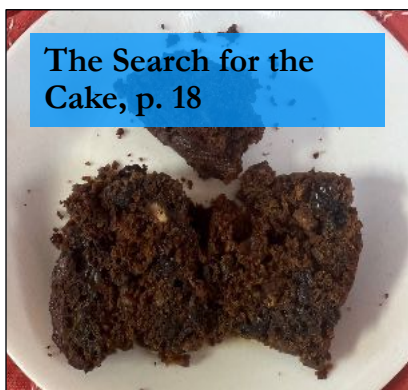
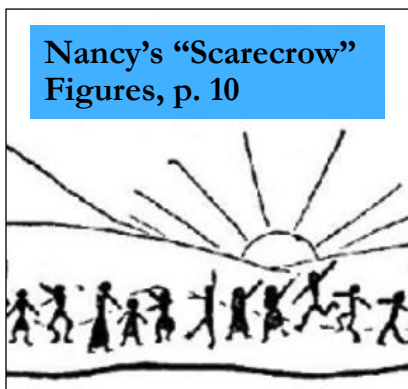




Signals from TARSUS & North Pole News

May 2024

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Ship's Papers — Important information for the Crew



A Note from the Editor

By Simon Horn, sjhorn@gmail.com

Late last January I received the sad news that long-time TARS member Audrey Cossar had died. She was 87, and had been an enthusiastic member for many years. My condolences to the family. Her son Ross has written a lovely appreciation of the way his mother instilled a love of Arthur Ransome in him throughout his life. Please read it starting on page 4.

As Ian explains in his regular message, earlier this year a small group of North American TARS held a preliminary online meeting over Zoom, essentially to iron out any bugs their inexperience might have caused. The experiment went well, and I second Ian's request that any member interested in joining a future such online meeting should let him know.

In this issue

Ship's Papers includes **Ross Cossar's** appreciation of the important role his mother played in encouraging his love of AR.

In *Dipping Our Hands*, **Andrew Fisher** continues his look at the 12, explaining how Titty and Roger are "imaginative, sensitive, and successful". **Molly McGinnis** then looks back at various ways of "outing" a loose tooth in "The Tooth, and Nothing but the Tooth".

Martin Beech reports from *The Professor's Laboratory* with a fascinating look at codes in "Nancy's 'Scarecrow' Figures, Doyle's Dancing Men, and a Chance Encounter with Baden-Powell", This is followed by **Ian Sacré** with his look at "Thole Pins, Rowlocks and Forcola". And you thought you knew about rowing!

In *Ship's Library*, your editor looks at another Amazon Publication, *Collecting Our Thoughts* from 2015.

Molly McGinnis provides us with another culinary link to the books in "The Search for the Cake" in *Beckfoot Kitchen*.

At the end I slip in another *Ship's Papers* page that did not fit up front: "New Page Layout Program" explains a bit of the technical process behind the newsletter.

Finally, for obsessives like myself, I have produced another version of the newsletter "Subject Index" since I started as editor, for February 2016 though January 2024. This is tacked on at the very end of the PDF.

The next issue is scheduled for September 2024. Please start thinking about your contribution now. The usual reminder will appear August 1.

Articles, book reviews, comments, questions, pictures, summer adventures. All are welcome.

All the best from me, to all of you.
Simon

Risk Assessment

As of January 2024, the Arthur Ransome Society in the UK has a revised risk assessment procedure. You can read it in the Members Area of the website at: <https://members.arthur-ransome.org/risk-assessment/> You will have to log in to see it.

As the page explains:

"Risk assessments are essential at TARS events to protect event organisers and those attending and sometimes, members of the public at large. If risk assessments are not undertaken, TARS can be found guilty of at least negligence, but quite possibly worse."

Now the specific rules that apply to risk assessment in the UK are probably a bit different from those in the US or Canada (though personally I do not know exactly what those differences may be). However, the tips and suggestions provided are logical and no doubt applicable wherever you are.

The page also links to a form that UK members are asked to use when planning an event or activity. The questions it asks make sense anywhere.

