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# SIGNALS

**THE MAGAZINE OF THE ARTHUR RANSOME SOCIETY**

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**LIBRARY SUPPLEMENT**

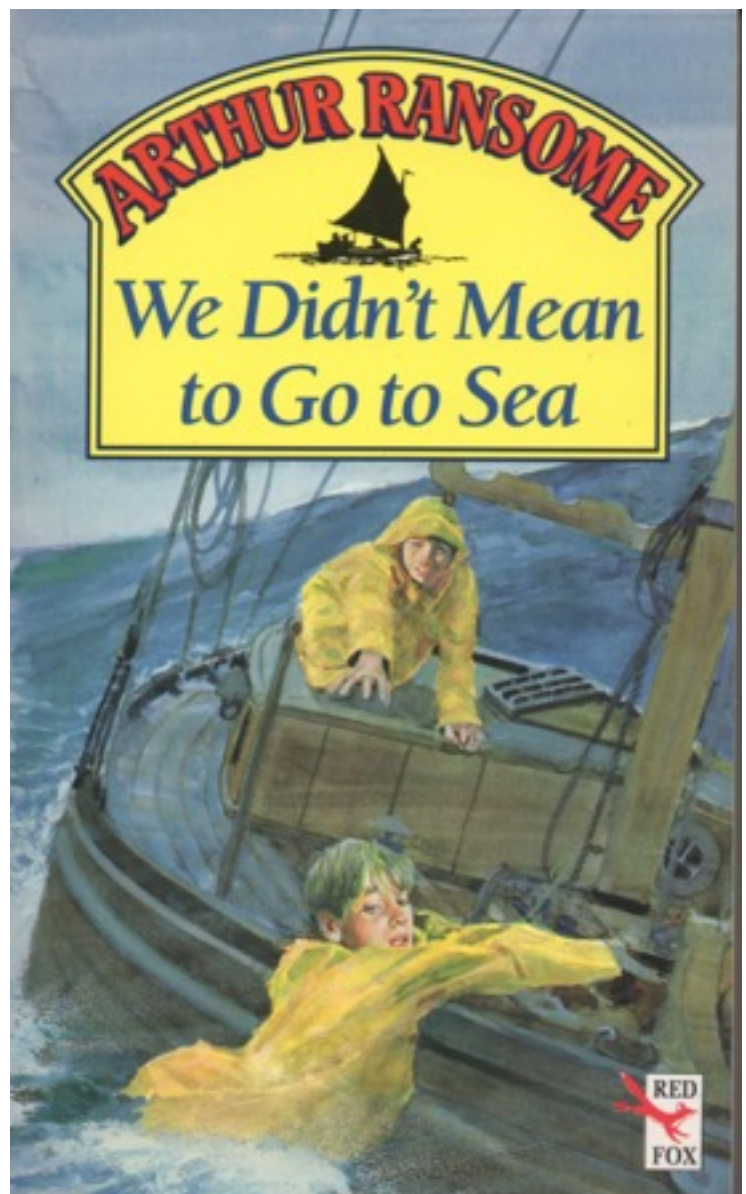
8 pages of new books

PD at 90, WD at 85,  
Racundra (nearly) 100

OXFORD for...  
SCHOLARSHIP!  
The Literary Weekend

Meant to go to sea - the  
Nancy Blackett story

Secrets of the  
TARS WEBSITE



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**MAY-AUGUST 2022 WITH IAGM DESPATCHES**

# The Arthur Ransome Society

Limited Company, No 03386251

Registered Office: Abbot Hall Art Gallery, Kirkland, Kendal, Cumbria LA9 5AL

Company Secretary: John Pearson, Mas d'en Clarimon, Route de Paloll à la Selva, F-66400 CERET, France  
email: tarsinfo@arthur-ransome.org website: www.arthur-ransome.org

**President: Libby Purves OBE**

**Honorary Vice Presidents: Christina Hardymnt, Ted Alexander, Ted Evans**

## TARS Board 2020/2021: Elected Trustees



**National Chair**  
**Peter Wright**  
0121 443 2910  
peterwright180  
@btinternet.com



**Company Secretary**  
**John Pearson**  
+33 468 833458  
tarsinfo@arthur-ransome.org



**Treasurer**  
**Susan Gouldbourne**  
01271 831520  
susan@ttars.co.uk



**Diana Wright**  
01249 750472  
dianaw986  
@gmail.com



**Vice Chair**  
**Mike Glover**  
01432 378205  
michaelglover  
52@sky.com



**Kirstie Taylor**  
0131 664 3947  
28 Orchardhead  
Road  
Edinburgh  
EH16 6HN



**Marc Grimston**  
07961 454896  
marcgrimston  
@gmail.com



**Krysia Clack**  
01904 642971  
steve@ksclack.  
plus.com  
**Overseas Members Representative**



**Peter Willis**  
01394  
387907  
peterwillis1144  
@gmail.com

## Regional Representative Trustees



**East**  
**Brian Key**  
01245  
263579



**North**  
**Elizabeth Williams**  
01913  
844759



**Midland**  
**Julian Blue**  
07856  
262042



**Scotland**  
**Linda Hendry**  
lochanhead  
@gmail.com



**South**  
**Iain Khan-**



**South West**  
**Barbara Flower**  
01963  
350119

**Membership Secretary**  
**David Middleton**  
memsec@arthur-ransome.org  
9 Merrow Avenue,  
Poole, BH12 1PY



**Overseas co-ordinators:** **Canada:** Ian Sacré +1 604 984 2295 [canada@arthur-ransome.org](mailto:canada@arthur-ransome.org)  
**USA:** Robin Marshall +1 941 726 1974 [45tarsus@gmail.com](mailto:45tarsus@gmail.com) **Australia:** Dawn Ciechomski  
[dp1949@live.com.au](mailto:dp1949@live.com.au) **New Zealand:** Barbara and Neil Robertson 04 473 6383 [newzealand@arthur-ransome.org](mailto:newzealand@arthur-ransome.org)  
**Japan:** Mikako Tarashima +81 3 6421 5668 [japan@arthur-ransome.org](mailto:japan@arthur-ransome.org)



# SIGNALS



## THE MAGAZINE OF THE ARTHUR RANSOME SOCIETY MAY-AUGUST 2022

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### From the Editor

## Back to reality

Possibly the most exciting item in this issue is on page 6, with the return of the 'Events ladder', released from its pandemic-linked furlough now that there's a significant enough number of events to list. When I mentioned this at the recent board meeting, the news was met with actual squeals of delight.

The meeting itself of course was on Zoom – something that came into its own during the lockdown, and is now surely here to stay. It's proved a blessing, with online committee meetings and readings of 'The Twelve' and other delights. One of these is the TARS Book Group, slowly gaining traction, and with another meeting planned for July - see page 7. Easy to join, fun to 'attend' – all you have to do is choose a book (or two or three if you wish) from the shortlist, read it, and join in the discussion.

Back in the 'real' world, the rescheduled IAGM is now looming on the horizon. Moving it to the August Bank Holiday weekend was a decision born of necessity - the school wasn't able to offer to match the May weekend we'd originally had for 2021 (possibly just as well in the event, as the government belatedly decided to shift the Spring Bank Holiday forward to the following weekend). August however was available, and hopefully will suit sufficient members (families in particular) to give us a steer for future years.

The move has also had its effect on this Signals - it's thicker than usual as a result of having both Despatches and the Library Supplement (which does recommend some 'summer holiday' reading - Jon Tucker's cheery 'Those Kids' books').

The timing means that the next Signals won't have 'Ship's Log' to fill it up - so I'd be delighted to hear from any budding writers with ideas! Just remember we're not Mixed Moss (which is also on the lookout for material, see p5); Signals likes shorter articles - 700 words is a good length – any Ransome-linked topic considered, just ask me!

*Peter Willis*

**This issue's cover:** It's 85 years since *We Didn't Mean to Go to Sea* was published, This edition was current 25 years ago when its star, Ransome's own *Nancy Blackett*, found her safe haven within the Tars-based Nancy Blackett Trust – read about it on pages 14-15.

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## CHAIRMAN'S NOTES

from

# Peter Wright

As I write this, the most horrendous invasion of Ukraine is taking place. I sincerely hope that by the time you are reading this, matters will have been resolved. Unfortunately, I can't see any good or winners coming out of this process, only a great deal of hurt, anxiety and loss.

Such events have made me think of Arthur's time as a journalist in Russia, witnessing and reporting on the Russian Revolution, and getting to know and win the trust of its main leaders. I still find it amazing that through this, he met and fell in love with Evgenia Shelepina, Trotsky's personal secretary.

Ransome's time in Russia was quite remarkable and it's only since I joined TARS that I have learnt of this side of his life. Having done so, I can't help but wonder what Arthur and Evgenia would have made of the invasion of Ukraine had they been alive today - perhaps it's as well they are not.

On a brighter note, Covid restrictions are being lifted and the Literary Weekend in Oxford (see pages 8-9) was most successful and enjoyable with a first-class venue, excellent speakers and plenty of bonhomie amongst old and new friends.

I look forward too to the IAGM in Suffolk, as well as to joining in some of the regional programmes. A recent Midlands visit to the Story Museum in Oxford was excellent, part of which is an expansive display devoted to the history of children's literature. It was good to see *Swallows and Amazons* featuring as one of the seminal works.

I've also enjoyed a Bohemian walk around Chelsea with Southern TARS, learning about another interesting part of Ransome's life. This too not known by me until I joined TARS. I wonder how many new members that join have the same experience, namely knowing the twelve S&A books, but not much more about AR and his life. What an exciting time of discovery they have ahead of them!

Zoom continues to provide meeting opportunities and I have greatly enjoyed several sessions reading through *Winter Holiday* as

well as discussing the TARS Book Club recommendations with members from near and far (including Japan and Australia). Do look out for other Zoom activities, they are open to all members and why not join in the Book Club - several new suggested reads can be found elsewhere in *Signals*.

Meetings of the Literary and Resources, Publications and Membership Committees have kept me very busy over the last few weeks and these culminated in a Board meeting. There is much good work being done by members of these committees and it's good to know the society still has plenty of ideas for activities and events. You can read about some of this work in "News from the Board".

The UK is not the only area where volunteers progress TARS matters and it's

encouraging to hear that there is new enthusiastic blood on the Australian Committee.

Three million cheers, I hope you enjoy your new roles and my thanks to those stepping down for a well-earned rest and a job well done (you know who you are).

Thinking of overseas members brings me to my two final comments. As you will read extensively in this edition, we have learnt of the death of Cheryl Paget, our much-loved long-time New Zealand co-ordinator and Ransome enthusiast. Cheryl and I had been exchanging

emails about children's literature and Ransome for several years and she had become a close pen-pal friend. She leaves behind two sons and I have sent the society's condolences to them, along with some of our memories of Cheryl. This is something I do each time we are informed of the death of a member and I often receive a lovely reply. Elsewhere there is a list of those members who died during 2021, although since then we have also lost John Burgess, another stalwart of IAGMs and Literary Weekends.

Finally, I would like to thank Catherine Lamont for her sterling work as editor of *Mixed Moss 2021*. I'm sure you will all agree it was an excellent bumper edition, and she also produced a supplement which can be found on the TARS website. Catherine is taking a well-earned rest so, although we have the 2022 edition in hand, if you fancy editing the 2023 edition, do please get in touch.

Enjoy your summers (or winters for some)!





## News from the Board

**The 88<sup>th</sup> meeting of the Board of Trustees was held via a Zoom link on Saturday 5<sup>th</sup> March. The following key decisions were made.**

### Chairman's opening business

The Chairman and secretary are arranging a face-to-face meeting with our Insurers to seek clarification and possible modifications of the TARS insurance policy to better protect our members.

A recommendation from the Australian committee for the winner of the AusTARS Cup for 2022 was endorsed. The award will be presented at the IAGM weekend.

It was agreed a £1,000 donation from Jim and Judy Andrews should be used to provide prizes for our children's writing and mapping competitions and subsequent similar initiatives.

### Literary & Resources Committee

The TARS book club is to be given further promotion to help increase participation. It was also agreed any children's selections should be promoted in *The Outlaw*.

TARS will host the Alliance of Literary Societies' AGM in 2024. It was agreed this should be held in the Lake District.

A policy on how to deal with the increasing number of offers of AR/Amazon books (often following the death of members) was agreed.

### Publications and Publicity Committee

Catherine Lamont's decision to step down as editor of Mixed Moss was noted and arrangements put in hand to find her successor. A range of publicity and promotion ideas had been discussed and endorsed.

## Literary Weekend

The Board noted that bookings have been flowing in and a full house is expected.

### IAGMs

Arrangements for the 2022 IAGM in Suffolk are well in hand and two possible venues for the 2023 IAGM in Dundee have been explored – we await costings. Additional support will be given to the Scotland Committee.

### Finance

Lakeland Arts: Correspondence with Lakeland Arts is ongoing. We have agreed that *Coch-y-Bonddhu* should remain at Windermere Jetty. We have offered Arthur's large First Aid box for display at Abbot Hall or Windermere Jetty and this is being considered. A joint event celebrating the 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the 1974 *Swallows and Amazons* film is proposed and will be discussed further. TARS has offered support in fundraising and publicity to help preserve *Esperance*, and Lakeland Arts have offered occasional free accommodation to the society to help us sort and catalogue our archives.

### Other Business

Update reports were received on membership and the web site along with reports from the regions and overseas groups.

*Amazon* – It had been brought to the attention of TARS (and other Ransome related groups) that the boat used as *Amazon* in the 1974 film may be available for public access and use in co-operation with the current owners.

Details remain a little unclear but it was agreed further information will be sought.

### Future 2022 Board and committee meetings

Board: Sun 28 August (IAGM)  
Sat 8 October  
L&R Cttee: Tues 13 Sept  
P&P Cttee: Sat 24 Sept

## MIXED MOSS

### Seeks new Editor

A vacancy has arisen for someone to take over as Editor of Mixed Moss following the decision of Catherine Lamont to stand down.

Julian Lovelock has kindly agreed to see the current issue through the remaining production processes, so the appointment will start with the 2023 issue.

If you are interested, please contact Peter Wright for an informal discussion.

# 2024

Already less than two years years away, 2024 is shaping up to be a big year for TARS and Ransome-related things in general, mostly centered on the Lake(s) in the North – such as...

### The 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary of *Swallows and Amazons*, the film.

Discussions are under way to celebrate with *Swallow* from the film (and possibly *Amazon* too!).

**The Alliance of Literary Societies AGM** - TARS is hosting it, and plans are in hand, with Windermere a likely choice, and a date to be chosen – avoiding Bank Holidays, which means it won't clash with...

**Our own IAGM**, also due to be held in the Northern Region in 2024.

DATE	CALENDAR OF EVENTS	REGION
30 April Saturday	Coots at RSPB Middleton Lakes	Midland
21 May Saturday	Gorge Walk	Midland
21 May Saturday	Blackdown Hills Walk	South-West
27-29 May	Warnford Camp	South
28 May- 4 June	Broads Camp	East
3 June Friday	Rusland Churchyard 6.30pm memorial	North
11 June Saturday	Archery Exmouth	South-West
17-19 June	Seafair Haven Milford Haven	Midland
18 June- 19 July	AR's Foreign Illustrations Exhibition, Brantwood	ART/North
25 June Saturday	Suffolk and the Sea Felixstowe Book Festival	East
8-10 July	Rudyard Lake Sailing Weekend	Midland
9-10 July	Swallows and Armenians Opera	North
12 July 6.30pm	Book Group	Zoom
13 August Saturday	Sailing Day Bank Ground Farm	North
19-21 August	Cobnor Camp	South
26-29 August	<b>International AGM</b> Shotley, Suffolk	East
9-11 September	Canoe Camping w/e Roadford Lake	South-West
17 September	Susan Cooking Day	Midland
1 October Saturday	Nene Valley Railway Peterborough	East
15 October Saturday	Bekonscot Model Village	Midland
15 October Saturday	Lunch and talk Teignmouth CYC	South-West



## CARRY ON CAMPING!

Sorry about the cheesy headline, but suddenly, after two seasons of lockdown (plus the successful example of Hoathwaite last summer), it seems TARS can't get enough of camping — the Diary is fairly bristling with under-canvas events.

Starting the season – **Camp Coot Club** (Not its official name!). This week-long (28 May-June 4) Broads camp has been organised by Marc Grimston in **TARS East** territory but is also attracting interest from members in other Regions.

Based on a commercial, but fairly basic campsite close to the River Ant, it will be very much a do-it-yourself affair, with the chance to visit Hunters boatyard, and sail *Titmouse*, from the TV serial (See Ebb& Flow, p40)

Also on the end-May weekend, from Friday 27th, is the return of **Southern** Region's now-traditional intimate Warnford Camp, with its own private lake. Safe and shallow, it's ideal for smaller dinghies. Just £5 for adults, juniors free. Southern's larger and even more traditional Cobnor camp, on the edge of Chichester Harbour near Bosham is also back again, 19-21 August. More details on p46.

**Midland Region** is taking to the water twice, first at **Seafair Haven** at Milford Haven, pretty much the western limit of its territory. This festival offers up to a week of small-boat sailing in some of the most beautiful scenery you'll ever find. Midland Tars are focusing on the weekend of **18-19 June**. Best arrive Friday 17<sup>th</sup> – early start on Saturday for an upriver dinghy flotilla, and on the Sunday there's a visit to the Tall Ship *Johanna Lucretia*. There's camping and bunkhouse accommodation available. If you want to start exploring online, take a look at the website, [tallships.wales/seafair-haven/](http://tallships.wales/seafair-haven/). Contact Paul Green: [paul-midstars@gmx.co.uk](mailto:paul-midstars@gmx.co.uk), or 07563 962496 for updates. More details p36.

A month later, July 8-10, and Midland is back on the water, this time at the familiar Rudyard Lake, with sailing, boating, camping and bunkhouse – p36 again for details.

And towards the end of the season, **South-West** has arranged a SUP/canoe camping weekend for 9-11 September at Roadford Lake, nearish to Okehampton, Devon - see p44.

# TARS BOOK GROUP

As the still-embryonic **Tars Book Group** reaches its first anniversary we can report that it has **doubled in size** and **gone global** – yes, the original trio of Organisers, **Amanda Ardagh-Walter, Elizabeth Williams** and **Peter Willis**, have been joined by three more enthusiasts, one of whom, Catherine Lamont, is Australian. The other two are TARS Chairman Peter Wright and Iain Khan-Gilchrist.

We've had two Zoom meetings, and the next one is planned for **Sunday 12 July 6.30 pm** (note date-change to avoid outdoor meets!) We'll be discussing books from the attached shortlist. We suggest everyone reads some books off the list – whichever you're attracted to – and may try others after what other members say about them in the Zoom session.



## ZOOM AGENDA

**Diary of a Young Naturalist** by Dara McAnuly  
**Malamander** by Thomas Taylor  
**Sea Fever** by Sam Jefferson,  
**The Last Hillwalker** by John Burns  
**The Murderer's Ape** by Jakob Wegelius.



### PLUS, a new experiment: a FanFiction title:

**'The Stowaways'** is an unpublished 'completion' of 'Coots in the North', which a Ransome fan wrote for his Ransome-mad grand-daughter (and partly with her help), and recently sent to TARS with a request that we 'cast our eyes over it to see if there's any merit in it'. Book Group members are invited to do just that – download it as a pdf via the 'Book Group' page in the Members' section of the TARS website, or email one of the Organisers.

**DATE SUNDAY 12 JULY 6.30pm (UK time)**

**Join Zoom Meeting**

<https://us02web.zoom.us/j/81680810253?pwd=cWoxUjFJOXlyRnFBaUJyVGRTQTNKZz09>

**Meeting ID: 816 8081 0253 Passcode: 337634**

And please notify Elizabeth ([finnsarah1990@aol.com](mailto:finnsarah1990@aol.com)) if you intend to take part. (Apologies to overseas members for the less than convenient time, we hope to arrange a more global-friendly time in the autumn)

## NEW: The Standing List

One of our founding aims is to discover good contemporary children's/young adults' books that have some element of Ransome relevance, and we'd like to build a 'standing list' of titles we can recommend and to which we can refer young people, as well as teachers, librarians and other grown-ups.

To keep the list manageable and focused, we're suggesting it will be in two parts:

**Suggestions**, which anyone can add to, and may be 'weeded' occasionally, and the **Permanent Reading List**; for inclusion on this, at least two members will need to have recommended the book. The list will be housed on the TARS website; comments, arguments (sorry, civilised discussions) and so on will always be welcome.



## Oxford for Scholarship... and marmalade!

Freshly minted memories of last month's Literary Weekend in words and photos

My weekend by Peter Willis

I arrive early, with the Nancy Blackett stall-in-a-suitcase, meeting Peter Wright and Ted Alexander delivering a four-wheel trolley full of Ted's extensive archive exhibition. including a few copies of Julia Jones's *Uncommon Courage* left over from her Brian Hammett Memorial Talk. They disappear remarkably quickly so wish I had brought more.

Plenty of familiar faces, some with unfamiliar decoration. Judy Snook has got a pink streak in her hair - rather fetching; Elaine Pyrke goes one better with a full electric blue makeover (spot her in the dinner photo!).

