



SIGNALS

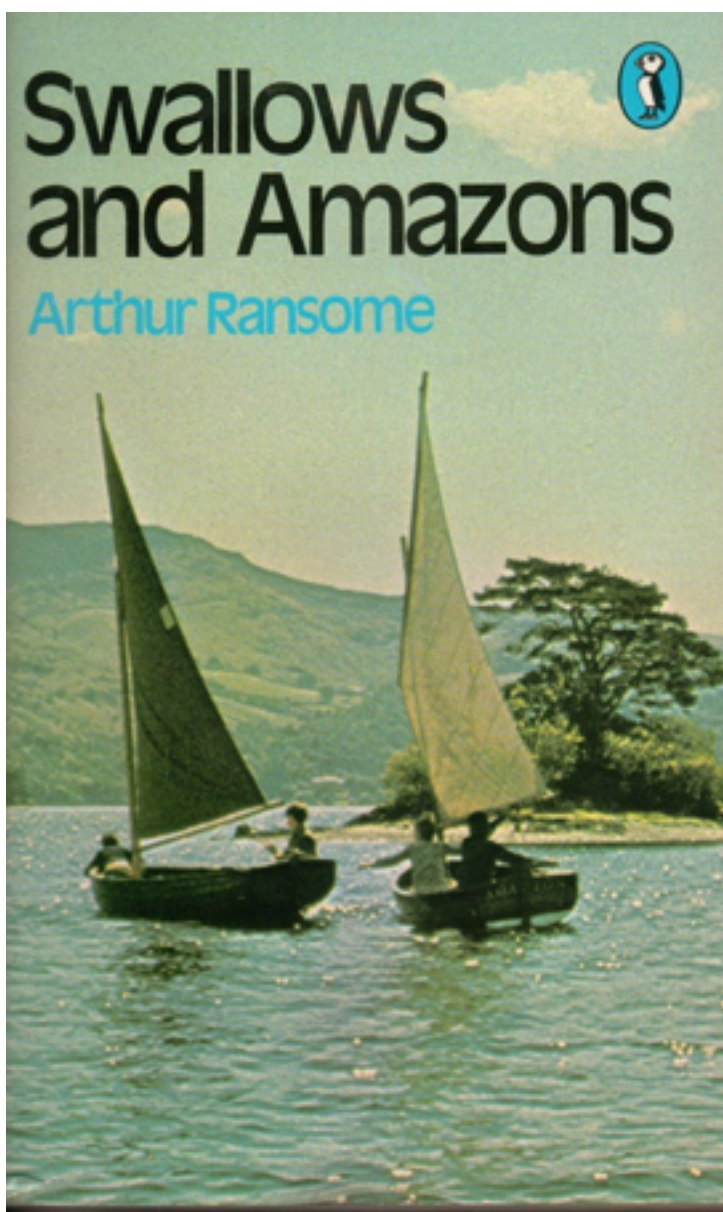
THE MAGAZINE OF THE ARTHUR RANSOME SOCIETY



**SWALLOW
AND
AMAZON
AND
SWALLOWS
AND
AMAZONS**

**The boats and the film
they starred in**

**Plus: Meet our new
President**



SEPTEMBER-DECEMBER 2023 WITH SHIP'S LOG

The Arthur Ransome Society

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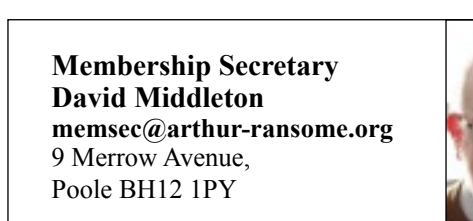
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THE MAGAZINE OF THE ARTHUR RANSOME SOCIETY SEPTEMBER-DECEMBER 2023

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From the Editor

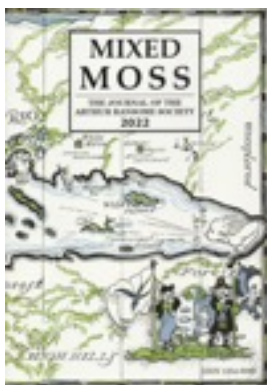
Our people

They say it takes a village to raise a child, and we know what they mean; the product is the result of the communal input. And it occurred to me to wonder how many people had contributed, in one way or another, to this issue of Signals.

“One way or another” needed a bit of thinking about. There are those whose contributions are ‘by’ – the writers; then those whom it’s about – the subjects, and those less visible whose existence in various capacities – the Trustees for example and the members behind the regional activities – whose existence and efforts make TARS the organisation this publication exists to serve.

So I counted up all the names, actual and implied, in this issue, and it came to a surprisingly large number. Too many to name all of them, but I must mention, and thank the issue’s contributors, especially Lesley Wareing who started with a modest little piece about marmalade at the time of the Oxford literary weekend, and has evolved swiftly into a wise and perceptive commentator on Ransome’s books. And Jill Goulder, an old hand at turning adventures into articles. This issue also sees a new columnist, Jack Blake (sounds like a *nom de plume* to me) making his debut.

All in all – and including Susie Cattley and Di Stockwell, whose extraordinary generosity is a memorial to the contribution they made while alive – the number adds up to over a hundred. About one in six of our total membership. *Peter Willis*



Worried that your Mixed Moss is missing from this mailing? Fear not, production is a little delayed and it will be going out with the December Signals mailing. Contributors include poet Ian McMillan (‘The Bard of Barnsley’); Christina Hardyment on Amazon Publications; Julia Jones on *The Book of Friendship*, Sophie Neville on S&A plus articles on the Mariners Library, Rattletrap, Low Ludderburn and much more winter reading.

CONTENTS

IAGM 2023 Report	2
IAGM Board meeting	3
Events calendar	5
Susie and Di bequest	6
Swallow and Amazon	7
Board member news	8
Profile: John Sergeant	9
Jan Allen Austars Cup	10
Literary Weekend '24	11
A Walk in the North	12
Great Northern? revisited	14
S&A film 50th anniversary	16
SHIP'S LOG DUNDEE	18-25
Amazon's next book	26
REGIONAL GATEWAY	27
Eastern 29 Midland 32 North 36	
South 38 South-West 40	
Robin Anderson obituary	28
Letters	44
Jack Blake's Jottings	45
TARS Stall	46-77
Reference	38-39

2023 IAGM Report

The 25th International Annual General Meeting of the Arthur Ransome Society was held on 7 May 2023 at the Malmaison Hotel in Dundee. A Zoom link enabled eleven TARS members to participate in the meeting from a distance. Some memberships had submitted proxy votes.

Welcome

Chairman Peter Wright welcomed the participants.

Apologies for absence

Received from Duncan Breckels, Ann Farr, Nora Fawcett, Marc Grimston, the Hoptons, Iain Khan-Gilchrist, Margaret and Joe Ratcliffe, Peter and Wendy Willis (Peter participated via Zoom), Winifred and Paul Wilson.

Minutes of the 24th IAGM, held on 24 August 2022

These were adopted as a true record; there were no matters arising.

Chairman's report

Peter presented his report, which had been circulated. He added that TARS was on the point of receiving a bequest of some £35,000 from the estate of the late TARS members Susie Cattley and Diana Stockwell.

Secretary's report

John Pearson thanked Peter for what he had found an excellent chairmanship. A great deal had been done, presided over and encouraged by Peter with a rare mix of firmness and considerateness. John thanked the membership for continuing to provide willingly at his request the information and advice which he needed as secretary.

Treasurer's report

Susan Gouldbourne presented the 2022 TARS accounts, which had been circulated. She drew attention to a minor required amendment. The meeting unanimously received the

accounts as so amended and thanked Susan for all her work as Treasurer.

Appointment of Examiner

The meeting unanimously re-appointed Sally-Ann Balment for a further year as independent examiner of the accounts.

Election of President

Peter proposed, and the meeting unanimously approved, the election of **John Sergeant** as the new TARS President for three years from the date of the meeting. A video of the Swallows and Amazons episode of John's *The Secret Life of Books* was shown

Elections to the TARS Board of Trustees

Rachel Chalmers and **David Butters** were unanimously elected to the Board, from which Peter and Susan were standing down under the six year rule. Susan would remain Treasurer and be invited to Board meetings as an Adviser.

AusTARS Cup 2022 winner

Peter announced the winner as **Janet Allen**, who addressed the meeting via Zoom. The meeting applauded Janet for all her work for TARS over the years.

Date and place of next IAGM 15 - 18 August 2024, in the English Peak District



Members' Forum

At this Forum, held after the IAGM, the following main points were raised:

There was some support for Berwick-upon-Tweed as a future IAGM location;

Christine Rae presented Amazon Publications' proposals for forthcoming books: the text of Ivan Cuttings' play *Red Skies* and a book by Kirsty Nichol Fidlay on Ransome's style of writing. Advance orders would be helpful, as would proposals for future books, and further editors should if possible be appointed;

Peter Wright reminded the Forum that the next Literary Weekend would be held on 19 – 21 April 2024 in Harrogate;

Roger Sturge expressed regret that TARS had not achieved recognition as a charity and thus remained liable to tax. The Board might review this issue again, but the general feeling of the meeting was that success was unlikely;

Arthur Herbertson told the Forum about his research for a book on Old Peter's Russian Tales;

Material on Tarbid held by **Stephanie Phillips Morgan** would be welcome in TARS archives;

Mike Glover said that David Middleton would be retiring after the next Literary Weekend from his long period of service as TARS membership secretary and as 'booking officer' for IAGMs and Literary Weekends. David was applauded by the Forum;

Janet Allen offered contact via Zoom to non-Australasian members interested in participating in certain AusTARS and TARS New Zealand meetings.

Board meeting minutes 7 May

Draft minutes of the Society's 92nd Board meeting, held following the IAGM on 7 May 2023 at Dundee.

Present Mike Glover (Chair from Item 3) Sandy Allan, David Butters, Rachel Chalmers, Krysia Clack, Barbara Flower, Susan Gouldbourne, John Pearson, Kirstie Taylor, Elizabeth Williams, Peter Willis (by Zoom) Diana Wright, Peter Wright (for items 1 and 2)

1. Apologies for absence

Apologies had been received from Jules Blue, Marc Grimston and Iain Khan-Gilchrist.

2. Appointments

The Board appointed Mike Glover as TARS Chair in succession to Peter Wright, and Krysia Clack as Vice-Chair in succession to Mike. Sandy Allan, nominated by TARS Scotland, was appointed to the Board as a regional representative trustee.



3. Minutes of the Board meeting of 25 February 2023

These were adopted as a true record subject to amending, in point 15, the date of the present meeting from 6 to 7 May 2023. There were no matters arising.

4. Matters arising from the day's IAGM or Members' Forum

The Board was inclined to think that there was little prospect of a successful re-application for charity status for TARS.

5. Other business:

- Future of 'Swallow' and 'Amazon' of the 1974 S&A film

Diana considered that the project for hiring out the two dinghies by Hunter's Yard could well break even in the medium or longer term. However, in order to avoid delay in readying them for service, it might be necessary to make payments exceeding the sum currently available from bequests and donations. After discussion the Board decided to guarantee in these circumstances up to £5,000, which the project should repay within five years. The Board considered that funds for the project should be sought also from sources outside the membership of TARS (crowdfunding, etc.). More generally, it was noted that TARS could withdraw from its agreement with Hunter's Yard if the arrangement turned out to be too financially burdensome.

- Proposed weekend celebrating the 1974 S&A film

The Board agreed to approve at this stage a budget of £2,500 for the costs of this event (travel expenses for certain participants, etc.).

- Responsibility for 'safeguarding' matters

Because of increased responsibilities outside TARS, Amanda Ardagh-Walter was obliged to retire from her responsibility for 'safeguarding' issues. The Board agreed to seek a suitable successor, to be appointed at its next meeting.

- TARS committees

The Board confirmed Krysia and Elizabeth as chair and secretary respectively of the Literary and Resources committee. A new chair and secretary should be sought for the Publications committee. Rachel should join the '1974 film celebration' working group.

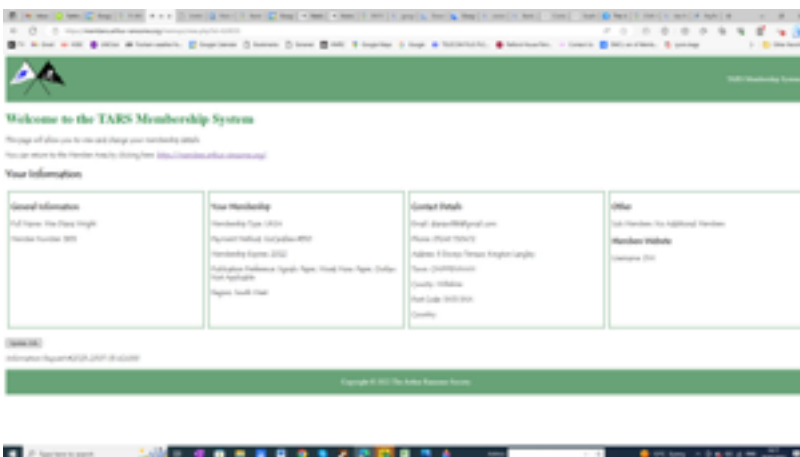
6. Date and place of next Board meeting

Saturday 14 October 2023 in Birmingham. Premises to be confirmed.

John Pearson, Secretary
16 May 2023

Updating your membership details

Did you know that you can alter your own details on the website? In the **Members' Area**, choose **My Account** on the right hand side, and then **View My Member Info** and choose **Update Info** which is below on the left. Don't forget to **Save!** In the New Year we will no longer be updating personal details for members who have a presence on the website - only for members with just a postal address.



NEWS UPDATE



The new TARS pull-up roller banner 210cm tall, 81cm wide and rolls down into a handy travel case. Some regions have already ordered theirs.

TARS to host the Alliance of Literary Societies AGM at Windermere

The Alliance of Literary Societies' Annual General Meeting weekend is hosted by a different member society each year, normally in a location associated with the society's author. TARS will be hosting the 2024 AGM, using Windermere Jetty (or a bit of it) for the two-day event.

The date is 18-19 May, with the Annual General Meeting and talks from the host society on Saturday morning, then free time to explore in the afternoon and a dinner in the evening. The Sunday is for excursions.

We plan to put on a good show with two talks on the Saturday, a look-round Bowness in the afternoon (possibly by boat), and on Sunday a visit to Coniston, hopefully including a trip on *Gondola* and visits to Brantwood, Bank Ground Farm and the Ruskin Museum.

Mainly aimed at officers of all the other literary societies, it's also open to their (and of course our) members. It's a chance to showcase 'our' author and compare notes with other societies.

Contact Amanda Ardagh-Walter (nickandamanda1558@gmail.com) if you're interested. For more on the ALS, see allianceofliterarysocieties.wordpress.com, where there's also a suggested accommodation list for the weekend.

The ALS's annual journal *ASLo* can also be downloaded from the website. This year's edition carries the results of the short-story competition on the theme of adventures that befell its authors under the title of 'Better Drowned than Duffers'. These include two entries on Ransome by TARS members – Winifred Wilson on his life of adventure and Peter Willis with a tale entitled 'Not Exactly Yachting'.

