



SIGNALS

THE MAGAZINE OF THE ARTHUR RANSOME SOCIETY



1974-2024

Swallows and Amazons

The film's half-century

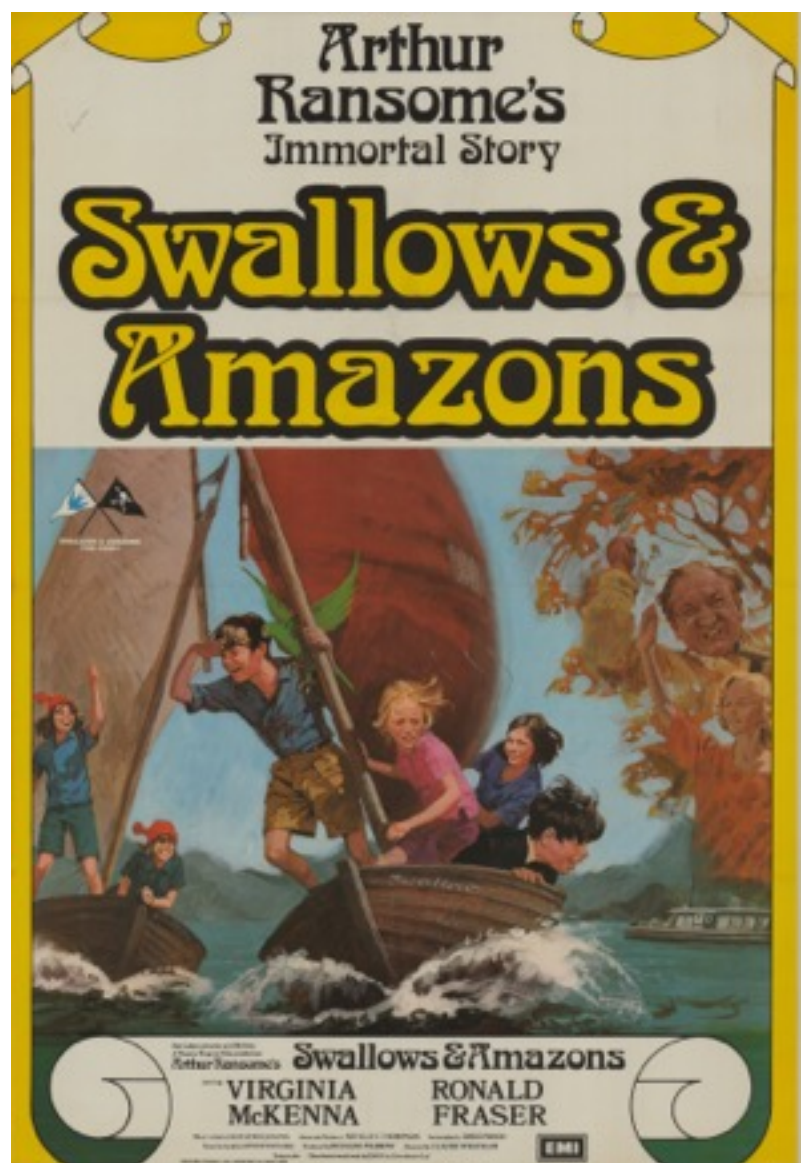
Sixpence a word

When telegrams were the only way (apart from pigeons)

Susie by herself

An Australian Tar's
UK winter holiday

Hunter's Yard
a Coot Club time capsule



MAY-AUGUST 2024 with Windermere Weekend guide

The Arthur Ransome Society

A Company Limited by Guarantee: No 03386251

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

Company Secretary: John Pearson, Mas d'en Clarimon, Route de Paloll à la Selva, F-66400 CERET, France

email: tarsinfo@arthur-ransome.org website: www.arthur-ransome.org

President: John Sergeant

Honorary Vice Presidents: Christina Hardymont, Ted Alexander, Ted Evans

TARS Board 2023/2024: Elected Trustees



National Chair
Mike Glover
01432 378205
glovermichael7652@gmail.com



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



Treasurer
Susan Gouldbourne
01271 831520
susan@ttars.co.uk
(Adviser)



Vice-chair and Overseas Members Rep
Krysia Clack
01904 642971
steve@ksclack.plus.com



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



Rachel Chalmers
07807
014466
rachelmchalmers@btinternet.com



Peter Willis
01394
387907
peterwillis1144@gmail.com



David Butters
01772
865840
davidbutters937@hotmail.com

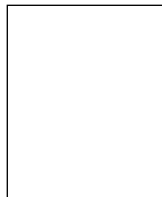
Regional Representative Trustees



East
Robert Welham
01277
214806



North
Elizabeth Haworth
01539
442050



Midlands



Scotland
Sandy Allan
07380
361486



South
Iain Khan-Gilchrist
07760
454767



South West
Barbara Flower
01963
350199



Membership Secretary

Krysia Clack

memsec@arthur-ransome.org



Overseas co-ordinators: Canada: Ian Sacré +1 250-871-2695 canada@arthur-ransome.org

USA: VACANT tarsus@gmail.com **Australia:** Dawn Ciechomski dp1949@live.com.au **New Zealand:**

Barbara and Neil Robertson 04 473 6383 newzealand@arthur-ransome.org **Japan:** Mikako Tarashima +81 3 6421 5668 japan@arthur-ransome.org



SIGNALS



THE MAGAZINE OF THE ARTHUR RANSOME SOCIETY MAY-AUGUST 2024

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From the Editor

On the road (train, boat...) again

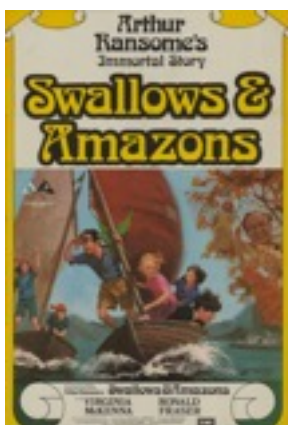
It was his idea... Jules Blue set the challenge, if that's what it was, to "see if we can circumnavigate or cross Great Britain together" in the last Outlaw, and he suggested to me that Signals might like to join in. Happy enough to do that, and I handed it over to Jack Blake to sort out the details – see page 37.

And then it dawned on me just how much travelling with and/or for Arthur I've got lined up this year: a board meeting in Birmingham, then Harrogate (Literary Weekend), the Lake District, twice, for the Alliance of Literary Societies AGM and then the film's 50th anniversary bash, followed by our IAGM in the Peak District, and doubtless another board meeting later on. And an Eastern Region visit to the North Norfolk steam railway – the only truly 'authentic' means of travel on the list. And maybe a coastal path walk along our own East Anglian 'Arthur Ransome Trail'.

It'll be a lot, but Catherine Lamont is bound to have beaten me already, even if you don't count the return flight from Australia – read her account of her midwinter odyssey in this issue.

And a last-minute update. **David Middleton** always said he'd stand down as Membership Secretary when he reached 80 – and now he has! He'll be a hard act to follow, but **Kryisia Clack** is taking on the task from the beginning of May – so thanks David and best of luck Kryisia!

Peter Willis



This issue's cover: The original film poster is something of a classic in its own right, both in this portrait version, and the landscape cinema design on page 14. It features vigorous representations of the children themselves, along with a scowling Ronald Fraser as Captain Flint, and Virginia McKenna as Mother, plus something which might be a baby flying through the air. The artist also chose to use ampersand (&) instead of Ransome's 'and' in the title.

Cover image, film poster on p14 and stills on p15 all copyright ©Studiocanal Films Ltd/Mary Evans

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News from the Board

The TARS Board of Trustees held its 94th meeting on Saturday 6 April. As at our previous meeting of last October, we again met in former Chairman Peter Wright's Cambridge Road Methodist Church at King's Heath in Birmingham. It was a pity that rail strikes prevented two Board members from attending.

Chairman's Comments

In his introductory remarks Chairman Mike Glover announced that **Jules Blue**, Midland region's Board member, had resigned from the Board, but would, with the Board's agreement, continue with all his many other TARS activities. The region should nominate as soon as possible a replacement for Jules on the Board.

Cattley/Stockwell legacy

Perhaps the main point on our agenda was to decide how best to employ the legacy of over £60,000 bequeathed to TARS by its late members Susie Cattley and Di Stockwell.

At its October meeting the Board had decided to invite TARS members to give their views and make their proposals on this subject. By the deadline of 14 February a wide range of replies had come in, by email or via the website, both from individual members and from some of the regions and one of the TARS standing committees. These were collected and organised by Peter Willis and discussed by a small group – Peter, Treasurer Susan Gouldbourne and Secretary John Pearson. They had prepared a report summarising and analysing the responses and suggesting how the Board might treat them. The complete texts of all the proposals themselves were also made available to the Board.

At our meeting the Board expressed general agreement with this report and made the following main decisions and observations:

- To place £30,000 in a contingency fund to meet future needs in an uncertain world;
- To reserve at this stage £15,000 “for properly assessed and agreed further expenditure on preparing the TARS boats *Swallow* and *Amazon* for commercial service”. Action along these two lines had been proposed by numerous members;
- To earmark up to £2,000 to meet the cost of examining, organising and cataloguing TARS archives;
- To invite TARS regions to suggest possible sites for further plaques or other memorials to Arthur Ransome (Leeds, Darien, Wild Cat Island, Shotley Pier?);
- To request further examination of the case and means for establishing a Senior Adventure Fund and for a scheme to help young people to learn to sail.
- The Board also decided not to endorse or ask for further examination at present of member proposals: to allocate a PC to each region and overseas group; to establish a Ransome ‘home’; to build a duplicate *Swallow*; to arrange for a new biography or film on Ransome; to arrange the production of a senior schools pack; to hold an annual rather than biennial literary event; to subsidise attendance at TARS events; and to make a grant of £3,000 to Karen Babayan to facilitate applying for an Arts Council grant to support the costs of a tour of her *Swallows and Armenians* stage production and exhibition.

Board memberships

The meeting was Mike's last one as TARS Chair. The Board thanked him warmly for all he had done in more than twenty years as Board member or officer. A new

Chair would need to be appointed at the Board's next meeting. The Board noted that Kirstie Taylor would be standing down at the IAGM under the six year rule; the Board reviewed possible names for elective members to be proposed to the IAGM.

Society memberships

The Board reviewed the situation concerning the subject of membership procedures: **David Middleton** is on the point of retiring as membership secretary; a new membership team will need to be formed. It also considered ways of organising membership procedures in the future.

The website

Ben Hambleton is developing his role as new webmaster. The Board considered ways of helping Ben to achieve the improvements he has proposed for the content and operation of the website.

Forthcoming events

The Board was pleased to note, from reports received, that all seems well with preparations for the major TARS events of the summer: the Literary Weekend in Harrogate; the organisation by TARS of the AGM of the Alliance of Literary Societies at Bowness-on-Windermere in May; and the major event in Windermere to celebrate the 50th anniversary of the 1974 S & A film. In this latter context the Board agreed that TARS should proceed with talks with the Langdale Chase hotel about a possible agreement between the hotel and TARS which could help us financially.

It was confirmed that **Southern region** would be organising the **2025 IAGM**.

Finally, the Board ratified the proposal from AusTARS for the 2024 winner of the **AusTARS Cup** honouring notable service to TARS, which we hope to present to the winner at the IAGM.

Literary & Resources Committee

(meeting 10 February on Zoom)

Ben Hambleton has joined the committee as the new Webmaster; he produced an outstanding written report for the meeting, with some excellent ideas for revamping the website which he plans to implement this summer, once he has completed his A-Levels. In the meantime he is happy to add notices and simple amendments. He can be contacted at webmaster@arthur-ransome.org

The Archives have now been transferred to their new home at the church in Birmingham: 23 boxes and containers in three tall filing cabinets; a grant of £2,000 to attract help in sorting and classifying from someone local with appropriate expertise has been requested.

A review of the committee's 2006 constitution has revealed a need for only minor updates, but more liaison with other literary societies could be of value.

Next meeting 21.09.24 on Zoom.
(Report by KC, summarised by PW)

Members who have died

We now record the deaths of fellow-members annually in this issue of Signals, for the previous year, with any updates and those notified so far in the current year. Please notify Krysia Clack, Membership Secretary.
2023

Robin Anderson 635 Sc (June)

Sheila Campbell 188 M (June)

Sam Cole 4599 M (not given)

Sylvia Dicker 385 M (12 May)

Graham Kingsley 1271 M (13 August)

Ann Osmond 5084 SW (11 January)

Michael Rines 10 (15 February)

John Rose 95 N (May)

Adrian Simmonds 766 N (February)

John Thompson 4559 (5 March)

Sidney Joe Turner 552 S (not given)

2024

Alan Hunter 1454 E (January)

DATE	CALENDAR OF EVENTS	REGION
11 May	Black Country Museum	Midland
11 May	Morwellham Quay	South-West
18-19 May	Alliance of Literary Societies AGM Hosted by TARS	TARS/ALS Windermere
25-27 May	River Deben Rally with Nancy Blackett	East
2 June	Arthur's grave, Rusland	North
8 June	Paint and Swim	Midland
9 June	TARS Book Group	Zoom
15 June	Canal trip	South-West
15 June	North Norfolk Railway	East
22/23 June	'The real Pictland'	Scotland
29-30 June	'Swallows and Amazons' 50th anniversary Windermere Jetty	TARS
6 July	Dick and Dot's Day Out Brockholes Nature reserve	North
13 July	'Swallows and Amazons' at the Riverside Cinema Woodbridge	East
13 July	River Soar activities Sail, canoe, swim and camp	Midland
13 July	'Sparkinsons' on Zoom	South-West
9-11 August	Cobnor Camp	Southern
15-18 August	TARS IAGM Weekend Peak District	TARS/Midland
1 September	'Ivy Walker' walk	South-West
14 September	Bell Rock lighthouse	Scotland



Susie Cattley (in black), and Di Stockwell (in red) were always at the centre of things in TARS

Susie and Di's bequest - your responses and suggestions

In the last Signals we invited TARS members to join in the discussion about how the £60,702.61 legacy bequeathed to the Society by our beloved members Susie Cattley and Di Stockwell might best be used. Here is a summary of your responses

The idea of seeking a 'consensus' of members' views was mooted at the last Board meeting, and I was asked to put a page in Signals to invite suggestions, *writes Peter Willis*.