If you are planning an event, think about this. If I get more information I will let you all know in a future newsletter.

(One the other hand, our spread-out membership means that we seldom (or never) organize events and activities, so perhaps the problem rarely arises.)



Greetings from the North

By Ian Sacré, TARS Canada Coordinator

3965 Marine Drive, Royston, BC V0R 2V0
gallivanterthree@shaw.ca

Greetings Fellow TARS Members,

For most of us at least, the cold days of winter have past and, with luck, we have the long warm days of

summer ahead to look forward to. I hope everyone's winter project has turned out as expected.

Diana Wright, who gave up the job of TARS webmaster, is now involved with the refits of Swallow and Amazon and reports that the dinghies are now available for hire at Hunter's Yard on the Norfolk Broads. Apparently more work needs to be done to the two boats during their restoration refit, and a cost figure of £20,000 has been mentioned. I recently did some in-

vestigation into the cost of wooden boat repairs in the UK and discovered that a well qualified shipwright in the UK will be paid about £45 per hour. So it is easy to see how costs for repair work would mount up quickly.

Earlier in the year we had our first mini TARS Zoom meeting which was arranged by Eric Benke, an American TARS member with TARSUS. For a first attempt the meeting was kept very small so that Eric could solve any bugs. But thanks to

Eric's expertise the hour-long session was bug free and went very well. We are now looking forward to another Zoom session meeting. If anyone would like to participate in the next session please let me know. Thank you Eric for all your work in setting up the last meeting.

Simon Horn continues to do his magic with our publication every four months. I look forward to reading the work of new TARS authors in the coming issues.

It is now time for me to go and paint my dinghy but, sadly, no one is prepared to pay me £45 per hour!

Wishing everyone fair winds and calm seas.

Ian Sacré
Canadian TARS Coordinator

Free Ransome Publications Still Available

Only a few people took me up on the offer of free copies of Ransome-related books for the cost of shipping alone, so I still have a number of duplicate copies available. See the list below. (Books are hardcover unless otherwise noted as paperback, i.e., PB.)

Amazon Publications

#22, *Arthur Ransome's Long-Lost Study of Robert Louis Stevenson* (2011) - PB

#24, *Drawn at a Venture* (2014)

#25, *Collecting our Thoughts* (2015)- PB

#27, *Twilight Years - Hill Top* (2017)

By Ransome

Old Peter's Russian Tales (1974, Puffin Books) - small PB, illustrated

The War of the Birds and the Beasts (1984, Jonathan Cape)

The Autobiography of Arthur Ransome (1985, Century Publishing) - PB

Signalling from Mars: the letters of Arthur Ransome (1997, Jonathan Cape)

Other

Arthur Ransome and Captain Flint's Trunk (1984, Christina Hardyment, Jonathan Cape)

Nancy Blackett: Under Sail with Arthur Ransome (1991, Roger Wardale, Jonathan Cape)

Arthur Ransome (1991, Peter Hunt, Twayne Publishers)

Arthur Ransome: A Bibliography (2000, Wayne Hammond, Oak Knoll Press)

If you are interested, please contact me by email at sjhorn@gmail.com.

I will only find out the actual shipping cost when I wrap up a book (or books) to send, but anyone who requests a book will be told the cost before I send it, in case you think it is too much. I will probably request reimbursement of the shipping cost using PayPal, but you do not need a PayPal account to send money to an individual. I will provide full details to anyone who requests a book or books.

— Simon

Mom and AR

How my late Mother shaped my love for Swallows and Amazons for over 55 years

by Ross Cossar (Norwood, Ontario)

I don't remember when exactly it was that my mother, Audrie Cossar, first read to me about Roger "tacking" up the field at Holly Howe, but I can picture my young self having story time with her in the evenings. Mom had a well worn set of the twelve stories that she read to me in order, and when she left them on my bedroom bookshelf I went on to reread them all several times in my youth. Mom had herself fallen in love with the writings of AR when she was young and she was very keen to instill the same appreciation in me.

