



SIGNALS

THE MAGAZINE OF THE ARTHUR RANSOME SOCIETY



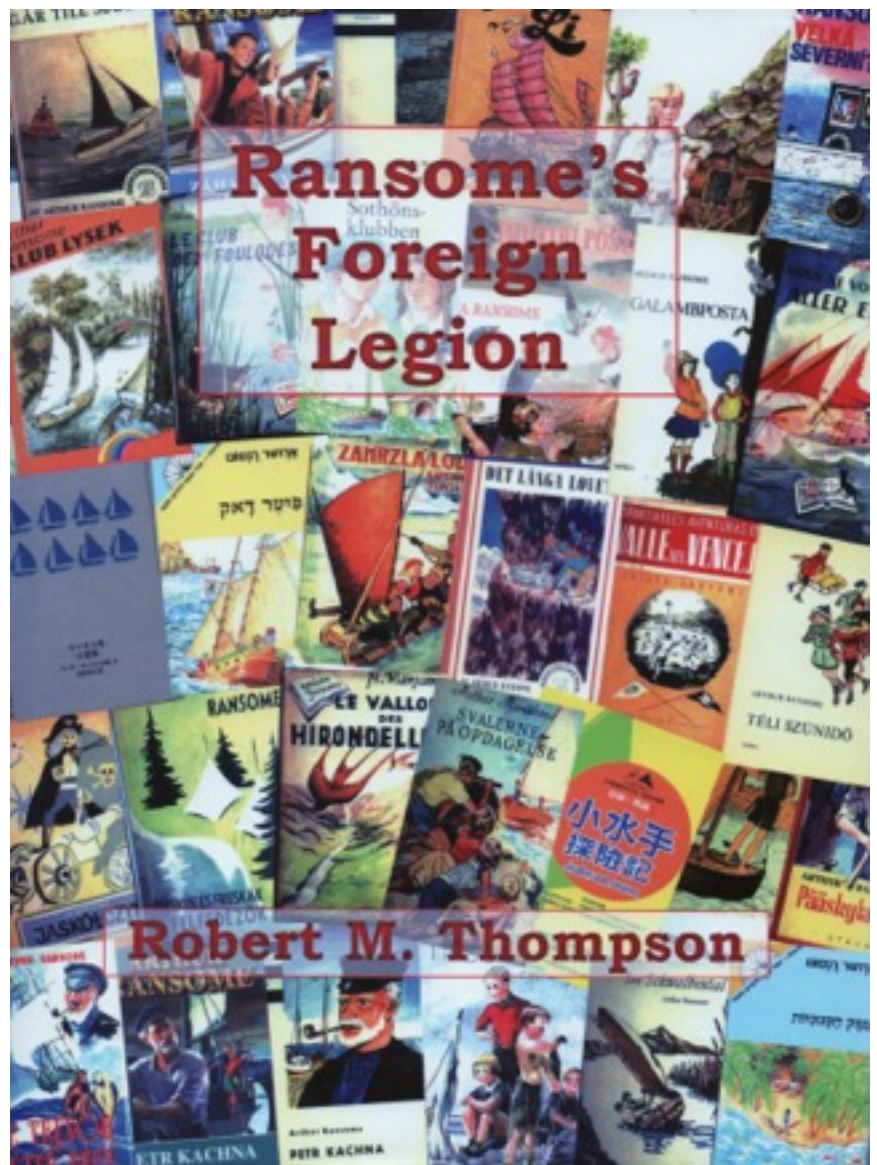
Celebrating
AMAZON
PUBLICATIONS

Belle looks round
Ransome's Leeds

Meet the Overseas
Co-ordinators

Arthur's BM
reader's ticket

Join the new
TARS Book Group



MAY-AUGUST 2021 WITH LIBRARY SUPPLEMENT

The Arthur Ransome Society

Limited Company, No 03386251

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SIGNALS



THE MAGAZINE OF THE ARTHUR RANSOME SOCIETY MAY-AUGUST 2021

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From the Editor

A precious relic

I sometimes think of it as my 'Howard Carter moment'. He, you'll remember was the first Egyptologist to gaze on the contents of Tutankhamun's tomb, and his name has become something of byword for that sort of experience. Mine – altogether more modest – took place in a huge depository, formerly a submarine repair depot, on the outskirts of Chatham Dockyard. I was watching as a remote-controlled fork-lift crawled along a stack about fifteen feet above my head. Eventually its operator found the place, stuck its prongs in and returned it with its burden to ground level.

And there she was, *Swallow*, from the 1974 film. The depot was owned by Turks, the boatyard, which ran a sideline in providing boats for films, and *Swallow* was the star lot in an action of their relics. I'd persuaded the magazine I worked on, *Classic Boat*, to send me down to view the collection, and here I was, I believe, the first Ransome fan to gaze on her in maybe 35 or more years.

She was a little dusty, a little scuffed, but there was her name in gold leaf on her stern, and, yes, wrapped around her spars, her beloved little sail, with its dummy patch on its leech - two patches actually, one on each side.

Led by Rob Boden and Magnus Smith, about 85 of us had crowdfunded just enough (as I knew - I was hanging on the line as Magnus approached our limit in the telephone auction) to secure her. About £5,000. We thought she would have gone for less. And now, if you saw her on the Antiques Roadshow, you'll realise how wrong we (and mercifully most other people at that time) were. If you didn't see the programme, its expert's valuation is revealed on page 6. Be sitting down.

Peter Willis

This issue's cover: *Ransome's Foreign Legion* is one of Amazon Publications' most ambitious and successful publications; it's here to mark our celebration of the enterprise on pages 8-9. Coincidentally, it also links in with that other 'Foreign Legion', our Overseas members, two of whose co-ordinators are introduced on pages 38-40. And if you are an Overseas Member, there's a special message for you on page 5, please read it and if you want to respond, please do so promptly – time is tight!

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CHAIRMAN'S REPORT from Peter Wright

As I write this, the first blossoms, bulbs and green shoots of spring are emerging in the garden. This is heartening after the long

dark winter made so much worse by the lockdowns due to the Coronavirus pandemic. Spring heralds new life, and here in the UK there are the first positive signs the pandemic is being tamed. The various roadmaps to recovery all indicate we shall soon be able to meet in small numbers again and by the summer, group activities should be allowed. I for one can't wait to meet TARS friends and go hiking, camping, sailing and if the Midland programme is to be believed, wild swimming in Welsh rivers and pools! I know the scenarios in other countries may vary, but I do hope that you all find something to enjoy and join in this summer.

For those for whom camping and hiking are no longer feasible, I hope you may join in the new TARS Book Group, which you can read about on page 7. Writing competitions are also going to be promoted (watch out for news in *Mixed Moss*) so there should be something for all to take part in.

It's so disappointing not to be able to hold this year's IAGM on Ransome's East Coast, but the Eastern region are hoping to rearrange their programme and hold the 2022 IAGM, possibly in August. We will, however, for the first time, be holding this year's formal IAGM meeting online via Zoom, on 29th May. Our President, Libby Purves hopes to address us and tell us why she loves Ransome, so I do hope you will all try to join the meeting. Being online will also give the chance for some of our overseas members to join us, bringing us closer together than ever. If time differences don't work out for you, the meeting will be recorded, so you can always watch it later at your leisure. It's also a huge personal disappointment that the Literary Weekend has had to be postponed, but we are exploring whether we could hold this in the spring of next year.

One of the things I know several of you have enjoyed doing during the lockdowns, is to re-read your favourite Ransome books. I joined in a fortnightly Zoom meeting where up to about 16 of us took it in turns to read from *Swallows and*

Amazons and greatly enjoyed it. No matter how much you think you know the books, there's always something fresh or new to learn. For example, I was surprised in chapter two, when Mother was explaining about the tents she had made for the Swallows, to read '*They are good enough tents except in a high wind,*' said Mother; '*Father and I often slept in one when we were young.*' What does she mean here? How young is young – a child, a teenager? We know Mother was brought up in Australia and learnt to sail in Sydney harbour, so does this imply Ted Walker was also brought up in Australia? Perhaps she means when they were courting or first married, (I don't think we know when she came to England or how they met) but in these circumstances wouldn't one normally say, "when we were younger"? It's a bit of a teaser – what are your thoughts?

My point in drawing attention to this is not to be critical of Ransome's writing, but rather to emphasise you can always spot something new and interesting when you re-read a book; so if you haven't picked up *Swallows and Amazons* for some time, why not give it another go and see what you can find that is new or that you have forgotten; you're sure to enjoy it again.

The Black Spot



IMPORTANT - PLEASE READ

You have everything you need to be happy, but TARS isn't happy, something is missing! *

Last year, when TARS had to increase its subs for the first time in seven years, no one seemed to object. HOWEVER, now that the subs are in, it appears that about 40% of you who pay by standing order have forgotten to inform your bank and change your order to the new amount! We hope this is just a lapse on your part and that you will swiftly rectify your tardiness, not forgetting to send the Membership Secretary, David Middleton, the balance you owe. Full details of the membership rates and what you need to do are set out in the renewal sheet inserted into this Signals. **Please look at it NOW!**

*Apologies for misquoting Ray Bradbury

2021 IAGM weekend CANCELLED, – but AGM to take place on Zoom

The Board of TARS regrets to inform members that due to the continuing Coronavirus emergency this year's IAGM Weekend planned for May 28-31 is CANCELLED.

Instead, the **Annual General Meeting** will take place on Zoom, on **Saturday May 29, at 10 am**. The Programme will include a short introduction from our President, Libby Purves, followed by the business of the AGM (please see separate AGM papers, included in this issue's mailing) and then the Members' Forum. The meeting will close at approximately 12 noon. All members are invited to follow the proceedings online, to vote electronically and submit contributions to the Forum - see below for more details.

The **Literary Weekend** planned for this autumn has had to be called off for the same reasons, but it is hoped to organise this for next year.

IAGM Next Year: Same venue, Later date

Planning for next year's events is currently under way. We hope to be able to restage the IAGM weekend programme, with modifications, at the same venue - the Royal Hospital School, Suffolk. Unfortunately however the school cannot accommodate our traditional May weekend, so we are exploring the possibility of the August Bank Holiday weekend, **August 26-29 2022**.

The **Literary Weekend** might then move to a date in the Spring. Options are being explored and a firm date, with further details will be published in the next issue of Signals.

ZOOMing to the 2021 AGM

- To join the Zoom IAGM meeting, you will need to book your place in advance. Booking will be open 1st - 22nd May. Please send your request to: TARSIAGM@gmail.com
- You will then be sent details of how the event will be organised, a guide to using Zoom and the Zoom email link.
- You will be able to vote on the formal motions set out in the IAGM papers.
- If you wish to ask a question relating to the IAGM papers, it would help if this could be mailed in advance to tarsinfo@arthur-ransome.org
- If you wish to raise an item or have a question for the Members' Forum it will also be helpful to notify us of this in advance by emailing tarsinfo@arthur-ransome.org. There will be a facility to ask questions on the day using 'chat box', but pre-booked questions will be taken first.
- **If you do not have internet access**, you can join the meeting on your phone, but you will need to let us know in advance as we will need to send you the phone number link. **Please phone Brian Key on 01245 263579.**
- For those unable to attend, you still have the option of voting using the proxy form available in the IAGM papers.

The event will also be recorded to enable members to view the proceedings later

**A Dick Callum Zoom quiz is also being planned for the evening.
Details will be posted on the website later**

News from the Board

A Board meeting, using Zoom, was held on 13th March 2021. The key points of note are:

Chairman's remarks:

- Marc Grimston was welcomed to his first Board meeting.
- Amanda Ardagh-Walter was thanked for her dedicated years of service and in particular for overseeing our Safeguarding policy. She will have to stand down at the IAGM under the 6 years rule.
- It was encouraging to note membership numbers have grown over each of the past four months.
- It was noted that 2024 will mark the 50th anniversary of the first *Swallows and Amazons* film. It was agreed that at the Autumn Board meeting, a discussion will be held to decide whether we should hold some form of celebratory event to mark the occasion.

Matters Arising from the previous meeting:

- **Coch-y-Bonddhu:** Her lease at Windermere Jetty expires in December 2022. Following consideration by the Scotland Committee, the Board agreed to their recommendation that she should stay at that location and a new lease be negotiated.

Treasurer's report:

- It was noted, with satisfaction, that a modest £339 profit had been made during 2020. The budget for 2021 was approved.

Literary & Resources Committee report:

- The issue of how best to lodge our publications at the legal deposit libraries has been resolved. With immediate effect, all our magazines, including copies of the Literary Weekend Transcripts, will be sent electronically to the British Library. They will act as a clearing house for the other legal deposit libraries.
- It was agreed that a TARS book group would be launched (through Signals and the website) to read modern children's literature that promoted the spirit and fun of outdoor adventure in the Ransome tradition. A steering group has been

formed to progress this. They will also consider the feasibility of a longer-term initiative – a possible TARS Book Award.

- A set of the 12 *S&A* books has been presented to Moat Brae.

Publications Committee report:

- It was agreed two writing competitions are to be promoted. An adult (members) competition, to be promoted through *Mixed Moss*, and a junior competition to be aimed at schools and youth organisations as a means of both encouraging youngsters to read the *S&A* books and promoting TARS. A small steering group will progress this.
- It was noted with concern that many members have not yet changed their standing orders in line with the latest membership rates. Since the publications meeting, Diana Wright has rung over 80 members who had not yet renewed their membership, with very positive results.

IAGMs :

It was agreed that:

- As a result of Covid, the 2021 IAGM weekend would be cancelled. The formal AGM meeting itself would go ahead as a Zoom meeting on 29th May.
- The 2022 IAGM should be held in Eastern region. As it was thought the Royal Hospital School could not accommodate us during our usual spring period, we agreed to try for the August Bank Holiday break (possibly retaining the business meeting via Zoom, in May).
- The IAGM timetable would roll forward one year, ie 2023 = Scotland, 2024 Midlands etc.

Literary Weekend:

- As, due to Covid, it had neither been possible to visit our preferred venue, nor had the College been willing to commit to a booking, the 2021 Literary Weekend has had to be postponed. It is hoped it may be re-arranged for spring 2022.

Website:

- A report on the satisfactory progress and success of the website was received.

AusTARS Cup:

- The recommendation from the Australian Committee was accepted. The winner will be announced at the IAGM zoom meeting.

Membership:

- Ted Evans was thanked for his dedicated work over many years, as Assistant Membership Secretary as he has decided to stand down from this role. Susan Gouldbourne volunteered to take over.
- A paper was also discussed about moving to online membership. Diana Wright has explored how best to make this happen and has found a much cheaper option than originally thought. There remain some questions about the costs of moving to Direct Debit and some of the practical details need finessing. The membership team, plus the chairman, will investigate this further and bring a final recommendation back to the Board.

Child Safeguarding policy:

- An updated policy was presented, adopted and signed (virtually) by the Board. Each region will now need to do the same. Amanda agreed to keep this role for a while and to write a complementary paper about adopting or incorporating a vulnerable adults section.

Relations with other AR entities:

- The Board was pleased to hear we have had a very positive response from ART to our policy statement. We can look forward to a closer and beneficial liaison with them, as we have recently confirmed with the Nancy Blackett Trust. Christina Hardymant has clarified the relationship with Amazon Publications. She set it up "under the aegis of TARS", i.e. with the protection and support of TARS, but as a separate entity in its own right with independent accounts.

Other reports: were received and accepted about the Alliance of Literary Societies, TARS Insurance, Overseas issues and from each region, where everyone is looking forward to being able to meet again in person in the near future.

Saturday April 17 3pm
Northern Region TARS presents
A ZOOM interview with
Mike Bender

to discuss his book

Sunlight and Shadows
(including thoughts on a second edition)

All members welcome. The format will be an interview between Mike Bender and Elizabeth Williams (chair Northern Region) with an opportunity to add questions on 'chat' during the interview. These will be collated and a selection put to Mike Bender at the end.

For the Zoom link or to put a question, email **Helen Lewis (h.m.lewis55@btinternet.com)**

If you miss this live event, it is being recorded and will be available, also via Helen.



This delightful portrait of Arthur Ransome, aged 46, was painted in 1930 by his friend Dora Altounyan (nee Collingwood), mother of the 'original Swallows'. It was posted on Facebook on his birthday last January by The Lakeland Arts Trust, which owns both Abbot Hall and Windermere Jetty, and which has kindly allowed us to reproduce it here.