Abbot Hall reopens

Abbot Hall, TARS' official address, is open again after a long closure. Official opening hours are 10 a.m. to 4 p.m. Wednesdays to Saturdays.

The museum/gallery was the recipient of Arthur Ransome's desk, typewriter and numerous other personal artefacts, including the manuscript of his autobiography, bequeathed by his widow Evgenia. It was the focal point of the movement to launch the Arthur Ransome Society in 1990.

TARS BOOK GROUP

The next Book Group meeting will be on

**Sunday 8 October
at 7pm on Zoom**

Join the Zoom Meeting:

[https://us02web.zoom.us/j/85920726561?](https://us02web.zoom.us/j/85920726561?pwd=bVlTeWxnR2NmNUFXak5QdG45cEJRQT09)

[pwd=bVlTeWxnR2NmNUFXak5QdG45cEJRQT09](https://us02web.zoom.us/j/85920726561?pwd=bVlTeWxnR2NmNUFXak5QdG45cEJRQT09)

Meeting ID: 859 2072 6561

Passcode: 815151

We will be discussing:

**Where the River
Takes Us**

by Lesley Parr (2023)
Recommended by Peter Wright; definitely fulfils the brief of a contemporary camping and tramping story. Set in the 1974 miners' strike.

The Draw of the Sea

by Wyl Menmuir (2022)
Recommended by Elizabeth Williams; A series of essays about the sea.

**The House with
Chicken Legs**

by Sophie Anderson (2018) A repeat author; Another story reminiscent of Old Peter's Russian Tales.

Read one, or all of them – before the meeting, or after listening to the discussion.

Suggest new titles – we need a bank of ideas for future meetings. Contact

Co-ordinator
Elizabeth Williams

elizabeth.williams10@aol.co.uk

DATE	CALENDAR OF EVENTS	REGION
8 September Friday	Hanson Collection Cambridge university Library	East
16 September Saturday	Punting and Museum Oxford	Midland
30 September Saturday	Bring and Scoff Literary Day	South-West
7 October Saturday	Literary Half-day Ted Alexander on Russia	East
8 October Sunday	Book Group	Zoom
21 October Saturday	Archery	Midland
22 October Sunday	Zoom talk (Tavistock Canal)	South-West/ Zoom
28 October Saturday	Autumn Gathering Guildford	Southern
11 November Saturday	Book Fairs	Northern
18 November Saturday	Skating and swimming	Midland
25 November Saturday	Zoom Quiz on The Picts and the Martyrs	South-West/ Zoom
20 January Saturday	ARTHUR RANSOME BIRTHDAY EVENTS	Most regions
24 February 2024	Rattletrap museum	Midland
19-20 April	TARS Literary Weekend Harrogate	TARS
18-19 May	Alliance of Literary Societies AGM Hosted by TARS	TARS/ALS
29-30 June	'Swallows and Amazons' 50th anniversary Windermere Jetty	TARS
15-18 August	TARS IAGM Weekend Midlands	TARS/Midland



Susie and Di bequeath £60,000 to TARS

In July, TARS finally received the long-awaited bequest from Di Stockwell’s residual estate; the amount was approximately £60,000 – almost twice the anticipated sum of £35,000 announced at the IAGM in May.

Di died in April 2020, just a few weeks after her partner Susie Cattley, had passed away in November 2019; their wills were linked, so the bequest is in effect from both of them.

Familiar to TARS for many years, Di and Susie were enthusiastic attendees at IAGMs, Literary Weekends, and Rydal Hall house parties, as well as at SW regional events.

In a 2020 South-west Region Newsletter, Jill Lane recalled “Susie enjoyed (dinghy) racing at her local yacht club and messing about with her collection of wooden boats, persuading Di to join in... Di was much quieter but a good friend and confidant. Any social gathering with them present would go well. They both enjoyed their wine.”

Peter Wright comments: “I first met Susie and Di at the Durham literary weekend in 2001 and was instantly taken with their good humour, generosity and jollity. Always enthusiastic and supportive, they’d throw themselves into any activity and engage all as long-lost friends. They had a wicked sense of humour, delivered with a twinkle in their eyes – they were quite a double act. Great Ransome fans and sailors, they were also keen travellers, in their campervan .Nellie.

“In working life Di had been Head of Midwifery services in Plymouth whilst Susie had been a social worker. They were both active Soroptimists. Di served on the TARS Board between 2002 and 2005.

“TARS is extremely grateful to receive such a generous bequest – !

“The delay to the bequest resulted not only from the linking their wills, but also through complicated property issues. (they lived in two adjoining houses, overlooking the sea at Oreston in Plymouth).

“In all it took three years to unlock, but thankfully all was resolved in the end, with

TARS receiving 15% of Di’s residual estate.

“Hopefully their most generous gift can be put to good use and we can remember them both with love and gratitude”



Di (in red) and Susie at a TARS South-west lunch

“Any social gathering with them present would go well”

Malcolm Porteous

Scottish regional member Malcom Porteous who died in May 2022 has left TARS £10,000.

John Pearson has contributed this memoir:

“It is not many years since I first came across Malcolm for the first time, at a TARS IAGM or a Literary Weekend. I liked him at once: a rather quiet and unobtrusive person, he didn’t push himself forwards. But he talked easily and knowledgeably; as well as Ransomian matters we had a number of common interests, including ornithology and classical music. I recall his leading a bird-watching walk at the Edinburgh Literary Weekend in 2017. Malcolm’s profession had been teaching, and I suspect he had been quietly good at it. It was always a pleasure to talk to him; I was so sorry when illness and disability finally prevented him from coming to TARS events.”

SWALLOW and AMAZON

Afloat Already and Adventures Ahead!

The story so far: TARS has bought Swallow and Amazon, the two dinghies used in the 1974 film... Swallow from the ailing 'SailRansome' for £1, while Amazon came from two families who have owned her for the last 40 years. Both arrived in need of considerable renovation, Broads boatyard Hunter's Yard is carrying out the work and will handle boat hire when complete. Report from Peter Willis



This instalment could have been quite dull, about contracts, finance and obscure boat-repair techniques. There will be some of that, but there is more exciting news about the boats meeting the public – and of course TARS members too.

The boats' acquisition by TARS has coincided neatly (and on the whole accidentally) with the 50th anniversary next year of the *Swallows and Amazons* film in which they starred.

Plans are already in hand for a TARS-led weekend of celebrations to mark the anniversary at Windermere Jetty, 29-30 June next year. More details on page 16, but *Swallow* and *Amazon* will be there – *Amazon* afloat, and *Swallow* ashore where visitors can see her close-up, and will probably stroke and pat her.



Southampton September

Amazon meanwhile has a date at the Southampton International Boat Show, September 15-24. Sophie Neville will be there, as she was with *Swallow* last year to tell the story of the boats and the film, and a team of bucket-rattling Tars is being assembled to help collect donations. See Sophie on the Foredeck Stage on the 15th, 16th, 21st and 24th.

Plans are also forming to have one or both boats at the RYA Dinghy Show next February.

Genuinely old

Part of the charm of *Swallow* and *Amazon* is that they are genuinely old boats. They were old when the film was made in 1973-4. They needed to look the part of 1930s varnished clinker dinghies, and they both achieved it by being just that. *Amazon* was built by Borwicks of Windermere in 1930, and *Swallow*, originally as a rowing-boat, by William King of Burnham-on-Crouch, Essex, in the same era. They are pieces of period craftsmanship, so it was not

in the least fanciful of the *Antiques Roadshow* expert Rupert Maas to put a value of £25-29,000 on *Swallow* when the show visited Windermere Jetty in the summer of 2020.

And it was not just the cachet of film glamour that he took into account. He knows something about boats, and about the work needed to maintain, or refurbish them.

In fact the initial estimates for each of them have come in a lot lower than that. £11,000 for *Amazon*, £13,000 for *Swallow*.

And already over £10,000 in donations has been received. Half of it has come in from TARS members, who began sending money in February, as soon as the purchases were announced.

The other £5,000 has been donated by the Nancy Blackett Trust, which offered to match-fund individual donations up to that total received this year. That target was reached at the end of July.

TARS itself has so far voted, at the IAGM, an interim guarantee of £5,000 underwritten from the Malcolm Porteous legacy.

Amazon afloat

Latest news from Hunter's Yard is that *Amazon* – though not yet fully fit – is capable of being rowed or even sailed in light winds. She was rigged and in the water for the TARS East's Broad Day on July 9th. Those of us present could have enjoyed an inaugural sail, but nobody asked, and nobody told us, so the honour of being first aboard (without sailing) fell to 10-year-old Violet Hicks and her brother Euan (6).

Swallow meanwhile is in the shed, about to receive the go-ahead for repairs to get under way.

If you'd like to donate, or just keep up with developments, go to www.arthur-ransome.org/sail. No computer? Contact Treasurer Susan Gouldbourne (see inside front cover). And thanks for your support.

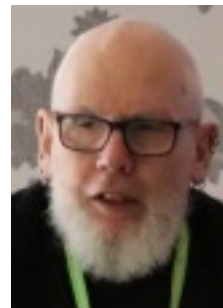
BOARD CHANGES

New Chairman: Mike Glover

Mike's varied career began in 1968 as an apprentice agricultural engineer, since when he has picked up other qualifications, both practical (City and Guilds in advanced engine, grain handling, welding and general engineering, trained gas fitter) and academic (Open University BA in Geography and Geology, 1983) and both (B.Eng., B.Sc., application of fluid drives for agricultural machinery in 1987 at the now defunct Seale-Hayne Agricultural College in Newton Abbot, Devon).

Since "stopping work" in 2012 he has volunteered at GWR, both in the building services department and as a training officer for 'non-operational' volunteers, and since 2019 has been a volunteer at Hereford Waterworks Museum where he became a trustee/director and, since 2020 is Chief Engineer. He picked up two Queen's Awards for volunteering on the way and has also been a local councillor at Parish, District and County level.

Mike has been a Tar since 1991, and a trustee since 2001 with two terms as company secretary and one as vice-chair. He's been a keen sailor for 40 years and prefers reading the books to discussing them.



New Trustee: David Butters



Born in Portsmouth on 29th February, 1948. David is still technically a teenager. At the age of six or seven his family moved to Worcester Park, Surrey, near Kingston-on-Thames.

He writes: "I first came across the Arthur Ransome books at primary school and when I reached the end of what is now Year 6, as the school was closing down, each pupil was allowed to take a book from the school library; I chose *Swallows and Amazons*. After graduating as a mechanical engineer I worked in industry until 1992 when I became self-employed and concentrated on piano and music teaching, something I had been doing part-time since 1968.

"The classic 1974 film '*Swallows and Amazons*' has always been a favourite and in 2020 I got to know Sophie Neville. We have become 'on-line' friends and I have been proof-reading and reviewing books for her for the past three years. I am very excited about the forthcoming 50th anniversary celebrations of the film's release next year and, at the suggestion of an actor/teacher friend, I and a friend from the Steam Boat Association are planning to stage the musical adaptation of *S & A* to link in with the TARS celebrations. We have approached Windermere Jetty Museum and Lakeland Arts, both of whom are enthusiastic about supporting our endeavour and are now looking for cast, musicians and, most importantly, a director. Our fingers are crossed that everything will eventually fall into place.

"I feel very honoured to have been proposed and elected on to the Board and look forward to serving the Society over the next six years."

New Trustee: Rachel Chalmers

Rachel writes: "I've been a fan of Arthur Ransome since reading my sister's Christmas copy of *Swallows and Amazons* when I was ten. But it was another 25 years or so before I joined TARS, when my own children were about that age. We were all enchanted on arrival at our first IAGM by THE camp, set up at the entrance to Glasbury House in 2011. What a welcome! They are now young adults and we still enjoy family hikes, camping and messing about in boats of all types. My partner Nick and I have a couple of boat-related projects on the go, one involving an engine (to keep him happy) and the other so I can learn to sail (at last!).

Although I continue to work full time as a Consultant Clinical Scientist in microbiology for Public Health Wales and the UK Health Security Agency (I dare you to ask me over dinner what I specialise in) (did anybody? - Ed), I am looking forward to serving on the TARS Board as an elected Trustee. (Photo taken on location at The Dogs' Home -Ed)



THE SIGNALS PROFILE

John Sergeant

Broadcaster, sailor and now TARS President,
introduced by Peter Willis

If you'd like to gain some impression of our new President, then I can heartily recommend going onto YouTube and hunting up a TV programme in the *Secret Life of Books* series about Arthur Ransome. In effect, it's built around John Sergeant, whom we see expostulating enthusiastically as he roams around Wild Cat Island and helps to sail *Peggy Blackett*, not without some expertise.

John Sergeant is best-known from his years as a BBC journalist, first as a correspondent reporting from various trouble-spots such as Vietnam, Israel and Northern Ireland. There's a parallel with Arthur Ransome there, though it's not one he likes to exaggerate. But like Ransome he eventually wanted to pack up and come home.

Unlike Ransome he continued in journalism, becoming the BBC's political correspondent – the Laura Kuenssberg or Chris Mason of his day, and he had a hand in shaping the way they now do their work. He, and his boss, the legendary John Cole, changed the BBC's approach to covering politics, moving from simply reporting events to explaining how something happened, why it mattered and where it was going.

His fame, though, is linked to two women. The first was Margaret Thatcher. His coverage of her response, in Paris, to the (unfavourable) first ballot in the 1980 Conservative party leadership contest won him a British Press Guild award.

The other was Kristina Rihanoff, his professional partner in there 2008 *Strictly Come Dancing* series. The image of her being dragged around the dance-floor by him during a Paso Doble is etched indelibly on many minds, including mine. (John was repeatedly voted through to the next round of the contest by the public, despite the disapprobation of the judges; he eventually withdrew when there was a real risk of him ending up in the finals – “a joke too far” as he put it.)

His interest in Ransome began early, in the conventional way, by reading the books, and trying to emulate them. He and his brother and sister

formed a gang – “But not as elaborate as the Swallows and Amazons – they were in a league well above us.” They lived in Great Tew, Oxfordshire where his father was the vicar. To his frustration the family holidays did not include the Lakes or the Broads. “We went to Dorset - no proper fishing or sailing.”

It was an error he was determined to correct when he himself became a father. “When my two boys were of an age, we got a Mirror dinghy and would go to the Lakes or the Broads every year – for about eight years, every summer, with various boats. It was a big thing in their lives, and in mine.

“I learnt to sail with my children – a great way of getting close to them, as they knew I was no good at it and was learning along with them.”

For John, it was also a way into

Ransome himself. “Once I'd got the boys interested, I started reading up about him - Christina Hardyment's book, the biographies. There are lots of aspects of Ransome's life which I know pretty well from my own experience, though of course he was not very political, much more a writer interested in boats and birds and fishing.”