Mom got her sea legs as a child and always seemed comfortable on a boat. My Grandfather had a motor cruiser during the 1940's and 50's that he plied the waterways of central Ontario with. While my Grandmother enjoyed time on the water, her arthritis limited her agility and thus placed my mother in the role of Mate and Deck Hand very early on. As a family they navigated Lake Simcoe, parts of Georgian Bay and the Severn River. She spoke of learning seamanship with her father and how she loved that what she read in the stories by AR so often applied to her family adventures on the water.

Her support of my interest in all things Ransome was never ending, as



she created themed birthday parties, encouraged outdoor adventures, ensured I had sailing lessons, travelled to Wild Cat Island with me during the TARS 10th AGM, and introduced me to the previous owner of my current 32' sailing vessel. Our sharing of this literary interest has been life long, and stronger than ever through our adult years.

We have a photograph, taken in the days before ubiquitous digital pictures, of Mom's hand-drawn lake-land map covering the dining room table. My friends and I had returned from a hike to climb Kanchenjunga (a local hill near our home in Peterborough, Ontario) and were having grog. On the map of the lake are little sailing boats made of a half walnut shells with paper sails. The cake was Wild Cat Island. While Mom created great birthday parties with other themes for my siblings, she always used such normal activities to enhance my love of AR's stories.

Outdoor activities were a mainstay of my upbringing. Family camping trips and later summer cottage rentals ensured that I learned skills such as building campfires in a manner approved of by Susan. Swimming lessons were taken and our family had a canoe for exploring local waters. A favourite canoe camping trip was on a river known as Eels Creek. One summer my parents rented a cottage on the seven-acre Black Duck Island and I've memories that I spent more time in the old wooden row boat than the rest of my family combined. As with the Swallows, Mom provided me with a blank

My nautical wallpaper



outlined map of the island that I labelled with my own place names. In all such activities my mother used her love of AR to help instill my love for healthy outdoor adventure.

My mother was very keen to turn my interests to sailing when I was around ten. As programs were available both through my school and summer camp, I had ample opportunity to take lessons and to simply spend time feeling the wind on my cheek. Lasers and Albacores were the small boats that I sailed in those days, while later as a teen-aged Sea Cadet, I had further opportunities for similar small vessel sailing, including 24-foot whalers. In addition to the practical lessons, I read the endless sailing lessons that AR tucked into his writings. I have purposely heeled my vessel in shallow water as Captain John did during the sailing race at the end of *Swallowdale*.

Land Ho, Wild Cat Island in sight! Actually my first sighting of Wild Cat Island occurred when I stood

with my son on Kanchenjunga (Coniston Old Man) during The Arthur Ransome Society's 10th Annual General Meeting. It was my equivalent Darien moment, as from up there the map of the S&A end papers was spread out before us. Mom had joined TARS very early after it's inception and had encouraged my family to join as well. We had both attended and hosted local Ontario TARS family events, and Mom encouraged us to join her on a trip to the Lake District of England. I travelled with my oldest son Fraser, who was 12 years old and of course already immersed into the world of AR. As a part of this adventure we rented an electric motor boat and made our way to Wild Cat Island. We moored in the secret harbour and imagined camping adventures of our own. I have since been able to travel to this hallowed ground and many other AR related places with the rest of my family. Mom's S&A enthusiasm has also continued to two more generations. My daughter Elsbeth utilized the assistance of the Ship's Baby Fund for a tall ship sailing adventure and my granddaughter Charlotte won a Junior TARS poetry contest.

Inspired by reading AR to my children, it wasn't long before I was looking to get them some sailing ex-



periences of their own. We joined a dingy sailing club, where we bought our first sailboat. It was an Albacore that we named *Great Northern*. Over the years we have upgraded twice. An Edsel 540 was our first little cruiser, which we named *Goblin*, and we currently sail on a Bayfield 32 named *Sea Bear*. Just a couple of years ago we were able to take both of my parents sailing aboard *Sea Bear* on the waters of Georgian Bay. I hoisted the signal flags for my mother as we cruised into places like Frying Pan Bay where she had lived her own adventures over 70 years ago. It was a truly a treat for all of us.