FOR OVERSEAS MEMBERS

'Engaging at a distance'

For a Mixed Moss article on the topic of 'Engaging with AR and TARS at a distance,' Kirsty Nicol Findlay is currently collating contributions from Overseas members. Whether it's a story, comments about the particular challenges or advantages of living overseas, or even a picture about 'signalling from Mars,' do get in touch by 30 April, to mixedmoss@arthur-ransome.org

NEW BOOK

Kennedy on Ransome

Coming soon: A new study of Ransome by **Alan Kennedy**, whose articles in the last two issues of Mixed Moss give some idea of the content matter.

Titled *A Thoroughly Mischievous Person: The Other Arthur Ransome*, it is due in September, from Lutterworth, publisher of Julian Lovelock's *Swallows, Amazons and Coots*, and Sophie Neville's *The Making of Swallows and Amazons*.

Alan Kennedy is an emeritus professor of psychology living in southwest France. Some more of his literary essays can be found on his website lasserradepress.weebly.com.

Of the book, he says it "offers a 'psycho-literary' explanation for his enduring appeal to both children and adults. I believe Arthur Ransome wrote his autobiography in his fiction, using narrative techniques borrowed from symbolists. His best work owes as much to the techniques of poetry as of prose and in that sense he can be counted as a writer in the modernist tradition."

120 years ago this year

"August the 2nd. 1901
 We climbed the Matterhorn.
 Molly Turner.
 J. Turner.
 Bob Blackett"

90 years ago this year

"Aug. 11. 1931.
 We climbed Kanchenjunga."
 Nancy Blackett John Walker
 Peggy Blackett Susan Walker
 Titty Walker Roger Walker

You know where it is...



ANTIQUES ROADSHOW

Swallow is worth... HOW much?!?

The first episode of the BBC's Antiques Roadshow filmed last summer at Windermere Jetty was duly broadcast on 21 February.

The interview aboard *Swallow* from the 1974 *Swallows and Amazons* film was held back until towards the end of the show.

Then Rob Boden, her co-keeper in Sail Ransome set off aboard her with art expert, sailing enthusiast and a great S&A fan Rupert Maas settled aboard for their chat. Rob told how about 85 Ransome fans had 'crowd-funded' to bid for her at an auction in 2010, and paid "five and a half thousand, or just under" for her.

Rupert admired her mahogany planks, and elm ribs, observed that she "wasn't over-restored" and that such boats occasionally came up for sale at about £2-3,000. "But," he then added, "I've got to value her, and the association with that iconic film is just so powerful that without hesitation I'd put twenty to thirty thousand pounds on her."

Rob added, "He did say later on, that the valuation was just a guide and we shouldn't get too excited about it!"

Peter Willis adds: I phoned Rupert Maas the following morning to confirm the figure, and ask how it might affect the value of Ransome's much larger *Nancy Blackett*, the original of the *Goblin*, for which the Nancy Blackett Trust paid a remarkably similar sum, £25,000, in 1997. The answer was, in effect, not at all. "It's the film that rules here – people consider a boat that was in a film a lot more starry than one that was owned by her author - it's the film that spreads the magic dust."

If you want to sail *Swallow*, contact Rob on humyar@tiscali.co.uk or 01539 731136, or visit sailransome.org

A second episode from Windermere, featuring Sophie Neville is due to be shown sometime soon.

RANSOME HOME

Blue plaque for 1 Gunter Grove



Arthur Ransome has been honoured with an English Heritage London Blue Plaque for one of his first homes in the city. He lived at No 1 Gunter Grove, Chelsea, in the front ground-floor room, between the spring of 1904 and October 1905.

It was not his first London address, but was the first to be mentioned by name in his autobiography. It was also where his first book of essays, *The Souls of the Streets*, was delivered to him on publication. Edward Thomas took another room in the house for a few weeks, and some of the Collingwoods, including Dora and Barbara, stayed in a flat he found for them nearby in Edith Grove.

"Those were wonderful days in the winter of 1904," he wrote. "With the Collingwoods just round the corner, I had the lake country with me here in London, and a whole family who shared the simple view that, so long as it was possible to pay one's way without actually starving, work was what mattered and money of no importance whatever. I never starved but I was always hungry."

It was here that he perfected his method of cooking a haddock – pour boiling water over it and read for another ten minutes. From here, in October 1905, he was to move to Carlyle Studios.

The English Heritage plaque was installed at the end of March, and 'unveiled', virtually, in early April, by means of a press release, quoting Ellen MacArthur. A planned ceremony had to be abandoned due to the Covid restrictions.

1 Gunter Grove as it is now (but pre-plaque). Ransome rented the ground-floor front room on the left.



A TARS Book Group

Announcing a social reading and discussion group with a particular purpose

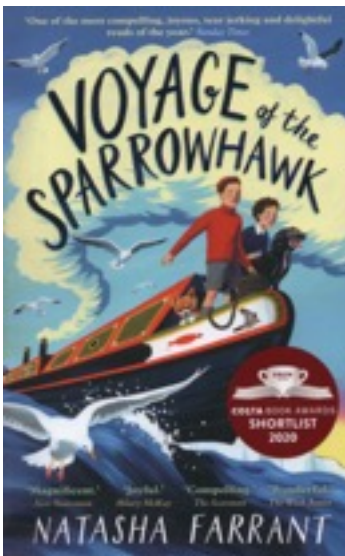
This initiative arose from remarks by Mike Bender in *Sunlight and Shadows* to the effect that Ransome's books had dropped out of the public eye or the 'cultural conversation' and ceased to have relevance in the world of current children's literature. The idea behind the Book Group is therefore to raise the profile of Ransome's books by developing a link between them and present-day children's books – while providing an enjoyable reading experience and discussion forum for interested TARS members, possibly leading to the announcement of an annual shortlist and maybe an 'award' of our own.

We will focus on new and recently-published books that reflect the 'Spirit of Swallows and Amazons' - a discussion topic in its own right, but likely candidates will be books that celebrate initiative, action, challenge and achievement, co-operation, comradeship and capability, probably in an outdoor setting. Our selections will be culled initially from the shortlists of existing children's book award schemes, including the Carnegie, the Costa Children's Book Awards and schemes run for schools by county council education departments, such as Cumbria and Oxford. Suggestions from members will also be welcome. Our initial reading list is *Voyage of the Sparrowhawk* by Natasha Farrant, *Spylark* by Danny Rurlander and *Lark* by Anthony McGowan. All are in the TARS Library.

Discussion will be initially via blogs on the TARS website, plus the occasional Zoom meeting.

There's an organising team: **Amanda Ardagh-Walter** (nickandamanda1558@gmail.com) will keep the membership list and contact members for Zoom meetings – email her if you'd like to join.

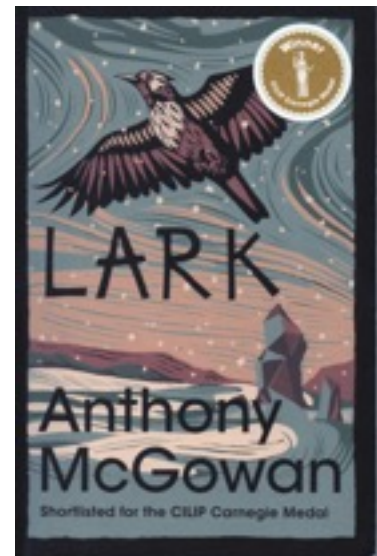
Elizabeth Williams (finnsarah1990@aol.com) will be bookfinder general - contact her if you want to suggest a title for the list. **Diana Wright** will look after the website side. **Peter Willis** will be general co-ordinator.



Set in the aftermath of the First World War, orphans Ben and Lottie set off for France in a narrowboat to seek missing relatives. Author Natasha Farrant cites Ransome and Blyton as influences. Winner of 2020 Costa Children's Book Award

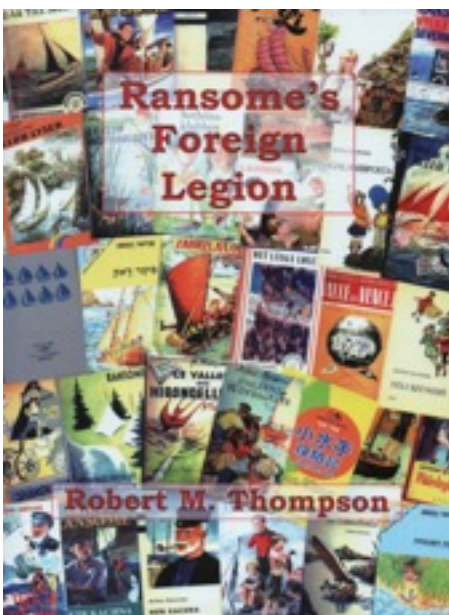
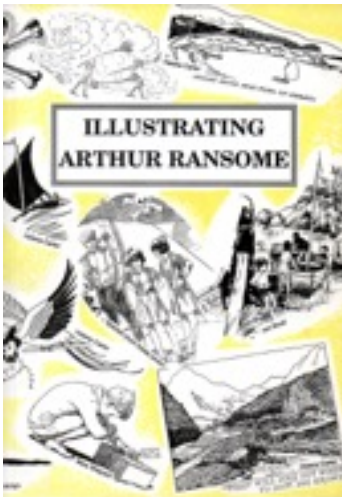


Set on Windermere and with lots of Ransome references. Loner 13-year-old drone designer Tom sets out to foil an assassination plot with the help of new friends. Action adventure with thoughtful sub-themes. Winner of Cumbria Schools Spellbinding Award 2020



Two brothers set out for a hike on the moors. They're poorly equipped, and with adverse weather, it starts badly, then gets a whole lot worse. A sparsely-written elegiac narrative, the finale of a quartet, it's the winner of the 2020 CILIP Carnegie Medal

OTHER AR ENTITIES 2 by Peter Willis



(almost) 30 years of Amazon Publications

Few literary societies enjoy the benefit of their own publishing arm. For TARS, it takes the form of Amazon Publications, which started nearly 30 years ago, and has produced a book nearly every year since – 28 so far.

Its business model is simple. It works on subscription publishing – announcing a title, which subscribers (TARS members only) order and pay for in advance. It then knows how many copies to print, including a few dozen extra, which are made available through the TARS Stall, for members who forgot to order or change their minds once the book becomes a reality.

I've often wondered how it manages to produce relatively short runs of such good-quality books – dust-jacketed hardbacks these days – so cheaply. The answer is pretty simple: there are no additional margins for book-trade distribution to worry about, and all the staff are unpaid volunteers. In short, it's totally unlike the global online amazon.com, with which it should not be confused.

Initial staff included Christina Hardymont, Dave Sewart and John Cowen. Roger Wardale and others got involved from time to time. Core members of the current team are Alan Hakim, with Margaret and Joe Ratcliffe and Paul Crisp.

'Under the aegis'

Although Amazon exists solely to serve TARS members, its finances are quite separate – it doesn't appear anywhere on the TARS accounts. Christina describes its status as "under the aegis" of TARS, which she suggests is "a usefully vague position" – although it has occasionally meant Amazon having difficulty finding a place on the agenda at TARS IAGMs. The benefit is that Amazon can maintain its financial independence while enjoying the same freedom as TARS itself regarding the use of Ransome's copyright material.

Amazon books are only accessible to non-TARS through being lodged in the British Library and the other Legal Deposit libraries. Second-hand copies occasionally pop up on eBay and elsewhere.

The birth of Amazon Publications was triggered by Rodney Dingle's 1991 survey of members' likes, *Distilled Enthusiasms*, the results of which proved too big for a *Mixed Moss* article. *MM* editor, Christina Hardymont, had the idea of publishing it as a separate booklet which was sent to all 784 TARS members as the first of a possible series. It was sent with an appeal to contribute to the cost but, more importantly, as a subscription towards another book, *Blue Treacle*, an early AR work, written for his daughter Tabitha. And so Amazon Publications was formed. Christina also coined AP's slogan: "To each according to their love of Ransome, from each according to their means and enthusiasm."

Although *Blue Treacle* was, at least in Alan Hakim's view, an example of AR's early style at its worst, subscribers didn't give up, and new books have come out almost every year since then.



The founding fathers, and mother, from 1991:
From left: Christina Hardymont,
John Cowen and Dave Sewart

The third one, in 1994, was *Illustrating Arthur Ransome*, a collection in one volume of all the illustrations (by Ransome and Clifford Webb) in the UK editions. This attracted some 300 subscribers. It also included a fascinating selection of some from overseas versions. In 2009, with Robert Thompson, AP produced a much fuller survey of overseas editions and foreign translations, with colour illustrations, in *Ransome's Foreign Legion*.

By this time, 15 years on, the number of subscribers had subsided to just under 200, and there the numbers have tended to stay. "We have a faithful contingent who have subscribed for years," says Alan, "but many newer members appear to know nothing about us, or alternatively, seem not to be interested in Ransome and his eventful life, but solely in the 'activity and personality' aspect of the *S&A* books."

Extraordinary range

The range of subjects covered has been extraordinary. It includes a lot of his journalism for the *Manchester Guardian* (*Ransome in China*, *Ransome in Egypt*, *Fair Cops & Glowworms* and *Drawn at a Venture*). By contrast, *The Best of Childhood* quoted extensively from his diaries and letters recounting the agonising difficulties he faced while writing the *S&A* books. Sailing enthusiasts, like me, have delighted in *Ransome on Blue Water* – his introductions to Mariners' Library titles and other yachting articles – and *Ransome at Sea*, logs from all the boats he owned, and some he hired.

There are the occasional co-ventures with other publishers – *Ransome the Artist*, with Abbot Hall, is a delightful sketch-book, and there's the 'long-lost' study of Robert Louis Stevenson. Copies of both are still available, as is the reprint of *Bohemia in London*, his 'first proper book' which had long been out of print.

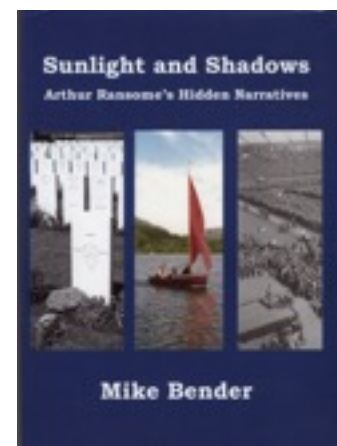
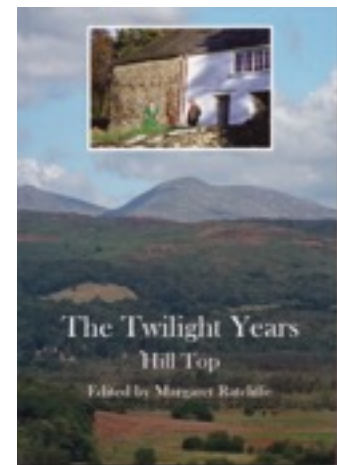
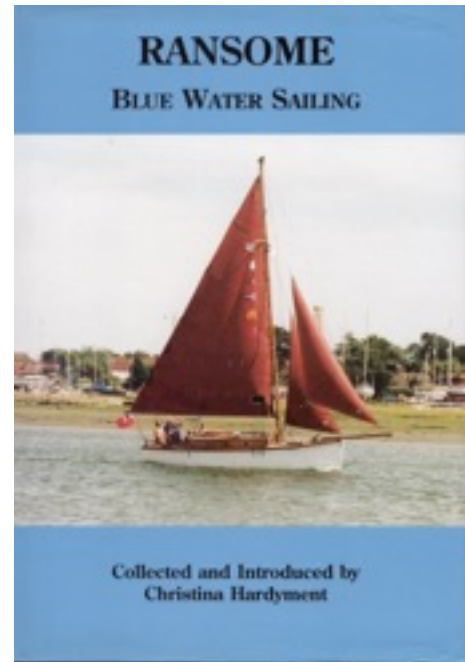
There is literary criticism. Its latest, published last summer, was Mike Bender's *Sunlight and Shadows*, enthusiastically received and much discussed.

And what next?

The Coronavirus pandemic has brought one project to a temporary halt. Amazon had hoped to produce an updated version of Claire Kendall-Price's 1993 Lake-country walking guide *In the Footsteps of the Swallows and Amazons*, but with additional coverage of the Broads and Ransome's East Coast areas this year, but its team of willing helpers have been unable to get out and check route details, parking etc. which will inevitably have changed over the last 25 years.

Instead, the team is currently working on *Ransome Centre Stage*, the collected scripts – and some illustrations – of the various plays put on over the years by TARS members, derived from AR's writings. Coming this summer.