Oxford for Marmalade... Mary Pritchard reveals there's a blue plaque nearby to Sarah Cooper, who actually made husband Frank's Oxford Marmalade.

Saturday morning, Mike Bender, who looks more like a volunteer lifeboatman than an academic, recommends TARS gets into funding PhDs - cheaper than you'd think, apparently.

*Spylark* author Danny Rurlander reveals what we all wanted to hear, that he's working on a follow-up book... but can't find a publisher. They don't like series fiction these days, he tell us.

On the Saturday 'afternoon off' Amanda Ardagh-Walter and I visit the Ashmolean where we discover a terra cotta mask donated by Robin Collingwood, 'from the Ruskin Collection'.

At the gala dinner, which I've decided is a suitable occasion to wear the TARS tie I've somehow inherited from Brian Hammett, I'm sat next to Mike Bender who knew him through the Cruising Association and an interesting conversation is assured.

Peter Wright, in his after-dinner talk, produces a letter, hand-written, from of all people Alan Bennett. One for the TARS museum, if one is ever established.

Maps seem to be a recurrent feature at this weekend. *Spylark* endears itself to TARS readers with a map at the front; Penny Bradshaw's 'Cultural landscapes' relies on them, and Sally Bushell uses them - via Minecraft - to engage children with reading. Her main theme is the creation, in books, with the help, inevitably, of maps, of 'playspaces' - a sort of licensed, fenced-off area where the children can escape from adults, explore, develop, and even be exposed to a limited amount of danger. The island in the lake, in effect. This gives rise to some of the liveliest discussion of the weekend.

After all that, David Wood is just pure fun. Tales of the making of the 1974 *Swallows and Amazons* film, with advice from Mrs Ransome.

Then Ivan Cutting, covid-positive, delivers the first-ever Literary Weekend Zoom lecture. Is this going to be the shape of the future as far as these weekends are concerned, with no need to meet up? I do hope not, it's been far too enjoyable!



From top: Mary Pritchard introduces Sarah Cooper; Judy Snook; TARS Stall with Christine Rae and and Krysia Clack; Penny Bradshaw; Margaret Ratcliffe; Mike Bender  
Below: As ever, the TARS Library was out in force, with an extensive selection





Above: The Gala Dinner; far left: Peter Wright and Danny Rurlander, signing copies of *Spylark*; left, Peter and Kirsty Taylor in The Buttery; below: Ivan Cutting's Zoom talk, with clip from *Eastern Angles' We Didn't Mean to Go to Sea*



### Previous Literary Weekend Transcripts – now indexed

Transcripts of all 15 previous Literary Weekends have been published – free to those who attended. They are all available from the TARS Library, and some can be bought from the TARS Stall (see p51). Paul Wilson has now indexed them all, under Volumes, Speaker and Subject, and the Indexes are now available to download on the TARS Website: Members' Area > Society Information > Literary Weekend and other national events > The Literary Weekend transcripts



Above: *Swallows and Amazons* (1974) scriptwriter David Wood delighted delegates with his talk





## The Arthur Ransome Society Member Site

[Home](#) [Publications & Events](#) [Society Information](#) [Juniors](#) [Arthur Ransome](#) [My Account](#)

- TARS Publications

- Regions, Countries & Events

Public Site



## Members' Area



Welcome to the TARS website! Have you discovered the Members' Area yet? Believe it or not, most TARS members still haven't. Which is a pity, because it's easy to enter and contains a mass of interesting stuff. If you haven't had a look yet, why not try now!

### How to get into the Members' Area of the TARS Website:

**Before you start**, you'll need to acquire two things: a **Username** and a **Password**. Both can be obtained from Diana Wright - in fact you may have them already. Two years ago, when the website was launched, Diana emailed every then member with their individual Username and Password - if you can check your old emails you may find them.

If not, just **email Diana at webmaster@arthur-ransome.org** and ask her to send them. Then...

1. Find the website: go to [www.arthur-ransome.org](http://www.arthur-ransome.org)
2. From the line of options in green type, go to the far right and click on **Members' Area**
3. This takes you to the **Log-in page**, which asks you to enter 'Username or email address': and 'Password'.
4. Tick the 'Remember me' if box you don't want to have to enter these details every time you visit, then...
5. Click on the green 'log in' button

**And you're in!** You'll find a list of options, all in green type:

[Home](#) [Publications and Events](#) [Society information](#) [Juniors](#) [Arthur Ransome](#) [My Account](#)

So now, go exploring - click on any of these (ignore 'My Account' for the time being) and see what you find! If you get stuck, bored or just want to move on to another section, just go back to the top (or scroll to the bottom of the one you're in and click 'back to top' )

**Home** has a general welcome, and **Latest Updates**, with details of recent events (and a short-form calendar) and additions to the website, plus contact details for TARS officers and the link to our own facebook site, The Arthur Ransome Society (TARS) Facebook Group ( which is not the same as the non-TARS-run public site, 'The Arthur Ransome Group').

**Publications** not only has useful information about TARS publications, but also the actual publications themselves in low-res PDF versions for you to download and read (note, if you click on a download, nothing will appear to happen, but it will go to your Download box where you can retrieve it to read offline later). Suggestion to UK members: look at the overseas magazines!



**Events** In the Members Area you'll find full details of all UK regional and national events, including those which for safeguarding reasons are members-only. There's an interactive **calendar** with details of events.

**Society Information** contains the full catalogue of the **TARS Library**, the **TARS Stall stocklist**, details of the IAGM, Literary Weekend, Minutes of meetings and forms.

**Juniors** provides some additional material to the wonderfully comprehensive public site.

Click on **Arthur Ransome** to find loads of fascinating information about the man and his life.

## Going interactive

**And now... find yourself!** Click on **My Account**, then on **My details** and you'll find the page shown below, titled **Welcome to the TARS Membership System**, and be invited to 'Load My Information', Click here, and you'll open up a four-box display ready-loaded with your name, your membership number, details of your membership – including how you prefer to receive your TARS publications, whether as paper copies or electronic downloads – and you can hit a little box marked 'Update info' if you want to change any of these details – your preferences, or your address if you move house. All of this is private to you - access is linked to your login details, your username and password.

If you go back to **My Account** and click on **Payment and Renewals** you'll find you can use the website as a convenient means of paying for such things as purchases from the TARS Stall, or books from Amazon Publications.

**Membership:** TARS has already started the process of switching to Direct Debit as our preferred method of subscription payments, and a number of members have already adopted it. It can be done via the website - and we'll publish more in the next *Signals*, in time for the 2023 renewals. Meanwhile, enjoy getting to know your website!

The TARS Website is managed by Diana Wright, email [webmaster@arthur-ransome.org](mailto:webmaster@arthur-ransome.org)

The screenshot shows a web browser window with a bookmark bar at the top. The page title is "TARS Membership System". The main heading is "Welcome to the TARS Membership System". Below this, a message states: "This page will allow you to view and change your membership details. You can return to the Member Area by clicking here: <https://members.arthur-ransome.org/>." The section "Your Information" contains four boxes:

General Information	Your Membership	Contact Details	Other
Full Name: Mr Peter Willis Member Number: 1028	Membership Type: UKGP Payment Method: GoCardless Membership Expires: 2022 Publication Preference: Signals: Paper, Mixed Moss: Paper, Outlaw: Paper Region: Eastern	Email: peterwillis144@gmail.com Phone: 01394 387907 Address: Creek View, School Lane, Martlesham, Martlesham Town: WOODBRIDGE County: Suffolk Post Code: IP12 4RR Country: GB	Sub-Members: No Additional Members <b>Members Website</b> Username:

## OBITUARY

# CHERYL PAGET

## A Tar who made a difference

Cheryl Paget, who died in January, just a couple of months short of her 50th birthday, was one of those Tars who ‘made a difference’, and was much loved for it, and for her own ebullient and generous personality, wherever she went, both in the UK’s Eastern Region, and in New Zealand, where she breathed new life into its branch – for which (among other things) she was awarded the AusTARS Cup in 2017.

At her NZ memorial service in her home town of Havelock North, this tribute was received from Susan Price, TARS member (and the country’s foremost authority on children’s books):

“Cheryl transformed the New Zealand branch of The Arthur Ransome Society. She became our Co-ordinator and encouraged us to meet one another, and introduced the annual Arthur Ransome holiday weekend, when many of us got together each January in memory of Ransome’s birthday. Cheryl loved fun and competitions, and gave a great deal of time and energy to the Society, thinking up activities that we would enjoy as a group. Hers was always a friendly face. She was also a keen researcher, writer and lecturer... It is incredibly sad that she died at such a young age. Cheryl’s passing makes it even more clear how important it is to grab every opportunity given to us in life, and make the most of it, because we never know what the future holds.”

Cheryl had emigrated to New Zealand in 2009 (after visiting a careers fair, and taking up the offer of a local government job there). Her departure from the UK coincided with the Eastern Region’s hosting of the IAGM, but with typical thoughtfulness she prepared a ‘treasure chest’ of games and toys for the juniors before she left. She was much loved, and missed in the Region, and we were happy that she was able to join us on a restored lifeboat trip on Secret Water when she returned to the UK on a visit in 2019.

She was born (as Cheryl Butler) and grew up in the Pakefield district of Lowestoft, and learned to sail in a Mirror dinghy on Oulton Broad with her

brother Niel. At her ‘home’ memorial service in Pakefield’s clifftop church, while others remembered her as ‘tough, loyal, brave, caring and generous’, he chose to describe her as ‘fierce’. “She loved fiercely, achieved fiercely – Queen’s Guide, Duke of Edinburgh Gold Award – and could be stern: the ‘brown-eyed death stare’ was something to fear.”

Cheryl was diagnosed with cancer in April 2020. As she wrote in a last message to her friends, “I suppose as an overachiever I am quite proud of the fact that I have not one but two types of cancer.” She left work, stepped down as TARS NZ Co-ordinator, took the opportunity to go on a ‘bucket list’ of rock concerts and tourist attractions (many Hobbit-related) with her sons Sam and Jake, catch up with friends over a glass or two of

red wine, and grab the chance to concentrate on one of the things she liked, and did, best: literary research and writing.

“Cheryl was a very thorough reader and researcher,” says TARS Librarian Winifred Wilson, “particularly into AR’s early life in London, and the many people with whom he came into contact there. She also sent from New Zealand books for the Library, complete with her own copious notes.”

Describing herself as “channeling my inner Nancy,” Cheryl wrote: “I decided to enjoy every day that I had given to me from the day of diagnosis... every day was a bonus and I didn’t intend to waste any of them.”

She was also sustained by her strong Christian faith and was not frightened of death. She concluded: “I am proud of what I have achieved in life, my career, my friendships and my sons... I hope I put as much joy back in the world as I took out of it. I never stopped learning, and took pleasure from studying and sharing knowledge, and membership of the Arthur Ransome Society allowed me to do that, and it enabled me to make new friends across the world at the same time.”

*Peter Willis*

*Cheryl’s last article for Signals: page 49*



**“Channeling my inner Nancy”**  
Secret Water, June 2019

## OBITUARY

# John Sanders: a steady hand on the tiller

An appreciation of one of TARS's 'founding fathers' by *Christina Hardyment*



*'Diplomat, carpenter and furniture restorer, a good photographer, faithful husband and loving carer, a gentle man, wise father, uncle, grandfather and great grandfather' (Chris Sanders)*

John Sanders played an essential role in the creation of the Arthur Ransome Society. Born in the year *Swallows and Amazons* was published, he married Brigit Altounyan in 1953 in Aleppo while training for the Diplomatic Service. During his long and successful career, they were based mainly in the Middle East and Latin America, with added time in London and a two year ambassadorial stint in Panama.

In 1980, they retired to Nibthwaite, on the shores of Coniston Water, the lake that had been the scene of the Altounyan children encountering Arthur Ransome when staying at Bank Ground Farm and visiting their grandparents, William and Dorrie Collingwood at Lanehead. Brigit's mother Dora remained a close friend of Arthur all his life (I recommend reading the many letters between them to be found in the Brotherton Library, Leeds).

John and Brigit enjoyed introducing their own children and grandchildren to the joys of messing about in boats, lurking on Peel Island and climbing the Old Man of Coniston just as Brigit's parents and grand parents had done. He trained as a cabinet-maker, and their home exhibited countless examples of his skills – including several boats.

I first met John and Brigit in April 1984, when I was exploring Coniston for my first book about Ransome, *Captain Flint's Trunk*. After I'd done some preliminary exploring (windsurfing to Peel Island, searching for possible Dariens, and tacking down to the shore from Bank Ground Farm), I came to Nibthwaite for tea. They made me wonderfully welcome then and on numerous later visits, and gave me vital clues to the origins of *The*

*Swallows and The Amazons*, as the first draft of Ransome's

book was called. Their son Chris and his son Robin took me out on the lake on *Mavis*, as *Amazon* was originally called, I was shown the stone bridge under which Arthur crawled as a boy, and John suggested that Wetherlam was a likely location for Slater Bob's mine in *Pigeon Post*.

A few years after CFT was published, the idea of appealing for funds to preserve *Mavis* by writing to its readers arose, and the success of that led, with support from Abbot Hall and the Coniston Museum, to the foundation of the Arthur Ransome Society.

A solemn meeting to discuss its constitution took place in the cosy converted barn adjoining John and Brigit's house, and again John's diplomatic skills came to the fore with wise advice – and cautionary tales.

Brigit, tireless in welcoming and encouraging, was the natural choice as the society's founding President. John, though always an essential prop and mainstay, preferred to act as a backroom boy in its affairs. But he used his diplomatic expertise to smooth ruffled tempers and placate strong personalities inevitably found among intrepid *Swallows* and rule-breaking *Amazons*, and his wise advice, delivered with perennial good humour, shaped the form it took for all time.

In 1992, Brigit and John moved down to Bideford Bay, in the West Country. She died of lung disease in 1999. After her death, John was fortunate to find companionship in Liddy Taylor (a granddaughter of the eminent physicist Ernest Rutherford), a longterm friend of them both. They moved to Clyst St Mary, near Exeter in 2002. He cared for Liddy lovingly during the final months of her life; she died shortly after he did.



Top: John, painted by his daughter Jane  
Above: Sailing *Mavis* on Coniston with Jane and Roger Altounyan's wife Hella



## OTHER AR ENTITIES 5: THE NANCY BLACKETT TRUST

# We did, and do, mean to go to sea



Above: Now: *Nancy Blackett* under sail on the River Orwell, as she has been for 25 years with the Nancy Blackett Trust

Below: As she was discovered by her restorer Mike Rines, derelict in Scarborough Harbour, in the 1980s



Recently, writes *Peter Willis*, I was asked to provide a potted biography, and found myself writing that in 1996 I had ‘inadvertently launched the Nancy Blackett Trust’.

And it’s perfectly true. We’d joined TARS a few years previously as a family after finding a notice about it in the back of a copy of *Swallows and Amazons*. Our first TARS event was a climb up Beacon Hill near Newbury, and it was very memorable. We met a whole lot of people, the first of whom was Roger Wardale, then Southern regional chairman. At one stage I found myself walking alongside, and chatting with, Taqui Altounyan.

At the end of the day I bought a copy of Roger’s book *Nancy Blackett – Under Sail with Arthur Ransome* from Ted Alexander’s car-boot bookstall, and was captivated by the story of her rescue and restoration. The following year, 1994, Eastern Region announced the ‘Great Race’ between *Nancy Blackett* and *Peter Duck* on the River Orwell. I had to see her, touch her, step aboard... I did all that, and of course fell hopelessly in love.

Two years later, Easter 1996, I read a small notice in *Signals*. *Nancy Blackett* was for sale, again, asking price £30,000.

### Grab a chance...

I now think it was that word ‘again’ that triggered me. I had visions of her being handed on, and on, to who knows who, and running the risk of deteriorating all over again. If only TARS could buy her, and look after her... I wrote a letter to about 80 members I knew proposing the idea. Grab a chance, and all that... Reactions were mixed, but... cheques started coming in.

Southern Region adopted the project – chiefly Paul Crisp, then chair, and Diana Sparkes, who became our first treasurer; TARS President Brigit Sanders became our patron. In the end, at the 1996 Bristol IAGM, the TARS Board decided not to adopt the project – a disappointing decision at the time, but as things turned out it was for the best. TARS had a lot on its plate over the next few years, and looking after *Nancy* has proved to be a major operation, which has benefited from having its own support group, set up as a charity, and VAT-registered (neither of which applies to TARS).

By the 1997 IAGM, the asking price – now £25,000 – was in sight. The Nancy Blackett Trust was set up, and *Nancy* was formally handed over at the Ipswich Maritime Festival in June.

So to begin with, the NBT was an all-Tars affair. Our donors, about 400 of them, all or nearly all recruited through TARS, immediately became members of the new trust. Over the years, NBT membership has remained fairly steady at about that 400 level but people – in both organisations – have come and gone and the overlap has dropped to somewhere about 20-25%.

Even so we remain closely connected with TARS. In the Eastern Region many of our public activities take place under a joint banner. We try to make sure that *Nancy* takes part in all suitable IAGMs – she will be at this year’s in Shotley.

And what, over the last quarter of a century (already!) have we achieved? Well, we’ve achieved what we set out to do – and the

and the first of the Objects in our Constitution – the preservation of *Nancy Blackett*, which costs us each year close to the original purchase price (and with an annual budget very similar to that of TARS). *Nancy* has had a new mast, and a new engine. The electrics have been rewired and we've even managed to install some discreet electric lighting to augment the glow of the traditional oil lamps. Other than that, though, regular maintenance, guided by a regular survey has meant that major repairs are few and far between.

*Nancy* – under our team of qualified skippers – takes members for day-trips on the River Orwell, and longer cruises, to the Solent, to maritime festivals, and of course over to Holland in the wake of both the *Goblin*, and of Ransome himself in 1936, when he researched the voyage for *We Didn't Mean to Go to Sea*.

### Arthur Ransome's East Coast

Her presence on the Orwell serves to remind people of the area's link with the book, and its author. The high-watermark of this association came in 2017, the 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary of Ransome's death. 'Visit England' encouraged regional tourist organisations to look to literary anniversaries for inspiration – an idea eagerly taken up by the council-sponsored Shotley Peninsula group, of which the NBT had been a founder member. The result was a chain of events, notably an Arthur Ransome Jamboree on Pin Mill Green – something like a village fete but with an added literary festival, at which Hugh Brogan made his last appearance. Other items included the NBT's own unique contribution – the marathon reading of *We Didn't Mean to Go to Sea* at the Pin Mill Sailing Club (of which Ransome himself had been a member) which drew over a hundred readers and listeners.

Permanent legacies include the invention and adoption of the label 'Arthur Ransome's East Coast' for the area. It's used on information boards for visitors, erected by the council and featuring *Nancy* and Arthur Ransome. A part of the Stour and Orwell long-distance footpath has been designated the Arthur Ransome Trail, running along the Orwell from Pin Mill, highlighting the down-river passage of the *Goblin* in Chapter IV of *WD* and ending at Shotley Pier where the *Goblin* dropped anchor and the Swallows went to the pub to buy 'grog' and phone Mother.

We also managed to secure a Heritage Lottery Fund award to process Arthur Ransome's own photos of *Selina King* being built, and enlarge some of them for exhibition at the Pin Mill Studio.

### Sailing for the young

Most of this met our second Object – "advancing the education and understanding of the public in the works of Arthur Ransome" – but the third Object, which focuses on enabling 'particularly but not exclusively young people' to develop their maturity through sailing, has proved less easy to fulfil. We have a 'Young Sailors Fund' to encourage individual enterprise; we do some work with school visits; we love welcoming families with children (and grandchildren) aboard *Nancy* – but *Nancy's* small capacity inevitably means the average age of crews is well on the 'wrong' side of middle-age.

We intend things to change following our recent bequest from Tony Parslow, as reported in the last *Signals*. Plans to invest in sailing facilities for young people are gradually forming. It may take some time, but as we move into our second quarter-century we feel confident that both *Nancy* herself and the Ransome spirit she represents have a great future – alongside TARS.



Top: Arthur himself at the helm  
Above: The cast of *We Didn't Mean to Go to Sea* (2016) find their sea-legs.

Below: Winter maintenance; chart work in the cabin, and Libby Purves reads a chapter at the Marathon Reading of *WD* in 2017



# No Holds Barred

## Evgenia Ransome's Diaries 1927-1933



Arthur's diaries have been well 'aired' over the years but less so, if at all, Evgenia's. These six momentous years were her prolific period and, of course, coincided with publication of the first four S&As. Arthur's Literary Agonies make occasional appearances... The best of Evgenia's diaries are here presented in individual pieces in slightly differing forms:

### **Trial by Diary – Persecuting the Postman 1927-1933**

A 'dramatized' account of Evgenia's life at Low Ludderburn where the postman's visits are assiduously recorded, time sensitive - with sighs or smiles. When Arthur is away, - Russia, Poland, Germany, Manchester, London - Evgenia is far from idle. Ill, yes, but never idle; making and receiving visits and tending to her garden. Hard to believe she only came to this country in 1924.

### **Manchester Misery 1928-1930**

Agonising about AR's future. Will it be the *Manchester Guardian* (they look at houses in Manchester) or will it be novels? Or will it be both? Ted Scott wanted Arthur to stay with the *MG*. Did 'Mabel', his wife?