Mom has always encouraged my immersion in all things Ransome. Like young Roger learning to swim, I enthusiastically followed her lead. Like John swimming around the island I'm in this for the long haul. I remember my mother being too shy to en-

ter the Dick Callum Cup at the AGM but then sitting in the audience whispering out the answers as quickly as any on stage. As I do now, she continued to read both AR's writings and books about AR through out her life. She built an extensive library which she has bequeathed directly to me. I have now added audio versions of the stories that when I'm listening to them bring me many memories and smiles. AR's stories provided his readers both an endless array of life lessons and the chance to escape the perils of their time through literary diversion. This has not changed today. Almost one hundred years after AR wrote these stories, I remain devoted to his gift. Most importantly though, I am thankful to my mother for weaving Swallows and Amazons into my life.

Mom, from one sailor to another, I wish you fair winds and following seas.

In loving memory of my mother Audrie J. Cossar (Baldwin), April 1st 1936 – January 13th 2024.



Dipping our Hands — Personal relationships with the books

Titty and Roger: imaginative, sensitive, and successful

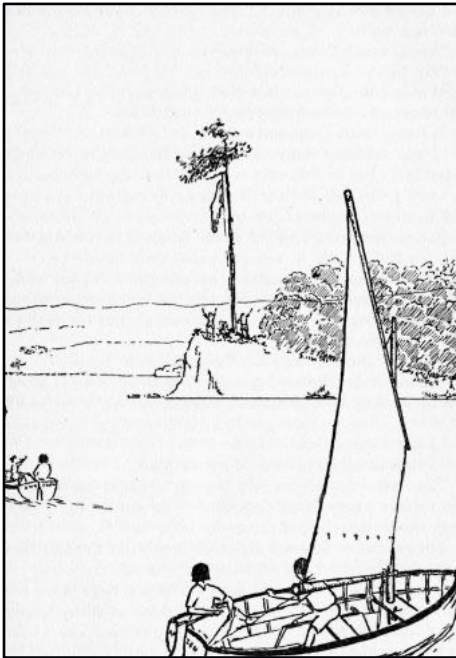
by Andrew Fisher (Evanston, Illinois)

(Andrew sent in his favourite episodes with Titty and Roger, and then I looked through the books to find appropriate illustrations. Tracking down the pictures that go with Andrew's examples reminded me of how much I like the various books and brought back memories of favourite passages. Try it yourselves; you'll appreciate it. – Ed.)

In many ways Titty is the most imaginative, sensitive, and successful of the Swallows, though we should not forget Roger. Here are just some examples from the books.

In *Swallows and Amazons*:

- Titty captures Amazon and maroons the Amazons on Wild Cat Island.

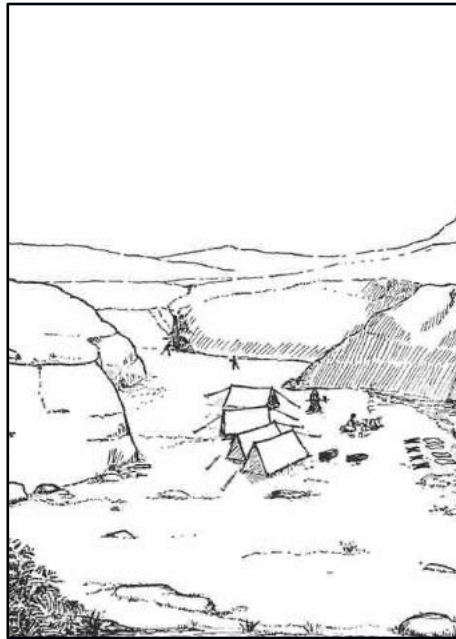


Do you surrender?

- Titty and Roger find the treasure – Captain Flint's book – on Cormorant Island.