Since retiring from frontline political reporting John has been able to indulge his own enthusiasms – as well as Ransome he's passionate about steam engines, and spent 12 years with the BBC's One Show getting out and about – including flying with the Red Arrows. He continues to work in broadcasting - a Channel 5 series, *The Big Steam Adventure*, aired earlier this year. And he has a one-man theatre show. Of his new role in TARS he says, “I'd like to get involved in things - talks, visits to the Broads and Lakes.”

The inevitable final question of any interview: his favourite book? *Swallows and Amazons*, unsurprisingly – the foundation-stone of the whole Ransome-world edifice.

And his favourite character? Again, no surprise; the clues are all there: Captain Flint.



“I learnt to sail with my children – a great way of getting close to them”

AUSTARS CUP WINNER 2023

Jan Allen

Co-founder of AusTARS 25 years ago and its mainstay ever since

As joint founder of AusTARS back in 1998, as well as editing its newsletter *Furthest South* and co-ordinating its activities programme, Jan has done more than anybody to ensure its continued vigorous health. Present Co-ordinator **Dawn Ciechomski**, and Secretary **Gill Metz** sat down with Jan to chat about her life in AusTARS and her love of Ransome:

“My much older brother had *Peter Duck*. I read everything in the house voraciously from an early age and came to PD without any prior S&A experience, and probably too young, maybe at seven. I was able to choose WD as a school prize at around year 8 so must have been a fan by then.

“Camping and hiking featured a lot. I led school friends on Saturday hiking adventures and from the start of university I was soon doing multi-night bushwalks in Victoria’s mountains.

“Rather like Titty, I read a lot of poetry when I was young and books and literature were a huge influence. I liked AR’s use of poetry in the chapter headings.

And like Dorothea, I write. I also related to Dick and planned a career as a scientist, though that changed in time and my working life was as a secondary teacher and teacher-librarian. Books won out in the end!”

D&G: “We know that being involved in TARS is one big interest. What others do you now pursue?”

“Despite some limitations from age and arthritis, I still try to be active in the outdoors, walking, bird and wildflower watching, cross-country skiing, cycling, surfing and kayaking. Gardening, walking our two lively dogs and maintaining our hilly one-acre-plus property just outside Melbourne is a pleasure I hope can continue to enjoy for some more years yet. I learn Italian, sing in a choir and play music with a U3A group and have music lessons and I have always loved listening to classical music. I like to keep learning, reading and writing, and enjoy doing Mensa puzzles. I also have an interest in heritage train journeys, while relaxations are re-reading favourites from my extensive collection of children’s books and wider library, knitting and doing jigsaw puzzles, down-time for the brain!

“A busy life! You are still running our TARS activities program after over twenty years. No thoughts of retiring?”

“Well, I have been told I can’t! But I have found that planning gatherings to enable AusTARS to meet and devising activities for them to enjoy together has been extremely rewarding and I hope to be able to continue doing that, and assisting with *Furthest South*, as long as I can contribute useful skills and ideas.

It has all been great fun, and somehow the richness of content of AR’s canon always seems to inspire fresh ideas that I can use. I have appreciated being able to step back quite a bit from taking major roles in the administration of AusTARS, especially since you both came on board to help with that side of things. Over the years I have been grateful for the support and the work done by all our

committee members to help bring AusTARS together as a well-functioning entity by putting guidelines and policies in place. In recent years, it’s been satisfying to

implement closer links between members here in Australia and those in New Zealand, and to feel TARS as a world-wide body has become more inclusive and cognisant of its overseas members.

“I remain grateful to the founders and current administration of TARS and appreciate all I have gained from my many years of membership. So many stimulating shared pleasures have arisen from the starting point of just reading a great series of books which can be enjoyed by child and adult alike.

“It’s been great to see *Furthest South* develop from the simple newsletter for members that two of us started in 1999 to the interesting ‘magazine’ it has become. My long involvement with the editing and content of FS continues to be rewarding.

“The trips Stuart and I have been able to make to the UK to explore the AR sites and attend IAGM weekends have enhanced our appreciation of the books, brought new friends and ideas and allowed us to explore AR’s landscapes and relive the books. What more could a fan ask?”



“It’s been satisfying to feel TARS as a world-wide body has become more inclusive and cognisant of its overseas members”

The 17th TARS Literary Weekend

19th – 21st April 2024
The Crown Hotel Harrogate



Reserve the date in your diaries now, as next year's Literary Weekend promises to be something special!

Harrogate, the home of the Great Aunt, is an exceptionally beautiful Victorian spa town with many historic buildings, parks and visitor attractions. You will be spoilt for choice on the free Saturday afternoon – a culinary treat at the famous Betty's Tea Room, a visit to the Turkish Baths, the Royal Pump Room Museum, a walk through the Valley Gardens or the Stray, a visit to the Royal Horticultural Society's Harlow Carr Garden, a 5-star shopping experience or even a trip into the Yorkshire dales - these are just some of the options.

Our accommodation is in the three-star historic Crown Hotel in the centre of the town, a 5-minute walk from the rail station (trains from York and Leeds). All rooms will be ensuite with singles, twins or doubles available.

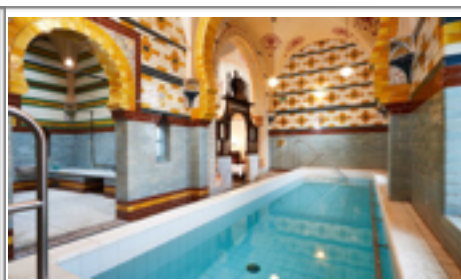
Bronte Suite

Our talks and stalls will be housed in the beautifully appointed chandeliered Bronte Suite. It's all a significant step up from our usual university accommodation, but the even better news is that the cost is held to no more than £20 above what we paid for the 2022 weekend – a less than inflation increase!

Our speakers – including you?

The sub-committee is currently putting together the usual attractive programme of Ransome-related talks with speakers both from within and outwith TARS – **if you would like to speak (either a cameo or a full talk) you'd be very welcome.** Please get in touch with Peter Wright at peterwright180@btinternet.com as soon as possible.

Further details, the full programme and booking form will be available in the December edition of *Signals*.



Coniston hideaways, and a play

In March, Jill Goulder embarked on a long-awaited trip from Sussex to the Lake District, intent on various pilgrimages and also to enjoy the production of 'Winter Holiday' in Bowness. This is her account of her travels to Northern-land

I visited the Lakes for a few days to stay with a friend who grew up by Coniston Water in the 1940s/50s near where the by-then adult Altounyans lived after their time in Aleppo.

I knew Taqui Altounyan in the 1990s (and wrote the postscript to the re-issue of her *In Aleppo Once* in 2001), so one of my missions was to visit her grave, near Titty's, in the cemetery NE of the church in Coniston village.



Back in 1994, I had been inspired by an enthusiastic Taqui, and then her sisters Brigit and Susie, to embark on a quest to find the little lake in the Hatay in eastern Turkey (formerly Syria) where in 1932 AR sailed with the Altounyans in the little dinghy which he and Evgenia had brought with them as a present for the children.

I recruited a companion, Alan Hakim, and after many adventures we found the lake, though not the boathouse that the Altounyans had described and given us photos of. In 2006, though, I was able to revisit the lake and find the boathouse (see my account at <http://www.allthingsransome.net/literary/asyrianboathouse/index.html>); but by then the Altounyan children were all gone.

So there I was in Coniston at last, and able to tell her in the tranquil cemetery "Taqui - I found the boathouse! I did it!"

Another Boathouse...

It seems to be my TARS destiny to find boathouses. On this visit, I was enchanted to be shown the real original of Amazon's boathouse: not the

striking one at the south end of Coniston (which inspired his drawing), but one tucked away at the back of a reedy inlet on private land (so don't try hunting, please!).

While the famous one stands at the entrance of a river leading to the Octopus Lagoon, SA in fact tells us "The boathouse stood deep in an inlet among the reeds," and my local friend told me that in the 1940s/50s this was what she and the Altounyans considered to be the real place, which AR would have known.

...and another Dog's Home

Another tale of alternative hideaways emerged. On my pilgrimage to the North, I of course visited our beloved Dog's Home and appreciated the clear description that AR gave of the path up to it and the building itself. But why 'Dog's Home'?

My local-living friend gave me a hint of where the name might have originated. Just North of Nibthwaite (where the Ransomes holidayed) is a slate building, not large but well-built and more recently restored).



In the 1940s/50s it was called The Kennel (!), and my friend and her siblings always called it the Dog's Home then as it indeed held a dog, who howled as the children passed. Was it already a dog-keeping place in AR's time, and did the young AR enjoy the name of an interesting isolated building and apply it to another one known to him (while living at The Heald) nearer to Lanehead and more convenient for hiding Picts?

(Perilous) Pictish pilgrimage

As for my pilgrimage to the Picts' hideaway, I was given detailed and lively email help by Northern Region members – thank you, all! The path, from the road running to the east of Coniston lake, starts in a very unobtrusive way off East Lake Road (below, left) S of Brantwood, just N of a large track with a pair of cottages, going up to Lawson Park. As the photo on the right shows, getting there now is a bit epic.



The path certainly mirrors AR's description, but is not respected by the forestry people; it's rough, and at the top end is almost a beck with water and big rocks. Across several places there are big branches; it's not always obvious where to go, but I kept going upwards when in doubt.

Eventually, in the last few hundred yards, the path was too much of a branch-strewn rocky watery channel and I completed the journey in the woodland to the right. Aside from being steep and the path being v difficult, it's a quiet and pretty route.



And there it was, in good order except for smashed windows. There's a splendid door, with a lock but it wasn't locked, so I went in and looked around. Some ash in the fireplace, but fortunately no litter etc.

Coming down, partly in the woodland, is simple, and lovely views started to open up across the lake.



'The North Pole' (@ MA Creative, Shrewsbury)

To the North Pole

No, I didn't go there! but I did go to Love Lee Productions' very enterprising production of *Winter Holiday* in Bowness, in a tiny in-the-round place at the back of the Beatrix Potter Experience. This travelling production made neat use of back-projections and small props (sledges, a lively cragfast sheep). The projections were often delightful colourings-in of AR's drawings, supplemented by new drawings of e.g. Capt Flint's study, the Holly Howe kitchen etc; and of course the semaphore messages.

AR himself was onstage as the narrator, but the energetic cast told plenty of the story themselves, including with songs and shanties.

A contrasting poignant moment came as John, singing alone as the Swallows sped north to the rescue of the Ds, sang of his deep sense of responsibility and desire to please his father and become a good Naval officer like him.

But it was the Ds, and particularly a believable young Dick, who quite properly (this is *their* book) stole the show. The lowering of the cragfast sheep was heart-in-mouth, as was their hair-raising sledge journey and the spectacular capsizing.

I was overjoyed to find in the programme that Dick was played by a real-life astrophysicist! And I later learnt that both his father and grandfather were real (South) Polar explorers.

And the director – a firm AR fan and BBC producer – added an AR-unscripted moment at the close of the play: Capt Flint quietly awakening the Ds so that they could witness the aurora borealis dancing in the sky from their own North Pole.

Most of the characters had their own moment in the sun – the doctor, a mumpish Nancy, Mrs Blackett. I felt that Titty's character was under-developed. I think, though, that that reflects the book? Titty had *her* books – SD, PP – and WH was for others. Well done, everyone!

Sailing towards an unknown coastline

Lesley Wareing ponders on *Great Northern?* and the influence of 1947 on the fictional events of 1934

Although *Great Northern?* has never been one of my favourite SA books I have increasingly found a great deal to enjoy and admire in it. During my most recent re-read I was particularly struck by the clever way Ransome manages the passage of time. In an impressive piece of prestidigitation, he turns back the clock from the late 1940s to the mid 1930s with one hand whilst with the other hand he demonstrates the advance of time by sketching how his young characters have matured since the first book.

SA was published in 1930 and GN in 1947. During those 17 tumultuous years in the real world only about four years had passed in the SA universe.

Assuming that the twelve SA books were set within four years between the summers of 1930 and 1934, and that at the start of the series – as we know – Roger was aged seven and the two oldest principal child characters, John and Nancy, were probably about 12 (inferred both from hints given in the books and also from notes made by Ransome), then in GN, Roger is 11 and Nancy and John are about 16 or 17 with all the others somewhere in between – all four years older than when we first met them.

At the start of the SA series, Ransome was writing contemporaneous fiction. By the time he published PP and WD he was already a few years adrift and the gap increased with each successive annually-published book.

A world that had changed

But by 1947, he was writing about a world that had changed momentarily and irrevocably; it must have been quite a challenge for him to think himself back into the world of 1934. It must have been difficult to avoid explicit references to what had actually

happened in the real world and even more difficult not to let his experience and knowledge of actual events to seep through unwittingly and colour his writing. However, when reading any of the later books I'm never really conscious of any dissonance or incongruities; Ransome seems largely to have

been able to maintain the integrity and fidelity of the SA universe he had created and which was very firmly and definitely anchored in the context of the early 1930s. Perhaps it was a comfort to him to revisit that time in his imagination.

Forward momentum

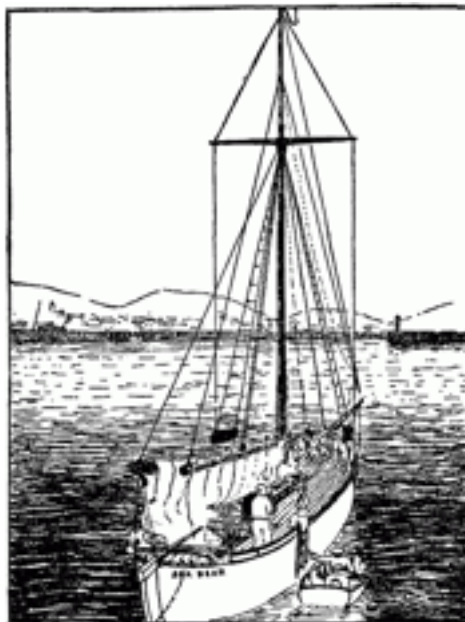
Yet whilst he was trying to fix in aspic the mood, tone, values, attitudes and characteristics of those early years of the 1930s, Ransome also needed to generate forward momentum by allowing his child characters to mature and develop in a natural and believable way.

There have been several interesting discussions on the Arthur Ransome Facebook

group about how the characters develop and mature, some going through very obvious and dramatic rites of passage e.g. John (and Susan) in WD; Nancy in PM.

In GN, I'm especially struck by many casual and mundane instances of behaviour and comments which show how the individual characters have grown and how their relationships with one another have developed.

On several occasions in GN, John and Nancy are referred to – and deferred to – almost as though they were adults. One or other of the younger ones says “John (and/or) Nancy will know what do” or “what to say” and “I wish Nancy was here”. Even Captain Flint says of the pair (when they've been absent for the whole day): “Old enough to take care of themselves.”



MR JIMMERLING COMES ABOARD

John and Nancy are deferred to almost as though they were adults

When Roger, enraged by the "Sleeping Beauty" incident and believing Nancy to be the culprit, tells her "I think you're a perfect beast" she responds cheerfully "Born that way". This response struck me as coming from someone with a degree of self-awareness, self-confidence and capacity for detachment. Someone much more mature than the 12-year-old Nancy in SA.

