



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 2024

Dear All,

Spring is here at last, blossom on the trees, bluebells in the garden with Consuta safely moored in the Kintbury Millstream during the winter.

Since Christmas it has been very wet with rain on most days, the main Kintbury road to the A4 closed for a couple of months due to serious road flooding, I've lived here for nearly 50 years and this had never happened before. During the British Waterways management of the canal, a couple of four very large sluices at the end of our mill stream were opened during most winters, and this avoided any road flooding. BW canal management however was taken over by the Canal & River Trust some ten years ago, so I contacted them to find out why they weren't opening these sluices. I was astonished to find that they didn't want anything to do with it, giving all sorts of excuses, basically "not our responsibility".

Now most of the Kennet river level control sluices in this area are managed by either private estates or individuals, the river flows in and out of the canal on its route as far as Hungerford, so the canal water level is matched to the river levels. It seems that the mill stream sluices (the original river course) had been managed and maintained by BW, but only via a gentleman's agreement with a private owner? Finally in April someone had the courage to slightly open one of the mill sluices to stop the road flooding, probably to provide road access to the Kintbury staging post of the annual Easter Devizes Westminster canoe race.

I suppose one good result was that the mill stream current has been very light despite the unusually high water level, fortunately this has caused no problems for Consuta's mooring.

We kept a dehumidifier running in the engineer's compartment throughout the wet winter months, this has been most effective by keeping humidity below 60%, usually less than 50% even during the wettest days. The unit takes about 160 watts, maybe I should have used our off peak supply, rather than the more expensive day rate electrics? The hull interior however has been remarkably dry, the brass work suffered very little tarnishing, the only drawback is that the water bucket of the dehumidifier needs to be emptied by hand every five days.

At the moment the Thames is still running fast with a few red boards up still at many locks, there has been little or no pleasure boat traffic options on the Thames so far this year.

Winter social held at the Swan in Thatcham

Our annual social held at the Swan Inn was attended by 25 supporters.

The Inn provided the trust with our own room, the food was excellent and very good value. It was great to meet up with friends with lots to talk about.



Future Thames moorings for Consuta.

Sadly our agreement to keep Consuta at Beale Park has been terminated by the park. The park trustees are also making some major changes which will increase the visitor park area but this will only be accessible by paying the entry fee. The new area includes the car park (previously free), plus most fields and paths all the way out to the exit gate, the change is scheduled to start on the 1st of May with a new pay to enter gatehouse situated at the park entrance. This means The Consuta Trust will also no longer have future mooring on the lake for Consuta.

The Trust therefore must move all equipment, Consuta's trailer and SL Cygnet from the covered shed by the end of August, we will also need to find alternate places for mooring Consuta on the Thames throughout the summer months also a place for keeping Consuta ashore during the winter. Currently we have a few options under consideration, however if you have any ideas or thoughts about this, please do let us know.

Work parties

During our first visit to the Beale Park shed in February 2024 we could see that there was a watermark on Cygnet's trailer wheels showing there had been some flooding in the shed probably about 6 inch deep.

The normal field entrance road was very muddy and "FACE" – the activity events company who have been moved from their lake site, were

having access problems so had added lots of gravel to make it useable? – probably only manageable by 4 X 4 though.

Our first official work party for supporters, arranged by Mark, was held on Saturday 6th April. The extra hands were very useful to help empty the shed, which was by April fairly dry.

What a lot of stuff had been collected during the few years we had been here.

Additional to removing all wall fittings and benches, Lyn was able to complete the painting of Consuta's road trailer, we also dismantled the framework of our very useful 1 ton lifting gantry. Many thanks for the help on the day from John, Nathan, Richard, and also to Paul and Ann for use of their van.





Note lifting gantry has been removed while Lyn completes painting of the trailer

One of two loads of the shed contents dumped into Paul and Ann's van

Engineering works

We have been wondering where we should put the Consuta's Windermere Kettle required for tea making, This was sorely missed last year and is so essential for syeam outings. There have been many suggestions but all seemed to have some drawbacks.

Most accepted that the original placing in the engineer's compartment although safe for passengers, did have other problems. The new proposal is to place the kettle plus the tea making equipment in front of the boiler's smokebox. This will be behind the front cockpit access door, where there is more room here now with the new boiler. We aim to have this essential item ready for the 2024 season.



Paul has also been working to improve those imperfect slide valve surfaces on the forward cylinder by some very careful hand fettling of the port and valve surfaces which avoids then need to remove the engine and send it off for machining.



The engine slide valve now with a lovely shiny flat surface



The engine cylinder port face now all flat with no ridges

Two new stays have been permanently fitted into the silencer to cure that nasty howl noise at high engine revs. The temporary stays we tried proved that this noise seemed due to a resonance in the silencer, so fingers crossed that the permanent stays work the same.

There are plans to replace the steel section parts of the current engine steam pipe with copper tubing, so far we have been successfully bending the 1½ inch bore copper pipe without any kinks, this interesting work is still ongoing.

The elusive Thames boat licence

Consuta now has a 2024 EA Thames licence and we are very grateful for all the help provided last year to resolve this topic that had followed a recent updated Thames boat Registration requirements. Consuta is classed as an historic charitable vessel that is not used for commercial purposes. I've learnt a lot, all very interesting stuff I suppose, however worth the effort as we do benefit from a major reduction in the annual licence charges which is most welcome.

Keeping update with Consuta's steaming activities

We will soon be starting to arrange working parties at Kintbury to prepare Consuta ready for the boating season. If you want to be kept informed about Consuta's operations during the summer please make sure you are on our active members circulation list, contact me or Mark if you are not sure. If you would like to see some photos of recent work, please take a look at the Consuta facebook section, easily accessed from the Consuta website (it's the bottom tick box on the left side menu).

Best wishes to all,

Brian Smith and the Trustees.

19th April 2024

More photos next page - - - -



Above:- Steve in the comprehensive workshop



Following an invite we visited Tom Jones boatyard at Romney lock Eton because this boatyard would have facilities for Consuta. The yard, previously known as the Stanley and Thomas, is a traditional boat yard and has reverted to it's historic name, managed by Steve, Dilly and Charlie Bil. Steve had kindly suggested that there could be space for Consuta's trailer here, and after our visit it looks like Consuta could also be lifted out as well using the yard hoist. So Eton, although a fair way down river from Henley, does have some interesting possibilities for over winter storage for Consuta.