The invitation duly appeared in the last issue, with a deadline of 14th February, and I asked TARS secretary John Pearson and treasurer Susan Gouldbourne to join me on a panel to conduct a preliminary sifting and sorting of the responses before passing them with our recommendations to the Board.

In all, over 30 members responded, split fairly evenly between emails and postings on the TARS website, which are available to read there. Most replies were from individual members, including several from abroad (mainly the USA and Canada), a few came from TARS groups – Regions and the Literary and Resources Committee.

Perhaps unsurprisingly the most frequently-made proposals related to the restoration of *Swallow* and *Amazon*. A few were not in favour ("mere film props" according to one respondent) but the majority proved to be firmly in support.

Another frequent theme was the desirability of putting a significant proportion of the money into some sort of investment, to guard against hard times ahead and/or to be ready to seize any

opportunities that might arise, as well as providing an income stream in the meantime.

Quite a number of suggestions fell into the category of 'good idea but no plan'. In some ways this is quite reasonable – naming desirable outcomes can be inspirational in itself and may lead to other Tars coming up with the means and ideas needed to bring them into fruition.

Among these were: helping young people to learn to sail; schools packs (and publications and research in general); distribution of copies of 'The Twelve' to schools and libraries; podcasts; erection of plaques ('blue' or otherwise) at suitable locations; a 'senior adventure fund'; provision of laptops to regional secretaries specifically for TARS purposes and to be handed on with the office.

One specific item is the sorting and cataloguing of the TARS archives, as proposed by the Literary and Resources Committee.

The Board has now met and discussed the recommendations submitted by the panel; its conclusions can be found in News from the Board on page 2. There is still scope for further discussion – particularly on the practical means of achieving or advancing of some of the accepted proposals. The debate is not over and your thoughts will continue to be welcome!

Restoring Swallow and Amazon

Amazon afloat and available!



As expected, *Amazon* was officially relaunched on Good Friday, March 29th, ready to start her first full summer hire season. She'd actually been in the water ahead of that, 'taking up' - which means allowing the planks to swell and become watertight - essential for most wooden boats.

Hire charges, which include VAT, are: half day £48, whole day £100. A week as a tender to one of Hunter's cabin yachts is £400.

For details and available dates, just phone Hunter's Yard, 01692 678263, and speak to Dan or Martin, or visit arthur-ransome.org/sail/.

Swallow meanwhile is expected to start her full restoration around the third week in April, once the yard's own fleet of boats is out of the shed and on the water. It follows some investigation work carried out at the end of last season and is expected to last most of the summer at an anticipated cost of around £10,000.

Both the dinghies, though, will be taking a break at the end of June in order to travel to the Lake District for TARS' 50th anniversary celebrations of 'their' film, *Swallows and Amazons*, at Windermere Jetty, 29-30 June (details on pages 14 and 15). *Amazon* is expected to be on the water, possibly available for sailing, certainly for photo

opportunities. *Swallow* will be ashore, at whatever stage her restoration work has reached, which will enable visitors to find out more about what restoring a historic clinker dinghy entails. Neville and Val Khambatta from Hunters and some of us from Sail S&A will be on hand to talk about it.

Looking further ahead, the situation will be reversed for both boats in 2025 - *Swallow* will be ready to be hired out, and *Amazon* will be spending the summer in the shed for a full overhaul. This is expected to be less drastic, and therefore less costly than *Swallow*'s, though the need to replace two of her

knees has already been identified.

A detailed financial proposal has been submitted to the 'Susie and Di Fund' panel, which has gone forward to the TARS Board for consideration.

And *Amazon* is booked to take part, along with *Titmouse*, in a Hunter's "Cruise in Company", 3-10 August. For more details,

contact the yard.

Hunter's Yard's website (www.huntersyard.co.uk) is a great place to gather information or just to have a happy browse. It will soon be having a special page for *Swallow* and *Amazon*, added, and *Classic Boat* and *Watercraft* magazines are expected to carry coverage in forthcoming issues. *PW*



Swallow at the Riverside Cinema, Woodbridge in 2015. This time it's *Amazon*'s turn

Swallows and Amazons on the Silver Screen

Cinema showings of *Swallows and Amazons* include

Riverside Cinema Woodbridge, Suffolk

Saturday 13 July

www.theriverside.co.uk

01394 382174

Benefit fundraiser for *Swallow* and *Amazon* restorations, with *Amazon* on show outside

Zeffirellis Ambleside

www.zeffirellis.com/film

015394 33845 **27 June**

with Sophie Neville Q&A

TARS Book Group

Sunday June 9, 7pm

Zoom Meeting

[https://us02web.zoom.us/j/](https://us02web.zoom.us/j/89659989201)

89659989201pwd=S1V4L1lyL0J

4K3Z1UXVIS2FWZm9Qdz09

Meeting ID: 896 5998 9201

Passcode: 935202

Chosen books:

October October

Katya Balen winner of the 2022 Carnegie medal

Where the World Ends

Geraldine McCaughrean 2018 Carnegie medal

While the Storm Rages

Phil Earle

elizabethwilliams10@aol.co.uk

HUNTER'S YARD

The historic home of Ransome memories

by Peter Willis, with Neville Khambatta

Hunter's Yard has been around since before the Coot Club started having their adventures on the Norfolk Broads. Only very slightly before – Percy Hunter with his two sons started his boat-hire business in 1932; Arthur Ransome started writing *Coot Club* in 1933, to be published for Christmas 1934.

Percy began his yard by digging the dyke from Womack Water to where the land was firm enough to support the large boatshed he would build, and which is still the heart of the business. (It's off the Thurne, the 'Potter Heigham' river, rather than the Bure, the 'Horning' river where most of the northern-rivers action in *Coot Club* and *The Big Six* is located.)

Hunter's was always a hire fleet, and is still based on its own-built mostly 1930s varnished mahogany yachts. Today, the yard looks very much as it did in the 1930s, so when the BBC wanted a yacht to play the *Teasel* in its 1984 adaptation of *Coot Club* and *The Big Six*, it turned to Hunter's – and used the yard itself to stand in for 'Rodley's' boatyard.

But the journey to its present 'time capsule' status has not been straightforward or easy. Following Percy's death in 1964, keeping the business going became an uphill struggle for his sons Cyril and Stanley, and it was put up for sale in 1966.

Sailing base for county schools

Mercifully, at about the same time, Norfolk County Council decided to create a sailing base, and its Education Authority took over the yard. For the next three decades, it provided sailing experience for the county's school children, while in the summer holidays, continuing to welcome the various youth groups that had been regular customers.

However, in 1995, the cash-strapped council decided to dispose of, and probably disperse, the yard and its boats. The move provoked outrage in the county, and funds – around £300,000 – were raised to save it, and a charitable trust, the Norfolk Heritage



Fleet Trust, was created to take over and run the yard and its fleet of historic hire boats.

It was the culmination of a huge campaign to save the yard and the fleet of yachts from coming under the auctioneer's hammer. However, not many people realise that this was the second time there had been a public campaign to ensure that

Hunter's Yard survived in its entirety. The first occasion had been in the early 1980s when Norfolk County Council found itself having to reassess its spending priorities and two of its sites – Hunter's Yard and the How Hill nature reserve – found themselves facing closure. A campaign was launched to save the yard and succeeded. As a result it was How Hill which the County surrendered to the How Hill Trust in 1983.

Lottery Fund steps in

The 1995 campaign to save the yards was led by the Eastern Daily Press and donations came flooding in – but would they be enough? The newly-created trust under its chairman, Bryan Read, approached the Lottery Fund, applying for between £100,000 and £125,000. But when representatives of the Lottery came down to inspect the Yard they were so impressed by what they found at the end of this little road in the heart of Broadland that at the end of the visit they told Bryan that the application was inadequate, and recommended the trust apply for the whole cost of purchasing the yard from the County.

With the enhanced Lottery Grant and the donations already made, Hunter's Yard was saved and a surplus was placed on reserve for the future. So the Trust was born, and the fleet of varnished boats survived to sail the waters they had been built for – but with a new clientele who had always wanted the chance to sail a 2-berth Hustler, a 3-berth Wood of one of the three 4-berth Lullaby class.

While the yard had been owned by the County only a very few private holiday makers had been

able to hire the boats, and many sailors thought they couldn't hire them because they 'belonged to Education Department' but now anyone could hire one. The first twenty years of the Trust went swimmingly, the groups still came year in year out, the number of families and individuals renting a single yacht increased and all went well.

As the century drew to a close and a new one dawned the Trust celebrated by starting to build another Hunter boat – the first new yacht for over 50 years. *Lucent* joined her 4-berth sisters, *Lullaby*, *Luna* and *Lustre* early in the new century.

Back in the late 1900s the bulk of the yard's income had come from group hires – school parties, adult groups and youth organisations. They would return year on year, hire the same boats, sail for a week and then go home having booked their boats for the same week the following year. But after around 20 years, explains the trust's current chairman Neville Khambatta, a long-time member of TARS, "We began to notice a change. The groups were getting smaller, then one or two stopped coming. No matter, there were plenty of families, the pattern of hire changed – more short breaks, long weekends – but all was still well."

The 'silent quants'

"This was also the time when we began to fit electric engines to the hire fleet. Silent quants some call them! Whatever you think about fitting engines to such unique boats, they are silent, there is no vibration and they do make it both easier and safer to pass under the bridges.

"Our first chairman had retired a few years before Covid struck and everything changed overnight. Unfortunately at the same time the new chairman had to resign for health reasons and," explains Neville, "I found myself in charge of a Trust with a dyke full of yachts which were not allowed to sail and customers who weren't allowed to travel!

"It has been said that there are no problems, only solutions... When the Trust had come into being they had created 'The Friends of the Hunter Fleet' and it was one of the Friends who came up with the first

solution. A 'Just Giving' page was started. By the end of lockdown Hunter's yard had received over £30,000 in donations from friends, customers and well-wishers.

"The other 'solution' came from the National Heritage Lottery Fund which created a resilience fund for Heritage charities to apply for. These two funds brought us out the other side of Covid and lockdowns, able to continue doing what Hunter's has always done... hire yachts to sail the Broads.

"There were still problems, the groups have declined still further, but last year saw 400 Norfolk school children coming back – just for a day, but coming to sail on their Broads, to discover what is in their back yard and this year will see even more primary school children experience sailing in the yard's half-deckers thanks to the generosity

of four local charities and the Heritage Lottery Fund who have given us grants to make it happen.

"When The BBC filmed *Coot Club* and *The Big Six* using *Lullaby* as the *Teasel*, one of our dinghies became *Titmouse* for the film. She was restored by one of our boatbuilders a while ago but was rather lonely, a little white dinghy in a yard full of varnished yachts... until last year when she was joined by her cousins from another film, *Swallow* and *Amazon*. "I like to think that she isn't on her lonesome any more, especially when *Swallow* and *Amazon* have had time to get back to being as slick and span as *Titmouse* is."

And it turns out Neville's own boat has a Coot Club connection too – it's one of the "White Boats", Yare and Bure One-Designs like *Flash*, owned by Mr Farland and raced by Port and Starboard.

Unique survival

"Hunter's yard is a unique survival on the Broads and on the British yachting scene," says Neville, "something we hold in trust for future generations."

For *Swallow* and *Amazon*, Hunter's Yard, with its expertise in traditional wooden boatbuilding (a rare, even endangered craft these days) plus hire-fleet experience, working with young people and a strong Ransome link, could hardly be a better home.



SUSIE

by herself

If Susie and Di were the grown-up Amazon Pirates, there's no doubt which one was Nancy Blackett



Susie Cattley - always the more extrovert half of the Susie and Di duo, wrote an autobiographical account when she joined Soroptomist International. She gave it to Jill Lane of TARS South-West; here, slightly edited, it is.

The subversive influence

After the trauma of the war years, my parents decided to drop out, buy an old farm and start a market garden in Devon. In 1947 we moved from Hampshire to Kingston, (near Kingsbridge) I went to a lovely mixed infants village school and was able to run a bit wild.

I was sent to my older sisters' girls' boarding school when I was 10, but got expelled for being a 'subversive influence'. I left under a cloud from my next boarding school quite swiftly too. So I ended up being educated as a boarder at Dartington, a co-educational 'progressive' school near Totnes, which I loved. I played the double bass in the jazz band, and rode my bicycle around a lot.

I left at 16, messed about in an Art school for a few months, then worked as an Au Pair in Zurich for six months, and did a secretarial course at the Queen's Secretarial College for Gentlewomen, in Kensington!

My first proper job was working as an assistant house mistress at The Magdalen Home for Penitent Prostitutes, a Home Office Classifying School in Streatham, which was for assessing and incarcerating delinquent adolescent girls who were straight from the Courts before starting a four year Approved School Order. My CV has always looked a bit odd!

A career in Social Work

Having decided on a career in social work I had to get professional training and went to Trinity College, Dublin, followed by Exeter university. In 1965 I was appointed as a Child Care Officer in Reading,

working in a deprived area with young immigrants, mainly single parents with no family support.

In 1967 I was seconded to the London School of Economics for a professional course in Child Care, followed by a year gaining experience in London's East End, and training in Family Group Therapy.

I transferred to Medical Social Work after the introduction of changes from more specialist to generic Social Services, and worked at the Royal Free Hospital in London. After about a year I developed an autoimmune disease (Polymyositis) which kept me either hospitalised and/or off work for most of the next two years.