In one vivid passage, early on in GN we are given a rare insight into Nancy's thoughts: "Nancy, at the tiller, was alone on deck. The clink of mugs and plates sounded from below. She took a gulp of tea and then a mighty bite of the rock bun. This was better than going into harbour with buoys and lighthouses and shops and quays. Sailing towards an unknown coastline. She had the ship to herself and wished that tea in the cabin would last forever."

Roger, a little boy in SA, is now 11 and reflects "In the old days, as ship's boy, and even now, cruising in the *Sea Bear* and rated as Engineer, he had had far too few chances of planning his own day. There was always a captain somewhere, or a mate, to tell him what to do next."

I used to think that Roger, who had shown some signs of increasing maturity in WD and SW, had regressed to being a little brat in GN. I now think that Ransome was just showing us that he had become a young adolescent, less inclined to be ordered about, beginning to develop more confidence in his own judgment and wishing very much for the chance to act as he thought fit rather than always deferring to his elders.

When Peggy signalled for Roger to come back to the *Sea Bear* from his look-out station at the Pict-house,

"Roger replied 'N...O...end of word' – and disappeared, making further orders useless."

Experienced sailors

There are many examples of affection, respect and admiration – occasionally tempered with irritation and resentment – and of comradeship. When the need arises - as when they took the *Sea Bear* into Scrubber's Cove in the fog – they come together as the 'crew of experienced sailors' they now are: "The whole feeling of the day had changed. This was no longer careless summer sailing. John, steering, was watching the compass as if his life depended on keeping the needle steady. Everybody was on the alert, waiting for orders, knowing that there must be

no mistakes and that if anything needed doing it would need doing at once."

There are displays of increased confidence, of increased self-awareness, and of insights into one another's characters and behaviour.

We have Dorothea saying (of Mr and Mrs Great Northern Diver) " 'He'd be like Dick, not wanting to move if he was interested in something where he was, and she'd be like Susan at first.' 'How?' said Susan, looking up from her netting. 'Thinking of the clock', said Dorothea and was surprised when everybody but Susan laughed."

I don't think Dorothea would have dared say something like that in earlier books. Nor do I think the others would have dared to laugh.

Near the end, when the eggs need to be returned to the divers' nest and Nancy offers to row over to the island, Dick immediately says: "No!

No!" (thinking of Nancy pulling as if in a boat race!); Dorothea has the courage to say "Dick ought to do it himself"; Nancy has the grace and maturity to say: "All right, Professor. Your eggs."; Titty has the confidence to say: "I'm bringing the eggs."

Shifted dynamics

The group dynamics really have shifted but it's demonstrated in a subtle way.

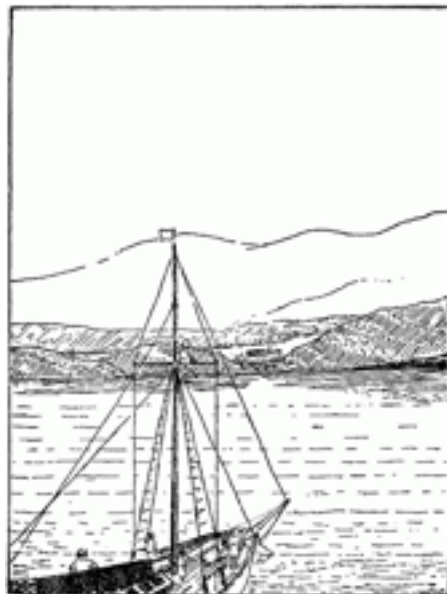
The ending is almost elegiac: " 'Gosh! Oh, Gosh!' said Dick, almost as if he were Roger, and blinking joyfully through his spectacles, pulled for the shore." A poignant farewell to all the many things of joy and immeasurable value the children

have experienced – and we readers with them. All the more poignant I feel because, like Nancy earlier in the book,

they were "sailing towards an unknown coastline" – the future – and we readers know, as did their author, what events awaited these young people within a few short years.

Editor's note: ,

This article began life as a Facebook post on the Arthur Ransome Group's site in April this year, where it engendered a lively debate, running to around 40 comments



PEGGY AT THE CROSS-TREES

"Increased confidence, self-awareness and insights into each other's character"



HOWARD BY THE SEA BEAR

1974-2024: fifty years of *Swallows and Amazons* on film

**A TARS weekend to celebrate
the 50th anniversary
of the 1974 film of
Swallows and Amazons
29-30 June 2024 at
Windermere Jetty**

Plans are progressing for a weekend of activities at Windermere Jetty to celebrate the half-century of this ever-popular film.

Full details of the family-friendly programme will be given in subsequent *Signals*, but it is hoped the event will include the following:

- A reunion of the cast and production crew of the film and a chance to discuss the film with them
- TARS dinghies *Swallow* and *Amazon*
- S&A and Ransome talks
- Screenings of the film
- A production of the *Swallows and Amazons* stage play
- A Ransome themed folk concert
- Trips to and from the Lakeside and Haverthwaite railway
- Steam boats on the water
- All the attractions of Windermere Jetty including *Coch-y- Bonddhu* and Ransome memorabilia

***And much much more.
Book the date now!***



Sophie's stories

'Amazon is a lovely boat to sail'

Sophie Neville, former TARS President, was 12 years old when she was selected to play Titty in the 1974 film of *Swallows and Amazons*. She kept a diary of the 55 days of location filming in the Lake District, 50 years ago in the summer of 1973. It provided the basis of her book *The Making of Swallows and Amazons*, and recently a series of 'On This Day' posts on Facebook and Twitter, reliving the experience.

The film remains incredibly popular – regularly resurfacing in the schedules of both the BBC and ITV – apparently it's been broadcast more times than any other movie on British television. It's also streamed on Amazon Prime and Netflix.

Sophie at Southampton

Sophie will be giving talks at this year's Southampton Boat Show (15-24 September) – she'll speaking on the 15th 16th, 21st and 24th September. The film's *Amazon* will be on display throughout.

"*Amazon* is a lovely boat to sail." recalls Sophie. In the film, she's required to remove *Amazon* at night from the Secret Harbour and anchor her off Cormorant Island. "I was given a grey cardigan to wear, but no-one thought to ask me if I could row." Luckily she could, having grown up with a Thames skiff.

"My one regret is that we didn't follow the book when sailing the *Amazon* back to

1974-2024: fifty years of *Swallows and Amazons* on film



The first talk Sophie Neville gave at a TARS IAGM – photo by Andrew Silk

Wild Cat Island. The wind was up and Claude Whatham needed Captain John to sail *Swallow* ahead of the *Amazon* which is the faster boat. I originally took the tiller, as Titty is urged to in the story, but had trouble with the rudder. Mate Susan, played by Suzanna Hamilton, is at the helm on the cover of the Puffin paperback brought out to accompany the film (and on the cover of this *Signals*), whilst I am fending off.

“The second part of the scene was shot on Coniston Water, with the Amazon Pirates, Nancy and Peggy ‘dancing with rage’ on Peel Island. A shot of Susan at the helm with me sitting on the bottom boards looking like a baby monkey was used on the cover of a hardback and a DVD distributed by the *Daily Mail*.”



Sophie’s fascinating ‘inside story’ of the making of the film (the date had to be added to the title in 2016)

Copies are available from the TARS Stall

More about the film in the next *Signals*



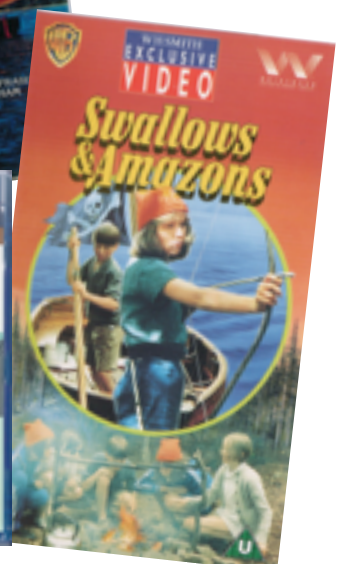
The Actual Anniversary (almost)

Swallows and Amazons was released on April 4th, 1974. To celebrate this date, the Cinema Museum in London is planning screenings on Saturday, April 6th 2024, and Sophie will be hosting a Q&A session at one of them. Details to come.

The Cinema Museum is at 2 Dugard Way (off Renfrew Road), London SE11 4TH cinemamuseum.org.uk 020 7840 2200



Video covers: left, original; below, retailer edition; below left, ‘40th anniversary’ DVD Do you have any others? If so, please scan and send to the *Signals* Editor!





SHIP'S LOG: TARS IAGM 2023

In Bonnie - and Jolly - Dundee

Rachel Chalmers sets the scene



“Dundee is a jolly place to live I’m told,” said AR’s father when applying for post of Principal of its University College.

It certainly was a jolly place to visit for the IAGM this year, and, although Cyril Ransome did not get the post, we had a taste of the family’s Scottish sojourn in Edinburgh, thanks to Margaret Ratcliffe and Amazon Publications – In our IAGM welcome packs was a booklet, “Setting the Scottish Scene”, originally created for the 2004 IAGM in the capital.

But what of the 2023 IAGM in Dundee? We were a small gathering of 37 delegates, but were treated to a packed programme of talks, walks, talks walking, walks talking, and historic site visits.

In the centre, along the Tay

The great thing about Dundee is how centrally located many of the attractions are, and those that are not in the city centre are neatly arranged along the river Tay. On offer were tours of: HMS *Unicorn*, the North Carr lightship, RRS *Discovery*, the Tay Road Bridge, V&A Dundee, Broughty Ferry Castle Museum, McManus Art Gallery and Museum, and the Verdant Works and Jute Mill Museum.

It’s rather a shame that the fog masked the views of the beautiful silvery Tay for much of the weekend but no matter, there was plenty to hold our interest.

On the opening night, our outgoing chairman Peter Wright delivered his opening address with a poem that was almost on a par with best of William Topaz McGonegall, and Kirsty Taylor, TARS Scotland chairman, greeted us with messages from absent



friends. Andrew Thackrey, our Blue Badge guide for the weekend, provided us with a lively and animated presentation; the potted history of Dundee – jam, jute and journalism.

He pointed out that this is a city of twos: MPs, MSPs, Cathedrals, significant ships, Universities, daily papers and football teams.

Andrew’s guided tour the next morning was just as interesting, with insights into noteworthy local personalities such as Mary Baxter co-founder of University College who insisted the deed for the funding of the college stated it should promote “the education of persons of both sexes and the study of Science, Literature and the Fine Arts”. Did she interview Cyril, I wonder?

We saw sites linked to local entrepreneur James Caird, who sponsored Ernest Shackleton’s 1914-1916 Antarctic expedition. One of the *Endurance*’s boats, named for him, became one of the most famous small boats in history for completing the epic voyage from Elephant Island to South Georgia. Dundee is not home to either vessel – the *Endurance* was located this year at the bottom of the Weddell Sea, and the *James Caird* resides at Dulwich College, Shackleton’s alma mater, but we did see the imposing Caird concert hall.

Oor Wullie - and our Kirstie?

And of course, during our walks, we encountered Oor Wullie and his fellow DC Thompson characters, notably Desperate Dan and Minnie the Minx (or was that Kirstie?).

We were treated to another talk after dinner on Saturday by Mary Pritchard who had a vast canon to draw upon, exploring Antarctic exploration in the first part of the 20th century. Exciting times!

On Sunday morning, the formal business of the IAGM saw John Sergeant elected as our new President, and the AusTARS cup was presented to Jan Allen. This year, there was quite a shift in tempo for the Dick Callum cup quiz; the format was a quick-fire multiple-guess romp through AR’s literary legacy. Phew!

TARS Scotland are a friendly and welcoming bunch (as you would expect of TARS!), who hosted a fun and stimulating IAGM, before handling the flag over to Midland TARS who are hosting in the Peak District in August 2024.

Chairman's opening remarks

Given we were in Dundee, the Chairman couldn't resist quoting the first verse of William McGonagall's most famous poem:

*Beautiful bridge of the silv'ry Tay,
Alas I am very sorry to say,
That ninety lives have been taken away,
On the last Sabbath day of 1879,
Which will be remembered for a very long time.*

He then paraphrased it to suit TARS, saying

*Beautiful bridge of the Silv'ry Tay,
Rejoice I am very happy to say,
That 37 TARS have arrived today,
On the Coronation weekend of 2023
Which we will remember I'm sure with glee!*

(He was roundly criticised for attempting a Scottish accent!)

Upon the handover of the flag, to him, now as ex-Chairman and representing the Midland Region (try to keep up!) near the RRS *Discovery*, he said

*By the beautiful Discovery on the banks of the Tay
I receive this flag and am glad to say
We'll meet in the Peak District, August next year
For which we all give three million cheers!*

(He was again roundly criticised for his accent.)



A polar bear on Andrew Thackrey's tour
Below-decks on RRS *Discovery*
Some penguins



Left: Flag handover, from Kirsty to Peter, by *Discovery*

Thanks to Sandy Allan, Andrew Jones, Nick Liggett and Peter Wright for their photographs





Mary Pritchard. Gala Dinner Speaker. warms to her subject

Antarctic discoveries after dinner

Replete from an excellent gala meal, reports Peter Wright, the audience sat back to listen to another excellent Mary Pritchard talk entitled: “*The King, the prospective Parliamentary Candidate, and the Boy Scout*” All was to be revealed as her talk progressed but her subtitle gave the best clue as to what we were to hear: “Antarctic Exploration in the first part of the 20th Century”.

Although there had been several trips into the Antarctic before 1901, it was the Scott/*Discovery* expedition of that year that first really fired the UK’s imagination and interest in Antarctica. Subsequent trips by Shackleton and Scott further ramped up the excitement about who would reach the Pole first.

When news came through that Amundsen had beaten Scott, whose party had perished on their return journey, defeat was turned into glorious, heroic failure.

Shackleton was to make two more trips South, the first in *Endurance* which famously got trapped in the ice and sank, the men having a perilous journey

to Elephant Island from where Shackleton with five others made the miraculous journey across the Southern Ocean in the ship’s boat, the *James Caird*, named after the Dundee-born industrialist who sponsored the expedition, to eventually find help to rescue his men. On his final trip on the *Quest*, Shackleton had a fatal heart attack.

Perhaps the most insightful observation Mary gave us was that on Scott’s first expedition he, along with Wilson and Shackleton, had made a long march to achieve the furthest South yet reached by any explorers. On the return journey Shackleton broke down with serious health problems. Against his own wishes, Scott instructed him to return home on a relief ship as he believed his health was substandard.

It has also been suggested that Scott, a Royal Navy man, had a grudge against having to take merchant seamen (of which Shackleton was one) on the expedition. Did these snubs fuel Shackleton’s desire to prove Scott wrong and motivate him for his own Antarctic expeditions?

Voyage in the *Fram*

The King in Mary’s title was King Haakon of Norway. His country had only recently separated from Sweden and the new King was keen to support Amundsen’s venture both to promote national Norwegian identity and create a hero. He and Queen Maude visited the *Fram* (yes, that *Fram*) prior to its sailing and Amundsen went on to name several locations in Antarctica after the Royal family.