And what can you do for Amazon Publications? "Join us!" is Alan's answer – as subscriber or author. "Surely somebody reading this has an idea for a book? Pamphlet or tome, we would be happy to help bring it to its ideal audience. By Tars for Tars. Above all, become a subscriber. Don't be in the 75% of Tars who are unaware of Arthur's wider legacy."



‘Folk tales and novelwriting’ – Ransome’s reading at the British Museum

Krysia Clack follows up a diary entry and is rewarded with new information of acquaintance with a well-known artist

It was while reading *The Twilight Years, London*, Arthur Ransome’s diary entries for his later years, that I came across this entry:

Thursday 6th February 1958: ‘Read at the BM.’

‘BM’ meant the British Museum Library in Bloomsbury, London, where the national library was then still housed, with its famous Round Reading Room located in the ground-floor foyer. And this, it turns out, was over half a century after Ransome’s first visit.

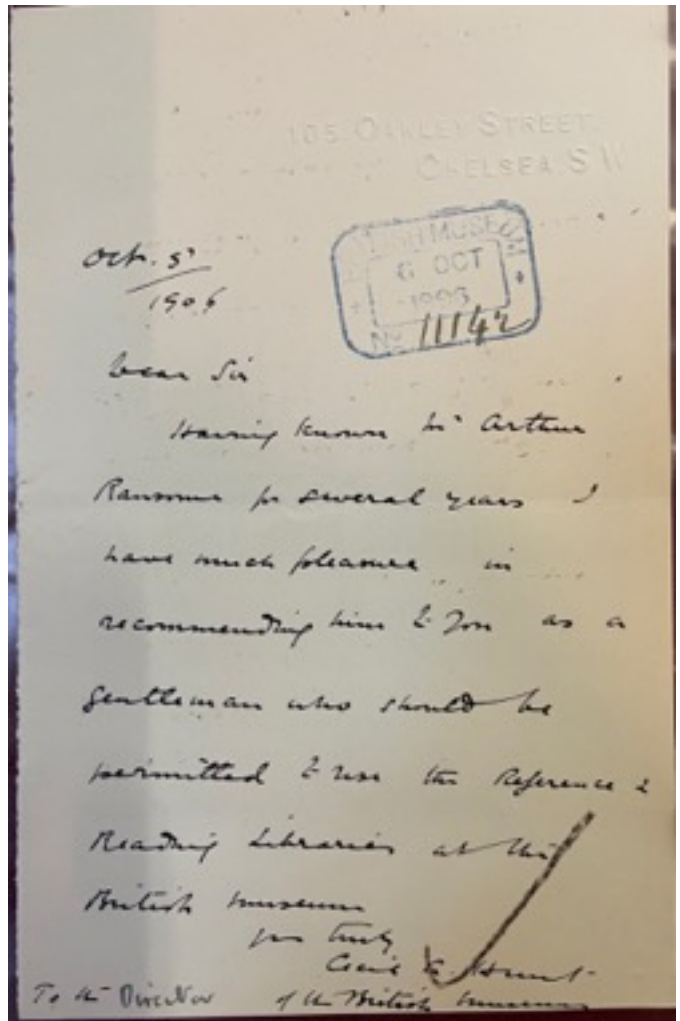
Books could not be loaned, but had to be consulted there - for which a Reader’s Ticket was required. I knew that the British Museum still retained old reader records and thought it might be worth checking if they could provide details about Arthur Ransome’s reader history at their library. I sent them an email asking if they still had Arthur Michell Ransome’s details. They replied surprisingly quickly and their email proved to be quite something. Not only did it confirm that the British Museum held details of Ransome but it came accompanied with five attached scans – which I opened with great excitement.

The first was Ransome’s letter of application, sent on 5th October 1906 from Carlyle Studios, Chelsea, in which Arthur requested a ticket to allow him access to the collection, explaining that “I am preparing some books on folk tales and a history of novelwriting” (novelwriting as all one word).

An artist - and a bohemian?

An application for a reader ticket had to be accompanied by a letter from a referee. In this case, it was provided by C A Hunt, himself already a ticket holder, who said he had known Ransome “for some years” and describes him as “a gentleman who should be permitted to use” the library.

C A Hunt does not appear in Arthur’s diaries but we can ascertain from his address – 105 Oakley Street,



on his embossed notepaper – that he lived in Chelsea and must have known Ransome during his Bohemian days. I sought Margaret Ratcliffe's assistance; her investigations showed that he was an artist of merit alive between 1873 and 1965. Margaret has already obtained a catalogue of Hunt's works which she has generously donated to the TARS library. She is investigating further Hunt's connection with Ransome. I am sure that there will be more to follow!

There was then a scan of the formal acceptance on 6th October of Arthur Michell Ransome as a user of the Reading Room and instructions that he would be presented with a reader ticket on presentation of that letter within six months.

Changes of address

The fourth scan was the 'Reader Application Card' where Ransome's changes of address were entered. Two – Manor Farm, Hatch in 1912, and Hurlingham Court in 1957 – are well-known and well-described in Ted Alexander's book *Ransome at Home*. However, there was an entry which I did not recognise: 34 Manchester Street (off Manchester Square), in December 1909, receives only a brief mention in Ted's book. Ransome and Ivy only lived there for about seven weeks when they came to London after leaving the property at Froxfield rather suddenly.

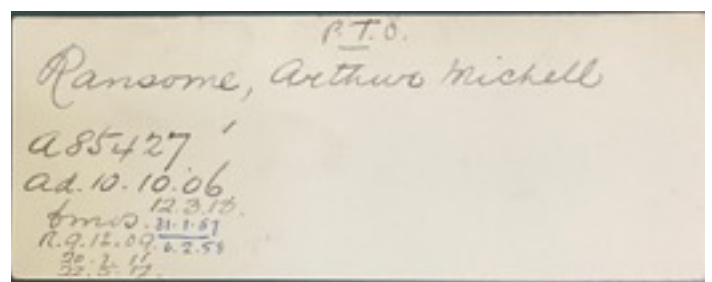
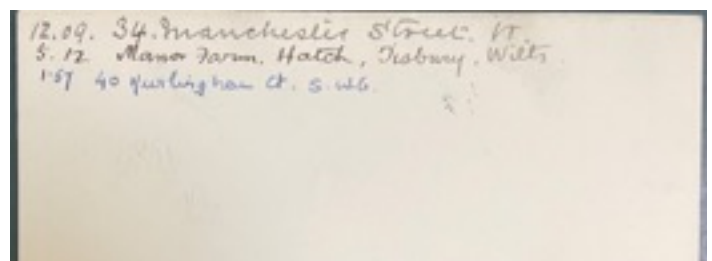
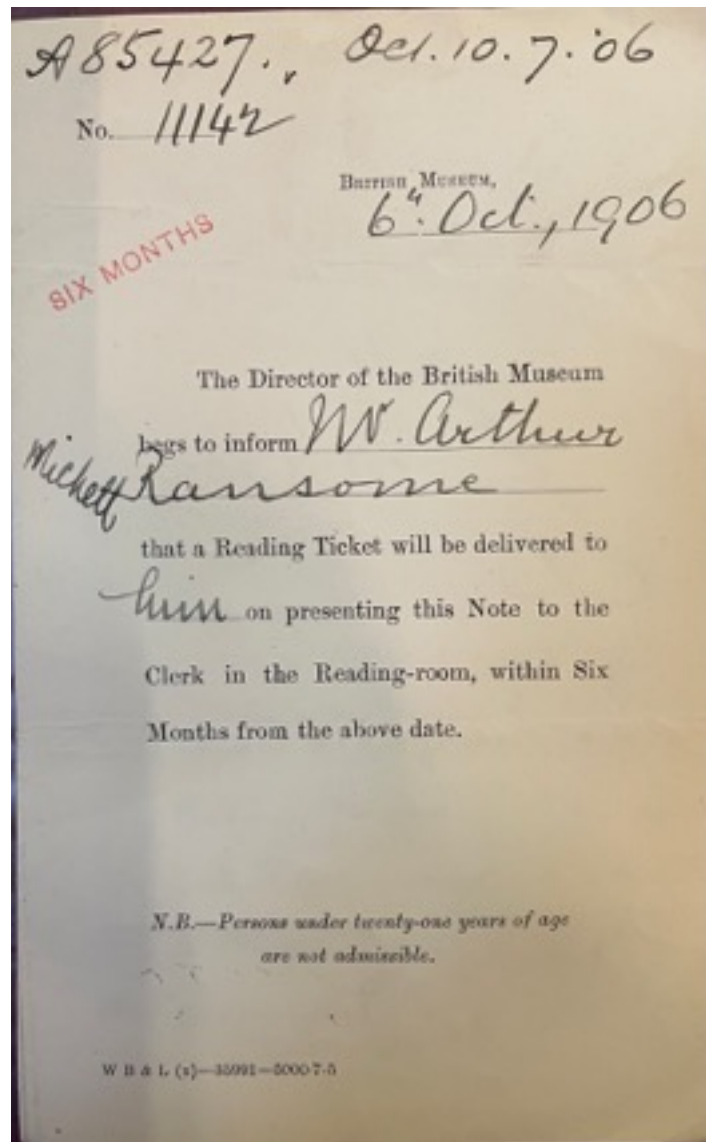
Finally, there was a record of Arthur's visits to the British Museum Reading Room and we can see that he visited a number of times, the last entry being 6th February 1958, the same date as shown in the diary entry which started this investigation.

Unfortunately, the British Museum did not keep a record of the material Ransome consulted. That would have been so interesting. We all know that it was his research into folk tales that eventually took Arthur to Russia. Whether his intended interest in 'novelwriting' proved of value to him at the time (it's interesting to note that at 22 he was barely above the minimum age of admission) is an unknown quantity.

Postscripts

The National Library was later absorbed with other collections to form the British Library and moved to its own present site near St Pancras in London in 1997.

The Twilight Years, London, Ransome's diaries 1950-1963, edited by Margaret Ratcliffe is published by Amazon Publications; copies are available from the TARS Stall (see p42).



Belle sets out to discover Arthur Ransome's Leeds

Leeds is where I live and it's an amazing place, reports 13-year-old TARS member Belle Watson. It is also, as many readers will know, where Arthur Ransome was born and grew up. He grew up a few miles from where I live, so, as part of my lockdown exercise, I've been out to look at the houses he lived in.



6 Ash Grove

The first place we visited, where he was born on the 18th January 1884. Years later his mother showed him the house and, in his autobiography, Ransome describes it as “a mean, ugly little building, one of a row, not far from Woodhouse Moor.”

This house is now commemorated with a blue plaque and I have visited on a few occasions. I don't think it's as bad as Ransome said it was. It is a little run down but is in a mostly student area now. However, when Ransome lived here it was almost brand new (it was built around 1880) and there were only a few other houses, making it a desirable location to live in. Not too much has changed at the front of the house (other than modern repairs and features such as a grille and satellite dish).

That said, he likely wouldn't recognise the area itself as the road has changed considerably - there are more houses, more cars and quite a lot of graffiti in the area.



4 de Grey Road

Between 1886 and 1890 Ransome lived here. It was within the Yorkshire College (later Leeds University) and it then became a hall for women who studied at the University before being knocked down to make room for the current Brotherton Library. I didn't get to visit because it was knocked down before I was born! However, I did go to the Brotherton Library a few years ago for a TARS event where we got to peek inside Captain Flint's trunk.

Since I started writing this article I have mentioned it to a number of people and from this I am led to believe that the Brotherton Library was also built on top of a graveyard - the graveyard where my great, great grandad was buried in a family grave! The work started only three years after he died.

2 Balmoral Terrace

Ransome lived here between 1890 and 1894. The property is part of a terrace of three stone double-fronted houses built in about 1857. In 2002 the terrace was listed and is now a Grade II listed building. According to the listing description it still has lots of its original features including staircases, panelled doors, shuttered windows and fireplaces.

I think that Ransome might still recognise this house because, despite the many new buildings around, and new windows and modern repairs, it still looks very similar to when he lived in it.

It seems to me that it would be a nice area to live in, the roads are nice and quiet but it's near the centre of Headingley and all the facilities it has to offer.





The Three Horseshoes and the Skyrack

Two places in Headingley that Ransome refers to in his autobiography are the public houses called The Skyrack (on there right in the photos above and The Three Horseshoes (on the left). He wrote:

“ ... we moved to a house (2 Balmoral Terrace) halfway between the Skyrack Inn and the Three Horseshoes at Headingley on the outskirts of Leeds. I remember that house by a bush of white guelder roses and my own small garden of pansies with a border of Virginia stock. But I well remember the Shire Oak, the ruin of which remains enclosed in an iron paling...”

It is thought that the name Skyrack comes from the Old English for Shire Oak. The Shire Oak was a place where people would meet and there was a large oak present just across the way from the Skyrack public house until it fell in the early 1940s. This is supposedly commemorated (I haven't been able to check due to lockdown restrictions) by a plaque on the garden wall of the public house opposite, The Original Oak.

3 St Chad's Villas

In 1894, when Arthur was 10, the family moved from Balmoral Terrace into 3 St Chad's Villas, (“our last Leeds House”) which is now known as 126 Otley Road.

It is now a hotel and Indian restaurant (Ascot Grange hotel and The Voujon Indian restaurant). It is connected with 128 and together they form the hotel. Once lockdown is over, we plan to try out the restaurant.

I think that Ransome would find it harder to recognise this one because there have been lots of modern additions to the building. There are obviously the new signs, and what used



to be long front gardens are now a car park. Anyway I wouldn't be so keen to live at this address as it would probably be quite loud since the road that goes along the front of the houses is one of the busiest in Leeds.

All of these areas are in the Weetwood, Headingley and Hyde Park areas, and they are now very popular areas for both families and students. Since Ransome's days there has been a lot of change, most notably the popularity of the modern car – trams haven't been used for a while!

I hope that you enjoyed reading about this as much as I enjoyed walking round and finding out about all of these places. If you are ever interested in coming to Leeds (when we're allowed to do things like that again) do let me know and I can give you more information about where these places are - and we could maybe even meet up so we can talk about Swallows and Amazons!

OBITUARIES

David Jones

We are very sorry to report the death in February of David Jones, at the age of 89. He was for many years a leading light in TARS Southern Region, and active in Amazon Publications in the early 2000s. He was sole author of *Ransome in China* and one of the joint authors of *The Best of Childhood* a vital background for lovers of "The Twelve".

As a West Sussex County Councillor, he got us the use of County Hall for the 1995 IAGM, the first held away from the Lakes or the Broads. He noted that AR spent more time sailing in and around Chichester Harbour than in either of those primary regions.

He also owned one of the Peter Duck class of yachts, which he renamed as 'Mary Ransome', and was responsible for writing a history of the class, as well as getting its AR connection recognised.

All this was a sideline to his main life. He had a distinguished career in the Royal Artillery, retiring as a Lt Colonel, and then converted to being a farmer until full retirement. – Alan Hakim



Brian Keane 1934-2019 – TARS Member No.1

My father Brian introduced my brother and me to the wonderful world of Arthur Ransome when we were small boys, reading each of his novels to us in turn at bedtime.

Brian's love of Arthur Ransome and the Broads started at a young age when he used to travel by bicycle from North London to Norfolk. After leaving school, he and several school friends took holidays on the Broads, hiring half-deckers and camping and then graduated to sailing yachts. As children we holidayed on the Broads on various motorboats before the family acquired its property on the River Bure in Wroxham in 1977. Brian had finally achieved his dream of having his own place on the Broads and with a boat – a small sailing dinghy.

Soon, the family desired something bigger and more comfortable and so the search began. After several viewings, Brian acquired the second love of his life, *Ripple 2*, a 34ft gaff rigged auxiliary wooden sloop built by Loynes of Wroxham. Brian enjoyed over 40 years of highly social, pleasurable cruising on the Broads with his beloved *Ripple 2* and the other members of the Yare Valley Sailing Club. His enthusiasm for Arthur Ransome never waned over the years and he looked



forward to attending the various TARS events, as well as seeing old and new friends who shared his love of everything AR! In his last years, his health started to fail; he was not up to attending events but looked forward to receiving his TARS magazine and reading the latest articles on AR. – Ivan Keane

Like my father, I have many fond memories of my Grandad Brian, reading me stories from his set of AR books. He had bought all the AR DVDs available and every time I went to see him in Wroxham, I would ask him for the DVDs he kept in his study, watching them again and again. Grandad used to take me on *Ripple* which to me was 'The Teasel'.