In 1974 I was appointed locum Senior Social Worker at Freedom Fields Hospital, Plymouth and became a Team Leader in the Paediatric, Maternity and Gynae units and others, creating a cost-effective support service preventing the need for further admissions. What I did was called 'Crisis intervention' at the time. I was also a field work teacher, training social work students and holding support sessions for the staff, who found the work stressful and emotionally draining.

In 1987 my employers decided to reorganise and restructure, and wiped out my post throughout the county. Within a very few years the Hospital Social Work Department was effectively dispersed. I swiftly decided to take early retirement when it was offered.

Retrained for woodworking

Thanks to Mrs Thatcher, I got retrained with woodworking skills to become an Antique Furniture Restorer. I was sent on various cabinet-making courses and given a £200 grant to buy tools. After a year of 'apprenticeship' to a delightful furniture restorer in Noss Mayo, I was helped to set up my own small business, which I thoroughly enjoyed.

A few years later because of the sometimes heavy manual work involved, and the damage it caused to

my lungs, I had health problems again. I gave up the business, played more golf, and messed about in boats. My elderly parents had moved next door, and needed a lot more help, too.

Di Stockwell had also retired from her hospital post in 1987. We both joined SI (Soroptimists International) Plymouth and District. Di sold her house in Elburton and bought a half share of my house, Oyster Quay. We pooled our pensions.

The arrival of Nellie

With the lump sums which we both got on our retirement from public service, we designed a custom-made motor caravan – called Nellie the Elephant, because we had said our final good bye to the Hospital Circus). We had it fitted out for us by a redundant joiner/ boat builder from Marine Projects, with a teak and holly laid deck and light oak units. So our original Nellie was more of a posh yacht, really, and we had 22 years of pleasure with her. We have (so far) had enough capital between us to enjoy our retirement. We have trundled extensively throughout the Continent as well as GB and Ireland.

We are both active members of the Arthur Ransome Society and get involved in participating and often helping to organise some very enjoyable, if sometimes a bit quirky, events, which take place all over England, Wales and Scotland. We have met some amazing and interesting people through TARS and made some very good friends over the years. We recently ‘upsized’ spreading into my mother’s house following her death in 2009.

I was treated for breast cancer in the same year. Di managed to break her neck in October 2011, but thanks to the lift which was installed by my parents, and with the help and support we have had from our lovely Soroptimist friends we are not thinking of going into a Residential Home quite yet!



Members of Soroptimist International pictured at Calstock recently.

Group launches fundraising campaign

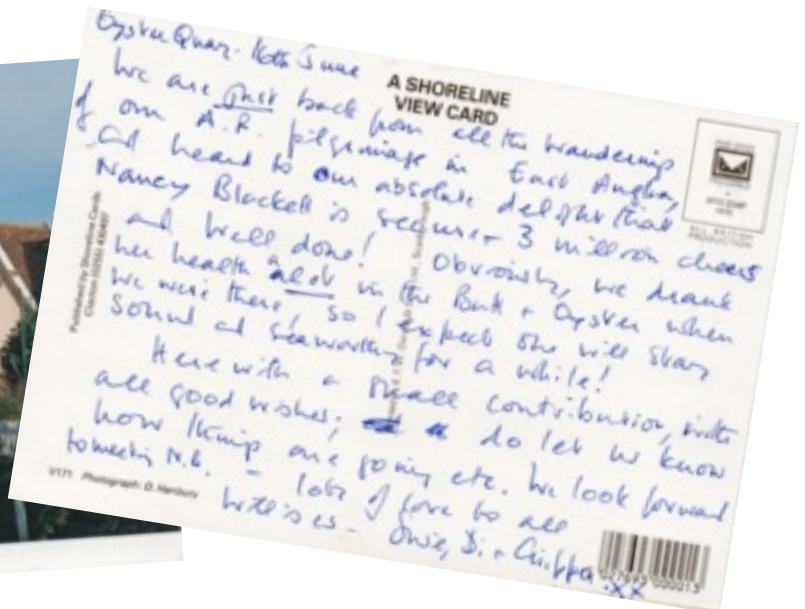
Susie, far left, and Di, beside her, at the launch of a Soroptimist International fundraising campaign in aid of Sail4Cancer on the Tamar in 2006. The boat is Susie’s yacht *Louisa*.

Jill Lane writes “*Louisa* is about 15ft, clinker build in Looe around 1935. She has the original Stuart Turner engine, a mast and tan sails - and a special gin and tonic glass holder constructed by Susie”. *Louisa* is just one of several of Susie’s boats she asked to store in the Lanes’ barn.

In the next Signals: Di’s story. And if anyone has any photos featuring Susie and/or Di – and especially *Nellie*, please send them in!

A Postcard from Pin Mill

Peter Willis writes: I came across this while tidying a drawer very recently. It dates from 1997, just after the TARS IAGM on the Broads where I’d been able to announce that the £25,000 target to buy *Nancy Blackett* had been achieved.



Celebrating at the Cinema Museum

SWALLOWS AND AMAZONS

50 years on from the first screening

The 50th anniversary of the premiere of Claude Watham's *Swallows and Amazons* was celebrated with style and enthusiasm at the Cinema Museum in London on 6 April – commemorating its Royal Gala Shaftesbury Avenue premiere on 4 April 1974.

Members of the cast were joined by an audience full of young fans, some dressed as their favourite characters – red-hatted Amazons and a Titty with a green parrot on her shoulder.

The gala screening was preceded with a letter from Virginia McKenna (Mother), read by Sophie Neville who played Titty:

“It is almost impossible to believe that it is the 50th Anniversary of ‘Swallows and Amazons’. I am really sorry I cannot be with you but I am here in spirit. For anyone who feels downhearted by the troubles in our present-day world, there can be no better cure than to be here this afternoon watching this delightful film set in such beautiful scenery. In a few moments you will be transported to an earlier time and a different place. You cannot but enjoy this very special film.”

Then, says Sophie, “We watched StudioCanal’s remastered version of the movie on the big screen.



The Lakeland mountains looked magnificent and the detail amazing. Broadcaster and writer Brian Sibley then interviewed the cast on how we’d got the parts, what impact the film had on our lives and what we’d spent our earnings on.

“The answers proved hilarious. It was lovely to hear from Jane Grendon, Sten’s mum, who had travelled from Gloucestershire to be our official chaperone. She pointed out how very hard we had worked all that time ago. Gareth Tandy, who had worked on the crew as Third Assistant Director told me, ‘I’d totally forgotten that I played one of the robbers!’

“There was then time for fans to get books, cards and film posters signed in the age-old tradition. Many thanks go to Brian, Lee Pressman and other volunteers of the Cinema Museum who made it all possible. It was an amazing day.”

And one that bodes well as a preview of TARS’ own two-day celebrations of the film at Windermere Jetty in June - see page 14 for details.



Above:
Brian Sibley interviews
the cast and crew on-stage

Left:
Cast and crew; from left:
Simon West (John),
Suzanna Hamilton (Susan),
Sophie Neville (Titty), Sten
Grendon (Roger), Kit
Seymour (Nancy), Jane
Grendon (Sten’s mother
and on-set chaperone),
Peter Robb-King (with
beard, make-up) and David
Wood (screenwriter) *photos
by Lee Pressman of the
Cinema Museum*

LITERARY WEEKEND

Harro-great!

Aunts to Avant-garde (and Alan Bennett)
in the GA's home town, *reports Peter Willis*

Paul Crisp started us off on Friday evening with a round-up of aunts, great and small, literary and real, including one who was younger than her own nephew.

Saturday started, so to speak, in a library in Southsea, which is where a young Michelle Magorian first found the Ransome books. It led to a career as a children's author (She's best-known for *Goodnight Mr Tom*) who was not afraid to borrow his 'stick-people' semaphorists on one occasion.

'I wish it was Leeds'

Sadly the next speaker, Robert Twigger of *36 Islands*, was unable to appear – in hospital with pancreatitis. So Peter Wright stepped in: a self-declared 'proud Yorkshireman' from the Leeds suburb of Headingley, he made the most of being on home turf, declaring his admiration of fellow local Alan Bennett and recalling Ransome's admission "I wish it was Leeds rather than Durham that had given me the Degree".

After the coffee break, photographer Jon Sparks entranced us with images of dramatic landscapes, and tales of some of the risks linked to them.

Over lunchtime I ran into John Sergeant and his wife Mary, and discovered he too was a fan of Alan Bennett, and had worked with him filming for TV in this very hotel.

Saturday afternoons at Literary Weekends are traditionally free for exploring and I went in search of examples of the Great Aunt's "tall, narrow house" (not hard, there are plenty of them) and secondhand bookshops (ditto).

The running drama of this weekend concerned the fate of our Japanese visitor Sayoko Tasumi.

Her journey had been interrupted by the floods at Dubai Airport. Eventually, after being diverted to Gatwick from Manchester Airport and losing all track of her luggage she arrived 20 minutes before the start of the Gala Dinner.

Captain Flint boards

The after-dinner speaker was of course our new President John Sergeant. His title was 'Captain Flint Climbs Aboard', but he suggested any comparison "would be arrogant to say the least". Not really – James Turner travelled the world in search of valuable minerals (mostly unsuccessfully) while John has enjoyed a distinguished globe-trotting career as a news reporter (a bit like AR).

Sunday papers

The Sunday morning programme gave us two splendid pieces of proper literary research. A paper from Kirsty Nichol Findlay made the case for Ransome as an Avant-Garde writer alongside other 1930s luminaries – it's the subject of her forthcoming Amazon Publications book.

Then Jim Ring, challenging both the assertions implicit in describing 'The Twelve' as "a series of children's books." Not a series, but a collection of novels in different genres, including travelogue and detective story, and "The actual age of the reader doesn't seem to matter," said AR. As for writing for children, he declared "I never do it".

And finally, it takes some skill to announce "a light-hearted look at Cryptosporidium" and get away with it, but Rachel Chalmers' cheery coverage of the health hazards of fresh milk, not to mention kittens, managed it.



From the top: Peter Wright (left) with new President John Sergeant at the dinner; Jon Sparks; Michelle Magorian with son George; Jon Sparks; Kirsty Nicol Findlay; Jim Ring, and Rachel Chalmers

Telegrams, semaphore and more

Back in January **Paul Thomas** posted some thoughts on communications technology on the Arthur Ransome Group facebook site – it generate a long thread of over 50 contributions. We asked **Lesley Wareing** to provide a summary for *Signals*, including the the ever-present issue of how mobile phones might or might not have changed things

‘Native’ communications technology in ‘The Twelve’ – mainly telephones and telegrams – tended to be used by or under the supervision of adults, whereas the children themselves tended to keep in touch with improvised low-tech visual and aural methods – not requiring any power source other than arms and legs or pigeon wings – often with great imagination and inventiveness. Ransome used all these various methods to drive along the plots – and sometimes to illustrate the quirks of the different characters.



nine days. This would account for that two-week time lag between the not-yet Swallows writing and then receiving their father's reply. Cmdr Walker really had to respond by telegram, otherwise the children’s holiday would have been over before his reply arrived. He splashed out on nine words though – “BETTER

DROWNED THAN DUFFERS IF NOT DUFFERS WON’T DROWN”, when – as Roger points out – one would have done.

Payment was per word used, which generated an economic form of language which Ransome understood well, from his Russian days. Sending a telegram involved a trip to the Post Office, and the message had to be transcribed onto a PO form.

The Facebook discussion debunked the idea that the stories would necessarily have been very different – or not worked at all – had mobile phones been available. For one thing, mobile phone signals can be pretty patchy in the Lake District and, given their track record with torch batteries, the children would probably have been very bad at keeping their phones charged up – other than Susan, though even she would have needed access to a reliable power supply. So even if mobile phones had been available, they might still have become deprived of them and forced to find other ways of communicating.

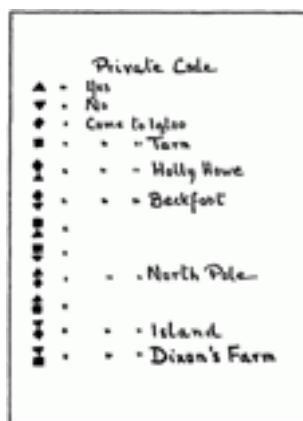
By cable, code and bicycle

A telegram from Malta would have been sent by Morse code via a submarine cable, decoded, then transcribed onto a form and delivered to Holly Howe by a postman on a bicycle. By 1930, teleprinters were beginning to supersede Morse, in which case the teleprinter tape would be pasted to the telegram form and whilst there might be slight delays in transmission, it is likely that in most cases a message could be received and replied to within a day.

Telegrams, telephones and wireless messages were the technology of the day, though even by the 1930s, telegrams were declining due to the increased availability and immediacy of telephones.

In WD the composition and despatch of telegrams from Flushing is described in quite some detail. In CC Tom Dudgeon receives a telegram at the Lowestoft Harbour Master’s Office and, in response, he and the twins used the phone to call home to Horning to reassure their worried grown-ups.

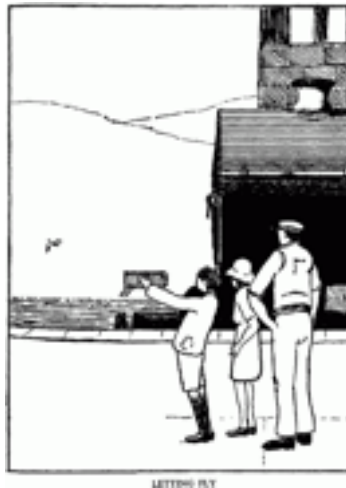
It all starts with a telegram, of course, sent all the way from Malta, and probably the only practical option open to Cmdr Walker. His children had written to him at the start of their Lake District holiday but, according to Paul Thomas’ research, even if Mrs Walker had paid 6d to use the newly introduced air mail service to Malta (started in 1928), it would probably still have taken a minimum of two to three days for the letters to reach Malta.