The prospective parliamentary candidate – for the Dundee constituency – was no less than Ernest Shackleton himself, who between expeditions unsuccessfully stood in the 1906 General Election for the Liberal Unionist Party, in a seat won two years later by Winston Churchill.

As for the Boy Scout, following a meeting with Baden Powell, Shackleton decided to take two Boy Scouts on his *Quest* expedition serving as cabin boys and deckhands. Following a competition in which over 1700 applied, two Scottish lads were chosen.

One had to be sent home at Madeira suffering from chronic sea sickness, but the other, James Marr, went on to serve with distinction, later becoming an expert in Antarctic zoology.

Mary told us that after the expedition, he had had to appear at various fund-raising events, but always dressed in his scout uniform.

An enlightening and entertaining evening was had by all and Mary could have told us much more but there was time for a few questions.

Following these, and it being Saturday, the audience was reminded of the traditional Antarctic sailors’ weekend toast: “To our wives and sweethearts – and may the two never meet!”



Discovering *Discovery*

Sunday afternoon saw a large group visit Discovery Point to view the Royal Research Ship *Discovery*, best known as the ship that took Captain Scott on his first Antarctic adventure.

Our knowledgeable guide Rob gave us a detailed and entertaining account of the ship; how it was built, Scott's trip to the Antarctic, life on board as well as other facts about the ship's life.

Commissioned by the Royal Geographical Society for the National Antarctic expedition of 1901-04, she was built in Dundee, was the last traditional wooden three-masted ship to be built in the UK and is said to be the strongest wooden ship ever built, with her hull over 2 feet thick to withstand the pressures of the Antarctic ice.

Although primarily a sailing ship, she was also equipped with a coal-powered engine to be able to push through the ice. Touring all her decks, we learnt how every inch of space was used – whether for stores, coal, spare sails etc. There was a stark contrast in the difference in accommodation for the officers (mahogany panelled wardroom with individual bunk

cabins) and the crew's messroom (sparse, with hammocks).

Discovery was built as a scientific research ship with laboratories for the scientists, of whom Dr Edward Wilson (botanist and artist) and Dr Koettlitz, were particularly praised by our guide.

I'm sure each of us had our own thoughts on what it must have been like on board venturing into the frozen South. The thought of climbing the rigging to the crow's nest in an Antarctic gale brought a whole new meaning to the phrase "shiver my timbers"!

Life after Scott

Although best known as Scott's ship, *Discovery* had a long and varied life, serving the Hudson's Bay Company for eighteen years,

RRS *Discovery* in the ice

photo courtesy
of Dundee
Heritage Trust



before being refitted in the 1920s as a pure research ship, studying whales and marine life in the Southern Ocean.

She had further Antarctic adventures under the Australian explorer Douglas Mawson who led the British, Australian, and New Zealand research expedition 1925-1927.

After her sailing life was over, she was saved from the breakers yard through the generosity of Lady Houston and was handed over to the Sea Scouts and later the RNVR, moored on the Thames Embankment.

Restoration and return to Dundee

She passed to the Maritime Museum in 1979 and significant restoration was undertaken before she came back to Dundee under the care of the Dundee Heritage Trust in 1985.

We then moved to the excellent museum where we could see reconstructions of the shipyard building *Discovery*, watch short films about the craftsmen, and learn more about the exploits of Scott and his men on their first foray into Antarctica and the on-going modern-day scientific study.

The museum was full of poignant artefacts and exhibits, of which for me the most moving were Scott's pipe and wooden snow goggles.

The museum is, as is *Discovery* herself, first rate and the whole afternoon was one of great pleasure and learning.

Peter Wright

McManus Museum

Winkie: The pigeon who saved an Air Crew

Kryisia Clack paid her respects

Having heard Andrew Thackrey's story about Winkie, the heroic pigeon, I just had to visit the McManus Museum where she has been preserved for us to pay our respects. (Andrew, TARS member and Blue Badge Guide, gave the welcoming talk on Friday evening, linking the tale to *Pigeon Post*.)

Just like Sappho, Winkie had made a heroic journey carrying a message that a rescue was required. In this case, Winkie was aboard a plane which was shot down over the North Sea in 1942. The crew released her to carry the message to her owner at Broughty Ferry, 120 miles away. He alerted the airbase at RAF Leuchars and a search and rescue mission was launched.

Ditching located

Using the time difference from the plane ditching to the arrival of the pigeon in the loft, and taking into account the wind direction and the inhibition to her flight speed caused by oil spoilage to her feathers, the RAF were able to approximate where the plane ditched. Within 15 minutes, the crew's position had been located and a rescue vessel dispatched.

On 2 December 1943, Winkie was awarded the Dickin Medal. The citation read:

“For delivering a message under exceptional difficulties and so contributing to the rescue of an Air Crew while serving with the RAF in February 1942”.

There were other exhibits which I could relate to Ransome. The information board accompanying the collection of Pictish stones could have been written by Dr Callum.

My eye also focused on a chocolate tin box presented by Queen Victoria to all troops in South Africa during the Boer War in 1900. It wasn't round or brass like the one in *Swallowdale*, but it had been distributed only three years after the jubilee.

Close-up to a coot

In another room I doubt if Dick would have been happy to see the stuffed birds as they definitely did not die of old age. It was too late to save them now. I had a close-up look at the coot and the bittern – I had forgotten that coots don't have webbed feet.



Above: The McManus Museum

Right: Heroic pigeon Winkie



Below: Professor Callum's Pictish engravings?



A close inspection of the wild cat on display made me realise how fierce they are. The glint in its eye suggested that they are the pirates of the feline family. Now could that be why Nancy and Peggy gave the island that name?

The tribal masks and weapons could have been hung in Captain

Flint's houseboat.

Other fascinating exhibits included an account of two ladies' journey around the world. I hoped to find a connection to Misse Lee but, although they had interesting experiences, they did not encounter any such character.

By now I was skipping through the rooms as time was running out. I did a quick whizz around the art gallery, the ceramics and many more exhibits I have not listed. A thoroughly enjoyable visit.



TARS alongside (and aboard)
North Carr Lightship on Saturday

***HMS Unicorn* and the North Carr Lightship** by Peter Milroy

Dundee has a strong sea-faring tradition so it was appropriate that we found two ships afloat to visit on the Saturday. Comfortingly for some, both vessels stayed securely moored in the Victoria Dock.

HMS Unicorn, (pictured below, with John Pearson) a frigate launched in 1824, is Britain's oldest warship still afloat. Although the ship never saw action, our enthusiastic guide helped create the atmosphere of



what it would have been like on board a Royal Navy vessel in the days of *Hornblower*.

The ship has been refurbished for its 200th anniversary next year and is full of well-organised displays. We visited its four decks; head-room was very restricted in the lower decks, as some taller TARS members may ruefully recall.

The *North Carr Lightship* is moored nearby, but unlike *HMS Unicorn*, it is not usually open to

the public being still in the early stages of restoration.

Built in Glasgow in 1933, the *North Carr* was Scotland's last functioning lightship when it was decommissioned in 1974.

Two volunteers showed us the work that has been started after the ship was rescued from the scrap yard. We were impressed by their dedication in the face of an enormous task with limited funding (we made some contributions).

The Roger Walkers among us could admire the six engines on board: three generators for the light and other electrical equipment; and three compressors for the foghorn.

Seeing the *North Carr* brought back memories of *Goblin's* encounters with the *Cork* and *Sunk Lightships* further down the North Sea coast and with the *Noord-hinder*, itself now a museum ship in the Netherlands.

Both these visits gave us glimpses of our maritime past and of what groups of modern-day enthusiasts can achieve in preserving historic vessels for the delight of future generations – an inspiration for TARS today.

TAY BRIDGE DISASTER

(Averted, but it *was* foggy)

"It's only tw miles there and only two miles back," the native guide told us as we set off.

We walked most of the way surrounded by mist on either side, though we could see the sea below. The walkway is in the middle of two streams of traffic and shared with cyclists – some have bells, others do not.

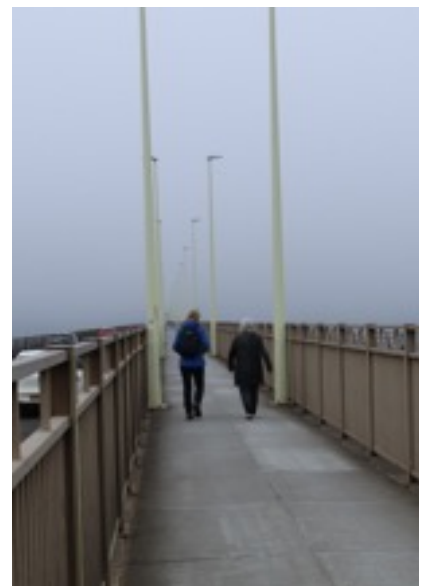
First we passed the oil rig training facility with its tall scaffold towers looming out of the haze. On either side we hoped to see a seal, porpoise or dolphin but none obliged.

The lamp-posts are numbered so that progress can be monitored along the way. From time to time houses on the far side would reveal themselves then be shaded from view again.

On reaching the Fife side we found a car park oasis with toilets, a tea and coffee stand and benches to rest on. We forgot to leave a patteredan. A nearby bus stop provides a return option to get back to Dundee but none of us succumbed to its allure.

As always, the journey back seemed shorter than the outward one but the views were no clearer. Sad for the photographers among us.

Linda Hendry.



How I won a cup two years running

byAan Hakim

Travelling up to Dundee in the cold and mist of a Scottish Spring, I made unfavourable comparisons with 2022 at sunny Holbrook.

There TARS had given me the AusTars Cup, so that wasn't going to happen again. The only other one on offer was the Dick Callum Cup. I have always thought of that quiz as the low point of each IAGM, but Kirstie promised a new style quiz open to all.

So when Christine and I, the only Amazons there, found ourselves in the room when teams were forming, we felt obliged to offer to take part. Approaching a half-empty table we said "We're looking for a team with no ambition."

They welcomed us aboard, and "No Ambition" became our team name. Our retiring Chairman's team was "Sure to be Last", which unfortunately proved true.

In the new-style quiz, almost every question referred to an event which every normal reader skips over without noticing, with a choice of four possible answers.

Some improved the odds with choices which were obviously absurd: "Who was the author of the book Dorothea was reading on the train North?" JK Rowling? Not unless she had read HG Wells' *The Time Machine* first.

Round after round went by, and we didn't even recognise the events, let alone know who was involved. But our table included Diana Wright and Helen Lewis, and they carried the other four of us passengers.

The scores were totted up, and amazingly, we won! I was forced to be photographed holding the cup, but very properly it was Diana who took it home. And Kirstie intends to ensure I never live down the shame.



The Dick Callum Cup The winning team: Andrew Thackrey, Christine Rae, Alan Hakim, Quizmaster Andrew Jones, Diana Wright, Helen Lewis, David Butters and Elizabeth Williams

Nancy's Round – People Skills

'Miss Nancy does fair rush a body off their feet' (Answers on page 25)

Q1: What's Susan's remedy for Titty's panic about having killed the GA?

- a) Cleaning the frying pan b) Psychotherapy
c) Putting her to bed d) A tot of whisky

Q2: How does Peggy persuade the D's to sleep in *Fram* on their own, so *she* doesn't risk being stranded there in the dark by herself?

- a) 'It's an even better observatory than that old barn'
b) 'Two's company, three's a crowd'
c) 'I say, how about I let you impress Nancy?'
d) 'Look here ... let her be your ship for one night'

Q3: Susan knew it was difficult to be fierce – when?

- a) You're asleep b) You're sharing a meal
c) You're sitting down d) You're dancing cheek to cheek

Q4: 'The trouble with Nancy's velvet glove is that it's usually got *what* inside it?'

- a) an iron hand b) a knuckleduster
c) a claymore d) bombs

Q5: Where was Timothy 'involved' with the police?

- a) Chile b) Peru c) Argentina d) Glasgow

Q6: Why does Nancy sit down comfortably on the floor of the cave in the Mining Gulch as the fire rages?

- a) Her legs are aching b) She was feeling faint
c) There was less smoke near the floor
d) To show Peggy there was really nothing to worry about

Q7: The others hope Roger will remember the fate of which explorer who got on the wrong side of the natives – the inside?

- a) Francis Drake b) Mungo Park
c) Captain Cook d) Colonel Fawcett

Q8: Why does Dorothea stop herself telling Dick he had better not go on the ice yacht?

- a) One glance at Dick's face showed that at that moment it wouldn't be any use
b) She wants to include an ice-accident in her latest story
c) She decides he's old enough to make up his own mind
d) She doesn't want to show him up in front of the Swallows as unadventurous

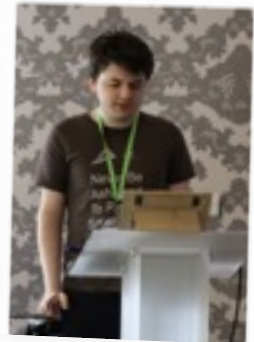
Tourist attractions and talks are important - but what really makes an IAGM is people: the members who attend - here's a selection. On the right, Kirstie and her alter ego, Minnie the Minx (by Rachel Chalmers).

Other photos here are by Sandy Allan and Nick Liggit. Top row: Kirstie's welcome speech; Linda Hendry and others; Andrew Thackrey's talk

Second row: Three tables at Saturday's Gala Dinner

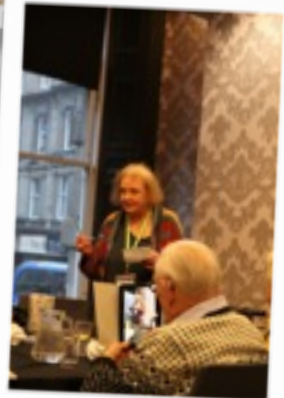
Third row: Members arriving for Sunday's IAGM; A Dick Callum Cup team, Arthur Herbertson, youngest member

Bottom row: Sunday evening: Another Dick Callum Cup team, and Kirstie's farewells and thank-yous



Dick Callum Cup
Nancy's Round, answers

1 a, 2 d, 3 c. 4 b,
5 b, 6 d, 7 c, 8 a



Cutting Edge Drama



Ivan Cutting's play, *Red Skies*, has such a brilliant script it just had to be book-published. Ivan agreed and Amazon Publications is delighted to present this work for subscribers, to be launched at the Literary Weekend in Harrogate in April, 2024.

As a massive bonus to the bare bones of the script, we have a perceptive Foreword by Peter Willis, who has been intimately connected to the play from before the start! Even better, we also have a detailed and revelatory Preface from the playwright himself – giving us a fascinating insight into his thought and writing process.