He noticed my 'addiction' and made me a member of TARS. I always look forward to receiving the TARS publications and hope to find my own vessel someday.

Grandad's and my father's passion for sailing has 'rubbed off' on me and I have now done several sailing schools at my father's local sailing club so that I can sail my own boat in the future. – Ivanna Keane

OBITUARY

David Carter

A belated appreciation

Some years ago, David asked to be deleted from the TARS mailing list as his sight had deteriorated. As a result the society lost touch with him. He continued to be listed as Vice-President Emeritus but following a recent enquiry to his family we now know that David died, peacefully of natural causes, on 18 May 2018. We felt that despite the delay, his contribution to TARS was too important to go unmarked.

David Carter was TARS' first Chairman when the society was launched in 1990, but his contribution to TARS began long before then, and continued long after he stepped down from the post after one term in 1992.

One of the initiatives that led to TARS began at the Museum of Lakeland Life in Kendal when it received the gift, from Evgenia, of Ransome's desk, his typewriter and other associated items. There were also some manuscripts from Capes, including *The River Comes First* and what was to become *Coots in the North*. Interest in Ransome began to grow, and the museum collected names of visitors against the possible setting up of a society.

Vicky Slowe, later curator of the Ruskin Museum at Coniston, and also an early TARS trustee, was working at Abbot Hall at the time and recalls "I was trying to pull the pieces together, and David walked in right at the start. He offered 'anything I can do to help'."

When the idea of a society took off, adds Vicky, "He and John Sanders worked on the structure of the organisation; he also got on very well with Dick Kelsall, and the three of them worked on the balance between the literary interest and the sailing, and how to set up the regional groups".

John recalls David as "the most comfortable person to be with. He was charming, very capable, modest and a good diplomat – he listened well." Vicky was "impressed by David's common-sense, diplomatic approach and his knowledge of how an organisation should be set up."

After his term as founding chairman, David continued to serve on the Board, and then as

membership secretary until 1999. Being local, and practical he made it his job to collect the TARS post from its registered address at Abbot Hall, and distribute it to the proper recipients with a membership update he called Carter's Chronicles. He was appointed a Vice-President in 1994, later – and for life – Vice-President Emeritus.

One other contribution by David was his fine monograph on *Ransome's Railways*, still to be found on allthingsransome.net, (go to 'Literary Pages', then 'Exploring Ransome's Books').

From his son Ralph we learn that David was born 18 October 1927 and attended boarding school at Ackworth and Bootham before joining the Navy as early as possible. He served in the Far East initially, then in Scotland (Arbroath) and Cornwall (Culdrose).

He left the Navy in the early sixties and after a brief time in the City joined Oxfam as an administrator before becoming their specialist

for organising relief efforts following natural disasters.

He moved on to managing aid development projects from Oxford and later became Field Director for Central America and the Caribbean.

He later joined the UN Disaster Relief Office in Geneva where he supported governments and aid agencies in creating, testing and deploying Disaster Preparedness planning for civil as well as natural disasters.

On his retirement he returned to the Lakes, buying a bungalow with sea and hill views near Grange. It was from here, Ralph tells us, "that he and my mother got involved in TARS... And the rest the society will know much better than I."



David, second left, at the launch of TARS in 1990, between Dick Kelsall, left and John and Brigit Sanders. Photo by Katy Cox

"The most comfortable person to be with ... charming, very capable, modest and a good diplomat" John Sanders

TARS Regional Gateway

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NEWS
FROM
THE GAELS

TARS Scotland



Gòbhlanan-gaoithe 's Bana-gaisgich gu sìorraidh!

Congratulations to Robin Anderson on becoming a nonagenarian in January! It seems no time since we were celebrating a joint RA/AR Birthday Lunch at the Ellersly House Hotel for his 80th. He may be shielding but he has plenty to keep himself occupied ... and a lovely view of the Gareloch.

through three boxes of documents to find the 2001 programme of 'Bohemia in Durham' at the Literary Weekend to answer a query – and to disprove Robin Anderson's somewhat unkind but normally accurate comment that 'Kirstie *has* all the information; she just can't find it!'



Flo Galbraith & Robin Anderson at Robin's 80th in 2011

A record of what happened, who was there, the stories and the history of groups is fascinating to those who come after, and to those who have forgotten. And it is all too easily lost – especially (Luddite librarian to the fore here) as computer files are the first thing to be thrown in the skip. One of my main regrets is that, in my early days of the Chalet School societies and TARS, I was so shy I *didn't* photograph and record events as they happened. And now they're gone.

Please do help if you can – and safeguard the history of TARS (not only for Scotland).

At present, I am sorry that it is impossible to organise events. Once there is more certainty and safety, the committee hopes to salvage some meeting up. Take care.

Kirstie Taylor

Two of our long-standing members have sadly had to move into care homes. Malcolm Porteous and Flo Galbraith both served on TARS Scotland's committee for many years. Both were Scotland's Chairman, with Flo also being National Chairman. We wish them both well and will continue to keep in contact.

Malcolm Porteous [left] with other TARS Scotland members in Dumfries, 2015

Unfortunately, this has meant the loss of early TARS Scotland archival material in the house clearances. Perhaps I may ask anyone who has photographs or documents from the early days, or events they attended, to copy them please: either to TARS centrally, or Scottish material to our Secretary, Elsie Miller or Treasurer, Paul Wilson. I've just waded



Southern Region



The Region currently has no committee. Iain Kahn-Gilchrist as Treasurer is currently holding things together - anyone interested in helping him organise regional events or with ideas for events is very welcome to contact him on 07760 454767 or iainkg@gmail.com

Southern Region – Spring

Spring has not really sprung yet, but more hope is in the air than for the last year.

Cobnor camping this summer?

Optimistically, I have booked the campsite at Cobnor for August 20th to 22nd. While anything can still happen to disrupt our plans, it would seem likely that by August we will be able to meet in the physical world instead of the virtual one.

It may be that we will still have to take precautions and we may have to make special arrangements about use of facilities.

Birthday Zoom Lunch

In the meantime, we had one meeting on Zoom in January to share the birthday lunch, separately, but together. A small number of us turned up, but it was very pleasant, and good to have a conversation with people that I haven't spoken very much to before.

These Zoom meetings are not ideal, but they do allow friendships to be maintained, and let some people join in who might not otherwise be up to travelling to meetings.

More Zoom get-togethers - Do we have your email address?

It was decided to have a virtual meeting like that every two months, by the time you are reading this a second one will have happened.

Of course it does mean that this can only include people who can be contacted by email.

We don't have email addresses for everyone in the region, some people are not on email, but for those that are, I would urge you to update your details on the TARS membership list.

I would also point out, that as we don't have a regional secretary, there will be no physical mail sent out. Events and news will only be sent by email or posted in Signals.

So, the more email addresses we have the better.

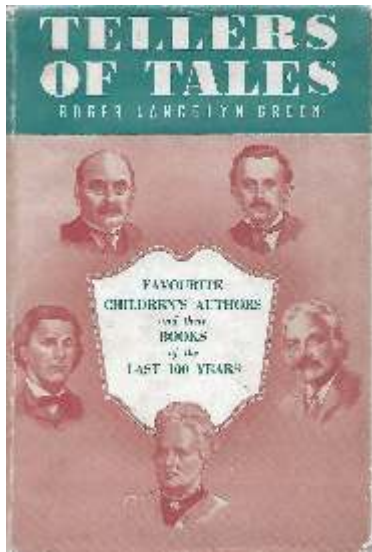
Hopefully we will be seeing more of each other very soon.

Iain Khan-Gilchrist

LIBRARY NEWS

Moat Brae in TARS Library?

Have I got that the wrong way round? Surely the Library is in Moat Brae? Yes, but on one quick visit to collect books for members, I happened to pick up *Tellers of tales: favourite children's authors and their books of the last 100 years*, published in 1946 and,



flicking through to find the index (there isn't one) my eye was caught by a sentence beginning: 'In Moat Brae garden at Dumfries ...'

It was of course in a chapter headed 'James Matthew Barrie', and continues:

"... are the veritable trees still standing down whose ample boles Peter was able to

hollow those passages to admit the Lost Boys to their home underground: in their upper branches that most alluring of elevated dwellings, Wendy's airy seat, Tree-Tops, was first built" – remembrances these of Barrie's own childhood.'

There is no indication of where the quotation is from, and when I sent it to Flora Burns, our friend the Chairman of the Peter Pan Moat Brae Trust, she didn't recognise it, and sent it off to the Director of Moat Brae, Simon Davidson.

It may be that some of the 'veritable trees still standing' in 2021 are indeed those same trees which Jamie Barrie climbed when he was a schoolboy at the Academy next door, and at least one of them has a little door, quite low down on its bole ...



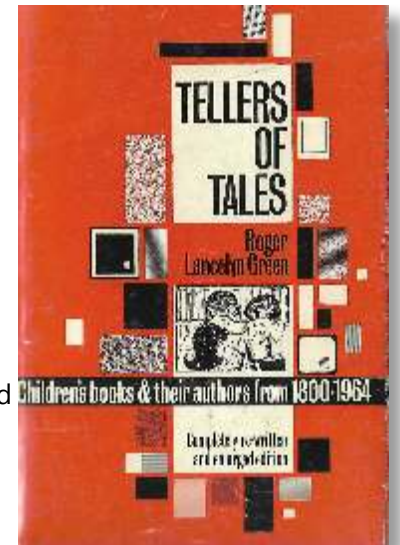
No living authors are included in the text and Mr Green regrets that as a result he has had to exclude 'Mr Ransome, who is so general a favourite'. Writing as he was in 1946, he says 'It is impossible at so close a range to decide which are the most successful of his stories, or what position they will ultimately hold ... I would rank him as only "a little lower than the angels," – although I would probably give him a whole chapter to himself were I writing *Tellers of Tales* in the year 2,000!' What a pity Mr Green is no longer with us to write that chapter!

After writing the above, however, I discovered later editions of this book, including a 1965 one, 'completely re-written and enlarged ...', and looking at the cover I realised straight

away that long ago as a student I had owned a copy. This is a much more substantial book, and it *does* include a chapter entitled 'Arthur Ransome and holiday adventure'. Mr Green had widened his criteria to include living authors, and the subtitle is

Children's books and their authors from 1800 to 1964. With the limited published information about Ransome's life available to him in 1965, before either Brogan's biography or AR's own *Autobiography* was published, he has summarised it quite well, although there are some inaccuracies.

He goes on to say that 'Of course Arthur Ransome's magnificent success ... has encouraged countless other and lesser writers to attempt stories in a similar vein' Of these he mentions, among others, Malcolm Saville, Kitty Barne, Mary Treadgold, Lucy M. Boston, Geoffrey Trease and Rosemary Sutcliff, all of whom are represented in TARS Library. This is a good book to dip into if you are at all interested in children's literature, covering as it does the entire period of Ransome's writing life, as well as the older books which he read as a child himself.



Winifred Wilson

How to use the Library

Contact Winifred Wilson on: 01387 252696

winwilson2003@yahoo.co.uk or

tarslib@arthur-ransome.org

TARS Library, Moat Brae,

101 George Street, DUMFRIES DG1 1EA

DONATIONS

Most welcome donations have been received from the following: Amazon Publications, The Chaucer Heritage Trust (courtesy of Aurora Blue's winning poem), Kate Crosby, George Derbyshire, Steve Ingham, Gordon McGilton, Cheryl Paget, Margaret Ratcliffe, G. Peter Winnington, and Writing East Midlands (courtesy of Martha Blue's winning poem). All of us who appreciate the Library are very grateful to them all for so contributing to the quality of our collection.

International connections



Since the 2020 Update, a period coinciding almost exactly with the restrictions caused world wide by the pandemic, the majority of

Library communications have been with members and other Ransome fans from outwith the United Kingdom. The first was from Mark Walker in **Australia**, who had noticed in the 2020 Update that we had been given a copy of *Sheila in the wind*, by Adrian Hayter. Mark had known the owner of the boat *Sheila* in Melbourne, and sent me a summary of a long article he had had published, which I can forward to anyone interested.



Next up from **Finland** was our friend Tatiana Bogrdanova, our guide to St Petersburg on the Baltic States trip in 2016, who also gave a talk at the

Edinburgh Literary weekend. Tatiana had been reading the *Autobiography* and found a reference I for one had not noticed before. Here is what she said:

By the way, I was wondering whether you could have come across *The Caledonian Phalanx: Scots in Russia* (National Library of Scotland, 1987). I am particularly interested in the article on Valery Carrick, the artist from St Petersburg; AR knew him and mentioned him in his *Autobiography*.

After some searching I was able to buy a copy of this

very interesting book, and send Tatiana the information she needed from it. If and when the next trip to St Petersburg takes place, she will be there!



The next unusual request was from a librarian at the National Library of the **Czech Republic**, who had been trying without success to borrow the French translations of some of Ransome's books via inter-library loan. TARS to the rescue! After some negotiations, the three books concerned were sent to the reader who had asked for them, Eva Hovorková Týlová, who has joined both TARS and the AR Club of the Czech Republic. You can read Eva's impressions of the French translations on page **iv**, and she has since also read two of the German translations.



Cheryl Paget from **New Zealand** wrote an interesting article in the 2020 issue of *Mixed Moss* regarding a book

she had come across by Ashley Gibson, *Postscript to adventure* (1930). Ransome owned a copy of this book, and was well known to the author, who mentions him a number of times. Later, Cheryl very kindly donated the book to the Library.



In the **USA**, Kate Crosby has been having another clear-out – she sent us a whole boxful of sailing books a few years ago, but this time it was six titles by Olivia Fitz Roy, and you can read her article about them on page **v** of this Update.

Handwritten letters between Arthur Ransome and J. R. R. Tolkien

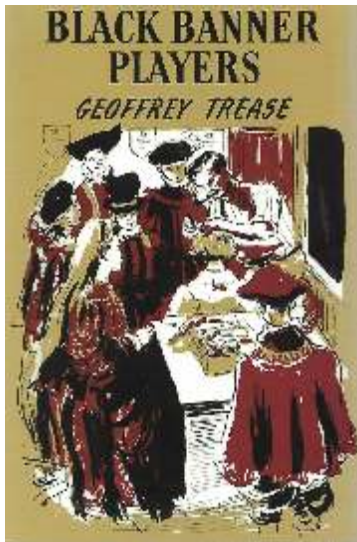
Early in 2020, members of Midlands Region met in Oxford, where they visited the Ashmolean Museum. TARS member Lindy Castell is a research fellow at the University, and had discovered that the original letter which Ransome sent to J. R. R. Tolkien after reading *The hobbit* is kept at the Bodleian Library there. The letter is reproduced in *Signalling from Mars: the letters of Arthur Ransome* (1997), edited and introduced by Hugh Brogan, along with an extract from Tolkien's

reply, the original of which is in the Brotherton Library, University of Leeds.

Lindy had obtained permission to give a copy of Arthur's handwritten letter to TARS, and it is now in our Library, along with a copy of Tolkien's reply, donated by Peter Wright. Arthur's letter is also reproduced in the 2018 book, *Tolkien: maker of Middle-earth*, by the Tolkien Archivist at the Bodleian, Catherine McIlwaine. The book is based on a major exhibition of the same name at the Bodleian in 2018.

On looking into this further, I found a chapter about the exchange of letters, and the corrections later made by Tolkien at Ransome's suggestion, in Margaret Ratcliffe's book *Collecting our thoughts: essays reflecting Arthur Ransome's reading* (2015), published by Amazon Publications. Lynn Mellone wrote the fascinating chapter entitled 'Ransome and *The Hobbit*', on pages 113-120. If anyone has a copy of Catherine McIlwaine's book which they would care to donate to our Library, it would be very welcome.

Long-standing wants fulfilled



Some titles for which we have been on the lookout have at last been added to the Library this past year. First of all, one title in the 'Black Banner' series by Geoffrey Trease, ***Black Banner Players***, has been eluding us for years. It was reprinted by Girls Gone By Publishers in 2005, but even the reprint has been out of print for some time, and a first edition when

available has been priced in the hundreds of pounds. Kirsty Nichol-Findlay wrote a chapter about the series in Margaret Ratcliffe's *Collecting our thoughts: essays reflecting Ransome's reading* (Amazon Publications, 2015) and I remember that she had to travel to Edinburgh to read this book in the National Library of Scotland.