More likely they would have used surface mail -i.e. ship – and even today the fastest ship to Malta takes

John and Susan use a public telephone in a grocer’s shop to communicate with their parents in London. Some private houses had telephones which were mainly used by adults for essential local calls – children didn’t generally get to use the phone to chat to their friends. Calls

were expensive and trunk calls even more so. There was a telephone at Beckfoot which was vital for summoning Colonel Jolys and his fire-fighters in PP. It was also the means by which the Great Aunt announced her imminent arrival at the start of PM which precipitated Nancy into hiding the D's in the Dogs' Home and set the whole farce-like action of the book in train. It also enabled a whole series of telegrams to be fired off by Cdr Walker from Alma Cottage which took the Amazons down to Essex.



literally saved them from being rammed, sunk and drowned.

Patterans were used by Titty in SA, SD and SW though not with much success. Blazes were cut to mark the way in SA and in PD. Leading lights, owl hoots and duck quacks were used to good effect.

Later in the series we come across Miss Lee's musical system, and while we are not given details, it could have been used for any number of codes, cyphers or languages over short distances by trained operators.

Other means of signalling in use (by natives as well) at the time included Morse, semaphore and pigeon post. These could transmit complex messages but with obvious limitations. The children used all three methods to great advantage.

Peggy and Nancy were extremely fast transmitters but it took Nancy to produce those wonderful dancing pin-people, semaphoring wildly, full of energy and dynamism – somehow so like poor Nancy when she was her normal self and not imprisoned by mumps in her sickroom. Encoding a semaphore message in a picture transmitted by hand-delivered note (also used in ML) was really ingenious – as was delivering a hand-written message hidden in the shaft of an arrow shot from the Beckfoot launch.

Optical telegraph

Then there was John and Dick's ingenious optical telegraph system in WH which could be used for a limited range of pre-determined messages. Limited but still good enough to communicate over a considerable distance and save precious time each day.

Using homing pigeons to report on progress and safety in PP secured parental permission for remote camping was concerned. Dramatically, Sappho got through with the vital message about the wildfire on High Topps, prompting the phone call to Colonel Jolys and the Tyson farm was saved.

Messages were sent by less sophisticated methods: hand-written notes, smoke signals in SD, flags in WH (and a key with a cryptic label in a tobacco tin) – and in PM, a lawnmower was used to cut a message in the grass, visible (allegedly!) to viewers on the hill, but not to the GA at ground level. The Walker children's inspired use of their red Woolworth's plates to make a red signal light in WD

Wireless telegraphy – common on passenger ships at the time – is lacking on *Wild Cat* on account of its cost, bulk and power requirements. In part this lack of technology, which may have led to different outcomes, drives the plots in PD and ML.

Miscommunications

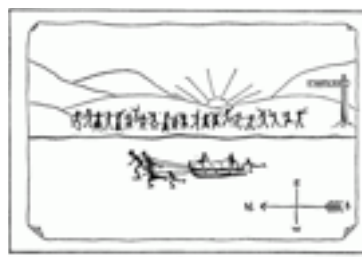
Lack of communication and miscommunication were crucially important at various points in the books. The start of SD would have been different altogether if Mrs Blackett had simply sent a written note to Mrs Walker c/o Mrs Jackson at Holly Howe to explain that her daughters would be unable to camp on Wild Cat Island while the Great Aunt was visiting Beckfoot. Captain's Flint's cryptic message about Timothy in PP led to all sorts of misunderstandings and much amusement.

Similarly Timothy's own note left on the houseboat door (intended for the D's but read by a puzzled Great Aunt): "Make yourselves at home till I get back. Timothy".

In WH, the misunderstanding over the Beckfoot flag was important not only to the plot but also to the fleshing out of character. How typical of methodical Dick to have carefully written down in his notebook: "Flag at Beckfoot = start for Pole"; how typical of careless, gung-ho Nancy that she should have forgotten all about it.

And how typical also that she readily admitted her mistake and absolved Dick of any blame.

As Paul Thomas summarised, Ransome used technology – one of the few things that date the stories to the 1930s – much as a modern author might, both to drive plots and create interesting situations. Lack of communication was likewise used by in several plot devices throughout the books to create confusion, misunderstandings and adventure.





Everything is in place to celebrate the
**50th anniversary of the
1974 *Swallows and Amazons* Film**
at Windermere Jetty, 29th & 30th June 2024.

**You won't want to miss this very special FREE fun family weekend,
featuring the cast, the boats and much more**

The Cast: A reunion of the original cast: We're pleased to announce the vast majority of the cast will attend. **Come and meet Susan, Titty, Nancy, John and Roger.** Yes, Suzanna Hamilton, Sophie Neville, Kit Seymour, Simon West and Sten Grendon have all accepted our invitations to attend, as have several other cast and crew members. This is a once in a lifetime opportunity to meet and say hello to these people who mean so much to us. **Please note the main day for meeting the cast will be Saturday.**

Junior TARS – why not come dressed as your favourite Swallows and Amazons character!

The Boats: Swallow and Amazon - the actual boats used in the film – now owned by TARS: See **Swallow** up close and ashore (in mid-restoration), and **Amazon** afloat. In addition, *Titmouse* from the BBC's *Coot Club* and *The Big Six* will be there, along with people from Hunter's Yard, responsible for all three restorations.

And the original Amazon - the Altounyan family's *Mavis*, which inspired Ransome's original story, is hoped to be able to come from the **Ruskin Museum** in Coniston.

Our President **John Sergeant** will also be attending.

The activities planned for the weekend, 10am-5pm each day, include:

Screenings of the film (of course!) – several during the weekend, taking place indoors.

Talks by **Sophie Neville** on the making of the film and **Peter Wright** on Arthur Ransome and how *Swallows and Amazons* came to be written.

A specially written show/folk concert by **The Boat Band** (see right) on a Ransome/S&A theme.

Roving singers will also tour the site, performing songs by **Neil Hannon** from the 2010 *Swallows and Amazons* stage adaptation

Exhibitions and memorabilia on Ransome and the film.

A special exhibition and artwork from **Karen Babayan** on the **Swallows and Armenians** theme.

A recreation of the **Swallows' camp on Wild Cat Island** will be set up by our old friend **Rob Boden**



There will be Jigsaws, Picture colouring and Knot-tying fun for children (and young at hearts).

(Due to production issues the advertised performance of the stage play has been postponed until 2025)

**All of this is absolutely free – to TARS and the public alike – no need to book. Just turn up!
Upon arrival, pick up your copy of the full timetabled programme!**

In addition the Windermere Jetty museum will be open as usual (with paid entry) where you can see *Coch-y-Bonddhu*, as well as the boats used in the other (2016) film and a selection of Ransome memorabilia as well as their impressive collection of boats and exhibits.

Windermere Jetty will also be offering trips on their steam launch **Osprey** which dates from 1902 and had a role in the 1974 film.

Directions: Windermere Jetty, Rayrigg Road LA23 1BN, open 10am-5pm <https://lakelandarts.org.uk/windermere-jetty-museum/> Parking is free if you pay to go into the museum; otherwise charges apply

If you want to venture further afield you could take a trip on the lake on **M.V.Tern** (built 1891), visit the **Lakeside and Haverthwaite Railway**, both seen in the film, or take a *Swallows and Amazons* afternoon tea at the prestigious **Langdale Chase Hotel** (where Virginia McKenna stayed during the filming).

Alongside our event, a **Wooden Boat Gathering** will be taking place, with wooden boats of all types and ages present, on the theme 'Ensuring the future for boats made of wood'. (organised by The Wooden Boatbuilders Trade Association: www.woodenboatgathering.co.uk)





The Master at Work

Here at Amazon Publications, we like to cater for all Tars be they fans of AR, the whole man or solely the *S & A* series – and everyone in between.

Our offering for 2025 is definitely for everyone but perhaps even more so for the *S & A* series fans.

The public AR Facebook site, which is so lively and popular, is easily more than 90% concerned with the *S & A* series and with children's literature generally.

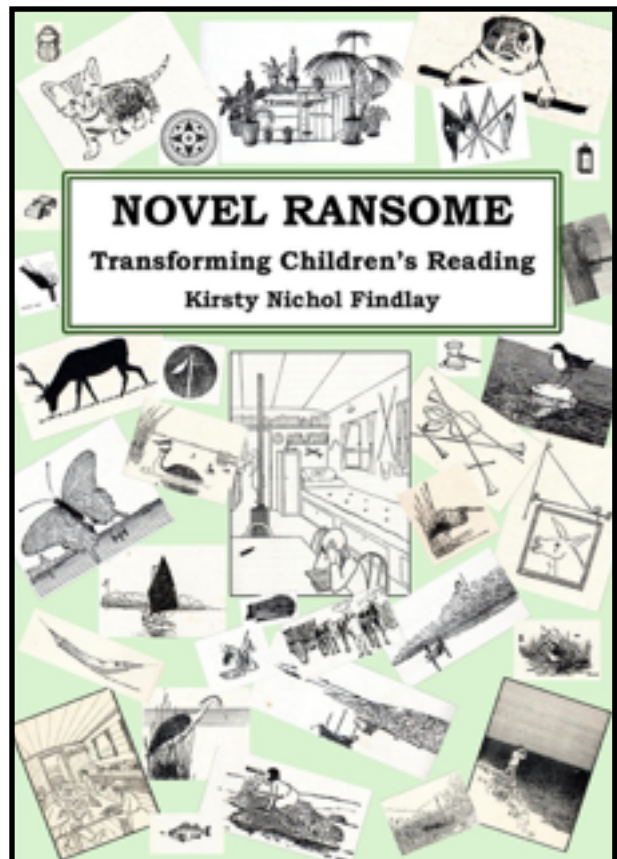
Novel Ransome: Transforming Children's Reading by Kirsty Nichol Findlay, should certainly appeal to most of you.

Kirsty will be telling us how (and why) AR was completely different and unique as a children's writer **and still is**.

- How he developed a concept of a story being more than words.
- How he set new standards for children's reading.
- His handling of time and awareness of time within the novels.
- His acute awareness of shaping story

And that's less than the half of it. Literally. More tastes in future *Signals*.

Look carefully at the front cover. Each illustration is relevant. And yes, many are from chapter endings.



Novel Ransome will be available for subscription in 2025.



For a list of those Amazon Publications still in stock (including our 2024 book *Red Skies*) see page 38.

TARS Regional Gateway

Scotland All North of the Border

<i>Chair</i>	Kirstie Taylor	0131 664 3947	28 Orchardhead Road Edinburgh EH16 6HN
<i>Secretary</i>	Eric Gotts		ericgotts47@gmail.com
<i>Treasurer</i>	Sandy Allan	07380 361486	sandy.allan35@btinternet.com
<i>Editor</i>	Linda Hendry		lochanhead@gmail.com
<i>Regional Rep. Trustee</i>	Sandy Allan		
<i>Committee</i>	Anne Allan		

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

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

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<i>Chair</i>	Julian Blue	07856 262042	julesbluerachel@btinternet.com
<i>Secretary</i>	Paul Green	01654 791256	paul-midstars@gmx.co.uk
<i>Treasurer</i>	Mike Glover	01432 378205	glovermichael7652@gmail.com
<i>Editor</i>	Jane Wilson	01933 223672	jane.pippinfort@googlemail.com
<i>Regional Rep. Trustee</i>			
<i>Committee</i>	Rachel Blue, Rachel Chalmers, David Hambleton, Ruth Mashiter, Sarah Samuel		

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

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

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

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

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

<i>Chair</i>	Susan Gouldbourne	01271 831520	susan@ttars.co.uk
<i>Secretary</i>	Barbara Flower	01963 350199	souwesters@gmail.com
<i>Treasurer</i>	Elizabeth Crisp		
<i>Editor</i>	Barbara Flower		
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TARS Scotland

News from the Gaels

A Weekend in the Real Pictland, 22/23 June 2024

The Picts (so named by the Romans in the third century C.E.) lived in much of Scotland north of the Forth and Clyde in the early middle ages. Their ancestors are thought to have built the brochs, which were certainly used in the Christian era by the Picts (those who have visited the Isle of Lewis in search of GN? will recall the large broch there). Later they were forced into east Scotland as the Scots from the kingdom of Dalriada in modern Argyll moved east. Eventually the two “tribes” became effectively one (mainly peacefully through inter-marriage), and together created the kingdom of Alba (Scotland).

Pictish Christianity drew on the traditions of both Iona and Northumbria, and the Picts established numerous monasteries in eastern Scotland, two of which were in Tarbat, near Portmahomack in Easter Ross, and in Rosemarkie on the Black Isle. The Pictish settlement at Tarbat was excavated as recently as in the 1990s; there is much of interest to see there, and in the neighbouring museum. The monastery in Rosemarkie has been built over many years ago, but relics of it can be seen in the Groam House museum in the village. There are also numerous Pictish stones, etc., all over the countryside, especially running south from Portmahomack towards Nigg.

Right: The Groam House Museum, Rosemarie
www.groamhouse.org.uk



Travel and accommodation

This is being organised by Chris Birt, Please contact Chris directly (as soon as possible!) to discuss detailed arrangements: Email: christopher.birt75@gmail.com or phone: 01997-420013 or 07768-267863

It is suggested that those travelling from the south should reach Tain, in Easter Ross, on Friday evening, 21st June, by train (changing at Inverness) or air (to Inverness Airport from other parts of the UK) or by car. Chris will make appropriate hotel reservations for that night in Tain.

On Saturday 22nd we would travel by car (hoping that there are enough cars amongst us!) the short distance to the Tarbat Discovery Centre. We would obtain lunch locally, and later proceed towards the ferry across the Cromarty Firth, from Nigg to Cromarty, stopping at various appropriate locations on the way. We would hope to stay that night in the Royal Hotel in Cromarty, unless it is completely booked up before we are ready to make reservations. The local alternatives are rather expensive! Chris will make the necessary hotel reservations, on the basis that each member of the group will pay their own way as they go.