Peter: ...*What really gripped me was the tense, intense, dialogue as Orwell tries to discover the truth of the Ransomes' Russian exploits, while Evgenia and Arthur parry and feint with him in a sort of verbal chess of bluff and double-bluff...*

Ivan: ...*If there was a play here, I always imagined it would be Orwell seeking out Ransome, and never the other way round. Ransome described himself as a patient fisherman, letting the fish come to him, whereas Orwell was a hunter, deliberately tracking down subjects and issues – it's what took him to Wigan and Spain. Then, suddenly, the whole notion of spying raised its head with Orwell's anonymity on the road. But Orwell can't start with the obvious...*



The play is in four Acts – set over the decade 1939-49 – each with a different location: *Selina King*, Harkstead Hall, a river near Coniston and a sanatorium in the Cotswolds. Arthur, Evgenia and George Orwell are the three main characters, plus a mysterious 'girl'.

Tension sparks from the very first scene. Evgenia is highly suspicious of Orwell throughout; AR is on the whole jovial and generally acts as peacemaker.

Why is Orwell there? Who is spying on whom? Who *was* spying on whom and for whom? Was Evgenia more than just Trotsky's secretary?

Biographical details of all three characters are naturally woven into the edgy, taut dialogue, lending the whole great authenticity. An achievement in itself since, in reality, the meetings are all hypothetical – a pure fiction.

If you saw *Red Skies* at the IAGM in Shotley, you must have this script to appreciate the play even more; its nuances are all in the dialogue. This will be a treat for all.

Nancy Blackett herself has been associated with Ivan's plays (his company twice staged *We Didn't Mean To Go To Sea*) and we are delighted that the Nancy Blackett Trust will be joining us in this venture by offering subscriptions to its members. More on this and full subscription details with the December *Signals*. *Margaret Ratcliffe*

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OBITUARY

Robin Anderson

Born Dunfermline 1931 died Garelochhead 2023

Former TARS Chairman , and so much more

It is with great sadness that I report the death of one of TARS Scotland's earliest and most eminent members – Robin Anderson. In the early years – for *many* years – he filled post after post on the Scottish committee, and then on to the TARS board, even becoming National Chairman. Robin was also chairman of the committee that delivered the successful 2001 Durham Literary Weekend.

In fact there wasn't much that Robin couldn't turn his hand to: whether providing illustrations; building a model of Wild Cat Island; fund-raising for *Cocky*; or devising the 'Bohemia in Durham' entertainment (though his comments about "wasting good claret" to produce "Opal Hush" were unprintable!), one could expect a quality result.

This is not so surprising when you realise how many other interests he had. His love of the *Swallows and Amazons* series led to him and his brother Alistair (another TARS Scotland stalwart) teaching themselves rowing and sailing from the books, first at Queensferry and then on the Broads – Alistair frequently stated that both their careers nearly ended them. Trains and Boats and Canals... and Dancing – all fascinated Robin. A young Robin and his skating partner, Joy, became champions; he trained as a chemist; and met his life-long partner,

Jim Hastie, working with the Margaret Morris Movement – everything from admin to stage direction via dancing.

When we were let down by a speaker I, attempting to assuage his wrath: "you can't expect creative people to be organised" to which he retorted with

his habitual immodesty: "Unless you're Robin Anderson". Like AR he did *not* suffer fools at *all*, far less gladly! One of the founders of the J.D. Fergusson Art Gallery in Perth and Administrator of Scottish Ballet – the list could go on for ever.

All of this and the world travels it involved gave Robin plenty of fuel for name-dropping – the Queen-Mother jostling with Margot Fonteyn or Steven Runciman – not to mention his *stories*. They were frequently scandalous, and always funny, even if it told against himself. He

happily recounted to the Durham Literates how I had gleefully repeated an argument with a fellow TAR who had mistaken Robin's *brother* for his *son*!

Increasing mobility problems eventually curtailed his activities until, over a year ago, he became bed-bound. Faithfully cared for by his friend, Peter Brabender (known to many Scottish TARS), he was able to die peacefully at home in his cottage overlooking the Gare Loch, at the grand old age of 92. His partner, Jim, brother Alistair, and sister-in-law, Elizabeth, all predeceased Robin; he is survived by his brother Ian and the rest of the Anderson Clan, along with many *many* friends, especially Peter and those of us in TARS.

Kirstie Taylor



EBB & FLOW

The Eastern Pages



THE GARRICK CLUB
Garrick Street
London
25th May 2023

Five Eastern Tars plus Andrew Silverster from the Midland Region and Paul Crisp from Southern arrived in the heart of London's theatreland for our tour of the Garrick Club where our own Arthur Ransome was a well respected and popular member. One of the items we would like to have seen was a portrait of Arthur but we were out of luck as it had been loaned to the private Beefsteak Club. It seems to have been there some time although nobody seemed to know why or for how long.

Founded in 1831 the Club was named after David Garrick, the foremost actor of his day who had died 52 years earlier. The purpose of the club was to, 'tend to the regeneration of the drama,' a place where 'actors and men of refinement could meet on equal terms.' Actors at the time, probably until the mid 1850s were not considered proper gentlemen, and actresses, apart from a few exceptions, even worse. Women with no money of their own were often forced to acquire a male protector, with the obvious implications.



The Garrick Club is a very imposing building on the outside and lavish on the inside with patterned floor tiles, rich fitted carpets, comfortable leather upholstered easy chairs, chandeliers everywhere, and paintings covering every wall — over a thousand paintings in all, many painted by well know artists like Thomas Gainsborough, Joshua Reynolds and William Hogarth.

Our tour guide, Sarah Hughes, was excellent. After coffee she began by explaining the origins of the club and describing the paintings, artists, and the names of all the great performers of their day, mainly nineteenth century, both men and woman, the plays and costumes in which they performed, plus a little of their lives; which in some cases were quite strange. She explained how the actors of the day stood and used their hands to emphasise to the audience of a tragic or humorous scene. The main character would face the audience with feet astride, head held high, whereas the lesser characters and servants, stood side on with suitably hunched shoulders. As they should, before leading us on the grand tour. Room after room of leather seats, carpets and paintings. Two rooms held long tables able to seat twenty plus guests and were set up with napkins and cutlery for some function later in the day. Sadly we had not been invited.

There are two bars, one of which is a cocktail bar. In one of the bars, I can't remember which, that despite the strict dress code, I believe unofficially, actors are allowed to wear jeans. They probably still have to wear the club tie. Although the club tie, know as the salmon and cucumber too, may be coming to an end as some members dislike the tie's design and some dislike wearing any tie at all. There is a painting of Sir Laurance Olivier with his tie hanging loose as he considered the tie, done up, made him look like a solicitor.

Sarah then took us upstairs to the Library section to meet Librarian Moira Goff to see what else we could find about AR's time in the club. Moira was very helpful but there was not



much information except that Arthur was a popular member. There were no photographs but there was a ferro-gelatine print drawn by Robert Lutyens and set into a small portfolio of 50 copies published in 1962 of AR with eleven other members of The Old Burgundians, an informal sub society drawn from members of the Garrick Club. We all had a long journey and had to get up early but I think we all agreed that it was well worth it.

Robert Welham.



EASTERN REGION PROGRAMME 2023

AUGUST 13th (Saturday): Bawdsey Radar Museum. Bawdsey Transmitter Block, Woodbridge IP12 3BA. Find out about the development of Radar and how it helped save the lives in World War Two, in the well-laid-out interactive display. (Dick would have been fascinated - in fact he'd probably have worked there). A vague link with AR as he mentions the Radar Masts in *WDMTGTS* which had not been built at the time the story was set in 1933. The Transmitter Block is at Bawdsey. From Woodbridge, follow the B1083, one mile beyond Bawdsey village, the museum is on the left (it is not part of the Bawdsey Manor estate). **Meet in car park at 12 noon.** Entry £8 for adults (less if large group) Juniors (under 18) free. Teas and coffees at the museum, also café nearby. Recommended bring a picnic lunch to enjoy on the sandy riverbank beach - and swimming things if you want. More details at <https://www.bawdseyradar.org.uk> or Peter Willis.

SEPTEMBER 8th (Friday): Hanson Collection Cambridge University Library CB3 9DR followed by an afternoon walk. **Meet 10.30am** in entrance hall of Library. Herbert Hanson was a founder member of the Cruising Association and a friend of AR. He collected over 600 priceless books, documents and charts now in the CUL. Guided tour. Contact Ted and Diana Evans on 01394 388295.

OCTOBER 7th: (Saturday): Literary Half Day. United Reform Church meeting room, Whiting Street, Bury St Edmunds IP33 1NR. **11am - 5.30pm.** Parking on site. **Illustrated talk by Ted Alexander on *Ransome in Russia*.** (with slides, maps and display material). Bring packed lunch, tea and coffee provided Cost £10 Juniors free. Optional meal afterwards at local restaurant. Contact Brian Key on 01245 263579.

JANUARY 20th: 2024 (Saturday): AR's Birthday Lunch. *Butt & Oyster*, Pin Mill. Date and time plus speakers to follow.



TARS EAST BROADS DAY with SWALLOW & AMAZON

Seventeen plus Tars including a smattering of children arrived at Hunter's Yard in overcast and rainy weather for a short sail in a couple of the Yard's boats and to see the *Swallow* and *Amazon* dinghies from the 1978 film of the same name, recently acquired by the Society and being restored and housed at Hunter's Yard.

With the rain falling harder, lunch was called for. I joined Ted and Diana Evans, along with Paul and Clare Sykes (a couple I had met around twenty-five years ago) aboard the Evans' ex Broads motor cruiser *Unicorn*, for lunch and a cruise East to Potter Heigham bridge then West as far as the River Bure before returning to the Hunter's Dyke in time to photograph the Hunter boats, struggling with little or no wind around the dyke entrance.

Robert Welham.



The rain was probably a blessing - it arrived late in the morning and at Neville Khambatta's suggestion, an early lunch around the long table in Hunter's big shed enabled people to get to know one another. I found myself chatting with the delightful Hicks family from Ealing, notably Violet, aged 10 and a paid-up TARS Ship's Boy, who couldn't wait to get afloat.



After lunch, in dry and light airs we rigged the two Hunter's half-deckers and ventured along the dyke (passing someone making a fair job of quanting a Teasel look-alike) into the river - *Buff Tip* (white hull, sail number 34 with the Hicks family and others) and *Valient Rebel* -varnished hull, which I crewed with Simon Cronin, a capable local sailer (knew the 'flat' spots along with Sue Bell, Marc Grimston and others. Eventually I got a turn at the tiller, sailing Broads-style holding onto the mainsheet, plenty of going about. Blissful.

Amazon was on display rigged - apparently she could have been sailed, but we didn't ask and nobody told us. D'oh!

Peter Willis



Sailing by Violet aged 10



On 9th July, I went to see *Swallow* and *Amazon* with my mum, dad and my brother. We saw them at Hunter's Yard in Norfolk where they are being repaired for full use. My brother and I even got to sit in *Amazon* while she was afloat. We also saw *Titmouse*.

After that, we went sailing in *Buff Tip* on the River Thurne and, at one point, I was in charge of the tiller (for steering), but most of the time, I was in charge of the jib sheet (small sail). It was amazing.





RUGBY THROUGH RANSOME'S EYES

A small group of TARS members met at Rugby School. Our tour began in the museum, largely celebrating a certain game and usurping the literary connections a little (we'll let them off; it's the 200th anniversary of the running-forward-still-holding-the-ball incident). Our guide had gone to a lot of effort to discover as much as she could from the archive about Arthur Ransome and his time at the school and being a small group meant we were able to have an in-depth conversation and to share the additional research we had taken along.

Next we visited the Temple reading rooms (the school library). This was a special arrangement, so somewhere I had not visited on previous tours. The first thing I noticed was the prominence given to the Carnegie short list for this year – there are some great looking books on it although they seem largely aimed at teenage audiences rather than children generally. Upstairs is where the plaque to Arthur Ransome is displayed so we also took the opportunity to explore the museum-type displays on that floor. After this we were taken to the building used for speech days etc. Also named after Temple it is one of only two spaces large enough to hold all the students at once but not built until after Arthur's time.

Being a Saturday morning in term time, we encountered a lot of students so there was plenty of opportunity to discuss life at Rugby school in modern times. The uniform, for instance has changed recently with gold-buttoned, double breasted blazers for heads and deputies of houses or school and the retention of floor length skirts for the girls, originally chosen to match the length of the boys' trousers but kept as they hide a multitude of sins including pyjamas worn against the cold of winter! The dominant houses have also changed since Ransome's time in that, then the School House frequently expected to win the competitions and cups, now it is the Town House (and its female equivalent) which is by far the largest and wins more often than not. The integration of girls into the school has also evolved with a big step forward in the last year

or so being the awarding of caps to female sports participants – our guide was proud of that development, having encouraged the girls to push for it and been instrumental in organising it.

We duly admired the chapel which was set up ready for a confirmation service the next day. Personally I think of schools like Rugby being quite dour places to go but both the library's vibrancy and the party poppers obviously ready for a celebration atmosphere in the chapel reminded me that young people are still young people no matter their educational circumstances. The memorial chapel next door is a very different space, much more peaceful and reflective. We located Geoffrey Ransome's entry on the naming boards for World War I and our guide was able to show us his biography and photo in the books of memory too.

We moved on, past the birching tower with its very worn steps and plentiful graffiti, to Old Big School where, once upon a time, all the teaching happened in what is a large hall style space. Here there is a portrait of Mr Whitelaw, the man who took Arthur into his boarding house from the day boys' Town House and acted as a sort of benefactor or patron to Arthur during his time at the school.

Finally, we climbed the spiral staircase to the Upper Bench – the intimate, balconied room built for that icon among Rugby's head teachers, Thomas Arnold to teach the twenty he was preparing for entry into Oxbridge, and now lined with the desks lids etched with the names of boys who studied there.

The afternoon was spent on a tour of the town, where again, our guide went over and above to show us a wide range of interesting bits we wouldn't have noticed on our own. This time, Rugby the game was of higher interest to some but two statues have been put in quiet squares which celebrate the literary connections of the town – of which there seem to be plenty. Arthur is featured on the one nearest the museum and town library.

Sarah Samuel

Amongst the mud and clay,
 the golden daffodils poked up in torrents of grass and mud,
 the chestnut ponies, also all over muddied, look on, bemused,
 as scarecrow-like walking figures crumped towards them, clad in coats,
 mud-stuck wellies and walking boots.
 Even the hardy cannot escape from the mud of the exposed field.
 And so, locked in a sea of grass and mud, three churches alone stood, one
 selling teas and coffees; a very long meadow,
 a sea of luscious grasses, stretching almost to a mile.
 We companions, 12, walked along, talking poetry, in the
 footsteps of the 6 poets of Dymock.

Esme Blue

WANDERING AMONGST THE DAFFODILS BUT THIS TIME THE CLOUDS WEREN'T LONELY

This is the tale of the Midland Region Dymock Poets walk. We all met up at Dymock church where we had time to look around the exhibition about the Dymock poets, a number of whom had been good friends with Ransome from his Bohemian days onwards. His closest friends were Edward Thomas, who sadly died during the First World War, and Lascelles Abercrombie.