Thanks to the generosity of TARS member Gordon McGilton, we now have a copy of the GGBP edition, sent from his home in Canada, and a great read it is too, so now we have the complete series of five titles.



Arthur Ransome's mother Edith was an author in her own right. A copy of Edith's book, ***A first history of England***, 3rd edition 1907, became available and is now in the Library. I quote here from her Preface:

I began this little book some years ago, in the hope and belief that I should have my husband's help and advice in the undertaking. When I found that this was not to be, I should have given it up but for his earnest wish that I should complete it, and in accordance with his desire I have done my best to finish it on the lines we had planned together.

The book is intended to be read by children, before beginning the series of school histories my husband wrote himself

So Cyril's influence follows his wife as well as his son after he has died!

In the lists of other titles advertised inside the front of the book is another by Edith, *A Primary history of England*, priced at 1s, along with this present one, which would have cost the reader 2s 6d. I have seen it written that *A first history* is a later edition of *A Primary history*, but this list would seem to indicate that they were separate titles.

The title page gives the author as Mrs Cyril Ransome, but the Preface is signed 'Edith R. Ransome'. She also says:

I had many interruptions while trying to do what has been to me no easy task, and my sincere thanks are due to my publisher, who has waited for years for the completion of the book and has done everything in his power to help and encourage me in the undertaking.

Interruptions such as sorting out her wayward son in his own attempts to be an author?

***The wind in the sails*, by Jacques Perret**

Ransome mentions in his diary on 24 February 1954:

"Wind in the sails" appalling translation full of howlers. And later, on 5 September he notes:

Review of Wind in sails in Sunday Times.

Wayne Hammond's *Bibliography* tells us that this is correct, and that the review is reprinted in the Amazon Publication *Ransome and blue water sailing*, Christina Hardymont's excellent collection of reviews written by Ransome on the subject of sailing.

Wind in the sails was published in English by Rupert Hart-Davis, and on the back cover is an advertisement for some titles in the Mariners Library, so I was at first puzzled that this one is not in the series. But of course,

The wind in the sails is fiction, not a true tale of seafaring, and not just fiction but fantasy, and a rollicking good tale! I also noticed that the name of the translator does not appear on the title page, or anywhere else in the book.

Christina throws more light on the subject in the introduction to her book. After describing how the Mariners Library came about, and AR's involvement with it, she goes on to say:

Ransome also advised on other nautical titles published by Rupert Hart-Davis. Richard Garnett [a partner in the firm] remembers his recommending Jacques Perret's *The Wind in the Sails* in 1954. 'The translation was so bad that he said that if the translator's name was to appear on it we must add "with several hundred corrections by another hand" – Ransome's, and some of mine. So of course we left it off.'

So it wasn't just Ransome who was critical of the translation, but he was the one who did most of the work of correcting the text. What about his review, on p. 119 of Christina's book? Well, when I had read it my immediate reaction was 'That is how to write a book review!' One of the problems I always find is how to give a flavour of the book without giving too much of the plot away. Ransome describes quite a lot of this story, but approaching the dénouement, this is what he wrote:

Nothing is going to prevent the encounter with the English vessel. Nothing does prevent it. But what happens?

I must not say ... The story never falters but sweeps to a magnificent climax, and has turned at least one of its readers into an urgent propagandist eager to share a most unusual pleasure.

And if that doesn't whet your appetite, nothing will!

As we know, much-loved member of TARS **Brian Findlay** died in May 2020. Among Brian's many interests was his large collection of antiquarian books.

Seeking a definition of 'antiquarian' I discovered a whole minefield, so if anyone wants one, you'll have to look it up yourself: it's not straightforward. Suffice to say that Brian was a serious collector, and he knew his subject – in fact, many subjects, and his collection merited an auction of some of the books,



followed by the first of three catalogues of the remainder, available free of charge from the antiquarian bookseller Christopher Edwards of Henley-on-Thames.

There is now a copy of this catalogue, *Selections from the library of Brian Findlay: Part I: English books, A-L*, in our Library. Of great interest to those who knew Brian is the short outline of his life and career – or should I say 'careers'. Please ask me for the contact details of the bookseller if you would like your own copy.

My reading Ransome's books in French by PhDr Eva Hovorková Týlová

Well, after all the reading in French and meeting puzzling words, names etc., it may be difficult for me to describe it in English. I know my text will be full of mistakes, but: I know it is very easy to criticise somebody's work. It is easy to find the mistakes in texts somebody else wrote. I do not consider myself to be the clever one, moreover in the language which isn't my native one.

Never mind, I have read thousands of books in French from different periods, for adults, for children, I have read Ransome's books many times again and again in original version, in Czech, I have been teaching languages and literature for about 40 years.

I do not want to offend the French translator, I know he was translating it in another 'situation', but I want to show my discomfort and my pleasure as well. After more than 10 years of searching for the French version, after new, lost, renewed hopes, I realise that my dream has come true in 3 last months. I have had the pleasure to read the Ransome's books 'for the first time' – as a new story. I am afraid it cannot be repeated, even if there are four more titles I would like to open.

I love French language, I consider myself half-French in my heart. But, let me allow to tell puzzling moments. First I think that the translator got it as any book to translate and earn money. In my opinion he hadn't known the story, he hadn't read it before translating. And the world of Swallows and Amazons didn't tell him anything, their fantasy, mentality, activities. And sometimes I thought that he let somebody else to translate some parts. Or there were long breaks before single chapters to translate. Ship terminology – did he know it? Some experience with sailing? Later he made better, the *Swallowdale* is acceptable in the way I hoped to read the stories. But the names and the facts

Before putting down some of them I want to add, that the French language has many better synonyms, even in the '40s and '50s. The text was very often 'interrupted', annoying, puzzling due to curious expressions which made me open the original, open the vocabulary, write to other fans. Especially Mrs Winifred and Mr Vaverka and some readers, my brother for example.

When I got the parcel from Scotland, from the TARS Library, I was touching it carefully unopened for some days, looking at it with love and emotions and gratefulness to Mrs Winifred who agreed to send it to me for unlimited time! Without setting conditions, believing simply that I am a person who deserves it and will care for it and send it back! The very first sentences in French were such a shock I had to close the first book - *Swallows and Amazons* for some days.

The second opening was better and every day I was reading some pages with bigger and bigger pleasure. But till the last page of the third book I couldn't accept the French names!!! Why was it needed to change them? And if, why only some of them. They were showing that the translator didn't know the heroes, their characters. If only I could have asked him ...

Swallows and Amazons

John – Jean, Roger – Roger, Susan – Susanne, Dick – Dick, Dorothee, OK. But why Titty – Micky and later Miky, small Bridget – Cricri. And the resemblance with the British Queen's face neglected! Nancy – Marion/ Clément, Peggy – Margot, well, let it be, there is some reason to discover. But uncle Jim Turner – Paul Fournaire, Polly – Jacquot. Sammy – Mathurin!!!! How does it sound when Nancy wants to discipline him!

Why some family names to translate some of them and not the others? Mrs Walker – Marchand, Mrs Dickson – Maigret. She was not skinny, was she? And her direct speeches – sometimes she speaks the 'cleanest' village language, she who was caring for 2 Ds' mother in a town-educated family I suppose, then suddenly she makes formal sentences. Mrs Blackett is happy to keep her name. Mr Jackson – Mr Boiseau – expression from Canadian French for quantity in farms ...

Winter Holiday

Difficult to explain in English, difference in French between 'tu' and 'vous' when addressing people. I do understand that in the time of the translation even the children were more formal and addressed each other 'vous', but in the translation it is sometimes 'tu', sometimes 'vous'. When they sing, there are titles of French songs. When mother remembers her childhood

in Australia, she speaks about French colonies in Africa, but some animals are not 'replaced'. Even the boomerang is there. Why to translate adventures of British children and show I am a true French patriot? Change the facts. A bit stupid, I cannot understand it. And many other examples are in my head, on pieces of paper in front of me, vocabularies.

I am aware of the situation that possibility of discussing it with a French reader could explain many situations, show, underline my errors, made me tell 'oh, sorry, now I can see', never mind it is me who have finished the reading of three books in French. Books I have loved very much since the first 'meeting' them when I was 10 or 12 years old. *Swallows and Amazons*, bought for my two older brothers.

Every fan knows it – the first meeting and then discovering more titles. *Swallows and Amazons* for ever! No matter which language is chosen to describe their adventures. If you have some free copies in French or any title in German – I am here. If you have a vehicle to go back in time and visit the translator, how much is the ticket and what is the time of leaving?

Olivia Fitzroy by Kate Crosby

Reading Olivia Fitzroy's Stewart family books as a child, I was entranced by the Scottish Highlands. The end-paper maps*, the unpronounceable place names, the marvellous wild country, the stalking and the fishing. And her characters are good, too – tall, volatile, tangle-haired Fiona first of course, and also glamorous, older brother Ninian, flaxen twins Jean and James, cousin Sandy, steady-going friend Hugh. And later the mysterious, moody exiled Fergus.

Fiona glanced at him. The far-away look she knew so well was back in his eyes, his face stern and inscrutable. "Can you see Taransay?" asked Jean, staring in the same direction. "I can always see Taransay," said Fergus.

Olivia Fitzroy (1921–1969) started writing tales for her sisters when she and her family were sequestered in Wester Ross during WWII. *Orders to poach [OTP]* was published by Collins in 1942. (Billy Collins was a family friend.) The Stewarts and Hugh are charged by their absent soldier father with maintaining the good health of their highland deer forest when the new tenant of Carrick House forbids any shooting and fishing.

*As an adult I spent a holiday in Poolewe, and immediately recognized all of Olivia's landscape. Just as beguiling in reality.



Steer by the stars [SBTS] (Collins) followed in 1944. We meet Fergus as the family spends a summer cruising the coastline in a motorboat, crossing the Minch and helping some illicit whisky distillers. *The house in the hills* [THITH] (Collins 1946) finds the Stewarts making a deserted croft habitable in the dead of winter and searching for a hidden cave in a magical fairy hill. Fergus appears and leaves in his usual mysterious way.

Re-reading these first three, it dawns on me that they would now be Young Adult books. Hugh and Ninian are in the army. Fiona has done a London Season. There is drinking and smoking and shaving and lipstick and nail varnish. Fergus is obviously a lot older, and fairly chugs his own whisky. Perhaps that's why I will always prefer *The hill war* (Collins 1950) where we step back in time. Fiona is 14 and the twins are 9. Fiona and Ninian have been at odds the whole summer. The final explosion sends Fiona off to hide in the hills together with faithful cousin Sandy, to wreck the rest of Ninian's summer. In between scaring off his deer and swiping venison patties through the Lodge larder widow at night, Fiona is successful and Ninian has to cry 'pax' when Jeannie goes missing.

Thereafter comes *Wandering star* (Collins 1953), Fergus and Sandy in the South – Olivia feeling she's exhausted her Highland background? But then *The island of birds* [TIB] (Jonathan Cape 1954), back to Scotland. Just Fergus and the twins, sailing off to Fergus' private island to protect a sea eagle's nest. Next *The hunted head* [THH] (Jonathan Cape 1956) where Jamie gets a knock on the head and we return to 18th-century Carrick and the counterparts to the contemporary Stewarts. The Battle of Culloden is over. Ninian is dead. Fiona, dressed as a boy, with her brother Jamie, must get an urgent message to Prince Charles Edward hiding in the hills. Win Wilson likes this one best and feels Olivia has hit her stride with historical fiction. And just before that, *Wagons and horses* [WAH] (Collins 1955) an outlier, based on Olivia's year travelling with the Chipperfield Circus – this one not for me.

I think Collins did a poor production job for Olivia. Yes, it began in wartime, but I see no attempt at uniformity of board colour or font, a mishmash of illustrators: William Showell; Shirley Hughes; Mary Gernat; Phyllida Lumsden for THITH, where some of her work is really bad; Anne

Bullen for SBTS, a complete waste of her special talent with only one pony drawing in the book.

Collins can't even spell Olivia's name consistently – is she Olivia Fitz Roy or Fitzroy? Just think of AR's lovely, dependable dark green boards with the familiar dust jackets, year after year. Cape did a better job for Olivia with similar green boards for TIB and THH. Raymond Sheppard's drawings are strong, bold art in their own right. Something else that Collins didn't provide was a good editor. The long tramps, the exhaustively described lochs, corries, burns and woodlands are peerless but ... too many. The narratives tend to sag in the middle, too. Olivia was 21 when she started writing. She didn't have AR's years of writing in many different disciplines to be able to do her own pruning.

Olivia was not a best seller like AR. As far as I can see there is only one edition of most of her books. WAH had a Children's Book Club reprint in 1956. There was a Puffin OTP in 1956, and Fidra Books in Edinburgh have recently re-issued soft covers of OTP, STBTS and THITH. (Due to Covid, they appear to be closed just now.)

What strikes me now is how subtle Olivia is, beyond her years in her characterizations and in the nuances of sibling relationships. We absorb, almost without noticing, that Sandy will follow Fiona to the ends of the earth; that Ninian knows timid Jeannie may need some quiet support when trolls might be near. The Young Adult aspect appears in STBTS with Hugh's barely-spoken resentment of Fergus with Fiona. Hugh can be quite grown-up cynical too. 'Generally the things one wants most don't happen, or at any rate not until one's forgotten one wanted them,' he says.

Olivia's characters are more introspective than many in other children's contemporary fiction.

Fiona's thoughts went ranging further and further as she knelt, wrapped in the rug, looking out onto the silver water. Quietness and emptiness and peace seemed to press upon the world, leaving her the only person in it. She found she was able to think more clearly about all the things that troubled and puzzled her ordinarily, she realized briefly and half-unconsciously, how much too much self and material things mattered to her, that somewhere, somehow, there was an answer and a meaning to so many things that seemed pointless, that the quietness and beauty of this night was more important than anything else.

Phew! Only Titty could come close to that in the Walker family. AR's books must have been available to Olivia. There's a lot of Nancy in Fiona (although Nancy would never have done all that cooking). Maybe the Oxus books too? I see a hint of Hull & Whitlock's Maurice in Fergus. Conversely, here's a nice co-incidence in OTP (1942):

The loch water was as clear and cold as ice. Round the point a black bird bobbed in the water. "Northern Diver", said Fiona. "There's always one up here." (*Great Northern?* is 1947.)

Today we may see the characters and activities of Olivia's books as victims of their time. Readers could feel that the unintended elitism of the Stewarts is either outdated or offensive. An awful lot of lobsters and grouse, hooking, shooting and skinning. Maggie to cook meals, light lamps and lug hot water about the place. (To mitigate this it should be noted that the Stewart family has fallen on hard times. The stalking and fishing are for the pot.) Still, Ninian is an Old Etonian.

That being said, all of it was fine by me as a child. My father got so fed up with me galloping through all the books he bought for me, that he started daily rationing. Lovely, now, to find at the end of a *THITH* chapter, his inimitable pencil 'Not beyond here'.

The Lockhart plot: love, betrayal, assassination and counter-revolution in Lenin's Russia, by Jonathan Schneer, 2020

Robert Hamilton Bruce Lockhart was a friend of Ransome's, and each referred to the other as such in their respective accounts of their time in Russia during the revolution.

In his *Autobiography*, Arthur wrote (p. 231):

"... when Lockhart arrived from England with a mission that was to keep in touch with whatever Government might rule in Russia after the withdrawal of our Embassy he came at once to tell me, 'It's your fault that we're here.'"

'I was delighted to see him ...'

At first they were of the same mind, but later Lockhart changed his mind about the Bolsheviks, and was tricked into getting involved with counter-revolutionaries, and was arrested by the Cheka, narrowly escaping with his life, according to this new, scholarly analysis of what became known as 'the Lockhart Plot'.

Lockhart gives his own version of events in his book *Memoirs of a British agent* (1912), which is of course in the Library. Jonathan Schneer was born in New York City, and has written seven previous books. This his

latest work is the first to be devoted entirely to the story of the 'plot', and is a well informed piece of research, with nine pages of bibliography, including titles well known to members of TARS.

He addresses the oft-quoted comment that AR was a spy, or even a double agent here:

'... a genuine British liberal, tolerant, humane, essentially apolitical ... he earned the trust of leading members of the Bolshevik government, who gave him unprecedented access to their meetings and musings.