### **Across the sea to Ireland September 1929**

Trip to Ireland to visit William Peters and family in Blackrock, Dublin, Never mentioned by AR in diaries or *Autobiography*. Added material from Will Peters Jnr.

### **In Sickness and in Health 1930**

We know all the details of AR's many maladies. What about Evgenia? Younger than Arthur but far from immune to illness, Evgenia goes to Malvern for a restorative spell. Later in the year, friends rally round when Arthur is being treated in London.

**Pastoral Life at Home 1931** We find out of whom Evgenia said: "I never met a man duller or more conceited". AR's verdict is even more harsh. They go electioneering with Molly Hamilton in Blackburn, and both take great pleasure in observing and remarking nature in all its forms.

**First Broads Cruise 1931** With Ted and Dick Scott - who both fell overboard.

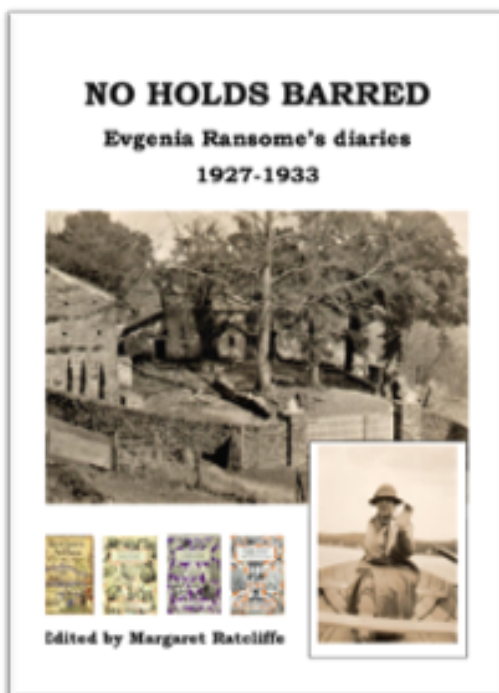
**The Scribes at the Prison Gates Aleppo, 1932** How could AR write *Peter Duck* with such excitement going on all around him! Not to mention 'contrasting' personalities.

**Second Broads Cruise 1933** Sailing with the

Kelsalls. Conned by a group of local girls (which episode is nowhere mentioned by AR). Make themselves ill by eating too many ices. A Communist fleet and 'huge gramophone' make an appearance.

See the enclosed Amazon Publications flyer for details of how to subscribe to this new book, scheduled for publication to coincide with the Shotley IAGM in August.

Or contact Alan Hakim (see page 54)





# TARS IAGM 2022 August 26-29

(August Bank Holiday Weekend)



## *TARS East welcomes you to* **Arthur Ransome's East Coast**

### *Pin Mill, Nancy Blackett, Secret Water, and a trip on a Thames Sailing Barge*

The programme is much the same as that planned for May 2021, built around the same low-cost, all-in accommodation/catering package at the historic Royal Hospital School. Costs have crept up a little due to inflation, but it's still a bargain deal: just £54 per person per night including your bed and all meals (breakfast, lunch, dinner) - with your £30 registration fee, that's under £200 for the three-day weekend. There are meal-only options for those who prefer to camp or book into a local bed-and-breakfast.

This is a chance to discover and enjoy the settings for *We Didn't Mean to Go to Sea* and *Secret Water*, and explore the remarkably unchanged area that the Ransomes chose to make their home. And indeed to visit their actual home at Broke House. For Arthur, the Suffolk coast was a sort of homecoming - he had family links with the famous Ipswich heavy-engineering dynasty whose name crops up all over the area.

The barge trip is bound to be popular, but numbers are limited by its capacity, so book early if you want to bag a place. But there's plenty more to do and see by day, and an exciting programme of entertainment in the evening, including a 'different' Dick Callum Cup! So read on, book up, and we'll all look forward to meeting up again, at last.





**The Royal Hospital School**

The meeting and dining rooms are in the main building, to the left of the tower (11 and 12 on the plan below)

**Nelson House** will be our residential block, about a 5-minute walk away

The large tarmac 'Parade Square' will be available for car-parking

**Your Accommodation**

The AGM's base is the historic **Royal Hospital School**, Holbrook, on Suffolk's Shotley Peninsula. The school occupies a superb site overlooking the River Stour with views across to Harwich. The dining facilities are excellent with a first rate choice of food, and there will be a licensed bar.

**Accommodation and meals**

Accommodation is provided on site - please see page 7 – and **all meals are included** in the accommodation price, including packed lunches on Saturday and Monday and a sit-down Sunday lunch after the AGM.

**Campers and other non-residents requiring meals will need to book them separately** – please see the booking form for details - all meals need to be pre-booked. Tea and coffee will be available during the day.

**Camping and motorhomes**

Camping and motorhome spaces are available on site close to the school buildings but there are no electrical hook-ups, and camping facilities are cheap – but basic (there is a toilet block).

A larger, well-equipped campsite with full facilities is available close by at **Alton Water** about a mile from the School: Alton Water Camping and Caravanning, Holbrook Road, Stutton, IP9 2RY website:

[anglianwaterparks.co.uk/alton-water-park/camping](http://anglianwaterparks.co.uk/alton-water-park/camping)





## By Sailing Barge to Secret Water

Thames Sailing Barge *Victor* will be ours for the day on Saturday.

We will board her at Harwich for departure at 10.30am (return c4.30pm), sailing out of Harwich Harbour and down the coast to enter the Walton Backwaters – the still-mysterious ‘Secret Water’.

Seeing this tidal archipelago from the water is an opportunity that relatively few Tars will have experienced. As Christina Hardyment explains in her book *Arthur Ransome and Captain Flint's Trunk*, being on the water gives a much better sense of the mystery of the place than seeing it from the land. We will have our packed lunches, and there will be drinks and light snacks for sale on board. *Victor* has a maximum capacity of 40 people, so places will be limited and allocated on a first-booked basis. Cost of the barge trip is £40 per adult, £20 for under-18s.

**Seal-watch and Secret Water sites in the Backwaters** A shorter (two-hour) trip, by motor launch, with expert guide Tony Haggis, loading at Titchmarsh Marina, is also available. See <http://www.walton-on-the-naze.com/> for more information. Cost will be £15 per adult, £10 for under-15s.



## Walk the Arthur Ransome Trail

The six-mile Arthur Ransome Trail, a stretch of the Stour and Orwell Long-Distance Path, follows the voyage of the *Goblin* down the Orwell as described in Chapter 4 of *We Didn't Mean to Go to Sea*. It starts in Pin Mill, at the Butt and Oyster and runs alongside the river, ending (as did the *Goblin*!) at Shotley Pier and the pub where they bought grog and phoned mother.

There are witty *Goblin*-related geocaches along the way, which, if you stop to examine them all, would extend the timing of the walk above its basic three hours or so.

A guide leaflet and car-share board will be available at the information desk.

A group walk on Saturday for those not sailing can be arranged subject to demand.



## Harwich Town

### Guided tour Saturday 2pm

Historic Harwich is well worth a visit if you've time - take the yellow Harbour Ferry from its pier at Shotley Marina (book tickets via [www.harwichharbourferry.com](http://www.harwichharbourferry.com)) - it also goes to Felixstowe so a round trip is also an option. There are two lighthouses, actually sea marks, one low, one high, the unique Tread Wheel Crane and a grid of quaint streets to explore.

## Alton Water

### Sailing and camping

Bring your dinghy, kayak, paddleboard... Only a mile or so from our base at the Royal Hospital School, Alton Water is a huge reservoir, set in a 400-acre park, offering deluxe camping and motorhome facilities, plus launch facilities for watersports. Day passes available. Contact [anglianwaterparks.co.uk/alton-water](http://anglianwaterparks.co.uk/alton-water)  
**River sailing:** Woolverstone Marina has a dinghy launch slipway - phone 01473 780206 for charges.



## DAYTIME EXCURSIONS

Sunday afternoon, Monday morning

### Pin Mill: ‘this happy place’

Pin Mill remains much as it did in Ransome’s day, at the bottom of the “deep green lane” as “this happy place where almost everybody wore sea-boots”.

The view he sketched in the late thirties is instantly recognisable – barges still lie on the Hard and the Orwell still laps at the walls of the Butt and Oyster where Arthur and Evgenia would have gazed out over the river with *Nancy Blackett* moored nearby, and where Jim Brading thought he might see what it would do for ‘breakfast’ at 7pm.

Alma Cottage lies nearby – the name attaches now just to the top one of the three houses in the pink-washed terrace that used to be the Alma Inn. Miss Powell really did live there, in the middle house with the bay window.

*Selina King* and *Peter Duck* were built at Harry King’s yard a little further round the bay.



Victorian pier is currently in the process of being restored. Shotley Marina, nearby, is on the site of HMS Ganges, the naval base to which Commander Walker was returning from the Far East. Its famous mast is still there, and there’s also a small museum.



### Nancy Blackett - welcome aboard!

Arthur Ransome’s own *Nancy Blackett*, the inspiration for the *Goblin* in *We Didn’t Mean to Go to Sea* will of course be present – these are her home waters! You’ll be able to go aboard, identify the bunks the Swallows slept in, and imagine yourself at sea in the *Goblin*. She’ll be moored at Woolverstone Marina – a short drive from the school with ample free parking. There’s a fine walk of about a mile along the shore to Pin Mill.

***Nancy will be open on Sunday afternoon only***

### Shotley Pier

This is the pier where the *Goblin* drops anchor at the end of her trip down the Orwell, and along which the Swallows walk to the pub – the Bristol Arms - to buy ‘grog’ and phone Mother. The

### Ransome’s houses

Although he regarded Pin Mill as ‘home’, and kept *Nancy Blackett* there, Arthur and Evgenia lived for most of their time in the area across the river at Levington in Broke Farm, now Broke House (above). He wrote all of *We Didn’t Mean to Go to Sea* there, as well as part of *Pigeon Post* and most of *Secret Water*.

Its present owner, Elizabeth, widow of Chris Courtauld, is kindly opening the house for Tars to visit on Sunday afternoon and Monday morning.

In 1939 the Ransomes moved to Harkstead Hall, a couple of miles inland from Pin Mill, and lived there until the end of 1940, when they moved back to the Lakes. It can be viewed from the road.

### Secret Water (ashore)

Secret Water (Hamford Water on all ordinary maps) is known locally as the Walton Backwaters. It lies between Harwich and Walton on the Naze and covers some nine square miles. It remains still somewhat remote and rather mysterious as it was when Arthur chose it for the setting for *Secret Water*. Details of how to find the The Wade, Witches Cottage and Beaumont Quay will be available at the AGM.

## EVENING ENTERTAINMENTS



### Friday 7pm Welcome, followed by Margaret Ratcliffe: **The Unexpected Bonus of Evgenia's Diaries.**

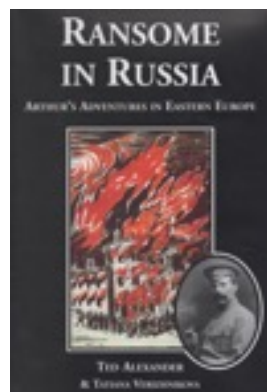
Ever-popular Friday-night speaker, Margaret will talk about how she first found Evgenia's diaries and what they reveal – including quite a few exciting incidents ignored completely by AR in his logs and diaries. They show how well-matched she and AR were – they liked and loathed the same people – and her early assimilation and social acceptance into Lake District society appear effortless. The real bonus entries, promises Margaret, are those where we can compare what each said (or didn't) on the same day. (*No Holds Barred - Evgenia's Diaries* edited by Margaret, is this year's Amazon Publications book.)

### 8.30pm Red Skies, act 1

### Saturday 7.30pm Red Skies, act 2 followed by

### Ted Alexander: The Russia that Ransome Knew

Why he went there, and what he found there – the illustrated talk will complement Ted's display of Russia-related and other memorabilia.



### *Red Skies* is a play by Ivan Cutting, from the Eastern Angles Theatre Company.

The play features an imaginary meeting between Arthur and Evgenia Ransome and George Orwell in Southwold in September 1939 – Arthur was en route to lay up *Selina King* for the duration of the War while George had returned to the family home for the funeral of his father.

Although there is no evidence for them having met, Ivan Cutting's play asks what might have happened had they done so. Orwell, on the verge of writing *Animal Farm*, is intrigued by the Ransomes' Russian background and his suspicion of spies is piqued by their unwillingness to explain how they got out of Russia after the Revolution.

They have experiences of revolutionary conflicts in common – Arthur in Russia and Orwell in the Spanish Civil War, but it is a mutual love of fishing that helps break down Ransome's initial resistance.

Later, Orwell establishes a greater rapport with Evgenia, too, leading her to question some of her experiences in greater depth. Why for instance was she allowed to leave Russia with Arthur?

Ivan Cutting explores the facts, part-facts and counter-facts in this complex and intriguing play. For Tars this production could provoke some thoughtful and possibly new reflections on an important part of Arthur's formative experiences.

*Red Skies will be presented in three separate instalments as part of the evening entertainments on Friday, Saturday and Sunday*

### Sunday 7pm Red Skies, acts 3 and 4

### 8pm The Dick Callum Cup

Thinking caps on and pencils poised for the ever-popular Ransome-related team quiz, set this year by Marc Grimston with, he promises, a different twist.

# THE PROGRAMME

**Please note: two items on this programme must be pre-booked; they have limited capacity and carry a charge, payable on booking: the Sailing Barge trip and the alternative seal-watch Secret Water boat trip, both on Saturday.**

**A LICENSED BAR will be available, at evening meals and during the evenings and at Sunday lunchtime**

## Friday 26 August

**14.00 Open for Registration**

**17.00-19.00 Evening meal**

**19.00 Welcome**, talk by Margaret Ratcliffe on **Evgenia's Diaries**

**20.30 Red Skies Act 1** (30 mins)

## Saturday 27 August

**7.30-9.00 Breakfast**; collect packed lunches

### 10.30 Barge trip to Secret Water

From Harwich, Six hours,  
Pre-booking essential (Max 40)  
Alternatively:

**11.00 Boat trip round Secret Water** from  
Titchmarsh Marina, Walton-on-the-Naze  
Two hours Pre-booking essential (Max 12)

### Time TBA Walk the Arthur Ransome Trail

Six miles, Pin Mill-Shotley, FREE see p3  
**14.00 Harwich walking tour** from Ha'Penny  
Pier Visitor Centre. Free see p3

**17.00-19.00 Evening meal**

**19.30 Red Skies Act II** (30 Minutes)

**20.00 approx** Talk by Ted Alexander on  
**Ransome in Russia**

## Sunday 28 August

**7.30-9.00 Breakfast**

**9.00 Church Service**

**10.00 International Annual General Meeting  
and Members Forum**

**12.30-13.45 Lunch**

**14.00 Local Exploration**, including  
**Nancy Blackett**, at Woolverstone, open for  
visits 14.00-17.00

**Broke House**, Levington, visitors welcome

**17.00 - 19.00 Evening meal**

**19.00 Red Skies Acts 3 & 4** (1 hour )

**20.00 Dick Callum Cup**

## Monday 29 August

**7.30-9.00 Breakfast**

and take luggage from rooms - secure space  
for storage. Collect packed lunches.

**9.00 Flag handover, and programme ends**

**9.30-onwards: Opportunity for Local  
Exploration, including:**

**Broke House at Levington** (visitors welcome  
during the morning)

**Pin Mill and Harkstead Hall** (view from road)  
**Shotley Pier and HMS Ganges Museum**  
**The Arthur Ransome Trail**

**Shotley Pier and HMS Ganges Museum**

**Walk the Arthur Ransome Trail**, six miles,  
**Pin Mill-Shotley Pier**, see px

**Visit the Walton Backwaters**, see the start  
of the **Wade and Witch's Cottage** as well as  
**Beaumont Quay** as described in *Secret  
Water*

## STALLS and DISPLAYS

**The TARS stall and the  
Nancy Blackett Trust Stall  
will be present and open  
at arranged times;**

**Ted Alexander's  
extensive Russian  
collection will also be on  
display**



## PLEASE READ THIS BEFORE COMPLETING THE BOOKING FORM

**Please send your booking form as early as possible;** this is a great help to the organising committee, and will help to ensure your place(s) on limited-capacity activities. Bookings should arrive no later than **30th June**. A late booking fee is payable after 1st July.

**Accommodation** is provided on site and three meals per day are included in the accommodation price. Campers and non-residents requiring meals should book them separately as indicated on the booking form.

Accommodation is predominantly in single rooms in the senior boarding house, Nelson. Although the rooms are not en-suite each has a washbasin and each pair of rooms shares a shower/toilet accessed off the corridor. Accommodation for a parent and a small child can also be arranged in these single rooms with the child using a camp bed or a mattress. There is no extra charge for this arrangement but meals for the child will be charged at £3 per meal for under 5 years and £6 per meal for 5 years upwards.

**Accommodation for people with disabilities** may be available. Please contact Brian Key to discuss your requirements before booking: **briankey18@outlook.com** or **01245 263579**.

**Pre-booking is needed** for the **Barge trip** or the **Secret Water** seal-watching boat, with payment, using the booking form. Places will be on a first-booked, first-served basis.

**If you would like to join the barge trip, but transfer to the seal-watch trip, should the barge be fully booked by the time you apply, please tick both options on the booking form, and pay only for the barge trip.** If you are transferred, space permitting, a refund of the cost difference will be made.

The sailing barge will depart from Harwich on Saturday morning at 10.30am for a 6-hour trip. Car sharing to Harwich where possible is advised, or there is a Harbour Ferry from Shotley. More details on arrival.

The shorter (2 hour) trip for seal-watching on Secret Water will depart from Titchmarsh Marina at Walton on the Naze. Again car sharing should be considered. There may be two trips if demand warrants.

**Please also indicate on the Booking form:** Interest in walking the Ransome Trail on Saturday, so that car pooling to provide a lift back can be arranged; interest in visiting *Nancy Blackett* on Sunday afternoon, and Broke House on Sunday afternoon or Monday morning.

### How to get there:

#### Royal Hospital School, Holbrook, Ipswich IP9 2RX

#### By Road:

**From the North** or the Midlands on the A14 follow the signs for Felixstowe. If travelling on the **A12 from the South** of Ipswich, exit at Copdock Interchange (**Jct 55**) onto the **A14 East**. If approaching on the **A12 from the North-east** (A47, Norwich/Lowestoft) join the A14 (Signposted Bury St Edmunds/Colchester), cross the Orwell Bridge and take the next exit (**Jct 56**). From west or east, leave the A14 at **Jct 56** for the A137.

At the top of the slip road take signs for the A137 'Ipswich Central and Ipswich Docks' and go down the hill. At the roundabout, take the **B1456 for Shotley and Holbrook**. Follow the B1456 alongside the River Orwell. The road ascends a hill. Continue for 1 mile until you see a water tower. At the water tower indicate right for the **B1080** signposted Holbrook and Stutton. Stay on the B1080 for 2 miles, passing through Holbrook Village and down the hill past the Old Mill. After a sharp right-hand bend you will find the School on the left at the top of the next hill. Enter the grounds, then go left round the main building to find parking on the Parade Square.

#### By Rail:

From London Liverpool Street, to **Manningtree** or **Ipswich** Station. Trains run about every hour and the journey takes about an hour. (Other routes available to Ipswich via Peterborough.) It takes a further 10 minutes by road (taxi) from Manningtree and 15 minutes from Ipswich.

# Arthur Ransome's East Coast

The TARS 2022 IAGM Aug 26-29 Royal Hospital School, Holbrook

## Booking Form

Please read all of Despatches before completing the loose white copy of the form. Then make a note of your choices on this Despatches page 8 and bring it with you to the AGM.

Please insert your Name and Postal Address

for your booking confirmation and receipt

When completed, send the white form with full payment in pound (£) sterling cheque, payable to TARS East to David Middleton, 9 Merrow Avenue, POOLE BH12 1PY. A receipt will be sent by return.

Your actual tickets will be in your arrival Welcome Pack.

A: Name (for badge) of member booking:		Diet?
Membership Number:	First IAGM? Yes / No	
Tel:	Mobile:	
E-mail:		
Vehicle Registration:		
Other Names (for badges) with Date of Birth for Juniors		Diet?
B:		
C:		
D:		
E:		

Diet: Use V for Vegetarian. For anything else, use "P.T.O." and add the details on the reverse of this form.

Please use overleaf for disability issues.

**Late arrival Friday?** What is your e.t.a? \_\_\_\_\_

Please save meal(s)? Yes / No

**Car Share:** Please offer places at Reception.  
I / we need \_\_\_\_\_ places.

Registration & Camping Fees	Rate	Nos.	£ Total
Adult registration whole weekend	£30		£
or Adult Fr £5 / Sa £10 / Su £10 / Mo £5 p.p.			£
U18 registration whole w/e or per day	£nil		n/a
Camping per pitch per night	£10		£
<b>Pre-Pay Activities Subtotal</b> (from right column)			£
<b>Accommodation Subtotal</b> (from right column)			£
<b>Camp &amp; Non-Res. Meals Subtotal</b> (from right column)			£
Late Booking (Aug 1st) + £20 per booking			£
<b>Chq No.</b>	<b>Grand Total Payable:</b>		£

Day	Indication of Interest	Adults	U18
Friday	Talk by Margaret Ratcliffe		
Fr/Sa/Su	Play: <i>Red Skies</i>		
Saturday	Arthur Ransome's Walking Trail		
Saturday	Harwich Walking Tour		
Saturday	Pin Mill visit		
Saturday	Alton Water Sailing		
Saturday	Talk by Ted Alexander		
Sunday	Service of Worship		
Sunday	AGM & Open Forum		n/a
Sunday	Coming just for the AGM		n/a
Sunday	Visit: <i>Nancy Blackett</i>		
Sunday	Broke House, Levington		
Sunday	<i>Dick Callum Cup</i>		
Monday	Broke House, Levington		
Monday	SW, Wade, Witch's Quay etc.		