We set off on our walk as the clouds, determined not to be lonely, gathered together above our heads. Every half mile or so we stopped to listen to a piece of poetry, mainly from the Dymock poets, with which people had come prepared. This also allowed us to catch our breath. We braved a field of bullocks and crossed many a mire of mud and slime but even as the clouds decided that they had gathered so tight that they were squeezed of some of their rain drops, our spirits couldn't be dampened, though our heads were! We passed through a lovely old orchard full of daffodils and then on past many trees heavily laden with mistletoe, an unusual sight these days.

By lunch time we had reached the church of St Mary's Kempley, where we sought refuge from the rain on seats in their porch. The church was open but by this time our boots were clad with about half a field's worth of mud so we thought it unwise to venture within. Refreshed with our various lunches we then listened to more poems including some sent by video link, George Derbyshire reading *Adlestrop* and a funny poem from our illustrious chairman, Peter, which we very much enjoyed. We also listen to an extract from a play by Lascelles Abercrombie which had been dedicated to Ransome.

Then onwards to the church of St Edwards Kempley which was serving tea and coffee. Here a number of our crew left to take a shorter and less muddy route back to Dymock, whilst the rest continued on the original circular route. After a mile or so we became a little lost and had to resort to a genuine 1920s sat nav to find our way, sorry we meant 2020s! Back on route we eventually made it through the ever deepening mud to Dymock.

Once more outside Dymock church the Blue family treated us to homemade cake to celebrate making it back. Yes it rained a tad and yes the mud did stick to our boots, but it was a great and thoroughly enjoyable walk, made the more so by the good company and the happy feeling of having a wonderful day despite all the not so lonely clouds!

Ben, Franny and David Hambleton

A DAY OF DROMEDARIES

On Saturday 20 May, a motley crew of Midland TARS descended on Llandrindod and its National Cycle Museum. The museum holds over 250 unicycles, bicycles, tricycles and quadricycles. The bikes include everything you could imagine from the first hobby horses, through penny-farthings, safeties, tandems, novelty bikes, choppers, racers, tourers, recumbents, folding bikes, through to modern electric bikes. The exhibition is arranged as a single walk-through, with displays of related bikes broken up by bike shop windows, the interiors of bicycle repair workshops, cycle-touring campsites, cycle club silverware trophy cabinets. These were as interesting as the bikes themselves, full of different types and brands of puncture repair kits, lights, bicycle clips, camping equipment etc that the APs in particular had forgotten they'd forgotten. No sign of blue glass bead necklaces:

Two small necklaces of blue glass beads which she hung on the lamp-brackets of the dromedaries. "Every camel in the East wears them," she said, "to keep off the evil eye, and our dromedaries will need them extra badly to save them from getting punctures." (*Pigeon Post*)

There must have been hundreds of tyres in the exhibition, but I'm not sure that anyone was looking for the difference between John Bull tyres and Dunlop tyres (*The Big Six*).



In the afternoon we moved on to the Caban-coch dam in the Elan valley, above Rhaeadr. Here we split into two expeditions: one on foot along the south-eastern shore of the lake, including visiting the remains of the Nant-y-Gro dam, destroyed in a 'proof-of-concept' trial for the RAF's bouncing-bomb 'Dambuster' raids of 1943. The smaller expedition cycled along the north-eastern shore to the head of the lake, along Lôn Cambria, part of National Cycle Route 81 between Wolverhampton and Aberystwyth. All in all, a good day to be out, with weather worthy of *Pigeon Post*.

Stephen Benham

RELAXING BY, ON AND IN LLYN TEGID

Llyn Tegid is a beautiful body of water to the south west of the town of Bala in the Eryri National Park. For the weekend of 16 to 18 June, TARS Midland arranged for us to have the "peninsular" camping spots at the lovely Pant yr Onnen Lakeside Campsite. We were a small group of seven, with plenty of boats for sailing and paddling. But some of us don't need boats; epic swims were in order. Although the forecast was for thunder and lightning, and rainstorms, we all remained dry (apart from the swimmers!) or dried out before tents had to be struck. It was a very relaxing and fun weekend, and a birthday celebration meant that there was also cake. I hope we are lucky enough to have the peninsular for TARS to enjoy again next year, it really is a very lovely spot – camping by a lake, surrounded by hills. What more could you want?

Rachel Chalmers



FORTHCOMING EVENTS IN MIDLAND REGION

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



PUNTING WITH DODOS! Saturday 16 September

Well not quite. Spend the morning punting in Oxford on the River Cherwell (£10 per person), picnic by the river and then in the afternoon visit the Oxford Natural History Museum (free entry) where you will be able to hunt down, among other things, a stuffed dodo and other more Ransome-linked animals.

Park at the Oxford Parkway park and ride, or arrive there by train, then travel by bus part way into Oxford, meeting up at the Cherwell Boathouse at 10.15am.

Contact David Hambleton on 01865 390124 or by e-mail at david_hambleton@hotmail.com to let him know that you are coming as he will need to know numbers for the punting and can then send you a map showing where to get off the bus.

FESTIVE ZOOM TOGETHER Saturday 16 December

Get together online, from 4pm to 6pm, for a festive natter and quiz. For more information and to get a Zoom link please contact Rachel Blue on julesbluerachel@btinternet.com

AGM, JUNIOR PARLEY AND GEOLOGY

Saturday 20 January

The venue for the Midland Region AGM 2024 will be the Friends Meeting House, 930 Bristol Road, Selly Oak, Birmingham B29 6NB. Starting promptly at 11.30 there will be a brief formal meeting for adults while Juniors can have fun parleying about ideas for future Ransome-inspired activities while busy using biscuits and melted chocolate to create an edible igloo with which we can celebrate his birthday after lunch. There may also be time for them to plan an imaginary museum.

Please bring along some food for a 'bring and share' lunch following the meetings. After demolishing food and the 'cake' there will be the opportunity to brush up on your knowledge of geology, ready to assist Dick, at the Lapworth Museum of Geology which is a 10-minute drive or 25-minute walk away on the campus of the University of Birmingham.

While not essential, it is always helpful to know roughly how many people to expect, so if possible please indicate your intention of being there to Paul Green on 01654 791256 / 07563962496 or by e-mail at paul-midstars@gmx.co.uk



AMAZON ARCHERY Saturday 21 October

Arrive in Aston on Trent, Derbyshire (Map Ref SK413304) from 10.30 ready for an 11am start. Get your eye in with target practice in the butts in the morning. After lunch shoot the targets on a woodland trail - no animals or people hurt - and all under the careful supervision of the Centaura Field Bowmen. Bring a packed lunch, hot drinks will be available.

Cost: Adults £10.00, Under 16s £5. (Midland Juniors paid for by the Region). Numbers limited so get your booking in fast to Paul Green, 34 Felindre, Pennal, Machynlleth SY20 9DZ. You can also telephone 01654 791256 / 07563962496 or e-mail him at paul-midstars@gmx.co.uk



SKATING AND SWIMMING Saturday 18 November

Come to Tamworth Snow Dome, Leisure Island, River Drive, Tamworth for a day of summer and winter holiday fun. Enjoy a swim, eat your packed lunch and then take to the ice for a 2-hour skating session. Swimming costs about £5 and skating £11 a head. Midland Region will pay £5 towards the cost of Midland Juniors for the day.

For more information and to book please contact Jules Blue by e-mail on julesbluerachel@btinternet.com

RATTLETRAPS-ON-THE-WATER Saturday 24 February

Pay a visit to Bourton-on-the-Water in the Cotswolds, meet at 11am for a walk and quiz around the village followed by lunch (bring a picnic or make use of one of the many cafés in the village), then on to The Cotswold Motoring Museum, The Old Mill, Sherborne Street, Bourton-on-the-Water GL54 2BY, voted one of the best motor museums in the country by the real motor enthusiasts. We don't know whether we will find a real 'Rattletrap', but you never can tell what might be hidden under the boxes in the corner! Prices for 2023 £7.50 adult and £5.25 for Juniors. Midland Region will pay £5 per Junior towards the cost of the museum. For further information or the register your intention of being there please get in touch with David Hambleton on 01865 390124 or by e-mail at david_hambleton@hotmail.com

Please send copy for the next issue of *The Gulch* to jane.pippinfort@googlemail.com by 15 October

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.

The Northern Region AGM March 18th; we met by zoom as it enables members from the far corners of our region to attend. Elizabeth Williams chaired the meeting.

The Northern Report for 2022 was received and thanks were offered for all the hard work of the committee. The treasurer, Liz Haworth, explained the financial state of the Region which was solid.

Events for the next year were discussed and it was decided to try and do events around the region to offset travelling costs and encourage members to get together more easily. Events in York, Northumberland, Cumbria and Preston were discussed.

Most of the committee are happy to continue in post but Ann Farr has asked to stand down after some years of very happy volunteering. We are privileged to be able to continue to use her as a resource.

Our Guest Speaker, all the way from New Zealand by the magic of Technology, was Kirsty Nichol-Findlay who opened up for us the genius of Arthur Ransome's forward looking and therefore ground breaking literary style.

The talk was so good it has now been extended as a full Amazon Publication – so watch out for it.



A set of books was presented to Year 6 of Tang Hall School in York in July. Miss Eastwood (in photo) is not only the teacher of that year but also the school librarian. Krysia Clack told the children a little about how Arthur Ransome originally came from Leeds, enjoyed long Lake District holidays as a child from which he never wanted to return home, later made friends there from whom he received a gift of a pair of red slippers and who in return wrote 'Swallows and Amazons' set in the place they all loved so much.

Ransome at Rusland June 3rd 2023

On a beautifully sunny evening, with glorious views of the surrounding hills and woods, six of us (plus Jasper) met at St Paul's church at Rusland to remember the anniversary of Arthur Ransome's death. We tidied up the grave, Liz Haworth laid a bouquet of flowers and we thanked Arthur for bringing us so much happiness. The church is beautifully kept and has a small piece about AR permanent on display.

Krysia Clack



Killhope Mine visit

In April we visited the Mining Museum at Killhope in Upper Weardale. It was a bright breezy morning as six of us donned our wellies and headed into the mine in stygian darkness and through six inches of fast flowing stream, it was a real "Slater Bob" mining experience.

How those miners endured the cold and the dark, working 10 hour shifts to cut and load the precious lead ore into horse-drawn carts defied our belief. We were glad to re-emerge and sample the washing floor; picking out tiny pieces of galena which shone through the dull dross of broken rock. The whole area is preserved now to protect red squirrel and ground-nesting birds. In those days it was a barren industrial landscape, yet the miners produced amazing art out of the local quartz and low grade gemstones.



Northern Events for later in 2023

Saturday 11th November

The Children's and Detective Book Fair; the Pavillions Harrogate. HG2 8NZ

Watch out for –

a trip to Northwich to visit the Anderton Boat Lift and meet up with some old friends!

Southern Region



Regional Spring Challenge – extended!

Well, perhaps it has been too warm for uphill expeditions in the last couple of months so the photo challenge offered in the last edition of Signals will still be open through the summer. Humble apologies to members on the Isle of Wight as St Boniface Down (241m) was missed off the list.

I have made it to the highest point in West Sussex, Blackdown, which stands at a magnificent 280m near the northern county border close to Haslemere. I have lived in the county for nearly 40 years, but this is the first time I have visited this area of sandstone ridges in the Sussex Weald. Having missed the turning to the first car-park, we then shot off the top of the Ordnance Survey map and out of good phone reception, so the rest of the walk definitely had the air of exploration. Whilst the trig point is amongst the trees, there is a viewpoint called the Temple of the Winds from where you can see over the plains of Sussex and Surrey.



By the time this issue of Signals is landing on your doormat or in your inbox, we should have had our summer camp and the photos of sun-drenched sailors and campers (we hope) will appear in the next issue.

Southern

Coming events:

Autumn Gathering Saturday 28th October 2023

2 to 4.30pm at St Nicholas Parish Rooms, Bury St, Guildford, GU2 4AW

On the theme of ‘Communications’

We are returning to a family orientated autumn gathering and trying a new venue which is a little more central in the region. The hall is in the centre of Guildford, near the station, with car parks nearby.

There will be an opportunity to brush up your semaphore, make a simple morse code signal lamp to send messages and explore the world of signal flags. Resources are being assembled. We hope to have a visiting speaker who has had experiences of all sorts of communications during his naval career and has many stories to tell.

There will be opportunities for verbal communication over refreshments and cake and, for those who like to communicate electronically, perhaps time to share favourite apps.

Adults £5, Juniors free. Please book in advance with the secretary to ensure a plentiful supply of cake:

rjbealtars@gmail.com

or 01243 605889

You will then receive payment details and a map.



Birthday Lunch

After last year's successful gathering in Winchester, on the west of the Region, next year's lunch, celebrating AR's 140th birthday, is going east.

Saturday 20th January 2024 at The Barn in Tunbridge Wells TN1 1NU.

The venue is very close to the station and we have tables reserved from 12.30.

Prices may change before January, but the restaurant does fixed-price 2 or 3 course lunch menus and has an informative website: **www.barn-pub-rest.co.uk**

Full details will be in the next issue and by email, but please put the date in your diary, it would be great to meet some more members.



Sou'westers and Seaboats

News from the South-West Region

A Day Out in Devon

Fifteen TARS gathered at Uffculme Woollen Mill on the 13th April, a sunny spring day.

Devon is a hilly county which favours sheep farming, whilst its rivers and streams are fast flowing, ideal for driving water wheels that provide the energy for processing wool. The Uffculme Mill shows us the results in the beautiful wool which these two circumstances and our human need for wool has produced.

The mechanics of the machines are fascinating to see, but Heather having been a keen knitter at a certain stage of her life, was most pleased to see the beautiful colours and texture of the finished product, whilst also wondering at the huge machinery that acts as the spinning wheel that women once had to use!

The cafe and the rushing water into and past the Mill were also much appreciated, as were the pleasant surroundings in the spring sunshine. We remembered that one of Arthur Ransome's interests was, rather surprisingly, knitting, and we wondered if Uffculme Mill had ever processed wool that he had used!

Heather Woodland and Alan Goodwin



SW TARS visit the Herschel Museum of Astronomy in Bath

Behind a large front door in a fairly insignificant row of Georgian terrace houses in Bath, one day in March, seven TARS members found a curious mixture of arts and science, which would have delighted both the GA and Dick Callum.

The Great Aunt would have been interested in all the musical instruments (including a Military Serpent) adorning the walls and tables in the house! Most of these had belonged to William Herschel, who gave music lessons there for some years before astronomy took over his life.

This house and garden are where Dick's interest would have been caught, as it was here on 13th March 1781 that William Herschel discovered the planet Uranus, which he first named Georgium Sidus after King George III.

Do you know what an 'orrery' is? I didn't.



William summoned his sister Caroline from Germany to keep house for him. She eventually became an astronomer in her own right and over time discovered eight new comets, which led to her being the first woman to be awarded the Gold Medal of the Royal Astronomical Society in 1828.

Two of their brothers came to England to work with William, and his only son too became an eminent astronomer, photographer, artist, botanist and musician and was buried in Westminster Abbey.

What a talented and interesting family! ENJOY!