'As a result, Ransome wrote the best-informed newspaper articles to emerge from revolutionary Russia. His government did not approve his outlook but read him closely. It could not afford not to. Eventually it hired him as an intelligence agent (which is not the same as a spy; Ransome never spied, but rather reported honestly to his masters in London what he had seen in Russia. What he did not tell them, however, was that also he reported honestly to his Bolshevik friends what he knew about the country of his birth). The remaining skeleton staff at the British Embassy thought this man ... to be a rather slippery character, which perhaps he was – but they debriefed him regularly too ...'

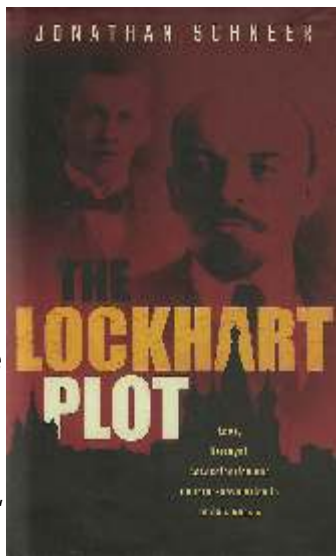
In my notes on reading this I've written 'Good point, well put, must remember that!' The book is, of course, not about Ransome, but if Schneer can understand so well the man we know, I tend to trust what he writes about the many other characters in the book too. In his conclusion to the book, he writes:

'... Lockhart could not resist the chance to advance his career by joining the interventionist camp. Neither could Cromie, Reilly, or any of the others among Lockhart's circle, except for Arthur Ransome – and Ransome worked for a newspaper, not a government.'

Despite this, the two remained friends for the rest of their lives, and when Ransome reviewed *The British agent* for the *Manchester Guardian* in 1932, 'Lockhart immediately wrote to him: "You heap burning coals upon my head and I thank you from the bottom of my heart. No one is more fitted to write the review than you. No one, I am sure, will be half so kind as you have been.'"

As for Lockhart himself, here is Schneer's impression of his character:

'It is wrong to think of him as a playboy dilettante blithely swimming out of his depth in shark-infested waters as some historians have depicted him. Determined, competitive, hardnosed, capable, and supremely confident, he set out to recoup the situation ... he commenced a game of wits against the Cheka ...'



ADDITIONS TO STOCK

SINCE SPRING 2020 *UPDATE*



ALPINE CLUB, *The Mountaineers: great tales of bravery and conquest*. 2015 (2011)

BARRETT, Nicholas 'Literary landscapes of England: Arthur Ransome – the children's writer who brought the Lake District to life' in *This England*, Winter 2004/5

BARRIE, J. M. *Tommy and Grizel* (The works of J. M. Barrie, Cassell and Company Ltd). n.d., but 1925 (1920)

BENDER, Michael *Sunlight and shadows: Arthur Ransome's hidden narratives*. 2020

CALDER, Jenni (comp. and ed.) *Treasure islands: a Robert Louis Stevenson centenary anthology*. 1994

CHANG, Jung *Big sister, little sister, red sister: three women at the heart of twentieth-century China*. 2019

CHAUCER, Geoffrey *The William Morris Kelmscott Chaucer: a facsimile of the 1896 Edition, with the 87 original illustrations by Edward Burne-Jones*. 1985 (1896)

CHESTERTON, G. K. *Twelve types*. 1906 (1903)

COLVIN, Sidney (ed.) *The letters of Robert Louis Stevenson Vol. IV 1892-1894*. 1922 (1911)

CROUCH, Marcus *Chosen for children: an account of the books which have been awarded the Library Association Carnegie Medal, 1936-1965, revised edition*. 1967 (1957)

EDWARDS, Christopher *Selections from the library of Brian Findlay: Part I: English books, A-L*. 2020

FARRANT, Natasha *Voyage of the Sparrowhawk*. 2020

FITZ ROY, Olivia *The hill war*. 1950

FITZ ROY, Olivia *The hunted head*. 1956

FITZ ROY, Olivia *The island of birds*. 1954

FITZ ROY, Olivia *Orders to poach*. 1942

FITZ ROY, Olivia *Steer by the stars*. 1944

FITZ ROY, Olivia *Wagons & horses*. 1956

GREEN, Roger Lancelyn *Tellers of tales: children's books and their authors from 1880-1964. Rewritten and revised edition*. 1965

HARRISON, Frederic *John Ruskin*. 1925 (1902)

JACOBS, Joseph *English fairy tales: being the two collections of English fairy tales & More English fairy tales, compiled and annotated by Joseph Jacobs; illustrated by Margery Gill*. 1968 (1890 and 1894)

KNIGHT, William (ed.) *Journals of Dorothy Wordsworth*. 1925 (1897)

McGOWAN, Anthony *Lark*, 2020 (2019) (CM)

MACLEOD, Helen 'Arthur Ransome' in *Book and Magazine Collector*, no. 12, February 1985

MANSEL, Philip *Aleppo: the rise and fall of Syria's great merchant city. New ed.* 2018 (2016)

MOOREHEAD, Alan *The Blue Nile*. 1973 (1962)

[MORRIS, William: see CHAUCER, Geoffrey]

NATIONAL LIBRARY OF SCOTLAND

The Caledonian phalanx: Scots in Russia. 1987

PERRET, Jacques *The wind in the sails: translated from the French*. 1954

RANSOME, Mrs Cyril *A first history of England*. 3rd edition. 1907 (1903)

RUNDELL, Katherine *Why you should read children's books, even though you are so old and wise*. 2019

RUSKIN, John *Sesame and lilies* and *The political economy of art*. n.d.

RUSKIN, John *Unto this last: four essays on the first principles of political economy*. 1900

SAYERS, Dorothy L. *Hangman's holiday*. 2003 (1933)

SAYERS, Dorothy L. (ed.) *Tales of detection*. 1947 (1936)

SCHNEER, Jonathan *The Lockhart plot: love, betrayal, assassination and counter-revolution in Lenin's Russia*. 2020

THOMAS, Edward *In pursuit of spring*. 2016 (1914)

TREASE, Geoffrey *Black Banner players*. 2005 (1952)

WEDGWOOD, C. V. *The last of the radicals: Josiah Wedgwood, M.P.* 1951

WHITEHEAD, Janet and David 'Arthur Ransome' in *Book and Magazine Collector*, no. 205, April 2001

WILLIAMSON, Henry *A clear water stream*. 1958

WINNINGTON, G. Peter *Love in the revolution*. 2020

[WORDSWORTH, Dorothy *Journals*, edited by William Knight: see KNIGHT, William]

YEE, Chang *The silent traveller: a Chinese artist in Lakeland*. 1944 (1937)

YULE, Donald and Marion Pitman. *Good morning, Sir George: ten tales of the tinier type from Donald Yule with Marion Pitman making up the XI*. 2020



MAPS AND SPIES – AN EPIC EVENT

At 2pm on Saturday 14 November we dialled into Zoom to set off with Sarah on a series of map-making and espionage activities. We had printed out a few items in preparation and first up we had a bare-bones map that some eagle-eyed TARS soon identified as being of Potter Heigham, but with most of the information removed. Using compass and bearings we filled in the details, though our efforts won't be causing the Ordnance Survey any sleepless nights.

Once we had got our eye in, Sarah led us all on a virtual treasure trail round Potter via Google Street View. We made several intriguing discoveries, including the fact that photos from different years are stitched together (next time you use Street View, check out the 'Image capture' date at the bottom). This means that depending on what angle you approach a building or junction, you can make cars and trees appear and disappear! Pleasingly, the tour ended at a fish and chip shop. It's a shame we could only look at it on the screen.

Next up we used the Latitude and Longitude finder on www.doogal.co.uk to go on a whistle-stop tour of Britain. By then it was time for a break, so everyone disappeared for a cup of tea. Once refreshed we used our new-found expertise with bearings and maps (the old fashioned, made-of-paper kind) to travel round the Lake District.

After all that virtual travelling, it was time to use our legs for a map symbol relay race: we had a set of OS symbols printed and cut out, and when Sarah named one it was a race to fetch the correct symbol and wave it in front of our webcams. We're now confident that we won't confuse a wind pump and a wind turbine again!

Each of the activities produced a code word that gradually provided an answer to the question, "What is the Swallow's secret for a successful crew?" The first few words gave us 'Fried [BLANK] for breakfast'. The final word was to be revealed in the final activity, which combined map-reading with espionage: 56 cryptic clues to the names of towns to be marked on a map which would create a join-the-dots word. For this we were split into two teams via Zoom and members chipped in as they worked out the answers. Sadly we were unable to get all the answers and plot them on the map in the time available, but we had a go after it was over. We'll try to add a picture of our efforts. (If you can't read the answer from the picture, here's an anagram of it: map mince.)

All in all it was a fantastic way to spend an afternoon and we are very grateful to Sarah for putting it all together. Any one of those activities would have taken ages to prepare, so a whole afternoon of them is an epic undertaking. Thank you.

Fred Whalley



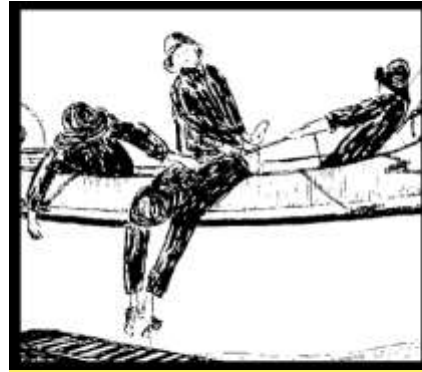
FEAST YOUR MINCE PIES ON THIS PIC QUIZ

In mid-December Midland TARS had an online 2D AR picture quiz followed by AR-themed Christmassy munch - while people were arriving we talked among ourselves and, having made a heap of scones, munched merrily! We enjoyed them with lots of butter while still puzzling over the pictures. One member had bought a lovely (huge-normous) pork pie.

During the picture-puzzle entertainment we had to guess which books the pictures were from and what the captions underneath were. It was fun but extremely difficult to guess what the captions were, but we all enjoyed it. There were some pictures from all the 12 AR books. It was difficult to guess, partly because when online, you have to click and scroll a lot, and the pictures had been 'doctored', some shown in different colours, or back to front, or blurred! (You can see some examples to the right.)

However much we enjoyed the quiz it was not the same as meeting in 3D, but at least we met!

Aurora Blue



READING TOGETHER

Led by Amanda, we have just finished reading through S&A on Zoom, our next session will start *Swallowdale*.



Not as scenic as the tarn, but a frozen puddle on a Nottingham golf course gave Fiona Fyfe the opportunity for some Winter Holiday fun.



WINTER HOLIDAY BLACKOUT

Blackout poetry is created from existing text. The idea is to choose a range of main words from the text (important to the poem's theme, words that sound nice etc) and connect them into something coherent using other words from the text. All in all, the poem needs to use the words in the exact order they originally appeared but, of course, because you are being selective, the poem will be something completely new and different.

To present a finished version, all the words not being used can be blacked-out, just leaving the words of the poem exposed to be read. The effect can look like a censor's pen so the style is often used for political poetry.

Here is some blackout poetry based on a page from *Winter Holiday* which was created by members participating in the Tell Us A Tale event on Zoom led by Sarah Samuel in February.

Potatoes by the fire,
Dorothea melt your stockings,
Spectacles crawled out that sheet of iron,
Dribbling of course in the fire place.
Twice, had a fine smell in his eyes.
We've swept away Roger!
Who's for brooms?
'Nobody is', said Titty.

The Hambleton Family

Surprised,
running into each other somewhere -
"How's keeping? Since cooking
toffees time does flit on, -
I'm forgetting
and there's the lot of you!
How do you do?"
"Champion, thank ye."

Esme Blue

Snow.
Dry dusted snow.
Dribbling melted snow.
Sizzling fire snow.
Brooms and spades breaking,
Shovelling
Gleaming, shining, snow.

Fiona Fyfe

Here, long before the adventure,
Smooth white blanket covered tarn,
ice slippery under snow.
The path up the wood
Tracks good and hard. '
Rough stone, corrugated magic of snow
Changed the world.

Peter Wright

Have two lasses shoes,
first one foot then
the other.
Bearing very nearly thought,
Not going together.
I was fair, I'd call you.
The red-caps were in a hurry,
death cold in minutes.
You two, I'll go
One between them,
travel light.

Rachel Blue

FORTHCOMING EVENTS IN MIDLAND REGION

Some previously published events have had to change as lockdown restrictions are still in place, others are planned which we hope will be able to happen but please do check on the TARS website or with the organiser for any updates.

ZOOM ROUND THE PEAK DISTRICT

Saturday 24 April

As we had hoped to stay in the Don Whillans Hut on The Roaches in the Peak District National Park, a Grade II listed former game keeper's cottage built into the rock face which was renovated in 1991 in memory of legendary British mountaineer Don Whillans, there will instead be a Zoom quiz about famous Dons, followed by one with Peak District puzzles.

Please contact julesbluerachel@btinternet.com or phone 07856 262042 to get a link.



ROACHES RAMBLE

Saturday 22 May

Walk from Rock Hall, Roaches, Staffordshire, via Lud's Church chasm (of 14th century *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight* fame) to Gradbach, possibly taking in the 'fairy pools' of Three Shires' Head (a 2-mile extension to the point where Cheshire, Staffordshire, Derbyshire converge, only possible if the whole party wish to do it) back to Rock Hall via ridge line. Distance will be 6¾ miles or 8¾ miles if including the extension. Ascent is 311m. The walk will take 4-7 hours depending on nature of group, photos, lunch, etc. Landscape includes moor, woodland, rocky paths and forest tracks. No public toilets. Tea room nearby but bring own provisions for lunch.

Parking is on the main road below the ridge line, free but in marked bays. Arrive at 10.30, walk begins promptly at 11am.

For further information please get in touch with julesbluerachel@btinternet.com or phone 07856 262042.



WILD SWIM & WALK

Saturday 12 June

Wild swim in pools and falls of a beautiful Welsh valley. (Includes some walking to reach the pools). Meet at Pont Melin-Fach car park north of Pontneddfechan (in the Neath Valley just off A465) at 10.30. There will be a fairly leisurely walk of about 5 miles. The second half of the route follows the river, passing some spectacular waterfalls with a few swimming opportunities in the pools (at your own risk). Contact Sarah Samuel on sarah@sarahsamuel.plus.com or 07952 587273.

If this is not possible there will be a Zoom alternative – contact Sarah for a link.

MINING & MORE – ALDERLEY EDGE

Saturday 17 July

Take a walking tour of The Edge, taking in some of the Bronze age pits, mine shaft openings, quarries, accessible tunnels, locations of local legend, including the Wizards Well, locations of literary note from *The Weirdstone of Brisingamen* by Alan Garner, inspired by folklore and landscape and legend. Approximately 4 hours walking. Bring a picnic, though there is also a café but it does get busy! Stout footwear and a torch will also be needed.

Meet at Alderley Edge National Trust car park at 11.00 (£3 for 4 hours, £7 all day, National Trust members free.

If meeting is not allowed then there will be an online tour of The Edge (through Zoom) using maps and book pictures, plus extra not as yet thought out!

For up-to-date information please contact Jules Blue on julesbluerachel@btinternet.com or 07856 262042.



CAMP BY CONISTON WATER

Friday 6 to Sunday 15 August

Provided that the National Trust campsite at Hoathwaite Farm, Torver, is up and running again we will be using their group camping field. Come for as many nights as you wish. Bring a dinghy/canoe or grab a chance in someone else's. Cost will be £7pppn, Midland TARS Juniors £3.50pppn (under 5s free) plus a small donation to cover costs for trailers. For further details please contact Paul Green by e-mailing him on paul-midtars@gmx.co.uk or phoning 01654 791256.



GET TO KNOW TITTY

Saturday 18 September

Come to meet Titty (Sophie Neville) at her childhood home in Gloucestershire to hear about the making of the 1974 film of *Swallows and Amazons*. This will be followed by the opportunity to get afloat in a punt or coracles on the private lake. You are welcome to bring your own small craft. Don't forget a packed lunch.

For more details please contact Peter Wright by e-mailing peterwright180@btinternet.com or phoning 0121 443 2910.



Please send copy for the next issue of *The Gulch* to 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.

Northern Region Birthday held its annual birthday party on Saturday 16th January by Zoom. We were invited to bring our own cake dedicated to AR or the theme which was Secret Water. Elizabeth did a crafty quiz spelling out "Happy Birthday" in the answers, then we had lessons on knot tying with Liz Hawoth and Krysia read to us. We then toasted AR's 137th with our own tot of something nice.