Saturday	Secret Water	Pre-Pay	Rate	Nos.	£ Total
6hr	barge trip from Harwich (Adult)		£40		
6hr	barge trip from Harwich (U18)		£20		
2hr	SW boat trip from Walton (Ad.)	11am	£15		
2hr	SW boat trip from Walton (U15)	11am	£10		
2hr	SW boat trip from Walton (Ad.)	1pm	£15		
2hr	SW boat trip from Walton (U15)	1pm	£10		

(First Come First Served) **Pre-Pay Activities Subtotal: £**

**Full Board per night (includes all 3 meals per day)**  
*Couples and Families will be in adjacent rooms.*

All rooms are "Single".		Nights	Rate	Nos.	£ Total
Adult			£54		
Junior (10-18)			£54		
Adult with 1 Child (5-10) *			£66		
Adult with 1 Child (Under 5) *			£60		

\* in Camp Bed in same room

**Full Board Accommodation Sub-Total: £**

**Campers & Non-Residents Meals**

Day	Meals	Type	Rate	Nos.	£ Total
Friday	Dinner	Adult/5-18	£6		
Friday	Dinner	Under 5	£3		
Saturday	Breakfast	Adult/5-18	£6		
Saturday	Breakfast	Under 5	£3		
Saturday	Packed Lunch	Adult/5-18	£6		
Saturday	Packed Lunch	Under 5	£3		
Saturday	Dinner	Adult/5-18	£6		
Saturday	Dinner	Under 5	£3		
Sunday	Breakfast	Adult/5-18	£6		
Sunday	Breakfast	Under 5	£3		
Sunday	Roast Lunch	Adult/5-18	£6		
Sunday	Roast Lunch	Under 5	£3		
Sunday	Supper	Adult/5-18	£6		
Sunday	Supper	Under 5	£3		
Monday	Breakfast	Adult/5-18	£6		
Monday	Breakfast	Under 5	£3		
Monday	Packed Lunch	Adult/5-18	£6		
Monday	Packed Lunch	Under 5	£3		

**Campers & Non-Residents Meals Subtotal: £**

## LIBRARY NEWS

All librarians from time to time find unexpected items inside books, some of which have no business being there, and others of real interest. Fortunately, none of the former has turned up in TARS Library, but recently a nice copy of *Swallowdale* yielded a Christmas card and a postcard, both of which had been sent to Brigit Sanders, our first President, and her husband John, who had donated the book to us.



The Christmas card had been sent by the late John Cowen and his wife, and was in fact a mounted photograph of a charcoal burning, and the postcard was from Jeremy Gibson, who is happy for me to

share it with you here.

John and/or Brigit Sanders must have been in the habit of popping cards into favourite books, because this

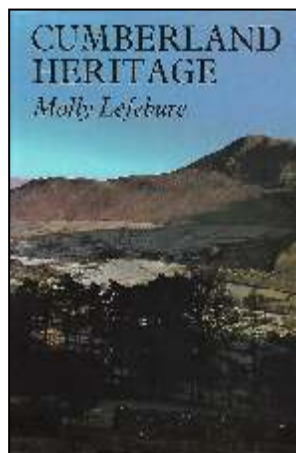


photograph turned up in another of their donations, *Cumberland heritage* by Molly Lefebure. The inscription on the back reads:



A very happy Christmas John, from Hilda. Taken years ago, I think when we stayed at Lake End. With happy memories.

Perhaps Hilda was a relation of John's, remembering a childhood holiday? I puzzled over the photograph, and decided it was taken from the shore of Coniston, looking towards the south end of Wild



Cat Island from an unusual angle. What do you think? And can anyone tell me where Lake End is? The only reference I can find online is to an hotel at Newby Bridge.

More finds next time, including an interesting one from Ted Alexander, to the same recipients!

Winifred Wilson

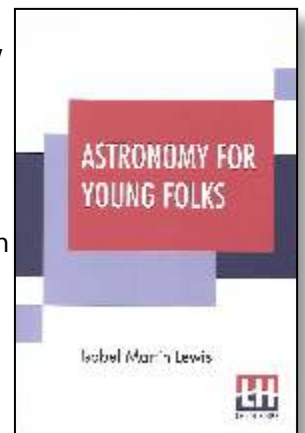
## How to use the Library

Contact Winifred Wilson on: 01387 252696  
[winwilson2003@yahoo.co.uk](mailto:winwilson2003@yahoo.co.uk) or  
[tarlib@arthur-ransome.org](mailto:tarlib@arthur-ransome.org)  
 TARS Library, Moat Brae,  
 101 George Street, DUMFRIES DG1 1EA

## DONATIONS

A long list of kind donors this year! Thanks to all of them, including those who have made a contribution to the cost of postage. Books came from Ted Alexander, Amazon Publications, Morag Chisholm, Chris Beetles Ltd, Frances Craig, Christopher Edwards, Jeremy Gibson, Avi Lank, the Lupton family, Lutterworth Press, Ray Nash, Cheryl Paget, Mary Pritchard, Stephen Record, Rene Samek, Kirstie Taylor, Paul Wilson & Winifred Wilson.

In addition, a very welcome suggestion came from Matthew Barker, a librarian at the British Library, who said that he had possibly found Dick's original star book. This was *Astronomy for young folks*, by Isabel Martin Lewis, which was then acquired for the Library. Many thanks to Matthew for telling us about it. It does indeed seem that it could be the very book from which Dorothea read out the relevant passages to the astronomer in *Winter holiday*, complete with star maps and quotations from Tennyson. And there's more about astronomy, for Wisconsin member Avi Lank sent this e-mail:





Ahoy, Winifred:

I have just posted a contribution to the library – a book I co-wrote a few years ago called *The man who painted the universe*. It is about astronomy (hello, Dick) and contains a reference to *Winter holiday*.

The book duly arrived, and is an entertaining read about a man who, over a period of many years, built his own planetarium – and rebuilt it after it all collapsed! It is now open to the public, and its owner gives talks and demonstrations to visitors.

### How young is too young?

When journalist and sailing-instructor Carol Hogarth spoke to us at the TARS Scotland Literary Day last October, she began by saying that the act of reading as a child has a great influence on the rest of life, a sentiment which readers of Ransome would surely echo. Now I learn that it is never too early to start.



Here is a photograph sent by Czech member Eva Hovorková Týlová of her then 3½-month-old grandson, Vítek, giving the appearance of being engrossed in a book. Eva comments:

Two months ago our Martina (Eva's daughter-in-law) discovered a note that Montessori school recommends picture books even for the smallest babies, in white and black (and a bit of red) colours. And I discovered three of them and it works!!!

The photo isn't only a moment where Vítek seems like reading, it is his favourite activity almost every day. Since he was 4 weeks old.

I had heard of this theory about black and white and red being the only colours very young infants can recognise, and on looking into it, found that further research is now being done. Whatever the science tells us, if it works for babies, why not try it?

Winifred Wilson

### Aoi Darrant

My friend Aoi came to Scotland from Japan 10 years ago to study English at college in Glasgow. She is married to Euan from Dumfries, and they have two children at primary school here. Aoi is at present enjoying being a volunteer in the Lost Boys Bistro at Moat Brae.



Aoi kindly undertook to read the Japanese text of a book donated to the Library by the author, Hiroko Matsushita, in 2002. Enclosed in the book is a letter from the author to Margaret Ratcliffe, the then Librarian, explaining that the book is a critical biography of Arthur Ransome, published by the Japan Society of Children's Literature in English.

Hiroko also helpfully enclosed a table of contents in English. As well as the text in Japanese, there are chapters in English from *Old Peter's Russian tales*, *Swallows and Amazons* and *Winter holiday*, all with explanatory notes in Japanese of phrases such as 'mutton-headed galoots' and 'BETTER DROWNED THAN DUFFERS'. She also provides a very comprehensive bibliography in English and Japanese of works by and about Ransome.

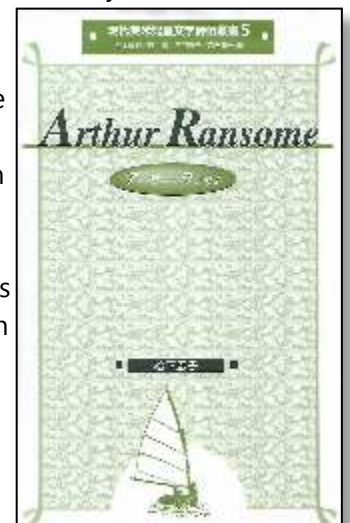
Here are Aoi's first impressions of Arthur Ransome himself, and of his writing for children.

Winifred Wilson

### Critical biography of Arthur Ransome

(in Japanese), 2002

The book is about Arthur Ransome's biography. I really enjoyed the story as a mum. His story reminded me of my child's play, like pretending to be a pirate or explorer. Arthur Ransome describes the ideal children in his book who have grown their imagination and problem-solving skills through their play. His stories always reflect his reality with specific descriptions of his holiday adventures, be it on his yacht or camping in the wild when he spent quality-



time with his children. One of his favourite places is the Lake District where I have visited a couple of times, so I could imagine the scenery even more. Even people who have never visited the Lake District will be able to imagine the scenery well through his in-depth descriptions.

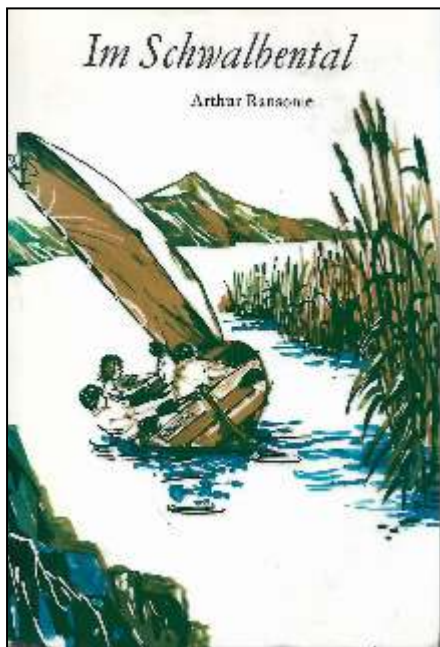
I felt sadness that he could not form a good relationship with his daughter in his real life due to divorcing his wife; my opinion is he always wanted to encourage his children to use their initiative and never force them to comply with an adult's opinion, which was the most impressive thing I learnt from this book. When I stay with my children I often think about things from my side and not from a children's perspective. I can understand why children can feel frustration; this could also inhibit their imagination.

I hope my children will gain a lot of experiences from nature and their holidays like the children in his book and learn things with their imagination.

碧 Aoi Darrant

### Swallowdale in German

TARS Library at Moat Brae has five of the titles in the Swallows and Amazons series which have been translated into German. The titles of most of them are not exactly literal translations. *Der Kampf um die Insel* (*The struggle for the island*) is the title of an early translation of *Swallows and Amazons*. *Weihnachtsferien* (*Christmas holidays*) is a fairly close translation for

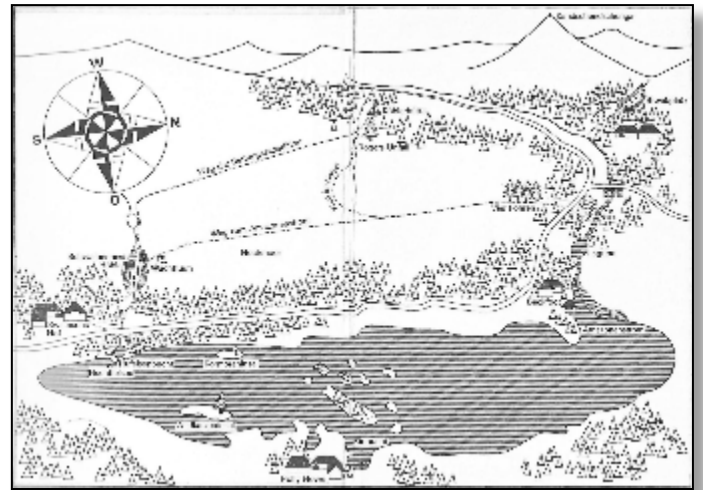


*Winter holiday*. *Die unfreiwillige Seefahrt* (*The involuntary sea journey*) is the name given to *We didn't mean to go to sea*. When I first saw *Im Schwalbental* on the shelves I thought it was some sort of travel book until it clicked that this was, of course, *Swallowdale*.

[The fifth book is *Seeräuberkönigin* (*Missee Lee*) – literally *Pirate Queen*.]

Two of the above four German books in TARS Library contain the drawings which most of us would associate with the Ransome books, but the cover of *Im*

*Schwalbental* with a drawing by J. S. Reinert did not alert me to a Ransome book – even although it was a picture of four children in a sailing boat with a brown sail. It was only later that I realised it was the Swallows navigating the shallows during the race to Beckfoot after the departure of the great-aunt. I really like the



map of the lake which is drawn at the beginning of the book with both Kandschendschenga and Swallowdale itself, which is given the name of Schwalbennest (Swallows' nest) although the children themselves always refer to it as Schwalbental (Swallowdale).

The German version is a translation by Wolf Klausner and was published in 1968 by Sauerlaender AG in Aarau, Switzerland. The particular copy in TARS Library seems to have come from a school library and has a library ticket at the end recording the names of some of the borrowers. R. Baumgaertner borrowed it on 17.12.69 and returned it after the Christmas holidays on 07.01.70. P. Engelhardt who borrowed it on 08.05.70 returned it a few days later on 11.05.70 (after the Ascension Day holidays). I like to think that he enjoyed it so much that he raced through it, though there is always the possibility that he had had enough of it and returned it to the library unfinished.

Given that it was published in Switzerland, it contains a number of Southern German words used mainly in Austria, Bavaria and parts of German Switzerland. 'Heuer' which means 'this year' appears often. It is like a fairly well known (?) Word 'heute' which means 'today'. While 'heute' is used all over the German-speaking world, 'heuer' is limited to Austria and surrounding areas. Two other words of this type are 'Spreissel' for 'kindling wood' instead of standard German 'Kleinholz' and 'Holzknecht' for 'wood cutter' instead of 'Holzfaeller'. Holz' is the German word for 'wood' as a material although most people will know 'Wald' as 'wood' in the sense of 'forest'.



Since the story is the same as the original there is no great point in going over this, but for those who are not too familiar with nautical terminology I appreciated the extra explanations added by the translator.

'Luven' (to luff) is explained as 'bringing the ship into the wind';

'Freiwache' (free watch, literally) is 'sleeping time' (for Bridget's watch below);

'Wriggen', a word I had never heard before and which was almost impossible to find in any dictionary, was explained as 'acting with the oar like a screwdriver'. In the English original it is 'to scull'. (I suppose that 'wriggen' is linked to the English verb 'to wriggle'.)

In addition, 'Langschwein' (long pig) was explained as term used by 'natives/cannibals who were eating human flesh which tasted like pork'. And then 'Korrobori', which we are told is the name for a midnight feast of Australian aborigines.

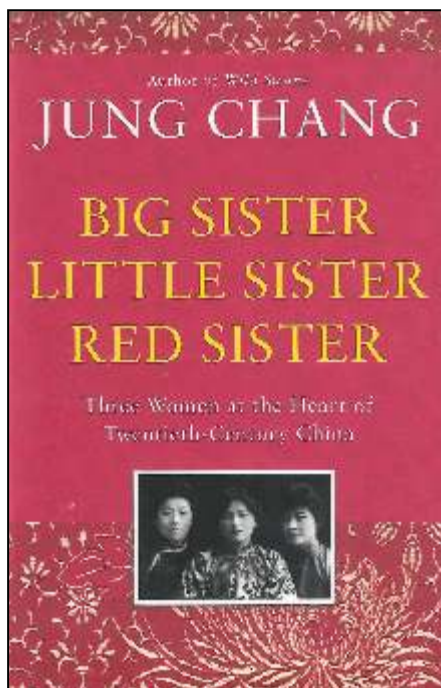
I really enjoyed the book. 'Donnerkeil!' is a dated expression used often by Captain Nancy – 'Shiver my timbers!'

Andrew Thackrey

### ***Big sister, little sister, red sister: three women at the heart of twentieth-century China***

Jung Chang (2019) Jonathan Cape, London

A review: Jules K. Blue



A book review is not the same as a concise critique: it cannot aim to catalogue facts or attain a mere summary of the debate within the book in question; it must attempt to inform without oversimplification. I will try to meet this challenge by considering how Jung Chang plots a personal route through some of the history

of Chinese Monarchism and (Parliamentary Democracy) Republicanism. I make room for digression with examples of detail and analysis.

Arthur Ransome took a voyage of 9500 nautical miles from England to Shanghai, China, in 1927 on assignment

to the *Manchester Guardian* newspaper and spent several months in Hankow (modern-day Wuhan), interviewing luminaries such as *Mme Sun Yat-sen* (née Soong Ching-ling, sister-in-law of Generalissimo Chiang Kai-shek who ruled the new Chinese Republic between 1928 and 1949), on whom *Missee Lee* was later to be modelled in his book of that name.

Jung Chang is internationally recognised, bestselling authoress of biographies, writer of *Wild swans: three daughters of China*; *Mao: the unknown story* (with spouse, Jon Halliday); *Empress Dowager Cixi: the concubine who launched modern China*. Chang, born in Yibin, Sichuan, China, in 1952 to parents who were Communist Party of China officials, originally named Er-hong, 'Second Swan', asked to be renamed at the age of 12 wanting 'a name with a military ring to it'. Her father suggested Jung, 'martial affairs'. Within 2 years she was keen to become a Red Guard, one of a mass student-led paramilitary social movement mobilised and guided by Chairman Mao Zedong during the first phase of the Chinese Cultural Revolution. But Chang soon left, refusing to participate in violence: a turning point. She left China to study in the United Kingdom in 1978.

To cite her latest book as an autobiographical biography could lead one to make a parallel consideration between some of AR's (12) books and the man himself; however, in the case of Jung Chang, she is dealing with facts and actual happenings and AR was consoled with turning fact into more palatable fiction. This book is a biography of three women but also one of a nation, era and historical political process and, perhaps more poignantly, an autobiography.

Having joined the Red Guards, whose numbers swelled into multiple millions, whose Commander-in-Chief was Mao Zedong, with their expansive aim of turning the world *red* or Maoist (partially through its *Great Leap Forward*, which actually resulted in the deaths of tens of millions of Chinese ranging between 15 and 55 million because of the Great Chinese Famine caused by the economic disaster brought about by Mao's campaign to reconstruct China from an agrarian economy into a Communist one), Chang would have been swept along in the highly propagandised and supported seizures of power, including the destruction of pre-Communist symbols of China's past, the '*Four Olds*'. (Old customs, old culture, old habits, old ideas: books, art, museums, galleries were ransacked or destroyed and temples and shrines and graves were desecrated.) Chang chronicles these episodes with both a clarity and solemnity of one who was 'there'.



Chang professes that modern Chinese history is intertwined with the private historiographies of the Soong sisters, a claim concluded from copious research of recently released material including correspondence, memoirs, archives, American libraries – including Chiang Kai-shek's diary in which he wrote every day for 57 years (!), revealing personal revelations about his marriage to May-ling (Little Sister). She writes: 'The story of the Soong sisters began as China embarked on its transition from monarchy to republic.' [p. xx]

Chang chronicles the three sisters from Shanghai, whose parents were devout Christians and whose father had been converted to this by Methodists in the American South. Through Chang we meet *Ei-ling*, 'kind age', born 1889, Big Sister, Chiang's unofficial adviser, married H. H. Kung, prime minister and minister of finance; *Ching-ling*, 'glorious age', born 1893, Red Sister, married Sun Yat-sen, 'Father of modern China', and rose to become Mao's vice-chair; *May-ling*, 'beautiful age', born 1898, Little Sister, who became Mme Chiang Kai-shek, first Lady of Communist-Nationalist China. With characteristic understatement, Chang simply states: 'They had class ... their extraordinary marriages pioneered the Republican revolution.'

Chang describes the sisters as though she knew them personally: 'Petite and square-jawed, they were not great beauties by traditional standards, their faces not shaped like melon seeds, eyes not resembling almonds and eyebrows not arching willow shoots. But they had very fine skin, delicate features and graceful bearing, enhanced by fashionable clothes. The sisters had seen the world; they were intelligent, independent-minded and self-confident. They had 'class'' [p. xv] Perhaps the best known modern Chinese fairy tale shows Chang's dispassionate fascination, even admiration of and for the protagonists. Chang imagined the sisters as 'princesses' in this sense.