Hints for Juniors and their parents – there is a workroom for Juniors showing a video of Caroline telling their story. Look out for a booklet called William Herschel's TOP TEN TREASURES. The guide book is worth buying too. Sadly, there is no café, but there is a loo.

N C Fawcett

Below - Peter Wright is hiding behind this replica of the telescope used to discover Uranus.



FOSSIL HUNTING ON CHARMOUTH BEACH, 20th MAY

There were no fossilised mastodon footprints but Charmouth Beach surrendered a selection of crinoids, sea urchin tentacles, and spiralling ammonite discs as well as many treasures from sea glass to fool's gold.

Rock hounds Jess and Susan Gouldbourne, Jake and Diana Dicker scrambled over the ankle-wrecking rocks with the Charmouth Heritage Coast Centre *Fossil Hunting Guide*, hammer in hand, in quest of fossils. Meanwhile, Diana Wright; Liz and Paul Crisp; Heather Woodland; and Alan Goodwin lurked and looked on the less challenging Jurassic shoreline closer to the café, next to the informative, educational and free Heritage Centre



This was not such a secret water and the shore resounded with the tap tap tap of geological hammers. Jake won the prize for the best limestone rock smasher releasing fossils and interesting, sparking rocks.

Although we didn't discover giant nautilus nor dinosaur bones, we all left with our pockets a little heavier with beef rock ammonites, limestone pebbles with glittering calcite crystals and sparkling iron pyrite fool's gold. But, we all agreed, it was wonderful to hook up and see each other again especially as the sun shone as we launched our summer programme.

Diana Dicker

FORTHCOMING EVENTS IN THE SOUTH-WEST

Members from other regions are always welcome to join us – email Barbara on souwesters@gmail.com or look at the South West pages on the website for details.

Saturday 30th September – meet at 10.45 am at Creech St Michael village hall for a **Bring and Scoff Literary Day**.

Do you fancy having your own coat of arms? Why not draw your own like Peter Duck had on his kitbag when becalmed in the China Seas! We might also have a go at knitting if our expert is available. Bring food to share for lunch and a favourite passage written by AR or about him to read out.

Sunday 22nd October via Zoom starting at 4 pm – Simon Dell has kindly agreed to give us another talk, this time about the Tavistock Canal.

SW TARS are inviting you to a scheduled Zoom meeting.

Topic: Tavistock Canals with Simon Dell Zoom Meeting

Time: Oct 22, 2023 03:45 PM London

Join Zoom Meeting

<https://us02web.zoom.us/j/83450573075?pwd=MFlpbzBkd1V2WkpvRzRaZnhxODJGZz09>

Meeting ID: 834 5057 3075

Passcode: 002756

Saturday 25th November via Zoom starting at 4 pm – another fiendish quiz compiled by Diana, but we have asked her to do it from just one book – **The Picts and The Martyrs** – so some of us might have a chance of getting some right by reading it beforehand!

SW TARS are inviting you to a scheduled Zoom meeting.

Topic: Diana's Quiz Zoom Meeting

Time: Nov 25, 2023 03:45 PM London

Join Zoom Meeting

<https://us02web.zoom.us/j/82666405830?pwd=OG9iTmпуTUFicHFESzF6Mm0rS2h5Zz09>

Meeting ID: 826 6640 5830

Passcode: 297872

Advance notice

the SW AGM will be via Zoom on Saturday 20th January 2024

And we are pleased to say that **Alan Kennedy has agreed to do a follow up talk to ‘AR and the Debacle at Durham’ sometime in February** – the date and Zoom link for this will be in the January to April edition of Signals.

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR



Flag etiquette, from Peggy Blackett

Dear Signals Editor

I refer to your really interesting editorial about the "TARS Fleet" in the last edition of Signals. How come I know about this when I am not a member of TARS, I hear you ask? Well, the reason is that the human people who sail me (I think they call themselves "owners", but Nancy always tells me that nobody really owns an Amazon pirate so I expect that's just their joke) ARE members and (being a good Amazon pirate) I quite often sneak a look at their magazines.

They, the magazines that is, are really good fun and quite often have lots about a man called Arthur Ransome, who reminds me of my uncle, and a girl who shares my name and reminds me of me.

Anyway, I'm probably chattering again (Nancy would say so anyway, even though all I'm really doing is being polite). The thing is that you said something in your editorial about my sailing under different flags at different times. I thought that was a bit confusing, as I've only ever sailed under my own flag, which one of my human thingies (aka owners) made for me.

So I asked my uncle whether he thought the same as we floated together a few days ago. He said "By Jove! You're quite right!" And then he added something about "Editors shall be hanged, like the last". I asked him whether he thought that was a bit stiff and, after he had thought about it some more, he agreed it probably would be and that keel hauling might be more appropriate. Especially if we put our centre plates down first.

But then he calmed down even more and said that perhaps it was all a misunderstanding and that it might be better to let the poor editor live on this occasion. The thing is, he continued, that all decent ships only ever sail under their own flags. But decent ones also fly courtesy flags when they are sailing in other ships' waters. ("That's right," I thought, "I always do fly the Society's flag when I'm helping my human thingies out at one of their events"). Therefore, ~~Uncle Jim~~ Captain Flint continued, it's most likely that someone had somehow mistaken my courtesy

flag for my real one.

Both Nancy and Captain Flint offered to sort the confusion out with you on my behalf. However, Nancy started colouring the biggest black spot I've ever seen, and my uncle started carving driftwood whilst muttering: "When a thing's done, it's done. Worrying never made an editor". So I told them to stop. Because all I really want to say, apart from don't worry (Captain Flint's right about that), is that whilst I am of course honoured that you made a mistake and wrote that I'm sometimes part of the Society's fleet, I'm not.

If you could let your members know I would be grateful, as I really don't like having to wallop knuckles on my gunnels with my belaying pins. Especially when my gunnels bruise easily and I've only got two pins left.

Yours sincerely

Peggy Blackett (Fiercely independent) Amazon Pirate Aged Length 13' 4"



The Ransome figurine on two book-cases

Book-cases and a Cowen connection

Hello Peter. I thought you might like to see this photo I snapped today on seeing the front cover of *Signals* which has just arrived.

My wife and I bought the bronze of Ransome at auction in 2017. It was amongst a sale of books presumably having belonged to John Cowen. We placed the little figure in the position you see it – by our collection of Ransome's works – before Margaret Ratcliffe pointed me to the cover of "*A Ransome Book-Case*", which, coincidentally, is right there on our bookshelf!

All the best.

Stephen Sykes

Hill Top, Ealinghearth, Cumbria LA12 8JR

JACK BLAKE'S JOTTINGS

I was in St Mawes earlier this summer (when the weather was very nice, luckily). It's a pleasing village on the edge of Falmouth Harbour, much favoured by retired sea-captains in their day. We used to come here a lot when the children were children.

Arthur and Evgenia came here too, in 1933 when he was recovering from an appendicitis operation. "Why on earth we never explored down here before I really cannot think," he wrote to his mother. "We are both enjoying this place very much... we shall probably stay here for ever!"

He also thought there was "a very lovely story lurking here," but he was totally preoccupied with working up a plot for *Coot Club*, so it continued to lurk.

A couple of vestigial references did crop up in later books though. In *We Didn't Mean to Go to Sea*, when John ask Jim "What's the furthest you've ever been in her?" Jim replies "Uncle Bob and I took her down to Falmouth one year." "We used to sail there with Daddy when he was on leave," replies John.

And of course, at the end of *Missee Lee*, "The people of St Mawes... woke one morning to find a little Chinese Junk... anchored off their harbour mouth". With an accurate illustration.

Arthur and Evgenia stayed at the Watch House just by the harbour. "Our bedroom window looks out on the little harbour, and

from the window of the room in which I and writing, I look up the creek at the boats at anchor..."

Nowadays it's a restaurant with a takeaway hatch in one wall, called Watch Out.

Falmouth itself – a 20-minute ferry-ride across the harbour – still retains much of its character. I was particularly pleased to find the second-hand bookshop still there. A tall, slightly crumbly Victorian building on the corner of Arwenack Street and one of the alleys leading down to the quayside, its five floors (two to them mezzanines - it's not *that* tall) are stacked with books on all subjects, so tightly packed you'd be forgiven for thinking it was held up by its own stock.

Needless to say, though, it didn't have the one book I was wanting to buy.

Criminal intents

St Mawes now has another niche in literature. Cormoran Strike, detective hero of Robert Galbraith's crime series, was born there and revisits it a lot in the last one, *Troubled Blood*.

Naturally he's often to be found in the Victory, the only proper pub in St Mawes, so I felt it right to spiritually join him there for the odd pint of Doom Bar... and to reflect on what William Blunt might have made of him, and the books he inhabits.

William Blunt is of course the *nom de plume* adopted by Ransome when he took to

reviewing crime thrillers for the *Observer* in 1939, and he laid out what he called "the rules of the game" right at the start. "No problem is of satisfying beauty if it deviates by a hair's breadth" from them. Death was definitely a requirement. So the Strike books certainly meet that criterion.

We should get a clearer idea of his views on the genre in the not-too-distant future. I'm told that Amazon Publications' next-but-one project after the soon-to-be-published *Red Skies*, is to be about 'Blunt' and the books that caught his attention.

It seems it will coincide neatly with a new book on the way from Christina Hardyment in 2025, a follow-up to her *Novel Houses*, to be entitled *Novel Crime Scenes*. Sadly I doubt if St Mawes will feature – probably too late for inclusion and anyway the crime doesn't occur there.

No Island life?

I was disappointed to hear that the competition in the last *Signals* to identify all the islands in 'The 12' had failed to attract any entries.

Apart from anything else, it sounded like a fun project, so I decided to give it a go myself. I got on pretty well, I think, and included one or two that others might not have observed... until I came to Secret Water, where there always seemed to be another island, and some, it seemed, that came and went. The competition is still open, as far as I know, and the prize (a copy of *36 Islands*, which is not a clue to the correct answer) is still waiting.

Cryptic teaser

Meanwhile, a little teaser to tide you over: It's a location mentioned in *The 12: Cryptic* clue: 'Frequently at the bottom'.

Guesses, or any other correspondence can be emailed to me via the Editor.



NO HOLDS BARRED
Evgenia Ransome's diaries
1927-1933



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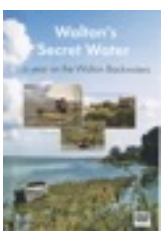
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THE MAGAZINE OF THE ARTHUR RANSOME SOCIETY



SEPTEMBER-OCTOBER 2020 WITH IAGM UPDATE

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.

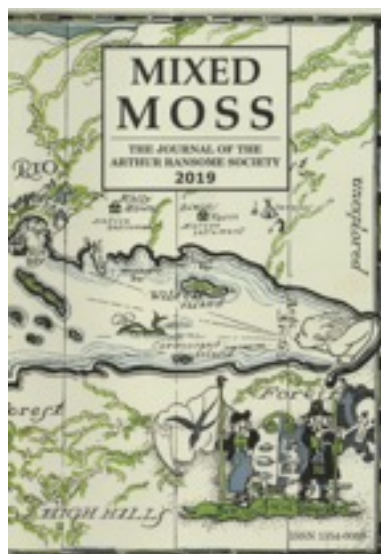
The January-April issue includes Despatches, with news and booking forms for the International AGM.

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 June, with distribution to members in the autumn.

Mixed Moss 2023 issue
Editor vacancy; Acting Editor Julian Lovelock
julianlovelock@outlook.com
Back issues: most in stock at the TARS Stall, £4 + p+p

LITERARY WEEKENDS
Transcripts of Talks from previous events are available from the TARS Stall, £6.50



Amazon Publications produces a Ransome-linked book yearly on a subscription basis. Next title (2024) *Red Skies*. Some back issues on TARS Stall. Enquires to Christine Rae:
tarsstall@arthur-ransome.org



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

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(monitored public group)

The Arthur Ransome Society (TARS) Facebook Group
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The TARS Library

contains over 1,000 books written by Ransome, read by him, written about him or connected with him. Browse the complete list on the TARS website, or request a paper copy for a small charge.

The Manor House, Church Lane, Houghton, STOCKBRIDGE, Hants SO20 6LJ

Christine Rae is handling requests and returns

email tarslib@arthur-ransome.org

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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 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

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Publications:

Peter Wright (Acting chair), Mike Glover (Secretary), The Blue Family, Julian Lovelock, 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 accept advertisements in Signals, included in the magazine or as loose inserts. Half-page £100, quarter page £50, eighth page £25. Insert your own flyer £100. Contact David Middleton, memsec@arthur-ransome.org

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 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.

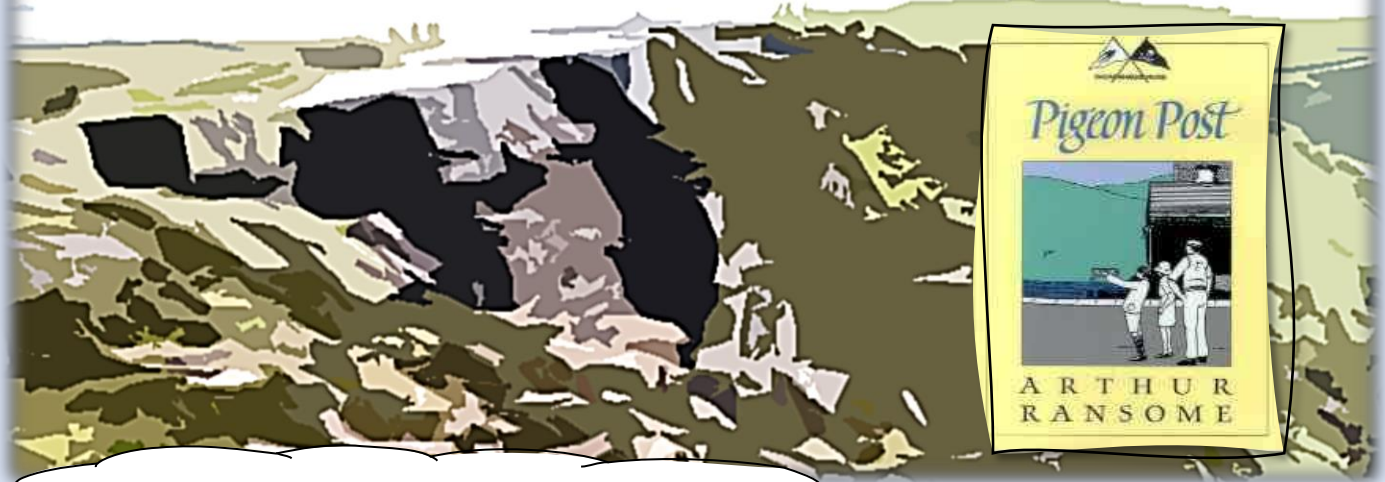
Please see the TARS website for further details or contact Paul Crisp: p.crisp048@btinternet.com

Book Donations Guide

If you have Ransome-related books to dispose of, or have been offered some, and would like advice from TARS, guidelines are now available on the Website, from all Regional Secretaries or the Chair of the Literary Resources Committee, Krysia Clack (steve@ksclack)

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