On Sunday 23rd we would visit the Groam House museum in Rosemarkie; in the afternoon there could be a short cruise on Loch Ness, unless southerners want to travel south that day. For those wishing to travel south on Monday 24th June, after a Loch Ness cruise the afternoon before, hotel accommodation in Inverness can be arranged.

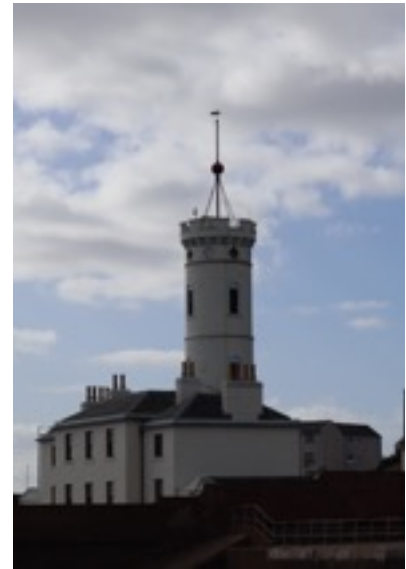
Signal Tower and Bell Rock Lighthouse Expedition

TARS Scotland are arranging a day trip on SATURDAY 14th SEPTEMBER to Arbroath's Signal Tower Museum – a real life “signalling to Mars” installation from 1813 plus an afternoon boat trip to the offshore Bell Rock Lighthouse

Meeting at the Museum (photo, right) at 10:30am, then having explored the accessible Museum in the morning, the fit and vertigo-free can climb the dramatic spiral staircase and visit the Tower Room on a one hour guided tour and find out how Light Keepers at the Signal Tower shore station communicated with the Bell Rock Lighthouse 11 miles out to sea before radio.

Museum entry is free of charge but there is a £7 per adult cost for the guided tour (children £5).

Then, after Lunch, the “crème de la crème” of the day – a boat trip out to see the Bell Rock Lighthouse itself (below, left) aboard Inchcape Marine Services ULTIMATE PREDATOR. The boat trip will be £30 a head based on 12 passengers. The boat is easily accessible (one step) from the pontoon jetty. Assemble at Arbroath Harbour at 1:30pm after lunch for sailing at 2pm. The round trip



takes approx three hours, including a close up cruise along past Auchmithie harbour and the Arbroath cliffs & caves on the return journey back to Arbroath.



Plan B: Arts and Crafts Hospitalfield House

(We are investigating a Plan B in case sea conditions do not permit the boat trip and to cater for those who do not mean to go to sea. A visit to Hospitalfield House is one possibility, a stunning early Arts & Crafts Scottish Baronial country house, left in trust in 1890 to support artists. There are exhibitions, walks, artists in residence, and a cafe.)

Add a day and explore Arbroath?

If enough people are interested in a two day visit to Arbroath, there are various possibilities for Day Two including visits to the **St Vigean's Pictish Stones & Museum** and to **Arbroath**

Abbey (these are free to members of Historic Scotland) and to Keptie Pond to see coots, swans and moorhens. A guided tour of our new local **Whisky, Gin & Vodka Distillery** is also a possibility at around £25 a head depending on tour.

Expressions of interest please by 30th June to Sandy & Anne Allan who will arrange to send out a Booking Form and collect the necessary fees.

9 Flairs Avenue, Arbroath, Angus DD11 5DY, Tel: 07380 361 486 (Sandy) : 07500 803 086 (Anne)
sandy.allan35@btinternet.com / anne.allan35@btinternet.com



Sou'westers and Seaboats

News from the South-West Region

SIMON DELL'S ZOOM TALK ON THE TAVISTOCK CANAL 22nd October



There are much longer canals than this one, which runs for only four and a half miles from the River Tavy in Tavistock to the River Tamar at Morwellham, but it is of interest to Pigeon Post fans as its main purpose was to export the copper that was mined locally.

Construction started in 1803, was completed in 1817 and included one and a half miles of tunnel. By the 1840s it had started to decline, but commercial activity carried on until the 1850s and the advent of the railways. For the 200th anniversary in 2017 short pieces of poetry written

by local children and others were installed on copper plaques along the canal – sadly these were later stolen, but have now been replaced on wood.

Simon showed lovely pictures of the canal and told us about the barges that were used. These were designed to carry 8 tons and had a very shallow draught. They didn't really have a bow and stern because the rudder could go on either end, so they didn't have to turn round.

The canal water is still used to produce hydro-electric power from plants built in the 1930s at Morwellham and Mary Tavy.

Many thanks to Simon for a very interesting talk, enjoyed by twelve of us including a couple from other regions, who are always very welcome.

Barbara

DIANA'S ZOOM QUIZ 25th November

Question: How well do you know *The Picts and The Martyrs*? Answer: In SW's quiz based on the book, not well enough! Generally held to be AR's most humorous book, its darker side quickly emerged in Diana Wright's choice of questions. For example, while some were easy (e.g. Col Joly's telephone number, and the loan of Jacky's frying pan), others were more Ximenean – *What was the make of the lawnmower?* One madly tries to recall pre-war manufacturers other than Ransome (Hayter? No, 1946!) in about ten seconds, only to learn that we are not told in the book – aargh!!! Can you think of a question to which the answer is twenty-seven *and a half* minutes to twelve? Did DW sharpen her teeth on

Torquemada? The Dick Callum Cup is a mere stroll in the park by comparison. Well done, Diana!

P.S. Question - what are the possible links between AR and Torquemada (not the Dominican monk of the Inquisition - nobody expects the Spanish Inquisition in TARS...as yet!)? Also, his successors Ximenes and Custos? **Paul Crisp**

SW TARS ZOOM AGM – 20th January

The meeting was well attended with 13 members joining in. Nora Fawcett had resigned from the committee last year when she moved back to the northern region so we were looking for a new member. Naomi Hemingway kindly agreed to step in to the breach. The rest of the committee were re-elected by the members. We had an interesting members forum after the AGM. **Susan**

AR'S BIRTHDAY LUNCH – 28th January

The January weather was kind so SW members from the north, east and south of the region gathered at Elizabeth and Paul Crisp's home near Okehampton to celebrate AR's birthday. Liz had prepared a delicious cottage pie and vegetable pasta bake and others of us brought along a starter, puds and home-pressed apple juice, enjoyed by all. It was good to get together again after several Zooms. Many thanks to Liz and Paul for their hospitality. **Barbara**



ALAN KENNEDY'S TALK – CHASING THE BLUE BIRD 10th February

We were very grateful to be given a zoom talk all the way from the South of France by Alan Kennedy. He wrote *A Thoroughly Mischievous Person, The Other Arthur Ransome*; the talk referred to and illuminated Chapter 3 The Language of the Psyche, in particular focusing on The Night Sea Journey and the theme of Coming Second. He showed images of fairies and fairy tales.

The talk started with a picture of a French fairy tale *L'Oiseau Bleu* - maybe this was why AR chose the blue bird Swallow for the name of one boat. Alan later showed a risqué cover picture to a book called *Lettres a L'Amazone* by Remy de Gourmont – perhaps this is why the boat *Amazon* is called that. The Amazons, the girls, were strong and revolutionary, the red caps an allusion to the French Revolution perhaps, where similar berets were also worn. An Amazon was in the 1990s a strong muscular woman. Gourmont rejected Naturalism; it is clear from the *Swallows and Amazons* series that Arthur believed in Naturalism, all these stories are an ideal illustration of what was called Muscular Christianity, a large feature in public schools in Arthur's days as a schoolboy, getting boys out into the open air, playing sport eg rugby the sport named after the school he attended. He knew about the work of Freud and Jung, and also obviously the unconventional relationships of others for the time eg Oscar Wilde. He may have written these works on these people as he was a very hungry author, in a similar way that Fantine in *Les Misérables* was forced into prostitution to keep her child, "What can I do? It pays a debt. Ten francs may save my poor Cosette!" Ransome would no doubt have been well aware of Victor Hugo's book, he went into Russian Revolution reportage well informed.



Ransome probably attended symbolist poet Paul Fort's Tuesday lectures at the The Closerie de Lilas [The Lilac Arbour] where Hemingway wrote *The Sun Also Rises*. He informed us about the Temple to Sappho and the literary salon that he and many others attended, all in Paris, many strong women were involved in these. This was the era of women demanding suffrage. Many of the characters in the *Swallows and Amazons* series were girls or ladies in strong positions.

The second main theme of the talk was of coming second. Arthur did feel inferior to Edward Thomas, a confident university educated man, unlike himself. They shared accommodation together, he admired Thomas but Thomas referred to him as The Electrician – perhaps Ransome turned this around with Roger's like of engines. Roger was very conscious of his junior position in the group of four Swallows. Ransome struggled at Rugby, probably owing to an earlier liberal start to his education.

The Night Sea Journey is the dreamscape – I mentioned when the talk was underway that the CBeebies programme In the Night Garden starts with a ship at night and stars, the pearls featured dived for are pearls, treasures revealed in your dreams, and stars, Dick loved astronomy. I drifted off at that point a bit singing R.E.M.s Nightswimming in my mind.

There was a lot to learn and the talk was academic and well referenced, as is his book. Thank you, Alan. **Clare**

Alan has made a YouTube video of the talk and slides: so if you missed it, here is the link <https://youtu.be/nRKawqJ9b1s>

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 11th May – visit to Morwellham Quay in Devon, meeting at 10.45 am to look round, lunch and go on the 2.00 pm Mining Experience.

Saturday 15th June - 2.5 hour canal boat trip – from Bradford on Avon to Avoncliffe and back. Time tbc.

Saturday 13th July – the other three Sparkinson interviews, via Zoom.

SW TARS are inviting you to a scheduled Zoom meeting.

Topic: Sparkinsons Zoom Meeting Time: Jul 13, 2024 04:15 PM London

Join Zoom Meeting

<https://us02web.zoom.us/j/88393884616?pwd=KzVtaUh5bnF3WmxzdmVTcFZna1pmZz09>

Meeting ID: 883 9388 4616

Passcode: 688395

Sunday 1st September – Ivy walk. An amble round Bishopsteignton and Teignmouth looking at where Ivy Ransome lived. Times tbc.

EBB & FLOW

The Eastern Pages



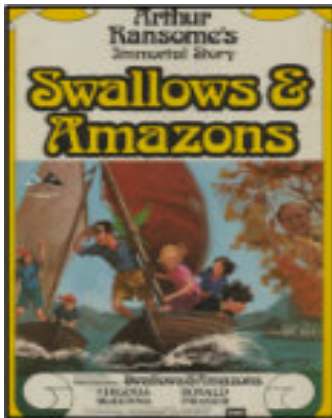
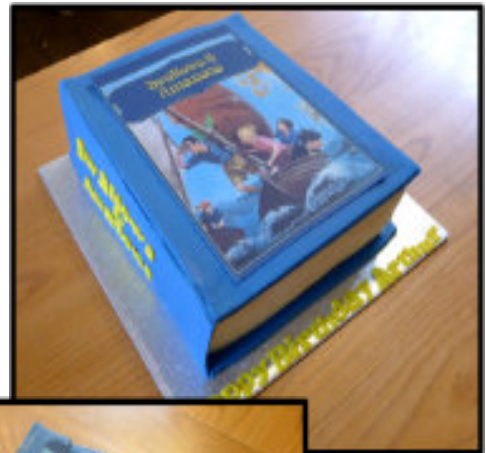
ARTHUR RANSOME'S BIRTHDAY LUNCH & AGM
Butt & Oyster, Suffolk
20th January, 2024

Back to our old haunt, the *Butt & Oyster* for our annual Arthur's Birthday Lunch and AGM. This year almost an IAGM as we had Catherine Lamont from Australia as a guest. Before the meeting began we started with a committee meeting which included ideas for this year's events, one of special interest is a film show at the Riverside Cinema in Woodbridge of the 1974 film *Swallows and Amazons* in aid of the boat's restoration at Hunter's Yard.

We could look back on last year's events as being quite successful as numbers were up since Covid, even if not by much. Hopefully this year will be even better.

The AGM was concluded without fuss followed by lunch which this year our secretary Nicholas Hinde managed to get us a free cup of coffee added to the meal.

Cake followed, this year arranged by Wendy Reis. A large iced sponge cake in the shape of a book, with a blue icing cover, white pages and yellow titling. This was followed by a film on the Walton Backwaters featuring a thumbnail appearance of our own Peter Willis which raised a cheer from the meeting. With fourteen Tars attending it was a very successful start to 2024.



EASTERN REGION PROGRAMME

MAY 25-27(Bank Holiday): Deben Rally with Old Gaffers Association, Woodbridge Boatyard, Everson's Wharf, River Wall, Woodbridge, Suffolk, IP12 4BB. *Nancy Blackett* and *Peter Duck* will be at this classic boat events celebrating the centenary of the design and build of the 'Cherub' the first of the Deben Cherubs.

JUNE 15th (Sat): North Norfolk Railway - Holt to Sheringham. Parts of this preserved line were filmed for the BBC's *Coot Club* (watch it again and see if you can spot where!) Meet at Holt Station in time for the 11.10am steam service. Ample parking at Holt's Station, £3 'donation' - much cheaper than the town centre, which is some distance away. Marc Grimston plans to be in the tea-room from about 10.30am. More details, including fares and return times, see nnrailway.co.uk.

JULY 13th: SWALLOWS and AMAZONS FILM. Woodbridge Suffolk. will be showing at the Riverside Cinema, Woodbridge as a benefit of the *Swallow* and *Amazon* restoration — one of the dinghies will be there. Book through the cinema's website www.theriverside.co.uk. More details from Peter Willis.
- Peter writes: When we last showed the film here.in 2015 as a benefit for *Nancy Blackett*, it sold out two showings.