Chang grew up in Mao's rigid, totalitarian regime from the 1950s to the 1970s. She, like so many others, heard of the anecdotal idiosyncrasies of the Three Sisters: that Little Sister – Mme Chiang – bathed each day in milk to keep her skin luminous, milk being an unavailable resource to the average family, which would have been deemed outrageous indulgence. Speculating gossip drove the myth and fairy-tale deeper into the everyday (universal/traditional) Chinese mind-set; that Ching-ling, Red Sister, was permitted to keep her prestigious name of Mme Sun by the puritanical Red Party although she had been widowed for years and lived with her bodyguard who was less than half her age – the point being that

nobody would have dared to gossip about any other top official at the time!

Often-quoted in China, 'Once upon a time in China there were Three Sisters. One loved money, one loved power, and one loved her country'. These fairy-tale figures clearly appealed to Chang as fitting historio-biographies whose '... lives spanned three centuries (May-ling died in 2003, aged 105) ... a hundred years of wars, seismic revolutions and dramatic transformations. ... grand parties in Shanghai to penthouses in New York, from exiles' quarters in Japan and Berlin to secret meeting rooms in Moscow, from the compounds of the Communist elite in Beijing to the corridors of power in democratising Taiwan. The sisters experienced hope, courage and passionate love, as well as despair, fear and heartbreak. ... enjoyed immense luxury, privilege and glory, but ... constantly risked their lives.' [pp. xviii-xix]

There is more to the Three Sisters than a mythology and more to China than its luminaries. Between historiography and political invention, between interpretation and opinion, such myths as those that have pervaded any discussion of this significant era in Chinese socio-economic and political transformation confront the reader of Jung Chang's tome with key issues in reflection: the nature of leadership in political and cultural movements; the interrelationship between the processes of ideology and power in politics; and a dark shadow of oppression and domination of a people by its rulers, begging questions such as how are nations created and shaped – intellectually, politically, culturally, emotionally?

This book is an assiduously researched historio-biographical account of unequal thirds whose interlocked familial epic saga embraced real dangers, betrayals and, according to Chang, all began with the declaration of Hawaii, some 6000 Pacific Ocean miles from the coast of China, as a Republic in 1894 which had a catalytic effect on modern China as a Republic itself, through the Chinese radical, Sun Yat-sen with his Xing Zhong-hui (Revive China Society). Chang skims over 300 years of Chinese history from Manchu-ruled monarchy to Republican China, Boxer uprisings and the concerted allied response to this (Japan, America, GB) and invasion in the south-east by Taiwanese Triads. Chang takes a tangential view of women's equality in China during this selected period, considering Ei-ling as a modernising champion; she considers with empathy and sympathy the difficult and miserable life of ubiquitous fear and frenzy lived by Sun Yat-sen's wife Mu-zhen and his mother as a result of his life as an outlaw, not forgetting his heartless behaviour towards

several of his concubines even in a society that condoned concubinage and foot-binding. It is clear that Jung Chang was mesmerised by the Three Sisters, in spite of their severe character shortcomings.

The book provides an extensive bibliography and indispensable annotations.

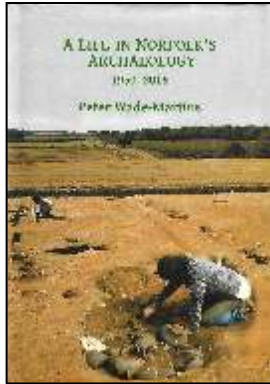
***A life in Norfolk's archaeology 1950-2016: archaeology in an arable landscape***

by Peter Wade-Martins

"Our father's an archæologist."

Mrs. Barrable pointed out the ancient remains of the Roman fort of Burgh.

Dorothea was having her first turn at the tiller when they passed the ancient ruins of St. Benet's Abbey, with the ruin of a windmill in the middle of them. The Admiral explained



what those bits of old wall and broken grey stone arch had been, and Dorothea, even with the tiller in her hands, slipped headlong into a story. ...



*Coot Club* is not a book primarily about archaeology but, when long-term member of TARS Jeremy Gibson came across the above title, it rang bells with him, and he later generously offered his copy to the Library. For, sure enough, the Norfolk archaeologists have been busy on both ruins mentioned in the story for some years. Their work has resulted in repairs being made to the old abbey and mill, and restoration of the river bank, so that boaters can now moor safely and walk up to the site.

For anyone with an interest in ancient buildings such as these and many others in Norfolk, this is a fascinating and highly illustrated book. Take a look at Ransome's maps inside the covers of *Coot Club*, and you will find the locations of both ancient sites. Thanks to Jeremy for spotting the connections, and for donating the book.

Winifred Wilson

***Laughing torso***, by Nina Hamnett

As you will read elsewhere in this issue of *Signals*, New Zealand TARS member Cheryl Paget died in January 2022, after a long illness. One of the books

which Cheryl had read was *Laughing torso*, by Nina Hamnett and, after telling me about the many references to the young Ransome she had found in it, she kindly sent her copy for the Library. When it arrived, I found that Cheryl had marked each reference to Ransome with a small sticky note. Here are some of the comments which she sent to me about the book, which say it better than I could.

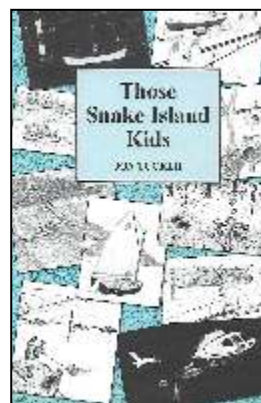
.....  
I'm currently reading the autobiography of Nina Hamnett, called *Laughing Torso*; she was known as the Queen of Bohemia; it was quite scandalous when it was published for all the people she gossiped about. Aleister Crowley sued her. Anyway, as I started it I thought she'd be too young to have met AR in his Bohemian days, having been born in 1890 when, lo and behold, on p. 22 'about this time I met Arthur Ransome' and there is a glorious description of him. I've copied it below for you. If you want the book for the library I'll post it to you when I've finished it.

.....  
I have finished reading *Laughing Torso* by Nina Hamnett, so I'll get that in the post to you this week. It is an interesting read for all the people she named – I had to Google a lot of them so I've had a real education, but she give such an insight into life as an artist/writer in the pre/during/inter-war years. Some of her portraits are quite vicious, I'm only surprised she was sued once. It's interesting for the fleshing out the people that Ransome knew. I am interested to know if Ransome knew Aleister Crowley, but I can't find any evidence that he did. A lot of evidence for what Ransome did is going to come from memoirs like this I think, he was so cagey in his own autobiography.

Cheryl Paget

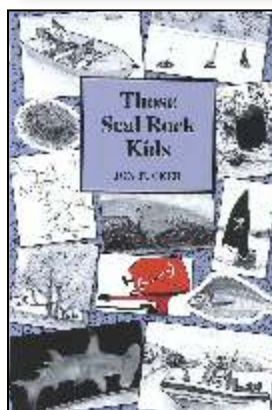
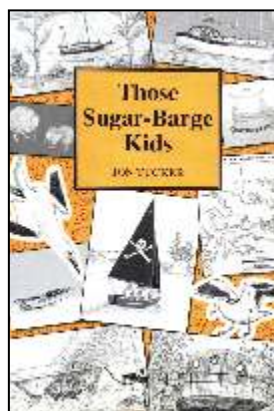
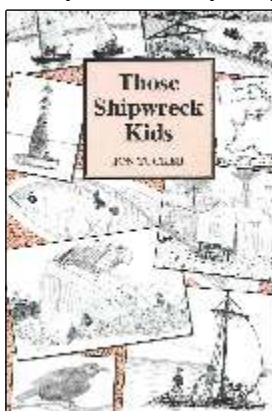
***Jon Tucker's Kids***

In the *Mixed Moss* editions for 2013 and 2015 Cheryl Paget (TARS New Zealand co-ordinator) reviewed the first two of Jon Tucker's series of Ransome-inspired antipodean tales. Since then three more titles have been published (2017, 2018, 2020).



All stories take place in tidal sea creeks. This first one is some miles south of Hobart. *Those Snake Island kids* takes place on a tiny island off the much larger Bruny Island, 3 miles sailing south from Hobart on Tasmania. These adolescent (or younger) characters' family are in all the books. Other similar aged boys and girls (much the ages of AR's Walkers) are in this or subsequent books – but are at least two generations on.

The second *Those eco-pirate kids* is sited in Cowan Broken Bay Creek Waterways, in NSW 2 hours' train journey north of Sydney.



For the other three, *Those shipwreck kids*, *Those sugar-barge kids* and *Those Seal Bark kids* the family move to New Zealand Bay of Islands (north-west of South Island). Parents in two families have sizeable yachts which are generally not too far way whilst their children are usually camping. All the stories involve frequent tidal sailing.

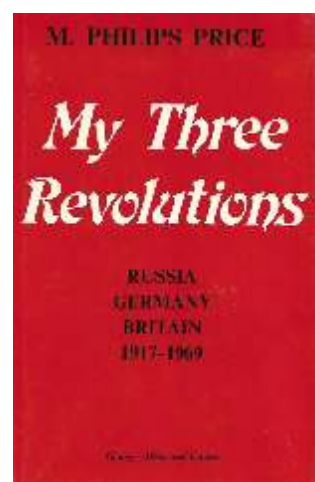
Being up-to-date there are mobile phones and radio – but of course their batteries etc. tend to fail just when they're most needed! Their camping is more realistic in that they allow for open-air sanitation or heads in larger yachts. In New Zealand particularly there are strict restrictions, tending to be widespread. Camp fires are strictly forbidden, and motorised boats have varying speed-limits. Frequent care is provided for threatened originally descended wild birds and eliminating unnatural predators from overseas.

Inevitably stories about girls and boys of early teens or less camping and sailing may seem to have comparison with AR's S&As; however, in fact being set first in Australia but mainly in New Zealand, the surroundings and natural life are totally different. This does much to improve their interest.

Jeremy Gibson

***My three revolutions***, M. Philips Price, 1969  
[Russia, Germany, Britain, 1917–1969]

I have [recently] completed this book; it provided the best read I have had in months! [Philips Price] clearly had a much wider understanding of the Russian revolution than did AR, but then he had the means to travel extensively in the future Soviet Union for a decade before the revolution, and so had contacts during and after the revolution from rural areas across the country.



Germany was also interesting, filling in some gaps in my previous knowledge, and his account of his life in UK is fascinating, although he allows this rather to peter out! He does not even tell us when he left Parliament. [Philips Price] was writing in 1969, and it is a pity that this period was not more completely filled in.

He was just a year younger than AR, born in 1885.

Chris Birt

**'The only university you can advantageously found were a public library. This is never out of season; ...'**

So wrote Thomas Carlyle in his journal on 12 January 1833 when he was invited to apply for a professorship at Glasgow University. And while our TARS Library is not open to the 'public', the sentiment applies equally well to us, as members of TARS.

We don't have a TARS university, but we do have the next best thing – a fairly comprehensive Library in terms of a resource for learning all we want to know about our author. It's *our* library, for *our* use! So do make use of it. If you are able to access the website, take a look at the full list of its holdings there but, if not, do get in touch with me and I will send you a printed copy for a small charge. Or, if neither of these suits you, just give me a call with your query. Librarians love questions!

Winifred Wilson



## ADDITIONS TO STOCK

### SINCE SPRING 2021 *UPDATE*



ASHBEE, Felicity and Julie Lawson *William Carrick 1827–1878*. 1987

BABAYAN, Karen *Swallows and Armenians: a map book for young explorers*. 2020

BLANDFORD, Percy W. *Small boats and sailing. Drawings and photographs by the author*. 1963

CARRICK, Valery *Picture tales from the Russian; translated by Nevill Forbes, first selection*. n.d. but c. 1922

CHAPMAN, Hester W. *Eugénie: a novel*. 1961. Note on cover: 'Ransome' and 'review copy for Arthur Ransome'

CHRIS BEETLES LTD *Cecil Arthur Hunt VPSWS RBA 1873–1965*. 1996

CHRISTENSEN, Lis 'Notes on Arthur Ransome and the Danish translation of *Swallows and Amazons*' in *Angles on the English speaking world* no. 6. 1992  
Published by the English Department of Copenhagen University

DOWNING, Charles (trans.) *Armenian folk-tales and fables*. Illustrated by William Papas. 1993 (1972)

EDWARDS, Christopher *Selections from the library of Brian Findlay: Part III: early continental books*. 2021

FROUDE, James Anthony *Thomas Carlyle: a history of the first forty years of his life 1795–1835, in two volumes*. 1901

GRACE, D. R. and D. C. Phillips *Ransomes of Ipswich: a history of the firm and guide to its records*. 1975

HAKIM, Alan (ed.) *Ransome centre stage: dramatic productions based on Arthur Ransome's life and works*. 2021

HAMNETT, Nina *Laughing torso: reminiscences*. 1932

HANFF, Helene *Q's legacy*. 1985

HEMINGWAY, Ernest *The old man and the sea*. 1953 (1952)

[HUNT, Cecil Arthur: see CHRIS BEETLES LTD]

JACK, Florence B. *Cookery for every household*. 1919 (1914)

KENNEDY, Alan *A thoroughly mischievous person: the other Arthur Ransome*. 2021

LEGRO, Ron and Avi Lank *The man who painted the universe: the story of a planetarium in the heart of the North Woods*. 2015

LEWIS, Isabel Martin *Astronomy for young folks*. 2020 (1922)

MARCH, Edgar J. *Spritsail barges of Thames and Medway*. 1948

MARKINO, Yoshio *A Japanese artist in London*. 1910

MARTIN, E. G. *Sailorman: illustrated by the author*. 1933

MITCHELL, W. R. *Arthur Ransome: afloat in Lakeland*. 2015

NOGUCHI, Yone *From the eastern sea*. 1903

RANSOME, Arthur *Petr Kachna* (PD in Czech) transl. Zora Wolfová, illus. AR, Nakladatel'sn Toužimsky & Moravec. 1998 (1961)

RANSOME, Arthur *Petr Kachna* (PD in Czech) transl. Zora Wolfová, illus. Zdenek Burian, Albatross. 2017

RANSOME, Arthur *Zamrzlá lod Kapitána Flinta* (WH in Czech) illus. Kamil Lhoták, Praha. 1958

RAYMOND, Ernest *The nameless places*. 1954 (with inscription 'for AR in gratitude for his indispensable pilotage through some very dangerous waters ... Oct. 21st 1954') (and pencil markings in text by AR)

REYNOLDS, Jason *Look both ways: a tale told in ten blocks*. 2019 (CM 2021)

RUSKIN, John *The stones of Venice*. 3 vols. 1906 (1851)

THOMAS, E(dward) *Book of the open air, Vol. II*. 1906

THOMAS, Edward *A literary pilgrim in England*. 1980 (1917)

THOMAS, Edward *The south country*. 1984 (1932) [1909]

TUCKER, Jon *Those Seal Rock kids*. 2020

TURNER, Philip *Sea Peril*. 1966

WADE-MARTINS, Peter *A life in Norfolk's archaeology 1950–2016: archaeology in an arable landscape*. 2017

WATSON, Victor *The Cambridge guide to children's books in English*. 2001

WEAVER, Carol and Michael Weaver *Ransomes 1789–1989: a bicentennial celebration*. 1989

ZOUÏKOV, Valérii Viktorovich *La cour du Tsar à Kolomenskoié*. 2008

## TARS Regional Gateway

### Scotland All North of the Border

<i>Chair</i>	Kirstie Taylor	0131 664 3947	28 Orchardhead Road Edinburgh EH16 6HN
<i>Secretary</i>	Elsie Miller		elsiemiller@btinternet.com
<i>Treasurer</i>	vacant		
<i>Editor</i>	Winifred Wilson		winwilson2003@yahoo.co.uk
<i>Regional Rep. Trustee</i>	Linda Hendry		lochanhead@gmail.com
<i>Committee</i>	Sandy Allen, Chris Rosindale		

### Northern S of Border to Cheshire, Gt Manchester, Yorks, IoM, N Ireland

<i>Chair</i>	Elizabeth Williams	0191 384 4759	finnsarah1990@aol.com
<i>Secretary/Editor</i>	Helen Lewis	01229 716685	h.m.lewis55@btinternet.com
<i>Treasurer</i>	Elizabeth Haworth	01539 442050	EHaworth@fba.org.uk
<i>Regional Rep. Trustee</i>	Elizabeth Williams		
<i>Committee</i>	Krysia Clack, Ann Farr, Veronica Priest		

### Midland Wales, Shropshire, Staffs, Derbys, Notts, Leics, Herefords, Worcs, Warwicks, Northants, Gloucestershire, Oxfordshire, Bucks, Herts

<i>Chair</i>	Julian Blue	07856 262042	julesbluerachel@btinternet.com
<i>Secretary</i>	Paul Green	01654 791256	paul-midstars@gmx.co.uk
<i>Treasurer</i>	Mike Glover	01432 378205	michaelglover52@sky.com
<i>Editor</i>	Jane Wilson	01933 223672	jane.pippinfort@googlegmail.com
<i>Regional Rep. Trustee</i>	Julian Blue		
<i>Committee</i>	Amanda Ardagh-Walter, Stephen Benham, Rachel Blue, David Hambleton, Sarah Samuel,		

### Eastern Lincolnshire, Cambridgeshire, Norfolk, Suffolk, Essex, Bedfordshire

<i>Chair</i>	Brian Key	01245 263579	chair.east@arthur-ransome.org
<i>Secretary</i>	Nicholas Hinde	01371 820054	sec.east@arthur-ransome.org
<i>Treasurer</i>	Duncan Breckels	01206 395711	tarseasttreasurer@gmail.com
<i>Editor</i>	Robert Welham	01277 214806	robertwelham5@gmail.com
<i>Regional Rep. Trustee</i>	Brian Key		
<i>Committee</i>	Diana Evans, Ted Evans, Marc Grimston, Carla Johnson, Wendy Reis, Jackie Snowman, Peter Willis		

### Southern Gt London, Berks, Kent, Surrey, E & W Sussex, Hants, IoW, Channel Islands

<i>Chair</i>			
<i>Secretary</i>	Rosemary Beal	01243 605889	rjbealtars@gmail.com
<i>Treasurer</i>	Iain Khan-Gilchrist	07760 454767	iainkg@gmail.com
<i>Editor</i>			
<i>Regional Rep. Trustee</i>	Iain Khan-Gilchrist		
<i>Committee</i>			

### South Western Wiltshire, Somerset, Dorset, Devon, Cornwall, Isles of Scilly

<i>Chair</i>	Susan Gouldbourne	01271 831520	susan@ttars.co.uk
<i>Secretary</i>	Barbara Flower	01963 350199	souwesters@gmail.com
<i>Treasurer</i>	Barry Gouldbourne	07971 933561	haccherman@aol.com
<i>Editor</i>			
<i>Regional Rep. Trustee</i>	Barbara Flower		
<i>Committee</i>	Diana Dicker, Norah Fawcett, Diana Wright		



## GETTING KNOTTED!

On a wildly autumnal day in November, from Morar Bay, West Highland, Scotland, our family took part in an online knotting workshop. A dozen Midland Region TARS members literally had their fingers tied up in knots as we discussed a potted history of knotting and the uses of knots and then tried our hands at a number of knotting challenges.

We noted how knots have long been tools for those engaged in trades or pursuits: think of archers and anglers, basket-makers, bellringers, bookbinders, builders, carters, cobblers, cowboys, dockers, falconers, farmers, firemen, millers, steeplejacks, waggoners and weavers!

We found that all knotting could be summed up under three headings: knots, bends or hitches. A hitch is used to attach a line to a post, rail, spar or rope; a bend joins two ropes together; a knot is everything else.

To practice, all you need is two lengths of flexible cord – each up to one metre in length. Anything tied with string or ‘small stuff’ (cotton or thread) whose function is to prevent a cord from pulling out or as a semi-permanent lashing or for shock-absorbing purposes is a knotty exercise in friction.

It was quite a challenge to carry out this activity over Zoom (try tying your shoelaces looking in a mirror!) but everyone had a go with good humour and enthusiasm.

Jules Blue

## FESTIVE FUN

A Christmas extravaganza was held over Zoom on 12 December. It gave a chance to see TARS friends and to get into the Christmas spirit, without the need to get in the car and drive for miles. We even managed to find the fairy lights filter on Zoom!

Different people had planned activities. Paul had taken the chapter ‘Peter Duck Spins His Yarn’ (from *Arthur Ransome and Captain Flint’s Trunk* by Christina Hardyment) and written it out so that different people could read different characters. That worked really well at involving everyone. It must have taken him ages to prepare it!

We also had a Christmassy quiz and dingbats to solve, plus seasonal readings and poems. To round it all off there was a very quick craft activity - learning how to decorate a pine cone.

It is amazing how people have become so proficient at using Zoom, given that most of us had never even heard of it two years ago!

Vicky Mitchell

## MAKING ZINES



We all six had a go at making our own mini-Zines. None of us made an Outlaw copy as such but I made one about the heavy horses in *Swallowdale*, Rebekah made one about puzzles, Ben made one about astronomy for *Winter Holiday*, Franny made one about sailing, Martha made one about birds and Aurora made one about sewing and how to make a fire! So, there were a lot of ideas flying around! We were also given some code-breaking sheets from the Waterworks Museum, discovering the code word SHARK. (This was all after we had been given a tour of the museum’s steam engine boilers and water pumps and had spotted six ‘frogs’ on the way!)