It was very nice being able to see each other and while it was not as good as being together in the flesh, we were comforted by the fact that had we been able to book a hall the event would likely have been cancelled due to recent snow fall! We were even able to welcome two new members to the mix.



Liz Haworth's ZOOM Cake depicting "Buttered Eggs"



Our newest family members' interpretation of Wild Cat Island. Made by Katy, aged 5 and Adam, aged 6. They can also sing Spanish ladies as a duet! Adam says to note the Lighthouse tree and the Leading Lights



Birthday card designed by Krysia Clack. Brush up on your Semaphore!



thoughts of TARry DOG

Goob morning. my hooman told me not many people write for signals cus TARS hoomans are not allowed to meet. There is a bad ill i thought it was just for ravens and rooks cus it is called Corvid, that is why it is Crow Navirus. i hope all hoomans get better. So i can help and write this. for northern region.

i am black and white DOG Melon my hooman is Robert but. i have heard some hoomans call him other things. i am TARry DOG my 6x great-great grand-DOG was Ringman. his hoomans were Jackson farmers in swallows and amazons. i think Ringman a welsh collie cus he was hyweling at the moon. There are not enough DOGS. in swallows and amazons books. My hooman says there is one book with a CAT i will hide

that book when i find it. i am a goob guard DOG cus i just sit at home and look fierce my hoomans frens say i am not a real DOG but i say pish i am just cuddly and do not move much. It is strange though, my hooman says i came from a tourist shop not a pet shop, but i am happy that i chose him to be my fren.

The big ill is not fine for hoomans, my hooman every Monday he does Zoomy with his frens they are all telling funnies that i do not understand and they ask many difficult questions i think it is called a kwiz. But last time i look i was shaky cus my hoomans frens have a CAT! i will forgive them though cus they are very goob frens to my hooman.

It is now crunchy leaf season and i exist to go outside and jump in piles of crunchy leaf. My hooman says i should not roll in smelly or he will put me in the spinny bath this is where he usually cleans his clothes. Just to show that i still love him, when he is asleep i will quietly climb onto his face and wait patiently for him to wake up. this normally does not take very long.

when i am shaky i have the collie wobbles. Today i feel again shaky cus my hooman told me about a stagy-sing he saw before the lock in, but it was all about CATS! when i meet mr loyd wubber i will tell him he must write a stagy-sing full of DOGS and NO CATS!

the books by mr ransome are very fine when they include my relatives. i have told you about Ringman there is also his cousin Roy we are all collies and best at dealing with silly animals that go the wrong way. i think a hound trail is a waste of time but there is a good winner i cannot say his name cus my hooman says it is in a kwiz so it is a secret. Pug William is a small DOG who sleeps lots but saves the day by being brave. but i think how can a mere pug have a street named after him there should be a Collie crescent or a Melon mews. mr ransomes other DOGS are Rory and Dandy they are Scottish collies who grrrr at hoomans in pink pyjamas. one of their frens is called DOGMudgeon. how can such a noble name be used for such a grim and melancholy hooman.

oh - a spider has just entered the room. and i am on my way to introduce myself. excuse me. the hooman is now helping the spider outside. that did not go as i planned. if the spider is reading this i am so sorry

i will stop now as outside it is a stormy. there are sky booms and flashes. i am not scared but i do have to check under the sofa for any more spiders. Goob night.

from MELON collie





June 3rd

is the day some Tars always gather at Ransome's grave to remember and reflect.

This event will go ahead on the day. Anyone lucky enough to be in the area is welcome to join us at 6pm at St Paul's Church, Rusland.

Northern Region AGM

Was held on March 20th by Zoom with a social afterwards.

Chair: Elizabeth Williams

Secretary: Helen Lewis

Treasure: Liz Haworth

Committee Members:

Kryisia Clack (Board Member)

Ann Farr

Veronica Priest

As nothing is likely to change this year, we were looking for new volunteers and fresh ideas for events for 2022.

April 17th 3pm
a ZOOM call with
Dr Mike Bender
author of
Sunlight and Shadows
organised by Northern
Region but open to all. We
are hoping to record this
event to view later.
Contact Helen Lewis
for access details

Ideas for events later in 2021

or as soon as Lockdown is eased sufficiently to allow them:

A visit to *Windermere Jetty, Museum of Steam and Stories*; to see their 'Swallows and Amazons' exhibition which had been extended because of Covid restrictions. A real MUST and not to be missed.

A trip north to **Nenthead Mines** and the steam railway at Alston. An outdoor event so not likely to be under so many restrictions

A joint visit with TARS Scotland to **Moat Brae** in Dumfries to see the Childhood home of JM Barrie, author of *Peter Pan*. Mostly outdoors, lovely gardens

A visit to **Seven Stories; the National Centre for Children's Books** in Newcastle. A good day out at any time, we are just waiting for them to re-open.

An Inn-Formal gathering at the *Red Lion at Lowick on December 29th*. Hopefully we will be out of the woods by then!

More details on the above will be published on the TARS website and by email alerts.

Any Northern Member not receiving emails from the secretary should contact **Helen Lewis**,

01229 716685 h.m.lewis55@btinternet.com

EBB & FLOW

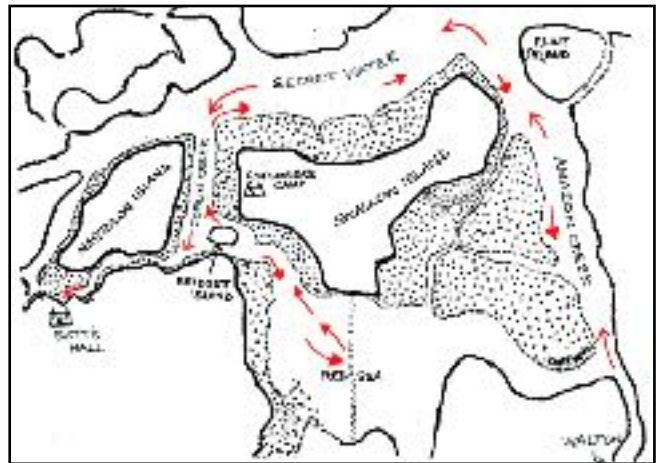
The Eastern Pages



At the time of going to print we are still in lockdown. Hopefully we will be back to normal life or near normal later this year. In the meantime we can at least look back, some of us a very long way back to old events and the books that inspired them. My favourite books were those set in the North plus *Secret Water* owing perhaps to it being the closest story to where I lived.

I first read the book in 1953 but it was not until the sixties that I began to explore the area and not until I had joined TARS in the mid-nineties that I went on my first epic voyage actually on the water.

The Eastern Region organised a trip around the backwaters from Walton to Batt's Hall, with its association with Charles Darwin. Around twelve plus Tars sailed in a small convoy consisting of an open longboat with an outboard engine, a small sailing cruiser and a dinghy. We travelled north up Amazon Creek, west into the Secret Water then south down Goblin Creek to the Hall opposite Mastodon Island. We were welcomed in true Ransome fashion with tea and cakes before heading back via the Red Sea. However with the tide on the ebb it was too shallow to cross the Red Sea's Island Road so had to retrace our route back around Swallow Island. Sadly I can no longer find the photos I took at the time but the memory lingers on.



Many trips followed over the years, in *Nancy Blackett*, twice in the old Walton lifeboat, and several Thames Barge trips. There were combined events with the Old Gaffers Association, including a round the island dinghy race and model boat

competitions. There were walks along the sea wall to Kirby Creek and the Witch's Cottage. On one occasion the witch herself, looking much younger and quite attractive, was working in the garden. Obviously witches are no longer what they used to be.



The other main event in the area is of course the Wade Walk across the Red Sea to Swallow Island. The road leading up to the Wade crossing is now in a terrible condition and blocked off to vehicles at the far end. At one IAGM a coach could get down the road but no longer. It is still walkable. There is a new road running alongside but it is on private land.

It is still worth the long walk to the water's edge and the view at high or low water.



Sou'westers and Seaboats News from the SW Region

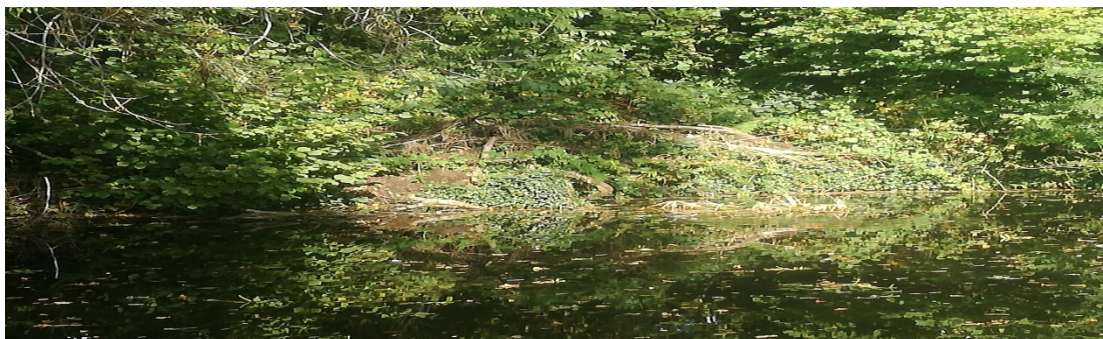
We walked part of the towpath of the Tiverton Canal last October, when we were allowed to meet other people outside, remember that?

We had to split in to two groups as there were seven of us, luckily the weather was day and sunny.

We passed a field full of pumpkins waiting to be picked by families ready for Halloween, the farm shop where we arranged to meet and return for lunch was having a pumpkin day.



Unfortunately for us this made it very busy so the second group were unable to grab lunch. I don't know what Roger would have thought!



We were lucky enough to see a Kingfisher on the way back though which made up for the disappointment. I did try to take a picture but I was too slow.

It was lovely to meet up and hopefully we will be able to again soon.



Birthday Lunch and AGM, Saturday 16 January

We had a Zoom AGM meeting first thing in the morning, which went well, and then lunch and a chat later. Some members joined us for both, while others joined for one or the other.



We had agreed to make a lunch based on a meal from one of the books. There were sardines, pemmican, cheese, buttery eggs and cake to name but a few.

Upcoming Events

We will be having our usual virtual get-togethers on the 3rd Saturday of the month for the foreseeable future. Barbara will send details and joining instructions.
 Saturday 15th May – Mapping event.
 Saturday 19th June – a quiz.

We are hoping to hold the events below but please look on the website or wait for

details from Barbara to see if and when they can go ahead. Donkey Sanctuary, East Somerset Railway at Cranmore, Devizes museum and Caen Hill boat trip, Somerset Rural Life Museum at Glastonbury and Ancient Circular Hut Village

Answers to Quiz, with thanks to Diana and Dick Dastardly

Starter round – S&A

1. Blackett
2. Cormorant Island
3. Shark
4. Charcoal burners
5. Elephant
6. Brown

Intermediate – all books in the 12

1. An adder
2. Bird Protection Society
3. Mary Swainson
4. Mrs McGinty the twins' housekeeper and the chieftan in GN
5. George Owdon (note spelling)
6. Blue

Dick Dastardly

- 1 Low Ludderburn, The Heald, Lowick Hall. (Earlingheath and Hill Top were only rented.)
- 2 The Garrick.
- 3 W.G. Collingwood.
- 4 Barbara and Ursula
- 5 Scarborough
6. Pauline Marshall, her first book being "Where it all began"

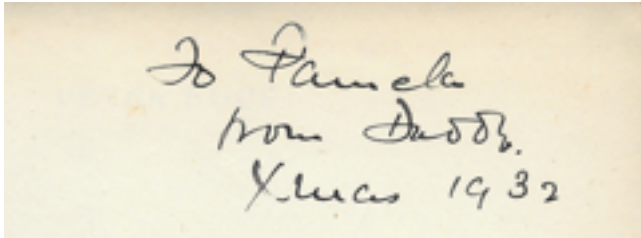
Hard – all 12 books

1. 4.86
2. Oulton
3. Coffee
4. Bigland
5. According to Dick 2,000°F – correctly 1,948°F
6. A dozen

Who before me?

Kate Crosby

ponders the previous owners of her Ransome collection



Another of the pleasures of secondhand books, peripheral to the volume itself, but hugely intriguing, are the extras that often come along too. Bits of paper falling out, inscriptions, prices, the particular edition. Lucky Pamela received her copy of *Peter Duck* fresh off the presses, Second Impression December 1932. And with a smaller, inserted page before the end papers, promoting *Swallows and Amazons* on one side, *Swallowdale* on the other, 'With illustrations by Clifford Webb. 7s 6d. net.' £1.00 for me in a Falmouth charity shop.

Looking through the rest of my battered green hardbacks, I'm surprised to find how few originated with me. Who is I. P. King? Looks like a boy's writing, firmly inked in both *Secret Water* and *The Big Six*, 1947 and 1948. An East Coast man? Was he a wartime kid? £5.00 each.

And H. O'Hanlon? *Swallows and Amazons*, reprinted September 1944, ink name on a bookplate – looks like a girl's – with 'Abbey Grange, Sherborne, Dorsetshire, England', pencilled underneath.



A family connection?

Wait a minute, I have a cousin in Sherborne. Hugh tells me that Abbey Grange is now the Headmaster's house at Sherborne School. Before that, it was owned and occupied by Geoffrey, known as Jack, O'Hanlon, Classics master at the school. (He won a classical scholarship to Oxford. Later he was awarded First Class Honours in Classical Moderation in 1906 and graduated in 1908 with a Second in *Litterae Humaniores*). Geoffrey/Jack was previously housemaster of Sherborne's Westcott House during the time of its most prestigious pupil, Alan Turing of Enigma Code fame, 1926 to 1931. My 'H' must be an O'Hanlon relative, but none of Geoffrey/Jack's three children have an initial H. (Many thanks to Cousin Hugh Watkins for this research.)

I have three first editions. *Secret Water*, 1939. 'Elsbeth, a very Happy Christmas from Ken (?) Christmas 1939,' right in line with Cape's plan to have a new AR in time for Christmas each year. No DJ. I appear to have bought it from Nigel Williams Rare Books, Charing Cross Road. £25.00 – ouch.

Then, my only American edition, *Great Northern?*, Macmillan 1947 'JDS'. Illustrated by AR (not Helene Curtis?) \$7.50. Nice oatmeal-coloured boards. Disintegrating dust jacket. Lastly and probably my best – *The Big Six*, a present from good friends, in good condition, with pristine dust jacket. At one point it was pencil priced 7/6. Nice.

Delinquent borrower

Then, I have to confess two horrible discoveries. *Missee Lee*, Second Impression March 1942.

'Timothy Perkins', in ink. I remember I borrowed it for a train journey, and never returned it. And, *Winter Holiday*, 1946, boldly pencilled 'Sarita Waldron 1947'. I borrowed that on the Thames at Marlow when our parents were having drinks at The Compleat Angler (real Hullabaloo country).

Swore to return it. How often have I cursed delinquent book borrowers? (Worse when I know a book is missing, but can't remember who has got it.) Glad I can't see TARS Librarian Winifred Wilson's face if she reads this. Especially as a couple of mine obviously *have* been returned to me. *Swallowdale*, 1948, with my

name and school number, 142, in Mum's hand is right here. *Coot Club*, 1948, has 'Please return to Crosby, 3, Ormonde Gate, S.W.3.' many years after the sprawling ink 'Katharine Wood' above.

Of them all, I like Pamela on the flyleaf of *Peter Duck* the best. Christmas 1932. The war to end all wars long over, the next one barely on the horizon. 'Dark at teatime', yes, but with all the Christmas caffuffle over, she's in front of the fire, slice of Christmas cake – the kind with cracky royal icing – at hand. Lovely 'new book smell' as she opens it. I can join her, aboard the *Wild Cat*, 'on deck in a summer morning tacking out of harbour under jib and mainsail.'

Kate lives in Esmont, VA, USA. This first appeared in Signals From Tarsus/North Pole News

Greetings from Kryisia Clack, new Overseas Members' Representative on the TARS Board



When the vacancy arose for the Overseas Members' Representative last year it was a natural progression for me to volunteer. I had recently retired from the British Library where I had spent 10 years responding to queries from all over the world, assisting people in how to begin their journey into locating the items they required for their research within the massive collection.

As the Overseas Members' Representative I hope to play much the same role. I may not know the answer to every query but hopefully I will be able to suggest someone who will be more knowledgeable than I am and able to assist.