SEPTEMBER 21st (Saturday): COMMANDER WALKER DAY: Harwich Harbour. No booking required. Assemble at Shotley Marina (IP9 1QJ) at 10.30am. Parking on site Refreshments available in the *Shipwreck* Restaraunt. 11.00am Free tour of **HMS Ganges Museum**. 12noon Ferry to Ha'penny Pier (£4.40 each way; buy on line at www.harwichharbourferry.com. Bring packed sandwiches for lunch or or use *Cafe on the Pier*. **Free Tour of Harwich** by the Harwich Society. Meet at the Ha'penny Pier visitor centre. Return Ferry to Shotley 15.50pm. Further information from **Ted & Diana Evens** (01394 388295 tedevans1936@gmail.com).

JANUARY 18th (Saturday): Arthur Ransome Birthday Lunch & AGM. Pin Mill. Lunch at the *Butt and Oyster* 12.30pm followed by a Speaker or Film Show then the AGM. Details to follow.





MUGGING UP ON OUR GEOLOGY

On Saturday 20 January, members of TARS Midlands Region met together for our AGM, at which we discussed plans for the upcoming IAGM at the Nightingale Centre, Derbyshire. It's shaping up to be a great event, so do look out for more information and booking forms! Whilst the adults tried our hardest to not be too native discussing budgets and logistics, our junior members made their very own *Winter Holiday* igloos - in a style much approved of by Roger, I'm sure, made from hot cross buns, marshmallows and lots of melted chocolate. I'm not sure which was more fun, making them or eating them, but there wasn't much left by the end of lunchtime!

Following our morning activities, we channelled our inner Callums and spent a wonderful afternoon at the Lapworth Museum of Geology. Often overlooked, in the centre of Birmingham University's campus, this museum is a true hidden gem (pun intended). We saw fossils, dinosaur bones, wonderful examples of minerals, crystals and hundreds of types of rock. We shared our own personal stories of experiencing earthquakes, visits to volcanoes and every one of us went away having learned something new. My personal favourite was the ship's log written by Captain W J Watson of the Irish ship, *Charles Bal*, of the eruption of Krakatoa in 1883. This had been turned into an audio recording and listening to his Captain's reports, with bearings and weather conditions reported meticulously along with detailed descriptions of the sailors' experiences, I felt like I was listening to Captain Flint himself, or maybe the Swallows' Father, or even reading the account in a book, whilst snowed in on the *Fram*. Of one thing I am sure, Dick would have approved of such a wonderful exhibit, and indeed the whole museum. Thank you very much, Midland TARS for introducing us to such a treasure trove - we have already been inspired to go fossil hunting (with great success) and are making plans to return to the museum.

Ruth Mashiter





TWO TYPES OF WATER

The skating rink was dressed in its finest Christmas brilliance for our TARS gathering in November. Great skating fun was enjoyed all round (by the younger members). Afterwards, some of us took to warmer waters of the swimming pool and enjoyed various tag and ball games.

Jules Blue

ENJOYING CHRISTMAS CHEER

A jolly group gathered over Zoom in mid-December for some Christmas cheer and do our best to get the right answers to the quiz! With chilly weather outdoors it was lovely to stay warm at home and still be able to see TARS friends. We started with questions about Ransome and his books, then moved on to the festive theme. With a mix of questions to test our little grey cells, there was something for everyone to try and answer!

Rachel Blue



RATTLETRAPS ON THE WATER

Bourton on the Water was the location for our meeting in February, though given the recent weather conditions it was getting close to being Bourton in the Water.

A quiz was our first challenge, finding the places in various photographs of the village and answering questions about them. The majority were quite simple, but David had set one very devious bonus-point question which defeated us all. Sarah and I had equal top scores so our quiz sheets were put into a hat (which David was conveniently wearing) and I was lucky enough to have mine drawn and win the prize.

After eating our packed lunches by the stream and watching ducks struggling to swim against the current, our next task was to create our own vessels from twigs and leaves to launch into the stream. This was a rather sophisticated version of 'Pooh Sticks' involving launching our boats from one bridge and then chasing down to see which of them arrived at the next bridge downstream first. Peter was the winner this time, although all the boats stayed quite close and he was nearly pipped at the post by Rebekah's vessel which had got into a fast bit of the current towards the end of the course.

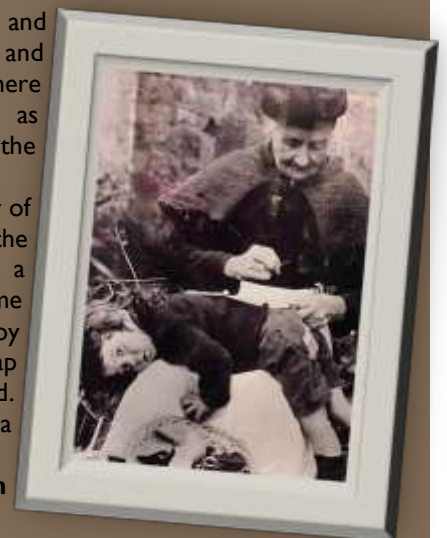
From here we walked upstream to the Cotswold Motor Museum, the real object of the day's expedition. We were in search of Rattletrap, which we didn't find, or at least not any Trojan cars, but the museum was a real treasure trove.

Arranged roughly in chronological order, it was absolutely packed full of cars, motorcycles, pedal cycles and caravans. Rattletrap might not have been there, but I certainly saw one car which could have very convincingly been the doctor's.

Not being a particular enthusiast for motor vehicles, one thing that particularly appealed to me was the way that the cars were presented with accessories loaded. Period suitcases, hats, buckets and spades, model yachts and picnic hampers were there in plenty, and just as interesting to me as the cars that they were in.

There were also plenty of photographs around the walls and Sarah spotted a special gem for Ransome enthusiasts - a small boy laid across a woman's lap having his shorts repaired. He had obviously found a knickerbockerbreaker!

Jane Wilson



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.



BLACK COUNTRY MUSEUM

Saturday 11 May

Leave the 21st century behind and explore sights, sounds, scents and tastes of the past in the Black Country Museum, Discovery Way, Dudley DY1 4AL. The museum has 19th century ironworks, foundries and forges plus recreated shops, houses and industrial workshops. See 1850s mining, 1912 school rooms, 1920s cinema, 1930s traditional fish and chips, 1940s confectionery, traditional street games, ride a heritage vehicle, and more. Historical characters in period dress will welcome you.

Costs are adults £25.95, 3-15 years £12.95, 65+ £24.95 or family £77.50 but all tickets last for a whole year and Midland Region will pay £5 towards entry for Midland Juniors. If you would like to come please can you book yourself in online at <https://tickets.bclm.com> and let Jules Blue know so we can all meet up. E-mail julesbluerachel@btinternet.com

IAGM IN THE PEAK DISTRICT

Thursday 15 to Sunday 18 August

Don't forget that Midland Region is hosting this year's IAGM in the Peak District, based at The Nightingale Centre in Great Hucklow. There will be talks and walks, the opportunity to sail and swim, chess and shanties, plus a wealth of other activities with an emphasis on fun for Juniors. Find further information and a booking form in the last issue of *Signals*, plus updates in this edition.

WALK IN NOTTINGHAM FOREST

Saturday 21 September

Join us for a full day walk in the 'Major Oak' area of the forest. Meet at 10 for a 10.30 start (meeting point Sherwood Forest NNR, Edwinstowe. Parking cost £5). The walk is 9.5 miles but shouldn't be very strenuous. It will pass through areas of the forest including the Major Oak and will also pass through Rufford Park. For more information contact Sarah Samuel on sarah@sarahsamuel.plus.com or 07952 587273.



PAINT AND SWIM

Saturday 8 June

Enjoy time in Droitwich park using watercolours in a style known as brush drawing. It was used for detailed botanical paintings and practised by many of Ransome's contemporaries, including Beatrix Potter. When booking, please let Sarah know if you will need watercolour paint providing.

Also, take an opportunity to swim in Droitwich's salt-water lido.

For further information and to book please contact Sarah Samuel on sarah@sarahsamuel.plus.com or 07952 587273.

MAPPA MUNDI

Saturday 12 October

Meet at Hereford Cathedral, 5 College Cloisters, Cathedral Close, Hereford, HR1 2NG to explore what the world was thought to look like in 1300 on the Mappa Mundi. There is also a chained library of books from 800. Contact Jules Blue on julesbluerachel@btinternet.com or 07856 262042 to find out more.



RIVER ACTIVIES ON THE SOAR

Saturday 13 July

Enjoy being on or in the River Soar at The Soar Boating Club, Normanton on Soar LE12 5HB with sailing, canoeing and wildish swimming. If you've a dinghy or canoe bring it along to launch from the slipway, if not 'grab a chance' on any craft on offer. Cost £15 adults, £10 Juniors. There is also with the chance to camp overnight. Sophisticated facilities (like showers) are available at the SBC Clubhouse. Camping is £15 per tent per night to SBC. For more information and booking contact Paul Green - e-mail paul-midtars@gmx.co.uk or telephone 01654 791256 / 07563 962496.

CRAFTS ON THE FRAM

Saturday 16 November

Climb aboard the 'Fram' in Wellingborough from 11.00 for some craft activities and other *Winter Holiday* fun. Please bring along something suitable for bring-and-share lunch with a *Winter Holiday* theme. A roast chicken will be provided for Captain Flint to deal with, plus something for non-meat eaters. To find out more please get in touch with Jane Wilson on jane.pippinfort@googlemail.com or 01933 223672.



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

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



Adventure Event



Nautical Event



Discovery Event



Titty's Challenge
(Able Seaman Log Book)



Susan's Challenge
(Mate Log Book)



John's Challenge
(Captain Log Book)



Northern Despatches

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

The Northern Region AGM March 16th, no 32;

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 2023 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 has improved a little with the increase in interest rates. Events are largely self-financing so that we can maintain funds to support and encourage junior attendance. Three sets of AR book have been purchased this year.

There has been a change in our representation to the Board this year as Elizabeth Williams stood down and Liz Haworth stepped into her place. We still have very good representation on the board with three members

Apart from our own events there are other Ransome related events taking place in our region this year; The TARS Literary weekend is taking place in Harrogate in April; the Alliance of Literary Societies AGM in May; the 50th anniversary of the 1974 film in June and the Arthur Ransome Trust is also organising a long-running Rattletrap exhibition at the Motor Museum from April in conjunction with the Trojan Trust.

The committee is as follows; Chair:Elizabeth Williams; Krysia Clack – (Board Member); Secretary: Helen Lewis; David Butters (Board Member);Treasurer Liz Haworth (Rep to the Board); Veronica Priest

Northern Region Events planned for 2024

June 2nd 6pm – Meet at St Paul's Church Rusland for Evening Praise and visit Arthur's Grave. Further Info from Helen Lewis.

Dick and Dorothea's day out at Brockholes, Samlesbury, near Preston on **Saturday, 6th July**. It is free, there is plenty of parking and it is in a nature reserve where there is a cafe. The details are on <https://www.pbfa.org/fairs/brockholes-preston-premier-fair-july-2023> for info contact Helen Lewis

Proposed trip to Nenthead Mine and South Tynedale Railway – watch out for a flyer to find a suitable date. For Info contact Elizabeth Williams.

Proposed trip to the Lakeland Motor Museum to see the new Trojan display - in August or September. Further Info from Helen Lewis

Proposed trip to see the Anderton Boat Lift,suggested for Sept/October. For Info Helen Lewis

With The Big Six on screen and plate

This year Northern Region celebrated AR's Birthday in the south of the Region, at Weaverham in Cheshire. The venue was the Scout Hall, in this case 'Scout' meaning 'Sea Scout'. Weaverham, as its name implies, is on the River Weaver, a navigable waterway which connects with the Mersey estuary and the Manchester Ship Canal.

The theme for this year was the AR book which is still a bit neglected – 'The Big Six'. A dramatised version was first seen on BBC television in 1984, and during the day at Weaverham we watched all four episodes. Many Tars will already own the DVD of this production, "*Swallows and Amazons Forever*", but it is stimulating to watch it in the presence of other AR enthusiasts. In between episodes Helen Lewis conducted a quiz, not just about the book itself but also about the dramatic adaptation. The film is generally highly regarded, as the storyline was followed fairly faithfully and the casting was excellent, featuring two actors who played 'Dr. Who' at one time, along with convincing child actors, particularly Caroline Downer who was a marvellous 'Dorothea'.

Two cakes

In the afternoon, two Birthday cakes were produced, the first of which had a single spectacular 'candle' which resembled a vertical blow-lamp. This was most impressive, although and although the 'cake' beneath was both edible and delicious, it was the second cake, shaped like a big figure '6', that became the fitting final course of our buffet lunch. It was good to have a gathering in this less-frequented end of the Region – this enabled a visit from a family from Midland Region and they were very welcome.



Southern Region



What has been happening in the Region?

Birthday lunch in Tunbridge Wells

The move to the east of the region this year proved successful as 15 members gathered at The barn in Tunbridge Wells to raise a toast to Arthur Ransome on his 140th birthday. The venue was accommodating, and we had sole use of the cosy conservatory for a very pleasant lunch. The membership numbers of those



present gave a good indication of the spread of experience from number 86 to number 5411 - some were attending their first event and some their first event for a long time. It was great to see them all and to get the feedback afterwards about how much they had enjoyed meeting fellow TARS.

Conversations on one table ranged from beekeeping and real honey, through 'guard ducks' to the translating from Russian of articles about Evgenia and her family from Russian

websites. Hopefully, Patrick will pull together all his information on the latter topic into an article along with further items that they are still translating. Diners on another table were entertained with stories about the late Rev David Towne, a former stalwart of the Southern Region and there was discussion about what to do with books and memorabilia – a topic that has been brought up at IAGM level (I think). Two TARS also discovered that they had met at another literary appreciation group.