Esme Blue



### What is a Zine?

A ‘Zine’ (short for magazine) is traditionally a self-published pamphlet which can be easily reproduced and distributed, often by photocopying. Find more about this in *The Outlaw*.



# THE VOYAGE OF A LIFETIME?

What an opportunity it was to have a talk about a voyage right across the Pacific Ocean and around Cape Horn, as an incentive to come to the Midland Region AGM on a bleak January day. Even more so when the person giving the talk was none other than the familiar TARS face of Jenny Wedick.

Jenny told us how she had done a number of voyages with the Jubilee Sailing Trust, an organisation which makes tall ships sailing available to those with disabilities by having able-bodied people aboard to help them, but giving everyone the chance to do as much as possible. After a number of shorter voyages she began to crave something more adventurous and so signed up to join the ship from New Zealand to Argentina.

We saw photos showing the huge quantity of stores being loaded aboard, though apparently there was not quite enough of everything as the chef had to grind oats into flour to make bread for the last days aboard. Strict watches were kept and everyone had specific duties - when it was Jenny's turn to wear a harness throughout her watch in case of emergencies aloft she was called on to go up to help stow a sail that had flogged itself loose.

There was so much to learn of life on board, of the weather encountered and of wildlife seen. Was all this enough to satisfy Jenny's craving? Not a bit, so we will wait for further installments!



## NOT JUST FOR CHILDREN!

Oxford is a literary city, especially for children. Almost everyone knows about Alice and that Tolkien and C S Lewis (creator of Narnia) drank together in a city pub. Philip Pullman (His Dark Materials) still lives in Oxford. There are other writers and books, but Oxford has almost no links to Arthur Ransome. I remember that Missee Lee had a supply of Oxford marmalade (Frank Cooper, no less) but she had been at Cambridge herself, so this is a very tenuous link. Why were TARS visiting? Was it perhaps linked to the marmalade season (this was early February)?

Not so, we had already made our marmalade. We met on a cold but sunny day to explore The Story Museum. This is a recent addition to Oxford's attractions. It is housed in what used to be the city sorting office in Pembroke Street, and a very short walk from Christchurch College with all its links to Alice and Lewis Carroll. We spent the morning in the twisty galleries, led by footprints of a friendly hare. We were armed with wands to open doors and to light exhibits, and with headphones to hear the many stories (Aesop, Norse, Anansi, Grimm, Hans Andersen...) I hadn't realised there were so many. Towards the end of this tour there is a library and here we spotted some familiar books (mostly S&A) shelved with many other familiar texts from a huge range of authors. Down the spiral stairs into the courtyard to the café and the bookshop.

In the afternoon Sarah Samuel led us on a tour across Christchurch Meadows to the High Street and up Queen's Lane to Broad Street and Blackwell's bookshop. We passed the lodge of St Edmund's College - soon to host the next TARS Literary Weekend. Sarah had researched carefully and had some interesting and unusual readings at each stopping place, so even those of us who knew Oxford well discovered new landmarks, such as the fauns holding up a doorway in St Margaret's Passage.

I highly recommend The Story Museum, it is clearly designed to interest children; but we in TARS know that the division of books into 'child' and 'adult' is a distraction from just reading and enjoying, and many writers write for themselves whatever age.

**Rosamund Weatherall**

The Story Museum, 41 Pembroke Street,  
Oxford OX1 1BP

[www.storymuseum.org.uk](http://www.storymuseum.org.uk)

## FORTHCOMING EVENTS IN MIDLAND REGION

We hope that these events will be able to take place as programmed, but do keep an eye on the TARS website and contact the event organiser in case changes have had to be made.



### GORGE ON RIVERSIDE CAVES

**Saturday 21 May**

Follow the River Dove, famous for *The Compleat Angler* by Sir Isaak Walton and Charles Cotton. Ransome was an angler and wrote many articles on the subject. In keeping with this there will be a fishy quiz to entertain you along the way.

We will walk towards Milldale alongside limestone gorges, several accessible caves, and over stepping stones. The route is approximately 8 miles, but as it goes there and back there is the option for those who want a shorter walk to turn around when they feel ready. At the end of the walk those with energy remaining can climb Thorpe Cloud, 942 feet.

For further information or to register your intention of coming please e-mail [julesbluerachel@btinternet.com](mailto:julesbluerachel@btinternet.com)

### WALK AND SWIM

**Sunday 7 August**

A waymarked walk to a waterfall, and further if desired, around the Long Mynd, with panoramic views. The plan is then to cool off in and around the streams or, for those who are committed and able, a dip in the reservoir.

Meet at Carding Mill Valley, National Trust, near to Church Stretton, Shropshire. 10:30 start time to aid parking. If overly popular on the day we will try to find a local alternative. Café and toilets at car park visitor centre.

For further information or to book please contact Jules Blue by e-mailing [julesbluerachel@btinternet.com](mailto:julesbluerachel@btinternet.com)



### TARS MEETS SEAFAIR HAVEN

**Friday 17 - Sunday 19 June**

Midland TARS are joining with Tall Ships Wales Trust for part of their meet-up on the inner reaches of Milford Haven / Pembroke Dock. The plans (to be finalised):

**Saturday 18 June** A *Swallows and Amazons* themed explore by water up one of the creeks.

**Sunday 19 June** Seafair Open Day with 'cruising in company' and exploring the tall ship *Johanna Lucretia*.

Come for either or both days, the weekend or possibly the whole week (17-24 June). Prices to be confirmed. Contact Paul on [paul-midstars@gmx.co.uk](mailto:paul-midstars@gmx.co.uk) or 07563962496 to express your interest and get updates.

### COOK WITH MATE SUSAN

**Saturday 17 September**

Come to Wellingborough, Northamptonshire, and try your hand at cooking some of Susan's favourite dishes over a fire. Cost £5 per head, but the region will pay the fees for Midland Juniors. For more information and to book please telephone Jane on 01933 223672 or send her an e-mail using the address [jane.pippinfort@googlemail.com](mailto:jane.pippinfort@googlemail.com). Hopefully blackberry and banana mash will be on the menu at this time of year, but Jane would be pleased to hear your ideas for any other dishes, so get reading!



### RUDYARD WATER

**Friday 8 - Sunday 10 July**

Enjoy a weekend on Rudyard Lake - Midland TARS 'Lake in the North', near Leek, Staffordshire. Bring your own tent or make use of a room in the bunk house (first come, first served). This also contains a communal lounge and two kitchens with fridges to store food. It stands on the edge of the lake. Cater for yourselves throughout the weekend. Bring your own dinghy or canoe or stow aboard someone else's (launch fees will be paid by the group). Adults £20 Juniors £13 (Midland Junior TARS fees paid by the region) for the week-end. Contact Paul on [paul-midstars@gmx.co.uk](mailto:paul-midstars@gmx.co.uk) or 07563962496 / 01654 791256 for more information and to confirm a place.

### A MINIATURE WORLD

**Saturday 15 October**

Pay a visit to Bekonscot Model Village in Beaconsfield, Buckinghamshire. The oldest and original model village, it was opened in 1929 and remains in a 1930s time warp. This is the era of the S&A books and there are many items and details which will feel familiar from the books. There will be a quiz to spot some of them.

There is a tearoom selling drinks, sandwiches and hot rolls. No picnics unless requiring a special diet.

Adults £13, Child 2-15 years £8.30 (Midland TARS will pay this for Midland Junior members). Tickets need to be booked online in advance at [www.bekonscot.co.uk](http://www.bekonscot.co.uk) Please let Amanda Ardagh-Walter ([nickandamanda1558@gmail.com](mailto:nickandamanda1558@gmail.com) or 01453 791056) know that you are coming so we can look out for you.



Please send copy for the next issue of *The Gulch* to [jane.pippinfort@googlemail.com](mailto:jane.pippinfort@googlemail.com) by 1 June

The icons shown by events above indicate which categories they cover for the Junior Log Book scheme:



Adventure Event



Nautical Event



Discovery Event



Titty's Challenge  
(Able Seaman Log Book)



Susan's Challenge  
(Mate Log Book)



John's Challenge  
(Captain Log Book)



# Northern Despatches

We consider ourselves lucky to have in our area not only Ransome sites in the Lake District but also AR's birthplace of Leeds. Northern members warmly welcome Tars from all UK regions and particularly overseas members to any of our events.

## Welcome to 2022 from the Northern Region Committee

We started the year with having to re-think the Birthday party from in-person to Zoom as the Covid Situation dragged on and the risk was worse in the North West. But we now hope to be able to fulfil the following programme:

**Friday June 3<sup>rd</sup>** 'Ransome at Rusland'. Gather at 6pm for reflection at Arthur and Evgenia's graveside and optional walk. Liz Haworth.

**Sat 13<sup>th</sup> August** - Sailing day at BGF, Note change of date from previous publication, with other attractions i.e. Dog's Home visit. Helen Lewis.

(A date for the York railway/chocolate trip is still to be confirmed)



And two AR-related things happening in our region, not actually organised by us:

**June 18<sup>th</sup> to July 9<sup>th</sup>**; Public Exhibition of AR's foreign translation illustrations at the Severn Studio, Brantwood, Coniston. (organised by ART)

**9<sup>th</sup> and 10<sup>th</sup> July:** *Swallows and Armenians*, the Opera, relocated from Lowther Estate and now at Battlebarrow House Gardens, Appleby: Tickets £20 adults, £15 concessions & £5 U21's, are available online from: [www.cumbriaoperagroup.com](http://www.cumbriaoperagroup.com) or from Appleby Tourist Information.

Please contact [karen.babayan@btinternet.com](mailto:karen.babayan@btinternet.com) for more details or see her Facebook page.



## DIGGING FOR LITERARY GOLD IN NEWCASTLE

Northern Tars descend on the city's treasure troves in search of David Wood's collection of Ransome screenplays (and not just S&A!)

**Moneo et Munio** was the text that greeted us at the Institute of Mining and Mechanical Engineers off Newcastle's Great West Road. The translation could be "I advise and I protect". This grand Victorian building, a cathedral in all but name to the science and artistry of mining and engineering, was built in 1838 but the Institute had been formed earlier by the owners and overseers after a series of disasters underground led to both loss of life and loss of profits. Science working together with technology invented the safety lamp and an early respirator, among other aids, to help miners survive when the tunnels became flooded with dangerous carbon monoxide. The Great Hall was decorated with the imagery of King Coal – the God Tyne transported it, pick axes hewed it, safety lamps illuminated it and its gain led to prosperity in the North East for hundreds of years.

**But we were TARS and had come to Newcastle for another reason – the search for Literature – and we found some right next door at the 'Lit and Phil'.**

The Literary and Philosophical Society of Newcastle Upon Tyne, founded in 1795 as a forum where people of the NE could meet, talk and learn, became an independent library in its present building in 1825. It holds over 200,000 books and some fascinating ancient maps. But it doesn't have a complete set of Ransome's 12 and we are going to amend that fact.

**But that was still not what we came for.** So at last – after a lovely lunch at the Laing Art Gallery Café – we puffed up seven flights of stairs to the Archives on level 6 of the 2009 Central Library. Not a cathedral space; not a mahogany rail in sight but treasure? – yes, there was that!

In acid-free pale green document boxes was David Wood's lifetime of creativity laid out for us to rifle through. He who wrote the words known to so many devotees of the 1974 film of *Swallows and Amazons* and these leapt off the pages at us, just as we remembered them. And there was more – treatments and screenplays – of PP, WDM, GN, WH as well. Some more complete than others but all fresh and faithful to the books that inspired them. Some with David's own comments – "I thought this might be rather good as a 6 part serial" – "Evgenia got her way and this never made it to production".

Then there was the Pamela Whitlock boxes... and Victor Watson's impressive children's book collection – some of us could have stayed a lot longer!

A tremendous day out and many thanks are due to Elizabeth Williams, our organiser and Hazel Sheeky-Bird, our Seven Stories contact. *Helen Lewis*



## Harrogate Book Fair Visit

The Harrogate Children's and Detective Book Fair - not a TARS event – occurs every two years and is a wonderful opportunity to hunt out the children's (or detective) titles that have otherwise proved elusive.

A few TARS members met up, a little disappointed that it wasn't quite the turnout there had been two years ago, but it was so good to see familiar faces again. We had lunch together and caught up with each other's news, TARS related or not. I didn't manage to spot the publication signed by Arthur Ransome that the stall holder had noticed but then I wouldn't have been able to afford it anyway. It was a successful visit as it seems that every single one of us found something that we wanted. *Krysia Clack.*



Adam and Katy with their Wildcat



Adam's Wildcat Drawing

Some Coats of Arms: Katy's: Horses, cats, painting, dancing; Adam's: Drums, triathlon, books, maths; Krysia's: Cats, tennis, church, 'loves', motto; 'always on the go'



### *Happy Birthday Arrrrthur! A Pirate's greeting after Peter Duck*

We met via zoom on Saturday 22<sup>nd</sup> January, 'storm bound, with hatches battened down' as the Omicron Wave swept over us.

Two readings of favourite incidents from PD were read and listened to intently which served to revise our vast knowledge of Peter Duck, soon to be tested in one of Elizabeth's fiendish quizzes. Luckily our newest members had all the answers and beat the rest of us into a Cocked Hat.

Coats of arms were exchanged and explained – the theme generally taken from the important things in our lives. Some were truly Piratical.

Cake was produced from all quarters and the Toast was "A very Happy 138<sup>th</sup> to Arthur" and wouldn't he be surprised if he could see us now! Shanties were sung – at least two somewhat revised versions – to a 'muted' audience who were invited to sing along at home.

More Quiz fun and some 'pirate gold' was despatched to the lucky winners. News was exchanged and plans laid to meet up as soon as the 'storm' eased and a physical 'Crab Drive' was allowed.

# EBB & FLOW

## *The Eastern Pages*



### EASTERN REGION PROGRAMME

**May 28<sup>th</sup>-June 4<sup>th</sup>: Camp on the Broads.** Dilham, Norfolk. A base camp site, no electricity hook up but toilets and showers are available. Cost £16 per head per night, children £8 per child per night. If you wish not to bring your own tent they have facilities for Glamping available at a separate cost. Please book in your own name at [canalcamping.co.uk](http://canalcamping.co.uk). Please mention the Arthur Ransome Society when booking, and let Marc Grimston know that you are coming.

If you have a canoe or paddle board they can be launched from the site. Other boats can be launched locally. Hunter's Yard will host us on Wednesday 1<sup>st</sup> June when they will give us a talk on the history of the Yard and will be holding two half-deckers back for us if we wish to hire them at the time. *Titmouse* will also be in the water for us to "play" with.

There will be loads to do and see around Norfolk so please book in as soon as you can and come and join us. [marcgrimston@gmail.com](mailto:marcgrimston@gmail.com).

**June 25<sup>th</sup> afternoon: SUFFOLK and the SEA** — Part of the Felixstowe Book Festival, at the Two Sisters Art Centre, Trimley, for talks featuring Julia Jones and Peter Willis, and Levington Marina (nearby) with real boats and live music. Details [felixstowebookfestival.co.uk](http://felixstowebookfestival.co.uk).

**August 26<sup>th</sup> -29<sup>th</sup>: IAGM** at Royal Hospital School, Holbrook.

**October 1<sup>st</sup>: Nene Valley Railway.** Meet at Wansford Station (parking) PE8 6LR, Peterborough for 10 am train. Last train back from Peterborough 1455. Intervening stations include Orton Mere. Booking advisable but not essential. Prices and bookings at [nvr.org.uk](http://nvr.org.uk).

**January 21<sup>st</sup> 2023: AR's Birthday Lunch and AGM.** Butt & Oyster, Pin Mill.





*AR's BIRTHDAY LUNCH & AGM  
But & Oyster, Pin Mill, Suffolk  
22<sup>nd</sup> January 2022*

After an absence of two years it was nice to be back to the *Butt & Oyster* for Arthur's Birthday Lunch and our region's AGM. It was a fine day, not too cold with bright sunshine and a light breeze. Despite in being January there were quite a few boats out on the river, large sailing yachts and small dinghies, with at least one race going on off the far shore.

Sadly only ten Tars turned out to the event, no doubt due to worries over Covid. Not only Tars but our proposed speaker also cancelled so that, apart from our lunch plus a helping of AR's Birthday cake supplied by Diana Evens and some chat, we soon concluded the business of the AGM and finished the day early.

The room was quite large with good ventilation so no one passed on any infection.

Hopefully Covid is on the way out, so future events should get more support.



**BRIAN HAMMETT MEMORIAL LECTURE**

When the board of the Admiralty decided to recruit a new reserve of "Gentlemen interested in yachting and similar pursuits" prior to WW2 some two thousand amateur sailors signed up even though most knew little of what would be expected of them or indeed how long they would serve.

Julia Jones' lecture delivered as the long anticipated Memorial Lecture for Brian offered a fascinating and revealing insight into this largely unknown force, the Royal Navy Volunteer Supplementary Reserve (RNVSR).

Basing much of her talk on research for her latest book "*Uncommon Courage - the Yachtsman Volunteers of WW2*", she was able to illustrate the range of personalities and talents that the force encompassed.

Many were experienced yachtsmen in their own right, some were indeed famous, Peter Scott and Nevil Shute amongst them. Others were weekend sailors often with more limited time in boats. Others too brought wider experience of adventure and hardship, amongst them Augustine Courtauld and his outstanding endurance on the Greenland icecap along with other Arctic exploration in the 1930s.

Very often men of the RNVSR found themselves in situations well beyond the normal expectations such as dangerous work on minesweepers or dealing with unexploded bombs. Some provided essential assistance for Ian Fleming's well known intelligence commandos.

Not all served time at sea, Fredman Lincoln for instance, a keen sailor and an able lawyer involved in anti-Nazi protests in London's East End, received an unexpected summons to the Admiralty and found himself puzzled when included in high level company. He soon discovered that it was his legal training that was sought. A large number of ships were lost to mines of an unknown type in the early part of the war. He was presented with substantial written evidence from survivors and was able to determine the cause — magnetic mines.

By developing "degaussing ships" which were fitted with a thick copper cable around its outer hull, a magnetic field could be produced that effectively neutralised the ship's "signature" rendering it immune to such mines.

In an enduring tribute to Brian, Julia suggested that he too in an earlier life would have had a ready and natural inclination to join the RNVSR — a typical reflection of his active concern for others and his nature.

*Brian Key.*



# NEWS FROM THE GAELS

## TARS Scotland



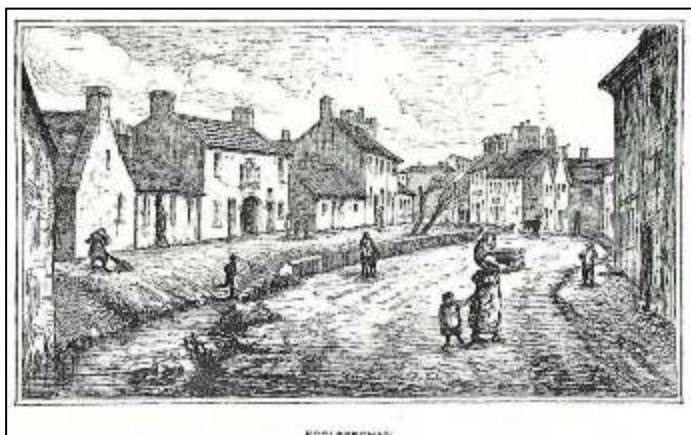
*Gòbhlanan-gaoithe 's Bana-gaisgich gu sìorraidh!*

### A day out in search of Thomas Carlyle



Thomas Carlyle birthplace, Ecclefechan, built by his father

As TARS Scotland Birthday lunch and AGM in January had to be cancelled because of Covid restrictions, there is little to report this time, so here is an account of an expedition around 'Carlyle country' instead. The book of that name, describing the places in south-west Scotland connected with the 19th-century philosopher and author so admired by Arthur Ransome, set me off on the trail. Since then, Paul and I have taken it further, and found the two properties where two sets of Jane Welsh Carlyle's grandparents lived, facing each other at a distance of perhaps a couple of miles on either side of the river Nith. Both families bore the surname Welsh, but they were apparently unrelated. More of them next time, perhaps.



Meanwhile watch this space, and the website – TARS Scotland hopes to find something else to celebrate before too long.

*Thomas Carlyle: a history of the first forty years of his life, 1795-1835*

in two volumes, 1901, by James Anthony Froude, MA

At the time of writing, (January 2022) I have reached page 79 of the 495 pages in volume two of this life of Carlyle, and the following passage, from his journals written at Craigenputtock in February 1829 struck a chord with what is going on in the British corridors of power at present.

Is it true that of all quacks that ever quacked (boasting themselves to be somebody) in any age of the world, the political economists of this age are, for their intrinsic size, the loudest? Mercy on us, what a quack-quacking; and their egg, even if *not* a wind one, is of value simply one halfpenny?

It raises a wry smile at a time when one might otherwise be tempted to *greet*, as we say in Scotland when upset or despairing, and is worth the hard work of reading about Carlyle. Having said that, Mr Froude is a convincing biographer, although not all writers have agreed with his views on Carlyle since that time.

