towards the 1939-45 war effort.

Of the book's three hundred illustrations, many are in colour. There are thirteen of Henry R Robertson's fine engravings of Life on the Upper Thames (published in 1875) and three of paintings by Alfred Quinton (from the early 1900s). Fourteen local scenes (in around 1900) by the renowned Oxford photographer and publisher, Henry W Taunt, are included, too.

The Author has lived in communities bordering the River Thames for most of his life and owned several boats (including two built to his own designs). He headed teams that organised boating rallies for the River Thames Society in the 1970s (edited the Society's magazine for a while) and in later years, several campaigning events for The Inland Waterways Association. For ten years he chaired the Sandford – Cleeve River Users Group (which campaigned successfully for the new Visitor Moorings at Wallingford) and served on the Environment Agency's Thames Waterway Working Group.

Available from the Author: [john3440dalton@btinternet.com](mailto:john3440dalton@btinternet.com) £30 (plus Packing & Postage £4)

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