Coming events

The May camp in Surrey should already have happened by the time this is in print so the report will appear in the next issue, and I hope it will be of glorious sunshine and an ascent of Leith Hill, the highest point in the Southern Region.

I am writing this with my fingers firmly crossed as periodic hail showers batter my window.

Cobnor camp August 9th to 11th

This is our traditional water based camp, next to the Cobnor activity centre on Chichester Harbour. The quiet site can accommodate tents or camper vans and we have access to the facilities beside the activity centre. There will be land based activities in addition to sailing your own boats / canoes/ paddleboards. The cost is £25 for adults and free for juniors. Please let one of the Committee know if you are planning to come along.

Autumn Gathering: Saturday 26th October 2 to 4.30 pm

We have booked the same venue as last year – St Nicholas Church Hall in Guildford – for an event on an as yet undecided topic. The venue worked well last year and there will be CAKE. Details will be in the next issue of Signals and emailed out before then but please put the date in your diary.

Evgenia's family

From Patrick and Svetlana -

“Here is some material that I collected from a Russian language Arthur Ransome website that Svetlana discovered.”

Translated from the website:

In the picture, below, Evgenia Shelepina is standing in the centre at the back. The girl standing on the right at the back is her sister Iraida; the girl seated in the centre is her sister Serafima. and the boy seated on the right is her younger brother, Gleb Petrovich Shelepin.

Gleb's grandson, Gleb Viktorovich Drapkin wrote the article about the family and published it on the Russian website arthur-ransome.spb.ru in 2009, the website is no longer functioning.



Serafima, Iraida and Evgenia in the 1970s
on one of Evgenia's trips to Russia



Patrick and Svetlana had lots of interesting information which we hope they will be able to share with members in the future.



MIDLAND TARS IAGM
HIGH TOPPS IN THE DERBYSHIRE PEAKS
AUGUST 15TH-18TH 2024

IAGM 2024 LOCATIONS:

Everywhere you will need to be is in reasonable proximity to Great Hucklow, the location for The Nightingale Centre, our main accommodation and indoor events hub. Five Acres Campsite, Wardlow, is close by, (a 5-minute drive, 2.5 miles).

Hathersage, location for our outdoor swim, is just 15 minutes' drive, 6 miles, away.

Thornbridge Hall, a Friday outing venue, is a 12-minute drive away, as is the car park for the Curbar Edge hike on this day.

Castleton, for the caverns, is also a 6-mile drive, whilst Combs Reservoir, for sailing, is the furthest site away, at 11-miles, 25-minutes.

Please refer yourself to the maps provided.

Camp Might Be ...

... sadly, can't be.

Instead: we suggest Five Acres Campsite! A 2.5 mile, 5-minute drive away. Opens March end but you can book ahead on Pitch-Up now. See this website also for a stunning gallery. A working farm, they have Llamas, goats, etc. Any questions, contact them direct:

fiveacrescampsite@gmail.com/07598073578



REVISIONS TO & UPDATES ON ORIGINAL PLAN



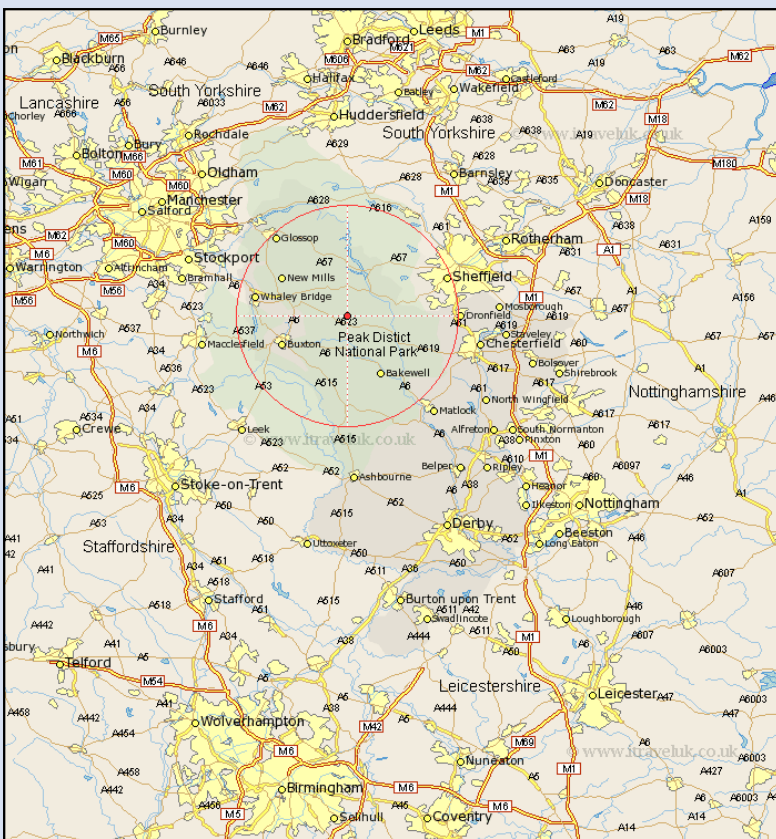
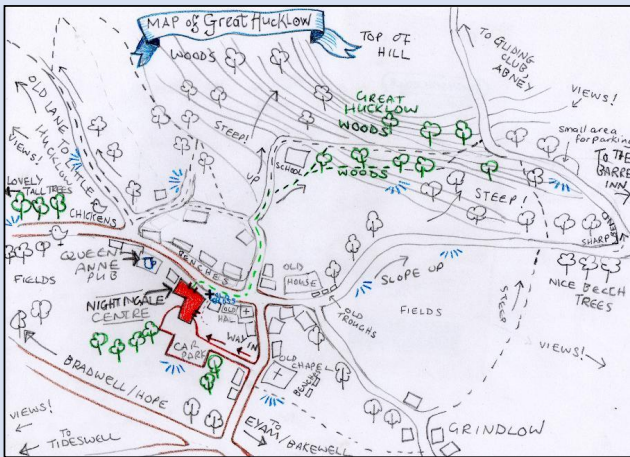
TARS Stalls & Library will open on -

Thursday: 7-7:30pm and after Martha's talk.

Friday/Saturday: 08:45-09:30/5-6pm/after evening meals but not during talks or DC quiz.

Combs Reservoir sailing day: (secure) parking here for boats/trailers as none allowed at Nightingale Centre. Possibility of (donation) loan of paddle boards from the Sailing Club. Safety patrol boat will be present on the day.

Susan Cup: Bring along a pre-baked, Pigeon Post- or nautically-themed, cake to be judged by Jenny Wedick!



Hathersage train station serves the village of Hathersage with regular Northern trains operating on the trans-Pennine Hope Valley Line. Trains run every two hours, one to Sheffield, one to Manchester Piccadilly and vice versa.

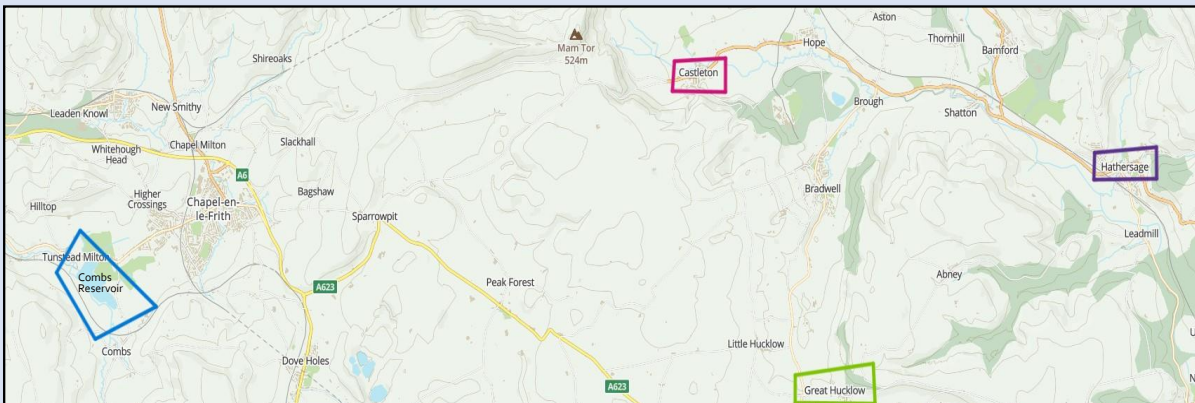
Northern Trains Ltd operate a 55-minute trip from Manchester Piccadilly to Hathersage and 18 minutes from Sheffield. Some trains allow free space for a bicycle without reservation!

travelineeastmidlands.co.uk – gives timetables of buses that bring you to Great Hucklow.

Hulleys of Baslow operate a link 5 times daily.

2Nice Taxis are able to transport able and disabled people.

bettertaxi.com is a great site wherein you can see day-night-Sunday fixed rates.



An Aussie Koala's British Winter Holiday or Nine Ransome Sites in Three Weeks by Catherine Lamont

“Softly, at first, as if it hardly meant it, the snow began to fall...” as this little koala clambered up the steps of the Brotherton Library. This was the fifth of my nine planned “Ransome Way Points” on what Peter Willis calls my 22-day GB Odyssey.

I'd landed at Heathrow on 4th January, accompanied by my usually stay-at-home 17-year-old son, Nick, who loved the books being read to him when he was 11 and 13. But not as much as I do. His present obsession is modern warfare; fortunately, the Royal Armouries is at Leeds, so while I was madly photographing Ransome archives at the Brotherton, he was happy pursuing his own interests two miles away.

My first Ransome ‘date’ was an early AR birthday party at a pub in Haslemere. Thank you so much to Jill Goulder, Ted Alexander and Alan Hakim for braving the weather and railway problems to make me feel so welcome, and to Diana Wright (who couldn't make it) for introducing me to Andrew Silk, who lived closest. I was so absorbed in the conversation, I forgot to take a photo until everyone had gone home.

Then I had the privilege of visiting Sophie Neville in her home where I collected my first stash of books, sampled her delicious broccoli soup and talked nonstop about mutual interests for all too short a morning.

Books...and a sweatshirt

Followed by Winchester (where there are no fewer than six military museums) and the TARS Library and Stall. Again, I forgot to take a photo until it was almost too late. Christine Rae was so warm in her welcome – such a pity that I again only had time enough to ransack the books and not stay for a cuppa. I also picked up the last S&A sweatshirt (a rather small size M).

Winchester was also an ideal launch point for my visit to Ted Alexander, where he showed me not only his Australian-connections poster but much of his extensive research into AR's background for me to digest more fully on my return. I'm so grateful for his sharing his colossal 600-page Ransome Index with me. Lovely to be with fellow enthusiasts.



Above: the Brotherton: below: Sophie and Catherine

Then the Brotherton (of which more, much more, later) followed by a train trip to Windermere... Here (having driven past Kendall where we couldn't visit Waypoint 6 because the Abbott Hall gallery continues to be closed) we discovered the perils of walking on crushed snow and the delight of waking

(on the morning of AR's 140th birthday) to the beautiful sight (photo opposite, top) from Ambleside Youth Hostel. Then we left in plenty of time for the bus to Waypoint 7 (Coniston and the Ruskin museum)... a bus which didn't come!

So we took the bus to Thirlmere instead, where the teenager was fortunately bored enough to agree to walk to the probable peak of Darien, and become more entranced by the little robins and other birds we saw on the way. Magic.



Next morning, we were actually on the Lake, heading for a meeting with some more AR fans (all members of ART as well as TARS) at Waypoint 8, Windermere Jetty. Would you believe it? It was closed because the carpark was too icy. So we wait patiently for Paul Flint and the others to collect us and drive to a café nearby (pic below) instead.

Now for the mother of a reluctant teenager, this second AR birthday meeting – the only one Nick attended – was probably the highlight of the AR-related part of the odyssey. Because we were unexpectedly thrown together in the same boat grumbling about the same problem in a café, he actually got to discover some very important things: (1) His mother is not the only AR enthusiast in the world (so may not be as crazy as he may think). (2) Some AR enthusiasts are actually interested in young people’s opinions, so he could participate in the conversation.



(3) His mother (who often rubs people up the wrong way, just as AR did!) has some good ideas and is appreciated by *some* people.

This conversation was probably the easiest of all, since I’ve corresponded with nearly all of those present and we have a mutual interest in trying to find new ways to bring AR to new audiences, rather than just focus on existing fans. And then it was time for Paul to take us to the station... via his lovely house where I collected a swag of postcards.

By this time, Nick was heartily fed up with travelling, so we stayed in London for the next six days and used that as a base from which I ventured to Waypoint 9 – the Butt and Oyster at Pin Mill (where I saw this sign – opposite) for the only official AR birthday celebration I attended.



It was also only the second TARS meeting I have ever attended in person (Melbourne being too far to travel to more than once in a Blue Moon), and I think I was the youngest there. I was very appreciative of Peter Willis making sure I was looked after both by strategic positioning at the table and giving me a lift back to the station. Just lovely to meet this fellow editor/writer in person.

Down the green lane

I also appreciated Nicholas Hinde’s suggestion to get in touch with Stephanie beforehand so that I’d recognise her at the Ipswich Bus Station and wander down the narrow green lane to the Butt and Oyster together.

And the following day, I was delighted to see the same raincoat-clad figure at another bus stop, in Cambridge – the only person I know there.

Even though I was in London, and saw a bus heading for Tooting (another early Ransome home), I decided that enough was enough. That is where the AR part of our GB Odyssey ended.

Thanks everyone who met me, tried to meet me but couldn’t, commented on my “reports” on the FB group or suggested places/people to see. After a difficult year, it’s just what we needed. So reassuring to know that there are still people in the world who can practice, not just preach, kindness, adventuresomeness and good sense just as AR, and the S&A crews did so long ago...