Back in August, I had a lovely day out with our friend David Kerr, whom some will remember as a minibus driver at the 2016 IAGM. We visited some of the sites connected with Carlyle, from his birthplace in Ecclefechan to the east of Dumfries to Craigenputtock in the west, where he spent 5 years of his married life, despite the feelings of his young wife, Jane Welsh, whose property it actually was. Although only 16 miles from Dumfries, even now it feels like the back-of-beyond, and how much more so in the 19th century. It was there that Carlyle wrote *Sartor resartus*, a book which Ransome described, in *Bohemia in London*, as his 'Bible', although I had to have it explained to me by an authority on



Carlyle's works after struggling through it. The birthplace itself, now owned by the National Trust for Scotland, was closed to the public at the time, due to Covid restrictions, but we admired its setting beside the burn, and found the gravestones of several members of Carlyle's family, including his own, as well as the monument which looks down on the village. There were several helpful information boards in various places.



The original Annan Academy building

Before reaching the town of Annan on the estuary, we had a lunch-break at the Annandale Distillery, which was restored to life a few years ago by friends of Paul's and mine, but declined the tour and samples on this occasion, as we had far to go. Our next stop was the original home of Annan Academy, where the young Thomas attended school, and where he later taught, after his studies at Edinburgh University. He thought nothing of walking all the way to Edinburgh each term, and his mother would send him parcels of food from the farm when a coach happened to be going that way. It was a hot and sunny day, and David is in his element when driving on the narrow country roads in the very rural hinterland of Dumfries and Galloway.



Off we went along the Solway coast, passing several landmarks in the life of Carlyle, bypassed Dumfries and set off for Craigenputtock, having first stopped to consult the map. When well on the way, David suddenly realised where we were, and when we

reached the end of the road to the house – there's no such thing as a 'private' road in Scotland, although some landowners don't take notice of the fact – we stopped to read a notice concerning cross-country horse-rides, and David remembered that he had met the current owner, so we may have a way in to have a TARS visit one day.



Setting off for home along the single track road, we met some of the inhabitants of the estate – a group of Belted Galloway cattle, who ambled round the car and took up their former position in the middle of the road!

*Winifred Wilson*

Engravings from *Thomas Carlyle*, Froude



Templand: home of Jane Welsh Carlyle's maternal grandfather, where Thomas and Jane were married



Penfillan: home of Mrs Carlyle's paternal grandfather





## **Sou'westers and Seaboats News from the SW Region**

### **Nora's Quiz**

Having had to cancel our AR Birthday lunch and talk at Teignmouth Yacht Club in January for the second year running we fell back on Zoom again. We had a nice number of people joining at various times, although unfortunately we couldn't see them all.

AR was toasted in sundry versions of grog and then we turned to Nora's "Where in the world .....?" Quiz. Example – "What wildlife had Man Friday met in her childhood in Australia? Name 3". Out of a possible 30 points + 1 bonus point I managed a measly ten and a half despite being the question master, (at least it proves that I didn't cheat!) Inevitably Diana won, but even she was stumped by some of the questions.

Many thanks to Nora for compiling this entertaining quiz.

Barbara

### **SW AGM**

We held our AGM on zoom again this year and it went without a hitch. Thank you to the committee for all their hard work this year and thank you to all those who attended. Hopefully next year we can meet in person with lunch afterwards.

Susan

### **FORTHCOMING EVENTS IN THE SOUTH-WEST (Covid willing!)**

Tars from other areas are always welcome to join us – get in touch with Barbara via [souwesters@gmail.com](mailto:souwesters@gmail.com) for details

Saturday 21st May -

Our walk will begin in Hemyock, where there is a lovely pub! If you would like to come just for the pub lunch that's okay.

Saturday 11th June -

Have a go at Archery –

Exmouth Archers will host the event.

9th-11th September

SUP/Canoe camping weekend –

This will be at Roadford Lake, nearish to Okehampton, Devon.

Saturday 15th October-

Lunch and talk at Teignmouth Corinthian Yacht Club –

Our third Walk in the Blackdown Hills attempt at having Viv Wilson's film show and talk

# Southern Region



## Birthday Lunch at Doggett's Coat and Badge

Hurrah for "a bit of a risk". As Iain Khan-Gilchrist wrote in the last Signals, "London based TARS don't generally show much interest in London based events" but to prove him wrong some of us Londoners and others did show up at Doggett's Coat and Badge to celebrate Arthur's birthday on January 15th.

The Doggett's Coat and Badge is a thriving modern pub beside Blackfriars Bridge. A long table had been reserved for us on the first floor from where there were spectacular views to the City of London and down the River Thames towards Parliament. It was worth going to the lunch for the view alone. That was a bonus as, of course, we were really there to have a sociable lunch, enjoying food and drink and sharing tales, some TARS -related, others certainly not. "Works on the line" defeated a few folk who had planned to join us travelling by train, but congratulations to Alan Hakim, who did not give up when his train unexpectedly terminated at Horsham instead of Waterloo. We toasted AR's memory and felt lucky to be celebrating the anniversary of his birth, despite various COVID restrictions.

Incidentally the somewhat bizarre name of the pub relates to an annual rowing race that has taken place on the River Thames for over three hundred years. Founded by Thomas Doggett for the watermen who ferried passengers across the river, the race is from London Bridge to Cadogan Pier in Chelsea and has been described as "an unforgiving race of 7,400 metres with bends and currents and the potential to hit any of the eleven bridges and numerous unyielding objects". The winner receives a tailored scarlet costume with a silver badge on one of the arms. It traditionally takes place at the beginning of August. I wonder if Arthur Ransome ever watched it. Maybe one day TARS members should go and cheer on the rowers and discover this almost forgotten annual event.

Yes, a good time was had by all at the birthday lunch and although London TARS may not show much interest in London based events now, we have had some terrific times in the past. Do you remember those evenings in a pub near the British Museum? Maybe there are more good London events to come. Anyway, thank you for "taking the risk" Iain.

Mary Pritchard

The Region now has a committee of two as **Rosemary Beale** has offered to help Iain Kahn-Gilchrist, in the role of Secretary, for which, she says she is *not* well qualified.

"I have been a member of TARS since the mid 1990s, I think, but for much of the time I have been an inactive member! Unlike Iain, I am not a sailor, more a walking and reading person, with a bit more time on my hands now that I have retired. I live on the southern edge of the region, at Selsey, right on the Sussex coast and I realise that it is almost impossible to find a good venue convenient to all. However, I would like suggestions of places of interest near YOU that are accessible, affordable and have something to offer all ages and that you would like to share with others. We might then be able to put together a program of meet up events around the Region.



My next task is to get to grips with putting information on the website, unless there is someone out there who would like to take on that job...or any other."

## Camping events 2022

### 27<sup>th</sup> to 29<sup>th</sup> May at Warnford, in the Meon Valley, Hampshire

This is a D.I.Y. camp at a TARS member's farm, where we have camped before. Facilities are limited to water and a toilet but there is a safe, shallow lake for sailing. The cost will be £5 for adults and juniors are free. Postcode SO32 3LB

### 19<sup>th</sup> to 21<sup>st</sup> August at Cobnor, Chichester Harbour

The Cobnor campsite has been booked for our popular summer sailing camp. The Covid restrictions, that resulted in the toilet block being closed, have not yet been lifted so 'Portaloos' will have to be booked, as last year. The camp costs are being kept at £25 for adults and free for juniors.



*View across Chichester Harbour from Itchenor towards Bosham and Cobnor*

The harbour is ideal for sailing, kayaking or paddleboarding – bring your own craft. If the tide is right, it is possible to sail up the channel to the historic village of Bosham, whose church features on the Bayeux tapestry and has links to King Canute.

For more information about both these camps and for directions contact Iain Kahn-Gilchrist ([iainkg@gmail.com](mailto:iainkg@gmail.com))

## London visits

As a volunteer at various riverside places of interest, Iain is able to offer free entry, for up to 4 people, and a guided tour of the Cutty Sark, the Greenwich Observatory and Maritime Museum. He is also able to offer personal tours of Ransome's haunts during the Bohemian phase of his life, in Chelsea.

**Email Iain if you would like to take advantage of either of these offers**



## Bohemian Chelsea Walk

Saturday 26<sup>th</sup> March

On an unseasonably warm, sunny spring morning, a select few gathered to enjoy Iain's guided tour around some of the areas of Chelsea which Arthur Ransome frequented during his early years of independence in London and when he was first married. By the early 1900s, when Ransome moved there from his mother's house in Balham, Chelsea had long since left its rural village roots behind and was joined to London by the Underground and the Chelsea Embankment and by the Albert Bridge to the south bank of the river.



Iain started by relating a scene in 1903, described in *Bohemia in London*, of Ransome aged 19 arriving across the river on the tailboard of a horse drawn van, which he had hired for 7 shillings (plus a shilling tip for the boy leading the horse). The van held a few sticks of furniture and a great many books, and Ransome was confident enough of his earnings as a freelance writer to rent a small room in Hollywood Road. It was hard to work out exactly where this would have been as there has been redevelopment, but Ransome's next, larger accommodation was easier to spot.



This was 1 Gunter Grove which now bears a blue plaque announcing that Ransome lived there between 1904 and 5. We had information to hand from Ted Alexander's book 'Ransome at home' and from Ransome's 'Bohemia in London', which enabled us to identify Ransome's room at the front on the ground floor – looking rather uncared for – and the landlord's basement apartment, which is currently boarded up and disappearing under ivy. Rather a shame, but perhaps more atmospheric than something more smartly modernised.

Looking now at the gleaming white render, shiny black balconies and expensive cars parked in the streets in this area, it is hard to envisage Chelsea as a gathering place for impoverished artists and

writers renting rooms, in a rather hand to mouth existence.



The Collingwood's London home at Editha Mansions was not far from Gunter Grove and we visited this more affluent looking establishment.



We also visited 120 Cheyne Walk where Arthur, Ivy and Tabitha lived briefly between time in Paris and their permanent home near Salisbury. This house also has a blue plaque - for Sylvia Pankhurst, who had rooms in the house around the same time as the Ransomes.

The walk took about 3 hours, including a stop for lunch and finished in Milborne Grove, at the apartment block where Pixie Coleman-Smith lived. Here we learnt of Opal Hush, the Anansi tales and the famous writers, poets, artists, and actors who attended her 'At Home' evenings.

It was a fascinating walk and worth fighting our way through another round of transport disruption for. Our thanks to Iain for his planning, preparation, and enthusiasm and also our admiration of his thorough knowledge of this area.

**Rosemary Beal**

**Photos : Peter Wright, Iain Khan-Gilchrist, M. Beal**

# HAPPY COINCIDENCES

**Three boats, three books, overlapping anniversaries and an oddly common theme with a recurring word... Peter Willis explores**

Three books, three boats, three significant anniversaries. *Peter Duck* is 90 this year, and whenever *Peter Duck* clicks up another decade, *We Didn't Mean to Go to Sea* is exactly five years behind – and vice versa. And *Racundra's First Cruise* is only one year adrift – next year, in 2023, we'll be celebrating its centenary.

And the boats: one real, one semi-fictional, and one metafictional.

*Racundra* was very real. And with her strange, shallow, beamy hull she was more than Ransome's first 'proper' boat – designed to his specifications, and built for him – she provided him with his breakthrough from reporting Russian politics to writing about yachting, from first-hand experience.

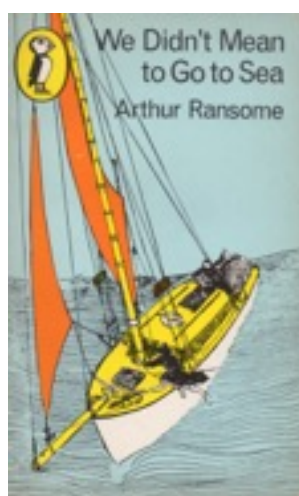
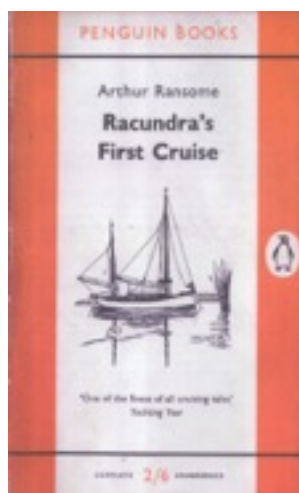
*We Didn't Mean's* *Goblin* was of course his own *Nancy Blackett* in very light disguise. But though the *Wild Cat* in *Peter Duck* must have been inspired by the sight of a Baltic schooner somewhere, she exists only in the imaginations of a group of children who are themselves works of fiction, and thus she's the very embodiment of metafiction, at two removes from reality.

Ransome is even studiously vague about her dimensions (probably about 60ft) and it's been pointed out that the proportions between people and boat in his drawings are uncharacteristically unrealistic.

Mr Duck himself, though, is the realest thing in the book. Just like Capt. Sehmel, Ransome's 'Ancient Mariner' crewman of *Racundra* on whom he's clearly modelled, he had served on the famous tea-clipper *Thermopylae*.

But to trace the strong thread between these three books, let us start with everybody's favourite passage from *We Didn't Mean to Go to Sea*:

*"He took another look at the compass card under that dim yellow glow, wedged himself against the cockpit coaming with a foot against the opposite seat, looked up at the part of the sky that was full of stars, and a little ashamedly admitted to himself*



*that he was happy... If anybody could have seen his face in the faint glimmer from the compass window, he would have seen that there was a grin on it. John was alone in the dark with his ship, and everybody else was asleep. He for that night was the Master of the Goblin, and even the lurches of the cockpit beneath him as the Goblin rushed through the dark filled him with a serious kind of joy. He and the Goblin together. On and on. On and on. Years and years hence, when he was grown up, he would have a ship of his own and sail her out into wider seas than this. But he would always and always remember this night when for the first time ship and crew were in his charge, his alone."*

And now, in *Peter Duck*, as the *Wild Cat* heads down-Channel overnight, John gets his trick at the wheel. *"This was better than that night when he had sailed Swallow in the dark..."* At the end of his watch, as John slips down the companion to his bunk, Ransome comments: *"If anybody had been awake to see him come down they would have wondered why he was smiling to himself, a broad, happy smile. John was extremely happy. He had kept his first night watch at sea. And most of the time he had been steering."*

It's worth reminding ourselves at this point that this isn't the real John; it's John-in-his-dreams, projecting his hopes into a piece of make-up.

But it seems it's very much the real Ransome. Here's *Racundra's First Cruise*, and Ransome's own first night at sea, as "owner and master" in her:

*"At ten o'clock, the others turned in. For the first time not on paper and in dreams, I had the little ship alone in my hands in a night of velvet dark below and stars above, pushing steadily along into unknown waters. I was extremely happy."*

Cheryl Paget's last article\*

## 'Lots of juicy insights - just not enough proof'

*A Thoroughly Mischievous Person* by Alan Kennedy – a review

This book reminded me of when, as an English literature undergraduate interpreting a text, I would invariably choose a feminist, Freudian or occasionally a Marxist framework, or a combination of, because I thought they were *easy*. Whether they are or not is not for discussion here, but I did often emit a wry smile, for if I were writing a Freudian interpretation of *Swallows and Amazons* I may have taken some of the passages Alan Kennedy chose to highlight.

However, what I was always told is that if you are going to write about an author you need to take your evidence from the text, and he does not refer to the Lakes texts nearly enough to make his point for my liking. Lots of juicy insights into the author – just not enough proof from his children's books.

The trouble with writing about a series of books, to my vexation, is knowing where to start and when to stop, and this book is a hop around the Lakes books, with a brief look at

Ransome's early works (and, confusingly, *We Didn't Mean...* and *Missee Lee*) without really clearly identifying why, or really proving the case. Lots of themes and ideas are liberally sprinkled throughout the book, which I would have liked to see as whole chapters. Also, I wish the book had a bibliography, as Kennedy clearly did a lot of research and I would like to do some follow-up reading without having to trawl through the footnotes again.

My main disagreements with Kennedy's findings are:

I am not convinced Ransome was writing for or about his daughter or ex-wife. He clearly stated in the first edition who (by way of what) he was writing for, and Captain Flint is the uncle figure Ransome either took on, or imagined for himself with the Altounyan family. I would have liked a whole chapter on the missing father idea though, there is definitely something in the oedipal complex that needs a thorough exploration.

I don't believe he had a hang up about not being a "university man". Firstly, he chose to drop out of studying science at Yorkshire College to become a Bohemian, spending years writing and eating cheese and apples and drinking beer with other, mainly middle-class people who were anti-establishment. His few proper married years to Ivy may have made him feel he should be achieving more than his status, but again, he chose to run away, this time to Russia, where, as part of the close-knit masculine world of correspondents and diplomats he may have found himself out of his depth, but he managed to worm his way into the company of Trotsky, Lenin and Radek, a position other journalists didn't achieve, and enabled him to be recruited by MI6, which must have made him feel pretty important.

Also, returning after the war, with so many of the officer class wiped out, did it really matter by then whether you had a degree or not?

I don't think he was a modernist writer, mainly because he does not use the stream of consciousness narrative technique so prevalent in the work of other contemporary modernist authors. When I was researching my article on Ransome and Katherine Mansfield (*Mixed Moss* 2019) I spent a lot of time trying to establish a link between Ransome and the Bloomsbury set, and I just couldn't find it.

However, this book was more interesting for what it didn't say than what it did. There were several

themes and ideas coming out that were never properly explored and sprinkled like fairy dust throughout the book. What I really liked, and wanted more in-depth discussion based on the text, was the idea of 'coming second' – I have never spotted that in the books and a whole

chapter really drilling down into where it turns up, and why, rather than it cropping up through his book would have been terrifically beneficial for future Ransome researchers. Spying in *Pigeon Post* was mentioned but not really explored – again, I would have liked more on this.

Rescue as a theme is mentioned in chapter 9 without any evidence from the Lakes books; again, I'd like to see where this is in the books.

I firmly agree that Ransome was trying to tell us something in his books, other than the story he was telling, and I think he was using the stories, narrative technique and devices from folk and fairy tales (see my article in *Furthest South* 2021 Vol.23 No.3), so I was very interested in Kennedy's interpretation. I am not sure about Ransome using classical mythology however, but more work needs to be done in this area, and so a Freudian interpretation (of fairy tale elements) is inevitable – sorry to those who find this distasteful. Kennedy has made a good start in this direction.

Therefore, I quite agree with his statement that "Magical children acting in a mundane setting – that was to become his [Ransome's] own distinctive gift to children's literature." (Pg 37)

I just wish this book drilled down much more deeply into the Lakes books to prove the point.

*\* Editor's note: This article arrived from Cheryl just too late for inclusion in the last Signals. An enjoyable exchange of emails followed in which the Editor challenged some of Cheryl's points, and she responded robustly, and good-naturedly. The article, with the emails can be found in the Signals section of the TARS Website Members' Area. PW*

*What I really liked, and wanted more on, was the idea of 'coming second'*



## BOOK REVIEW

# The sailors' war

*Uncommon Courage: The Yachtsmen Volunteers of World War II* by Julia Jones, 310pp, Adlard Coles £20.

Fans of Julia Jones's 'Strong Winds' novels will recall that in the first of the series, *The Salt-Stained Book*, the eponymous volume is a copy of *Knight on Sailing*, rescued in a 1945 naval battle, that becomes a talisman for the young hero, Donny.

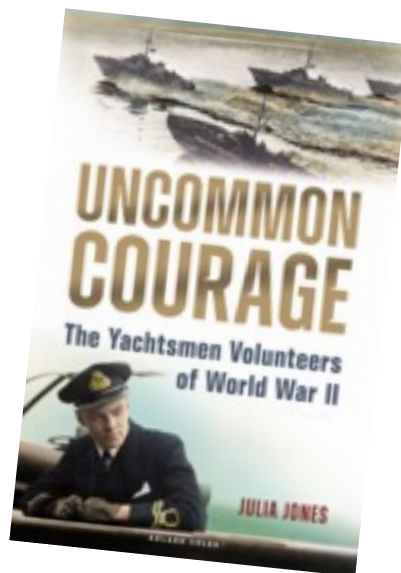
It's one of her ways of securing her characters to a multi-faceted heritage which they are to spend the rest of the series discovering. It's a heritage that she herself is also claimed by, as are many of the children who grew up in the post-war years often knowing little of what their fathers (and sometimes their mothers) had endured or achieved in World War II. Parents often didn't like to talk about it.

### The suitcase in the attic

This book is her endeavour to fill in those blanks. As readers of *The Cruise of Naromis* will know, its inspiration began when she found an old suitcase in her attic, full of papers relating to her own father's wartime experiences. (They began when he happened to be on a pleasure cruise in the Baltic in the summer of 1939, where he observed and took many photos of German naval preparations.)

She went on to research the memoirs, books, letters, diaries of many other yachtsmen who decided to sign up for the Royal Naval Volunteer Supplementary Reserve and bring their often specialised marine knowledge, or simply their selfless courage and initiative, to the war effort.

These 'Gentlemen, who are interested in yachting,' as the Admiralty announcement put it, had, from 1936, been invited to volunteer for service with the Royal Navy 'in case of an Emergency'. They were 'supplementary' to the established RNVR (ex-Naval officers from the first war) – and initially without formal training, pay or uniform. Instead they were expected to use their own resources and initiative – undertaking Erskine Childers-style clandestine reconnaissance, for instance, while enjoying a summer cruise.