I also hope to be an effective conduit of dialogue between the overseas members and the Board. If I do this successfully then there should be a good exchange of thoughts and ideas, the co-ordinators within each country will feel supported and the groups will feel part of the larger TARS.

Midnight Zoom meetings

It was a real pleasure to meet some of the members in Australia and New Zealand via Zoom within the first week of taking up the post. It is always a lot easier once you have met online and something I would like to repeat, even if it does have to take place a bit after midnight!

During the Covid lockdowns, we in the UK have had to learn to work around not being able to meet with other members. I admire the efficient way the overseas groups successfully communicate with each other despite the large distances that separate them – their comradeship was very visible during the Zoom meeting.

I recommend all members see what these groups achieve by reading their newsletters, '*Signals from Tarsus and North Pole News*' and '*Furthest South*', via the TARS website: go to 'Members' and select Publications for the links to the individual newsletters. The quality of research is seriously impressive and the creativity is as admirable. It is exciting to see such a hearty enthusiasm for the work of Arthur Ransome and for TARS throughout the world and I feel privileged to play my part.

...and from the Editor:

Overseas members account for more than a fifth of the TARS membership - about the same as a medium-sized UK region. The vast majority are with uncanny symmetry contained in four countries within two zones: North America, with 42 memberships in the USA and 21 in Canada, and Australasia, with 41 in Australia and 17 in New Zealand.

Both zones run their own newsletters, and even though these are now available to all TARS on the website, it's a happy function of Signals to share some of these contributions with the wider TARS audience.

I also thought it would be good to meet the co-ordinators from these countries, so invited them to write a bit about themselves. Such was the response that I've had to split it between two issues, starting this time with David Stamp of Australia and Neil and Barbara Robertson who have recently taken over in New Zealand.

David Stamp

AusTARS Co-ordinator

I was born a few days less than five years before WW II VE Day (Q: how old am I?) in Melbourne, and apart from 15 months living and working in Germany and England in the mid-1960s, Melbourne has been my home.

I qualified in mechanical and electrical engineering, and although most engineering students were almost obliged to profess an interest in cars, my real interest was to do with sailing boats - building, looking after and sailing them; there was plenty of opportunity to develop skills in woodwork, painting, mechanical things and so on.

A friend at school drew my attention to Arthur Ransome's writings when I was about eleven, and I gradually worked my way through his twelve books, imagining that I was a part of the stories. They must have had some beneficial effect, as before reading them, I used to cycle down to the local jetty and boat harbour with its yacht club, to try fishing, and look at the yacht club's motor boats swinging on their moorings. Arthur put paid to yearning for motor boats, and sailing boats became the thing, and have done ever since.

Of all the boats in the books, I liked *Teasel* and *Death and Glory* most – both could be used for voyaging; '*Teasel*' was preferable, and *D and G* was possibly achievable. I actually started saving

“I hung onto the quant, the boat drifted over the quant and the top end began to lean away from the boat...I kept hanging on...”

pennies and shillings with the hope of finding a *D and G* substitute, until, having accumulated a pound or two, I realised that there were no local replicas, and that if there were, my pounds would be insufficient, there was nowhere to sail such a boat, and nowhere to keep it.

Later, as a junior member of a nearby yacht club, and along with several young members I decided to build a Yachting World Cadet. The following year I built another Cadet, but for some reason it was not as fast as the earlier one – maybe the other skippers were getting better than I was.

During my mid-60s period in England I found time to look into the Broads, and with two others I hired a 28-foot ‘Westward’ class yacht for a week, starting at Wroxham, and getting as far as Reedham. Having read *Coot Club* (my favourite AR book) I felt that the surroundings were falling into their expected places, and with flat water and kind breezes all for the most part went well.

The Curse of the Quant

But on our second day I suffered The Curse of the Quant as, when close-hauled beating up to a bend in the River Bure, the wind headed us, and instead of tacking, I tried in vain to make the corner on the original tack. The sails luffed, the boat slowed down, we started drifting to leeward towards a large prickly hawthorn with branches hanging down into the river, and I got the quant and began to push to arrest the sideways movement.

The boat continued, I hung onto the quant, the boat drifted over the quant, and the top end of the quant, with its lower end affixed to the bottom of the river, began to lean away from boat. I kept hanging on until my feet were off the boat’s gunwale and I was over the water. There was no option other than to release my grip of the quant, followed by a rapid descent into the river, suffering considerable scratches from the hawthorn on the way down. I never did forgive that quant.

Elizabeth and I were married in 1968. We share many interests, including looking after our dwelling, sailing, cross-country skiing (not so much



David, with *The Big Six*, and ‘Dick’s camera’

these days), photography and memberships of several organisations, including TARS. We have had a succession of small boats, some concurrently, as well as a wooden sailing cruiser which we had for just on 25 years. We have also had a Hartley TS16 trailer-sailer for the last 28 years, which we tow to the Gippsland Lakes, 300km east of Melbourne, in the late summer each year, when there should be reasonably benign sailing weather.

Our second daughter lived in England for about ten years, and we made several visits, with time in the Lake District and the Broads. Highlights were finding the Dogs’ Home and on two occasions hiring a boat from Hunter’s Yard at Ludham.

AusTARS has been a large part of our lives since joining in 2003. Over the last year the Covid pandemic has brought about re-thinking of how we operate, with restrictions about where we can meet, numbers of people attending and so on. In the early part of 2020 we cancelled many activities.

From about the middle of the year we started meeting by Zoom, which resulted in members from all parts of Australia being able to take part; additionally, the potential of Zoom has allowed us to have combined Australia/New Zealand meetings.

A further benefit to us all has been the ability to include TARS members from the UK; there is a standing invitation for UK and other members to join us, differing time zones and interrupted sleep patterns notwithstanding.

Overseas Co-ordinators: New Zealand

Meet Barbara and Neil Robertson

Basically, we are a retired couple, having to face up to the inescapable fact that we are ageing rather more rapidly than we have in the past. Barbara has reached the big 80, and I am less than a couple of years away from that milestone. Barbara is a former maths teacher, who has taught in several overseas countries (India, Fiji and Papua New Guinea) as well as in NZ. I am a former NZ career diplomat, who ended up as a High Commissioner and Ambassador in various North Pacific countries.

We have belonged formally to TARS for nearly 30 years, having joined back in 1993 during a visit – not our first - to the Abbot Hall Museum in Kendal. (My membership card is number 932.)

I have been a Ransome fan since childhood - but Barbara was late to the world of *Swallows and Amazons*. In fact it was in the early 1970s when we were living in New Delhi that she first became aware of Arthur Ransome. I had a new senior colleague, to whom I mentioned that I had found a stash of Ransome paperbacks in a scruffy old bookshop in one of Delhi's markets.

This colleague immediately noted that she was also a Ransome fan, and our friendship burgeoned from that point. Sadly, she died prematurely of ovarian cancer in 2009. I had to give her 'career eulogy' at the Cathedral funeral. I mentioned that we had become lifelong fast friends through our shared liking for the works of Arthur Ransome, and this was featured both in her obituary in the Wellington newspaper, and in the Foreign Affairs eulogy circulated worldwide to all NZ posts.

Birthday gatherings

We have participated in various TARSNZ gatherings in the length of New Zealand, organised by our much-valued former Co-ordinator, Cheryl Paget. These have included regular January weekend gatherings in Hawkes Bay, Auckland, Hamilton, Wellington and Dunedin to commemorate Ransome's birthday. (Future gatherings may depend on the progress of Covid and relevant vaccinations.)

Barbara's book interests are focused on old schoolgirls' books, and she is currently editor of *The Abbey Gatehouse*, a NZ fanzine based (but not exclusively) on Elsie Oxenham's 'Abbey' books.



She also has a particular interest in the NZ writer Clare Mallory, giving a presentation at the last biennial Bristol Conference on old schoolgirls' fiction writers.

My own collections include Richmal Crompton, W E Johns, Dan Dare/Eagle, and P G Wodehouse, as well as Arthur Ransome. Pride of place in the latter collection is a genuine 1930 first (non-illustrated) edition of *Swallows and Amazons*, found by Barbara in a local bookfair for the princely sum of NZ50 cents! Incredibly, this was the second time Barbara had found such a copy in NZ - the first was in a secondhand bookshop, for NZ\$5, and this is now in the collection of TARSNZ member Susan Price, who is the creator and curator of the Susan Price Collection of more than 20,000 children's books which is formally part of New Zealand's National Library.

Antarctic explorers

Apart from our book interests, we are also Antarctic enthusiasts, having been on expedition ship voyages into the Ross Sea on a couple of occasions, reaching 77.51 degrees South (about as far as a ship can travel towards the South Pole). This enabled visits to Scott's Huts at Discovery Point and Cape Evans, and Shackleton's Hut at Cape Royds, as well as to NZ's Scott Base and the US McMurdo Station. Meanwhile, our overland travels have encompassed places such as Tibet, Kashmir, Nepal, Mongolia and Siberia.

In the Ransome-associated world we have also visited China, Russia, Estonia and the Netherlands (and of course the Lake District and the Broads!). However, overseas travelling might be behind us, given the depredations of both Covid and the ageing process.

The photo above shows us – nearer the South Pole than New Zealand – a decade ago.

Ransome and WEATHER

In *Furthest South* recently, **Hedley Thomson** took Mike Bender, author of *Sunlight and Shadows*, to task for a dismissive aside in the book about Ransome's use of weather in the 'Twelve' – here's part of Hedley's introduction:

Weather is one of those topics that tends to get thrown around a bit when discussing children's literature, often (if not usually) on the premise that the kiddies get to run around in blissful, warm sunshiny conditions most of the time. In his recent publication, *Sunlight & Shadows*, in analysing AR and the influences on his life and writings, Mike Bender rather takes this approach—though he doesn't consider whether or not it holds up. For example, he states (p. 210),

'And the key to this competence excitement [imagining other people's worlds, if I'm interpreting the phrase correctly] is Pettigrew's (2009) sarcastic remark that one of the ridiculous things about Ransome's Lakeland novels is that the sun is always shining; which seems to have validity, as the only bad weather I can immediately think of is the storm at the end of *Swallows and Amazons* (Actually, there is a thunder storm in *The Picts and the Martyrs*).'

So I thought I'd have a look for myself—in fact, a look at how AR makes use of the weather.



In typically thorough manner, Hedley then proceeded to analyse each book, chapter by chapter, but more importantly, day by day, for references to weather and its use in the plots. No room to detail them here but you can go to the website and look up *Furthest South*, September 2020 (Vol 22 No 3) and December 2020 (Vol 22 No 4). From the thunderstorm in SW, through the 'strong, flukey wind' that is the nemesis of *Swallow*, and the thunderstorm and fog in SD and all the other incidents in the books - more fog (lots of it), blizzard, heatwave, waterspout and the rest – Ransome doesn't hang back in using the weather help the plot. As a useful add-on, Hedley's research provides a guide to the number of days covered in each book (Which do you suppose is the 'longest'? And the 'shortest'?). Here is part of Hedley's conclusion:

First, I think it's fair to expect that in such stories the weather will generally be fair to fine; after all, if the summer holidays are going to be beset with rain and cold, a story line limited to what the children are able to concoct indoors to keep them amused isn't likely to get very far.

As for the actuality of how AR weaves weather conditions into the story, the reality is one of diversity, with the weather often dictating and even determining outcomes. And I think this is quite deliberate. As is the hallmark of Ransome's writing in the Twelve, the weather is used to teach behaviours and hone skills and to show that the weather isn't always going to be fine or do what you want it to do. As such, it is entirely unfair and unfounded to state that 'one of the ridiculous things about Ransome's Lakeland novels is that the sun is always shining'. A reasonable reading of or reference to the books themselves will tell you that.

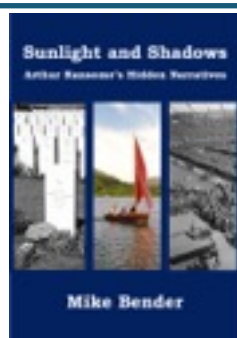
And just for fun: A Signals Survey

Which is your favourite weather incident?

List your top three and email me at

signals@arthur-ransome.org PW





AMAZON PUBLICATIONS

available titles

**NEW 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
Hardyment. 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,
and new writing on related themes. £15 (+ £3.50)

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

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)

Arthur Ransome's Family 1649-1975,
by Judy Andrews; with lots of previously unseen
illustrations. £5 (+ £2.50)

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 £7 (+ £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 £5 (+£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

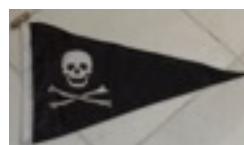
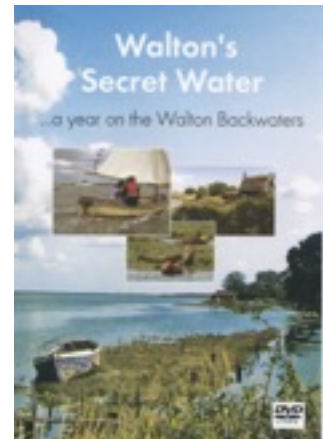
Ransome-referenced adventure story £10 (+ £2)



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.

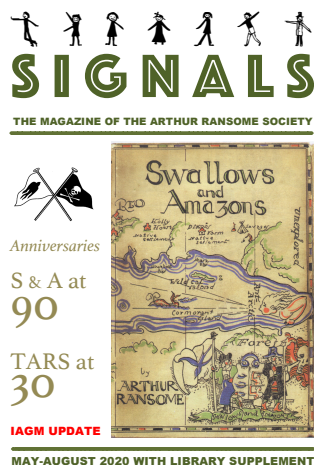
Three designs:

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.

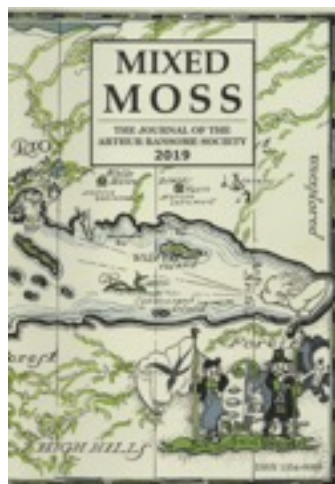
Some overseas material is included; overseas TARS groups also have their own newsletters – see below.

Signals Editor is Peter Willis
signals@arthur-ransome.org
01394 387907

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

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

**Australia/New Zealand:
Furthest South** Ed: Jan Allen
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 30 April, with distribution to members (not Youth class) in the autumn.

Mixed Moss 2021 issue
Editor is Catherine Lamont,
mixedmoss@arthur-ransome.org

**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 +pp



Amazon Publications produces a book with a Ransome connection roughly every year on a subscription basis. Latest title, *Sunshine and Shadows*. Some back issues on TARS Stall. Enquires to Alan Hakim: 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
or **Outlaw Editors c/o TARS,**
17 Chesterwood Road, Kings
Heath Birmingham B13 0QG

RANSOME ONLINE

TARS WEBSITE:
arthur-ransome.org
with log-in access for
Members Pages

OTHER WEBSITES

The Arthur Ransome Trust:
arthur-ransome-trust.org.uk

The Nancy Blackett Trust:
nancyblackett.org

allthingsransome.net
a useful resource site

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

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

TARS Committees

Literary & Resources:

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

Publications:

Barry Gouldbourne (Chair), Mike Glover (Secretary), The Blue Family, Paul Crisp (guest), David Middleton, Peter Willis

Contribute!

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

Advertise!

We are pleased to accept advertisements in Signals, either included within the magazine or as loose inserts. Half-page £100, quarter page £50, eighth page £25. Insert flyer £100.

TARS Subscriptions

2021 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
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

Summer wear from **The TARS Stall**



Adult T-Shirts

£12+ £3.50 p+p

Unisex,

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
Small W 16.5in L 24in
Medium W 19in L 25in
Large W 20.5in L 27in



Polo Shirts

£20+ £3.50 p+p

Unisex, light blue or maroon
Medium Width 21in Length 28in
Large Width 22in Length 30in
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

£22+ £3.50 p+p

Unisex, maroon
Medium W 23in L 27in
Large W 24.5in L 28.5in
X Large W 26in L 29.5in



Children's T-Shirt

'TARS AHOY!' logo

£10+ £3.50 p+p

Mid blue or lime green
W 17.5in L 23in 7-8 yrs
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

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
or by cheque payable to: *TARS Stall*. BACS payment details on request.

More Stall selections on Pages 42- 43 or www.arthur-ransome.org