20 YEARS AGO The first new-style Signals came out in August 2004 - this is the first of a two-part look back at what it contained, as a sample of what TARS, and Tars, were up to then.



In the news...

Farewell Lanehead

Lanehead, former home of the Collingwood and Altounyan families in fact, and, in fiction, the Blacketts, is to become unrecognised internally, following conversion to an outdoor activity centre. Fifty TARS pay a farewell visit.

Dick and... Elizabeth?

The latest Amazon publication, *The Best of Childhood*, reveals Ransome experimented with that name in an early draft of *Winter Holiday*.

The BBC's 'Big Read' inspires a TARS version - vote for your favourite AR title (one only) plus up to three non-AR favourite reads. Results promised, by Diane Janes, in the next *Signals*.

Ransome's *Selina King* is up for sale in Bermuda, for \$60,000 (c £33,000 at the time).

There is a very long article titled "Liability and insurance" sharing (intentionally or not) a page with a photo of a young Tar tending a dangerous-looking campfire.

The **TARS Library** - which had in those days a subscription fee of £5 - is in its fifth year and seeking, among others, *The Souls of the Streets*, and *Mariners' Voyage Alone in the Yawl Rob Roy*, with its Ransome introduction.

There's quite a lot purloined from Overseas TARS journals, including "The Wildcat" by Molly McGinnis from *Signals from TARSUS*, and Roger Seccomb on Australia's Heritage Wooden Boat Show from *Furthest South*, plus advice on climbing Kanchenjunga and a Bunloaf recipe from Tarboard.

So what's wrong with this picture?

It's from *Winter Holiday*, where the mump-infected Nancy is signalling to the others. You'll need to know your semaphore or look it up! There IS a mistake and it was spotted by Able-Seaman Annabel Turnbull, aged 8. Nancy is signalling Q - and the only Q in her message is the first letter of 'Quick', sent *before* Dot finds her piece of paper to take down the words. But in the picture Dot is already writing. oops!



*To Mrs A Barrable
Poste Restante, Horning*

*My Dear Amelia
Sorry you couldn't join us yesterday - our day on the Bluebell Railway was great fun. Nothing like the tang of steam and the sight of a leather carriage-window strap to induce a sense of mellow nostalgia (a pint of good bitter and an excellent steak and kidney pudding the station buffet also helped).*

Of course we also rode on the trains and some of us poked our noses into the engine sheds and carriages works. There was also plenty of chat about our old friend Mr Ransome, and about a few other

authors too (what do you know of Aubrey de Selincourt or Olivia Fitzroy?) The weather was chilly with quite a fierce wind but to my delight there were real coal fires in the waiting rooms.

*Give my regards to my young namesake and the pig-tailed sister of his. He would have been impressed by all that mighty technology (and envied the trainee engine-drivers puffing along the track) while she would no doubt have thrilled to the "Romance of Travel in a Bygone Era".
Your loving brother,
Richard*

(From Southern Region's Outposts - but who actually wrote it?)

Quotes Quiz (from North Pole News)

Identify the book. Answer the Question. Go to it!

Answers next time

1. It was kind of her to say so, but he knew she did not mean it. (Who said what? Who didn't believe her?)
2. Everything was going well. All plans had been made the night before. Now they had to be carried out and first of all... (First of all what?)
3. "Well you ought to hang out a notice when you're not there" (Said by who, to whom, where?)
4. "So did I," said Nancy, "till I saw they were as good as goats." (To whom was Nancy saying this, and in response to what?)
5. "May I have some marmalade on my pemmican?" (said Roger) (When was this said? What was the response, exactly?)

JACK BLAKE'S *Ditty-box*

'Breaker of hearts and shins'

Christina Hardyment has got in touch to report a possible breakthrough in her longstanding desire to track down an original for "Miss Lee" in the book of more or less the same name (which according to her *AR and Captain Flint's Trunk*, is her favourite of the Ransome 12).

Although Ransome drew heavily on Madame Sun Yat Sen for the character, she had been to an American university and he wanted her to have an English university background, so chose Cambridge, which meant Newnham (the women's college), and hockey as her chosen sport – for more about the hearts and shins, look up *AR and Captain Flint's Trunk* (2012 edition).

A contact a Newnham, currently "researching an exhibition of fictional students" has now come up with a Chinese member of the college's 1935 team who fits the bill. She appears in a team photo, and Christina has also managed to track down her wedding photo – here it is.

For more information, and the origin of that headline, you'll have to wait for *Mixed Moss* in the autumn.



Around GB with AR (and the Outlaw)

Here's a jolly idea first broached in the last Outlaw: "Let's see if we can circumnavigate Great Britain between us. On land or sea – and if you don't choose to stick to the coast, feel free to criss-cross the countryside instead."

And pretty well any means of transport counts. "Hike, bike, trike, sail, kayak, row, swim, take a train ride (steam for preference) or a hot-air balloon," suggests Outlaw editor Jules Blue, and I'd add pony-trekking, even skating or sledging if conditions permit.

Mountaineering could certainly count, or even fairly big hills. (Kanchenjunga, anyone?)

Maybe getting in the car doesn't really count, though it could depend on what your destination is (the IAGM for instance?).

And it doesn't have to happen this year – tales of previous treks (not previously told) would be welcome.

Send your stories in with what details and photographs you can. And maps if you like. Map references would always help if you can locate them. Email either the Outlaw or Signals (outlaw@arthur-ransome.org or signals@arthur-ransome.org).

And of course it's not a competition to see which of our two magazines gets the best stories, or the highest mileages, but as Mr Dixon liked to say, "We mun pull our weight, lad, pull our weight."

A Swallow for a son

A sad but uplifting story from Devon, involving the death of a beloved son, whose dream was to one day sail to Wild Cat Island, and the determination of his dad to build a 14ft varnished clinker dinghy, just like *Swallow*, in which to fulfil that dream.

Torin Passmore was destined never to live long – he was born with the rare and incurable mitochondrial disease.

Shortly before he died, aged 11, he'd told the Make-a-Wish Foundation that was the one thing he wanted to do.

Now his bereaved parents, Duncan and Siân Passmore are determined to build the boat and make the passage in his memory, and have opened a GoFundMe page to raise the funds needed: <https://gofund.me/6994b6fa> – use this link if you'd like to donate.

Duncan, who has twenty years' experience in woodworking but has never built a boat before, seems to think it will take him six months. I wish him all the best,

but would be surprised if that proves to be the case.

The 'manual' for this sort of exercise is Jonathan Gornall's modestly-titled *How to Build a Boat* – which I happened to pick up on an Oxfam stall on Father's Day last year. He – a journalist by trade – decided to build a small clinker dinghy as a present to his new-born daughter. Spoiler alert – it was launched on her fourth birthday.

His account of the intervening years of progress, frustration, learning, trial, error, and the generous support of 'proper' boatbuilders in what is now classed as an 'endangered trade' is fascinating and inspirational.

At an early stage, it's pointed out to him how "although the planks overlap along most of their length, at the stem and stern the overlap gradually diminishes until, in the last few inches, the planks all lie flush with each other. It occurs to me that this must be a difficult trick to pull off." It is, of course. But he does.

AMAZON PUBLICATIONS

Red Skies

(2024) by Ivan Cutting
When Orwell met the Ransomes
£12 (+£3.50 p+p)



No Holds Barred (2022) Evgenia's diaries 1927-1933, Ed Margaret Ratcliffe £14 (+£3.50 p+p)

Ransome Centre Stage (2021) TARS amateur dramatics, ed Alan Hakim £14 (+ £3.50)

Sunlight and Shadows (2020)
Mike Bender £14 (+ £3.50)

The Twilight Years, Vol II - London
ed. Margaret Ratcliffe £20 (+ £3.50) Ransome's diary 1950-1963, introduction by Griff Rhys-Jones.

The Twilight Years, Vol I - Hill Top,
£15 (+ £3.50) Ransome's diary entries 1956-1964.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Collecting our Thoughts, Essays from TARS Library catalogues, 2000-2009 £15 (+ £3.50)

The TARS Stall

PUBLICATIONS FROM TARS

Literary Weekend Transcripts

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

Encountering the Ransomes: DVD set

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

Mixed Moss

The TARS Journal since 1990
Most previous issues available. £4 (+£1.50)

BOOKS ABOUT ARTHUR RANSOME

A Thoroughly Mischievous Person

The other Arthur Ransome

by Alan Kennedy £15 (+£2.50)

The Life of Arthur Ransome, by Hugh

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

Good Little Ship: Arthur Ransome, Nancy

Blackett and the Goblin, by Peter Willis

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

Swallows, Amazons and Coots

a reading of Arthur Ransome by Julian

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

Arthur Ransome on the Broads

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

Arthur Ransome Afloat in Lakeland

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

Arthur Ransome, a Bibliography

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

Ransome in Russia, by Ted Alexander &

Tatiana Verizhnikova £18 (+ £3.50)

The TARS Stall

UK postage and packing shown for individual items.
 To order, or for multiple-item or overseas costs, or any queries please contact **Christine Rae**,
 e-mail: tarsstall@arthur-ransome.org
 Phone +44 (0)7881 505390, preferably 6-8pm
 (but *not* to make card payments, can't be done);
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 Houghton, STOCKBRIDGE, Hampshire SO20 6LJ;
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BOOKS BY ARTHUR RANSOME



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



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

The 12 Swallows and Amazons books
 Vintage Classics paperback edition. Set of 12 £75 (+ £17) Single copies £7 each (+ £3.50)

Audio CDs of 'the 12'

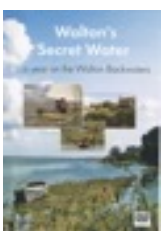
Read by Gabriel Woolf
 All 12 titles available. £14 (+ £3.50) each.

Old Peter's Russian Tales

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Need a mascot? Or a stocking-filler? Here he/she is!
 companionable soft toy, 24cm high (plague flag not included)
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TARS Publications etc

ISSN 2633-9331



SIGNALS

THE MAGAZINE OF THE ARTHUR RANSOME SOCIETY

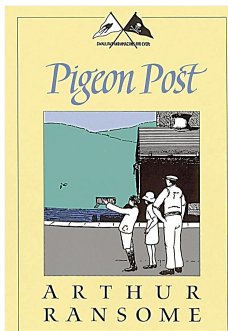


LITERARY WEEKEND
Who's coming to Harrogate?

Twenty years of Signalling to TARS

Ransome's winter and summer pair

'Holly Howe' ... and a tall(ish) ship



JANUARY-APRIL 2024 WITH IAGM DESPATCHES

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

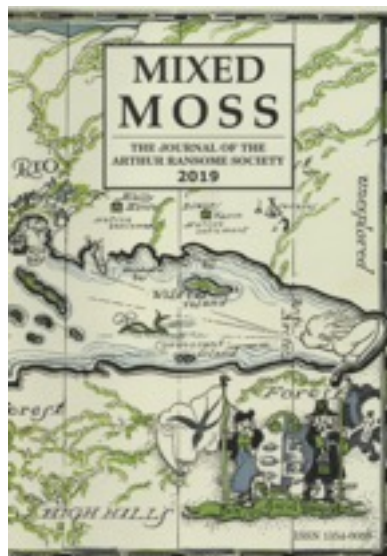
Copy deadlines 1 March, 1 July, 1 November

USA/Canada: Signals from Tarsus/North Pole News,

Editor: Simon Horn
shorn@colba.net

Australia/New Zealand: Furthest South

Editor: Phoebe Palmieri,
phoebe.palmieri@gmail.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 2024;
Editor Peter Wright
peterwright180@btinternet.com

Published December
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, £6.5

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 and Group members, three times a year, along with Signals.

Contact the Editors on outlaw@arthur-ransome.org or **Outlaw Editors c/o TARS, 17 Chesterwood Road, Birmingham B13 0QG**

RANSOME ONLINE

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

Webmaster: Ben Hambledon
email: webmaster@arthur-ransome.org

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

The Nancy Blackett Trust:
nancyblackett.org

allthingsransome.net
a useful resource site

tarboard.net discussion forum

FACEBOOK GROUPS
The Arthur Ransome Group
(monitored public group)

The Arthur Ransome Society (TARS) Facebook Group
(monitored TARS-only group)



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

TARS Subscriptions

2024 rates

(renewals due 1st January)

Adult (including Seniors) £25

Family/Group £35

Junior or Student £15

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

Corporate rate £60

RED SLIPPER FUND

Research and publishing grants available with new grant criteria

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

To encourage more of you to undertake research, whether for a small article, pamphlet or book, for pleasure or academic study, grants may 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:

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Safeguarding Officer:

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julesbluerachel@btinternet.com

Contribute to Signals!

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
Advertisements also accepted. Ask for rates.

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.

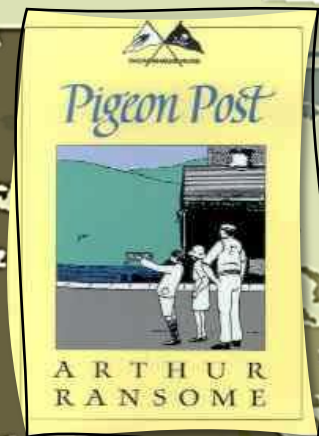
The range is enormous – sailing, climbing, archaeological events, walking and camping, Scouting etc to name just a few. There are a few rules: School trips and GCSE field studies, or trips with parents are not eligible; Only one award per person.

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)

MIDLAND TARS IAGM
HIGH TOPPS IN THE
DERBYSHIRE HIGH PEAKS
AUGUST 15TH-18TH 2024



Full Board & Lodgings available at *The Nightingale Centre*, Great Hucklow

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Stroll, trek or hike hills, dales, and edges around the Dark Peak; sail, swim, catch a train, see 1,000 shades of green, take a tour of a stately home, prospect for gold in caverns, listen to fascinating talks, join in with quizzes and feasts of fun!

Take a cooling dip in *Hathersage Outdoor Pool*