It took the Royal Navy a while to get used to the assistance of these yachtsmen whose approach leaned more to individual initiative than chain-of-command. They may not always have exemplified the Childers-like 'innate subversiveness of small-boat sailing', but the likes of Maurice Griffiths, Peter Scott, Nevil Shute Norway, Nicholas Monsarrat, Ian Fleming and many others brought an inventiveness to situations that sometimes challenged the 'Navy way' but got results.

### Quirky detail and grim humour

They also wrote letters, journals and memoirs. Delivered with vivid, often quirky detail, grim humour and modesty, they reveal quite staggering instances of bravery and selflessness.

It is these that Julia Jones has sifted to make up this remarkable mosaic of frank, front-line accounts of the war at sea. Her own narrative expertise manages to cram in enough detail to bring individual incidents or personal experiences to life, while at the same time creating a tapestry-like account of the progress (or setbacks) of the war.

There are also affecting reflections on the return to postwar 'normality'. Parents were notoriously reticent with their families about what they'd seen, done or endured. So for those of us who grew up in the often undiscussed shadow of these events, this is a deeply fascinating, and moving document. Jones herself is such a one, and her low-key, ever-humane commentary makes it all bearable.

There's a thorough list of the original sources, should you want to follow any of them up. It's gripping stuff – and for those who like to speculate on what the Swallows and Amazons might have got up to in the war, a valuable source of inspiration and insight.

*Peter Willis*

*Uncommon Courage was the subject of the TARS East/NBT Brian Hammett Memorial Talk in March; it's now available through the Nancy Blackett Trust's online shop ([nancyblackett.org/](http://nancyblackett.org/))*





“Better scholars  
at Camblidge...  
but better  
marmalade at  
Oxford”

Miss Lee



## Marmalade Matters

by Lesley Wareing

Back-to-back re-reads of *The Twelve* helped me though lock-down. This time around I noticed how much marmalade features. AR seemed to have quite a thing about it. It makes an appearance very early in *Swallows and Amazons* at the very first tea, on the Peak of Darien, in Chapter One. Thereafter it seems to be very much the preserve of choice. The Swallows (and the Amazons) have it on bread or bunloaf for breakfast, tea and supper.

Very recently I noticed that Joe, Pete and Bill also had marmalade on bread and butter for their tea on board the *Death and Glory* at the start of *The Big Six*. Marmalade (the right sort of course) has a starring role in *Missee Lee*.

I seem to remember marmalade being a bit of an acquired taste (because of the slight bitterness) as I was growing up – I think we preferred red jam when we were younger and only appreciated marmalade as we got older and our palates matured.

When I posted these observations about marmalade on the Arthur Ransome Group Facebook page recently, I posed the question: “Do those of you with children and grandchildren feed them marmalade?”

Well, it turns out that there are a lot of marmalade fans out there. A few people hate it; many more love it (“the nectar of the gods”). Some people loved it when children; some people started eating it because of reading about it in Arthur Ransome’s books. There were lots of different opinions about favourite brands and preferred ingredients. A lot of people still make their own – for some it’s a great annual ritual.

One response mentioned that there is a reference somewhere to a landlady in the Lake District, with whom AR sometimes stayed, commenting on AR’s fondness for marmalade. Marmalade matters!

### *Peter Duck and Swallowdale: a little mystery*

Jenny Wedick brought a ‘mixed’ set of twelve green hardbacks along to the Literary Weekend. One was *Great Northern*, a first edition; thumbing through it we noticed something we’d never spotted before: that in the ‘Also by Arthur Ransome’ list of titles at the front of the book, normally given in order of publication, two titles had been reversed. You’ve guessed it - *Peter Duck* came before *Swallowdale*. Quite logical in terms of the chronology of the stories, but odd. I’ve since checked my own shelf, and only found one other example, in a first edition of *Missee Lee*. Questions arise. Did the ‘new order’ get adopted when other titles were reprinted? Was it reversed in later editions? Was it due to an over-punctilious junior editor at Cape? Please search and report back! *Peter Willis*

## MEMBERSHIP

### Members who have died

At a recent Board Meeting it was agreed that it would be useful and appropriate to record the deaths of fellow-members, where we have been notified of them, and this should take the form of an annual list published in the first available *Signals of* the following year.

We are not always notified of the date of members’ deaths, but we list the date of notification as an approximate guide.

The deaths for 2021 are here, in alphabetical order, with membership number, region and where available date of death or month of notification. We have also included, separately, those so far notified for this year.

### 2021

**Tim Berry** 5309 N (August)

**Derek Forbes** 232 N  
(February)

**James Henderson** 1102 Sc  
(December)

**David Jones** 620 S (April)

**Professor Kenneth**

**MacKinnon** 863 Sc (May)

**Carl Nord** 4848 USA  
(December)

**John Pickup** 2369 S  
(October)

**Ken Randall** 2278 N  
(January)

**Brian Ridsdale** 227 N  
(September)

**John Sanders** 8 SW  
(December)

### 2022

**Cheryl Paget** 3950 NZ  
(18 January)

**John Burgess** 5065 Mid  
(February)

**Please send notifications to  
David Middleton,  
Membership Secretary  
See inside front cover for  
contact details**



## AMAZON PUBLICATIONS RANSOME Centre Stage

(2021) £14 (+ £3.50)

### Sunlight and Shadows

(2020)

Mike Bender £14 (+ £3.50)

### The Twilight Years, Vol II - London

ed. Margaret Ratcliffe £20 (+ £3.50) Ransome's diary 1950-1963, introduction by Griff Rhys-Jones.

### The Twilight Years, Vol I - Hill Top,

ed. Margaret Ratcliffe £15 (+ £3.50)  
Ransome's diary entries at Hill Top, 1956 to 1964.

**Robert Louis Stevenson**, Arthur Ransome's study, ed Kirsty Nichol Findlay. £8.50 (+ £3.50)

**Ransome the Artist**, by Roger Wardale, Sketches paintings etc by Arthur Ransome. £5 (+ £3.50)

**Ransome on Blue Water Sailing**, ed Christina Hardymont. Writings about sailing. £5 (+ £3.50)

**A Ransome Book-case**, by John Cowen  
Illustrated guide to Ransome's books. £10 (+ £3)

**Bohemia in London**, Ransome's 'first real book' with the original 1907 illustrations. £7.50 (+ £3.50)

**From our Special Correspondent** - the Journalism of Arthur Ransome in Egypt, by Nancy M Endersby-Harshman. £25 (+ £3.50)

**Ransome in China, 1927**, special correspondent to the Manchester Guardian and the Baltimore Sun, by David Jones. £7.50 (+ £3.50)

**Arthur Ransome**, a Bodley Head Monograph, Hugh Shelley. £2 (+ £2.50)

**Before a Peak in Darien**, ed Paul Crisp. From Arthur Ransome's early writings. £7.50 (+ £3.50)

**Fair Cops and Glowworms**, ed Paul Crisp An anthology AR's fishing articles. £10 (+ £3)

**Genetic Building Blocks**, Arthur Ransome's forebears, by Margaret Ratcliffe. £10 (+ £3)

**Collecting our Thoughts**, ed. Margaret Ratcliffe  
Essays from TARS Library catalogues, 2000-2009,

## The TARS Stall

For full postage details, please see back cover

### PUBLICATIONS FROM TARS

#### Literary Weekend Transcripts

Report and talks from **Edinburgh, 2017**  
£6 (+ 2.50) Previous events, 1995, 1999, 2001, 2003, 2005, 2009, 2013, 2015, also available.

#### Encountering the Ransomes: DVD set

**Personal memories of Arthur & Evgenia**  
Presented by Sophie Neville, recorded interviews filmed 1996-2010. **2-DVD set £20 (+ £1.50)**

#### Mixed Moss

Most previous issues available. £4 (+£1.50)

### BOOKS ABOUT ARTHUR RANSOME

#### **A Thoroughly Mischievous Person**

*The other Arthur Ransome*

by Alan Kennedy £15 (+£2.50) **NEW**

#### **The Life of Arthur Ransome**, by Hugh

**Brogan £12 (+ £3)** The definitive biography.

#### **Good Little Ship: Arthur Ransome,**

*Nancy Blackett and the Goblin*, by Peter Willis  
The story of *Nancy Blackett*, inspiration for *Goblin* in *WDMTGTS*, her restoration by Mike Rines and the Nancy Blackett Trust. £14 (+ £3.50)

#### **Swallows, Amazons and Coots**

**a reading of Arthur Ransome by Julian Lovelock** A literary overview of all 'the 12' by the former editor of *Mixed Moss*. £17 (+ £1.80)

#### **Arthur Ransome on the Broads**

by **Roger Wardale** Beautifully illustrated and draws on diary entries from the Ransomes' Broads trips, linked to the relevant books. £15 (+ £3.50)

#### **Arthur Ransome Afloat in Lakeland**

**W. R. Mitchell** Attractively illustrated account of AR's haunts by a local author. £10 (+ £1.80)

#### **Arthur Ransome, a Bibliography**

by **Wayne Hammond** A comprehensive guide to all Ransome's published writing. £20 (+ £3)

#### **Ransome in Russia**, by **Ted Alexander &**

**Tatiana Verizhnikova** His adventures in Eastern Europe 1913-24, £18 (+ £3.50)



# The TARS Stall

## BOOKS BY ARTHUR RANSOME



### **Racundra's First Cruise**

Arthur Ransome's first 'proper' boat, built and sail in Baltic in the 1920s re-edited by **Brian Hammett**, with additional material. Hardback £10 (+ £3.50)



### **Racundra's Third Cruise**

Previously unpublished account of Ransome's honeymoon cruise in Latvia in 1924, (includes his draft of *Racundra's* Second Cruise) edited by **Brian Hammett**. Hardback £10 (+£3.00)

### **The 12 Swallows and Amazons books**

Vintage Classics paperback edition. Set of 12 £75 (+ £17) Single copies £7 each (+ £3.50)

### **Audio CDs of 'the 12'**

Read by Gabriel Woolf  
All 12 titles available. £14 (+ £3.50) each.

### **Old Peter's Russian Tales**

Introduction by Christina Hardyment, with illustrations by Faith Jaques. £7 (+£3.50)

### **Swallows and Amazons musical**

The script and songs for the Bristol Old Vic stage musical production, £9 (+ £2)

## FICTION INSPIRED BY ARTHUR RANSOME

### **Strong Winds series by Julia Jones**

Contemporary teenage thrillers set in East Anglia, with a strong sailing element. Six in series::

1. **The Salt-Stained Book**
2. **A Ravelled Flag**
3. **Ghosting Home**
4. **The Lion of Sole Bay**
5. **Black Waters**

£6 each (+ £1.60) / Set: £25 (+£3)

LATEST: Vol. 6: **Pebble** £9 (+£1.80)

### **Those Kids series by Jon Tucker**

A new series of Tasmanian adventure stories for children by TARS member and live-aboard sailor Jon Tucker. Ask about available titles £10 (+ £1.80)

### **The Boat in the Bay by Alan Kennedy**

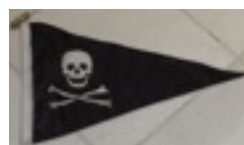
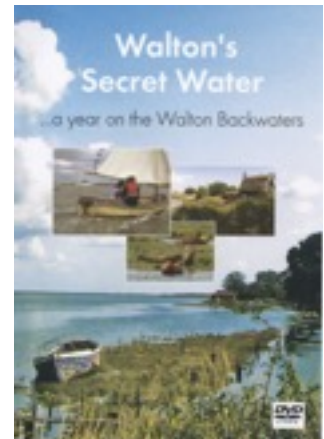
Ransome-referenced adventure story £10 (+ £2)



**TARS Teddy** Need a mascot? Or a stocking-filler? Here he/she is! companionable soft toy, 24cm high (plague flag not included) **£10 (+£3.50)**

### **Walton's Secret Water**

Film by David Webb of the Walton Backwaters, the setting of *Secret Water* country, and including the River Orwell and *Nancy Blackett*  
Run time 75 Minutes  
DVD £15 (+ £2)



## Burgees

For your boat, or for a 'homely' decoration for your bedroom

Polyester burgees, 50x30cm, including halyard and toggle.

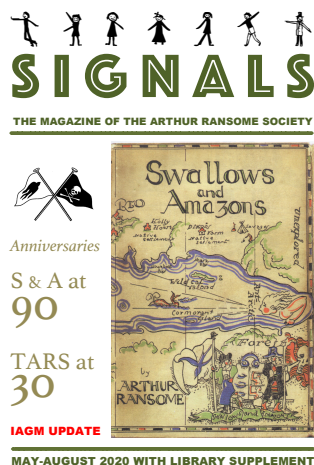
Three designs:

Swallow,  
Skull and crossbones,  
TARS (Swallow+ Skull and Crossbones), £18 (+ £2.50)

### **TARS Enamel pin badge**

(Swallow + Skull and Crossbones) approx 2x3cm  
£3 (+£1.50)

## TARS PUBLICATIONS etc



**SIGNALS** is the Society's Magazine, published three times a year with news of events, activities and Ransome related happenings in the UK and overseas, as well as letters, features, reviews and contributions from members.

The January-April issue includes Despatches, with news and booking forms for the International AGM.

The May-August issue has the Library Supplement, while the September-December issue includes Ship's Log, which carries reports from the IAGM.

Each of the six UK Regions has up to three pages for its own events and news.

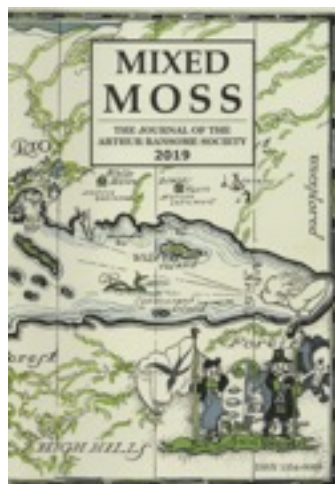
Some overseas material is included; overseas TARS groups also have their own newsletters – see below.

**Signals Editor is Peter Willis**  
[signals@arthur-ransome.org](mailto:signals@arthur-ransome.org)  
01394 387907

**Copy deadlines 1 March,  
1 July, 1 November**

**USA/Canada: Signals from  
Tarsus/North Pole News,**  
Editor: Simon Horn  
[shorn@colba.net](mailto:shorn@colba.net)

**Australia/New Zealand:  
Furthest South** Ed: Jan Allen  
[jp8fillyjonk@bigpond.com](mailto:jp8fillyjonk@bigpond.com)



**MIXED MOSS**, the Society's Journal, is published annually and contains generally longer articles on literary, historical and research matters. Potential contributors are invited to contact the Editor with articles or outlines/suggestions.

Copy deadline is June, with distribution to members (not Youth class) in the autumn.

**Mixed Moss 2022 issue  
Acting Editor for this issue is  
Julian Lovelock**

[julianlovelock@outlook.com](mailto:julianlovelock@outlook.com)

**Back issues: most in stock at  
the TARS Stall, £4 + p+p**

### LITERARY WEEKENDS

**Transcripts of Talks from  
the Edinburgh 2017 event  
and 13 previous biennial  
events are available from the  
TARS Stall, £6.50 +p**



**Amazon Publications**  
produces a Ransome-linked  
book yearly on a subscription  
basis. Next title (2022) *No  
Holds Barred* (see p16) Some  
back issues on TARS Stall.  
Enquires to Alan Hakim:  
[awhakim@btinternet.com](mailto:awhakim@btinternet.com)



**THE OUTLAW** is the TARS magazine specially for Juniors, sent to all Youth members, and to everyone with Group Membership, three times a year, along with Signals.

**Contact the Editors on  
[outlaw@arthur-ransome.org](mailto:outlaw@arthur-ransome.org)  
or Outlaw Editors c/o TARS,  
17 Chesterwood Road, Kings  
Heath Birmingham B13 0QG**

### RANSOME ONLINE

**TARS WEBSITE:**  
[arthur-ransome.org](http://arthur-ransome.org)  
with log-in access for  
Members Pages

### OTHER WEBSITES

**The Arthur Ransome Trust:**  
[arthur-ransome-trust.org.uk](http://arthur-ransome-trust.org.uk)

**The Nancy Blackett Trust:**  
[nancyblackett.org](http://nancyblackett.org)

[allthingsransome.net](http://allthingsransome.net)  
a useful resource site

[tarboard.net](http://tarboard.net) discussion forum

### FACEBOOK GROUPS

**The Arthur Ransome Group**  
(monitored public group)

**The Arthur Ransome Society  
(TARS) Facebook Group**  
(private group)



## The TARS Library

contains around 1,000 books written by Ransome, read by him, written about him or in some other way connected with him.

Browse the complete list on the TARS website, or request a paper copy for a small charge.

To borrow a book, contact our Librarian, Winifred Wilson, who will send it post-free in the UK (you pay only the return postage).

**Contact Winifred Wilson on 01387 252696**  
[tarslib@arthur-ransome.org](mailto:tarslib@arthur-ransome.org)

**TARS Library, Moat Brae**  
**101 George Street, Dumfries DG1 1EA**

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## TARS Committees

### Literary & Resources:

Krysia Clack (Chair), Elizabeth Williams (Secretary), Chris Birt, Paul Crisp, Ann Farr, John Pearson, Christine Rae, Winifred Wilson, Diana Wright, Peter Wright

### Publications:

Marc Grimston (Chair), Mike Glover (Secretary), The Blue Family, Catherine Lamont, David Middleton, Peter Willis

### Contribute!

Letters, articles, reviews, news, photos always welcome. Send them to the Editor at [peterwillis1144@gmail.com](mailto:peterwillis1144@gmail.com) or Creek View, School Lane, Martlesham, Woodbridge IP12 4RR tel 01394 387907

### Advertise!

We accept advertisements in Signals, included in the magazine or as loose inserts. Half-page £100, quarter page £50, eighth page £25. Insert your own flyer £100. Contact David Middleton, [memsec@arthur-ransome.org](mailto:memsec@arthur-ransome.org)

## TARS Subscriptions

### 2022 rates

(renewals due 1st January)

**Adult** (now including Seniors) £25

**Family/Group** £35

**Junior or Student** £15

**Overseas** as UK, with Signals/Outlaw online (otherwise + £5 postage surcharge)

**Corporate rate** £60

## RED SLIPPER FUND

**Research and publishing grants available with new grant criteria**

The **Red Slipper Fund** exists to encourage research into all aspects of Arthur Ransome's life and writings. This is one of the five objectives of the Society and we believe there is still much to discover!

To encourage more of you to undertake research, whether for a small article, pamphlet or book, for pleasure or academic study, grants may now be used towards travel costs, incidental expenditure or the costs of publication.

All we ask is that the TARS contribution is acknowledged in your work and that a copy is forwarded to the TARS Library.

For an application form and more details please contact: **Peter Wright**, [peterwright180@btinternet.com](mailto:peterwright180@btinternet.com)  
**17 Chesterwood Road, King's Heath**  
**Birmingham B13 0QG Tel: 0121 443 2910**

## *Junior Adventure Fund*

### Calling all young TARS aged 13 to 19

If you are planning to take part in a Ransome inspired outdoor activity, the TARS Junior Adventure Fund (formerly the Ship's Baby Fund) may be able to help with the costs.

The range is enormous – sailing, climbing, archaeological events, walking and camping, Scouting etc to name just a few. There are a few rules: School trips and GCSE field studies, or trips with parents are not eligible; Only one award per person.

**Please see the TARS website for further details or contact Paul Crisp,**  
[p.crisp048@btinternet.com](mailto:p.crisp048@btinternet.com)



# Summer wear from **The TARS Stall**



## Adult T-Shirts

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mid blue or white  
Medium W 21in L 28in  
Large W 22in L 30in  
X Large W 23in L 31in  
XX Large W 24in L 32in

### Ladies,

mint green or white  
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Medium W 19in L 25in  
Large W 20.5in L 27in



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X Large Width 23in Length 32in  
XX Large Width 26in Length 33in

### Ladies, light blue or pink

Small Width 16.5in Length 22in  
Medium Width 18in Length 26.5in  
Large Width 19.5in Length 28in



## Sweatshirts

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Large W 24.5in L 28.5in  
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Mid blue or lime green  
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W 18.5in L 24in 9-11 yrs  
W 19.5in L 26in 11-13 yrs

**UK postage and packing shown for individual items.** To Order, or for multiple-item or overseas costs, or any queries please contact:

**Christine Rae**, e-mail: [tarsstall@arthur-ransome.org](mailto:tarsstall@arthur-ransome.org)

By telephone +44 (0)1794 388897, preferably 6-8pm

(but *not* to make card payments, can't be done);

or SAE: The Manor House, Church Lane, Houghton,  
STOCKBRIDGE, Hampshire SO20 6LJ;

Payment may be made by PayPal to: [tarsstall@arthur-ransome.org](mailto:tarsstall@arthur-ransome.org)  
or by cheque payable to: *TARS Stall*. BACS payment details on request.

**More Stall selections on Pages 52-53**

**or [www.arthur-ransome.org](http://www.arthur-ransome.org)**