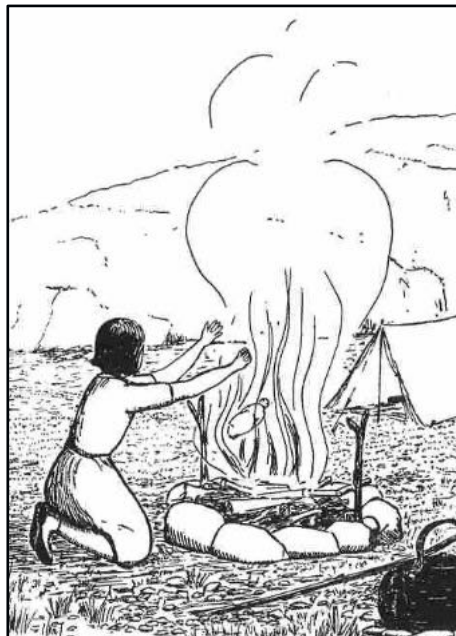
In *Swallowdale*:

- Titty and Roger discover Swallowdale.
- The evening after discovering the valley, Titty and Roger tell the others that there is something even better



The camp in Swallowdale

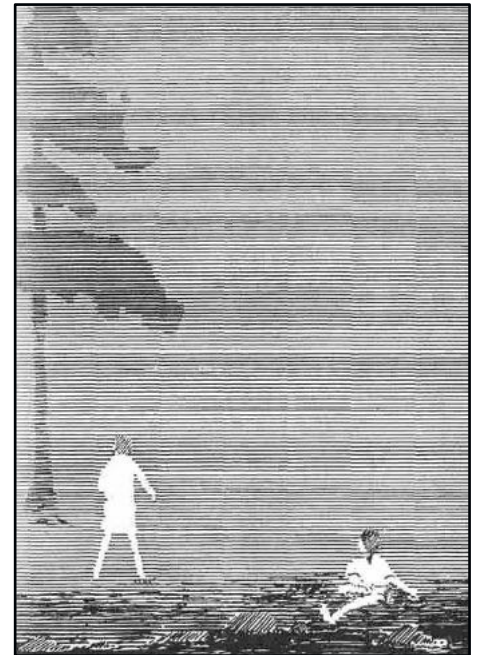
there. "What was it?" said Susan. "Probably a caterpillar." "Well," said Roger, "a butterfly did help."



Candle grease

- When Nancy says the Great Aunt made Mother cry, Titty is horrified. She makes a candle wax model of the Great Aunt and accidentally drops it in the fire. Titty believes she has killed the Great Aunt.

- Roger falls and only the rope saves him.



In the fog

- Titty and Roger get turned around in the fog, Roger gets to sleep in a wigwam and Titty rides home on a long log.

In *Peter Duck*:

- In Lowestoft harbour, Titty is sure she see red-haired young Bill being pushed overboard from the Viper as Swallow sails close by. Then they rescue him.



Overboard!

In *Winter Holiday*:

- Titty is the one looking out the window and first sees the Ds signalling to Mars.
- Titty and Roger and the Ds rescue the cragfast sheep.

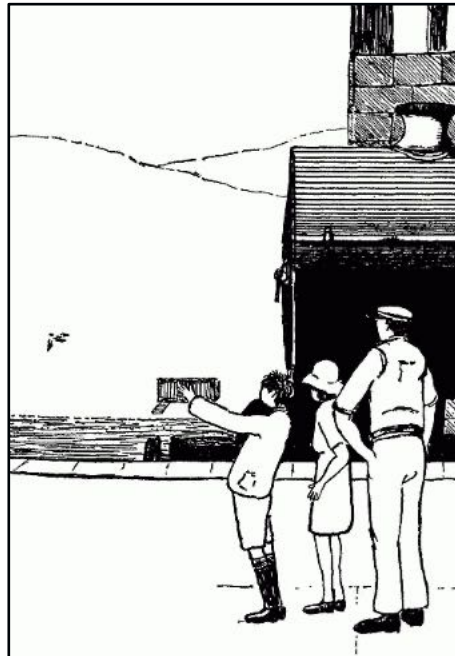


Cragfast sheep

- Thanks to Titty and Roger's bright torches, the final rescue mission can easily read the Ds message on Cache Island, and later the yellow quarantine flag at the north pole.

In *Pigeon Post*:

- Titty and Roger let fly the first pigeon.



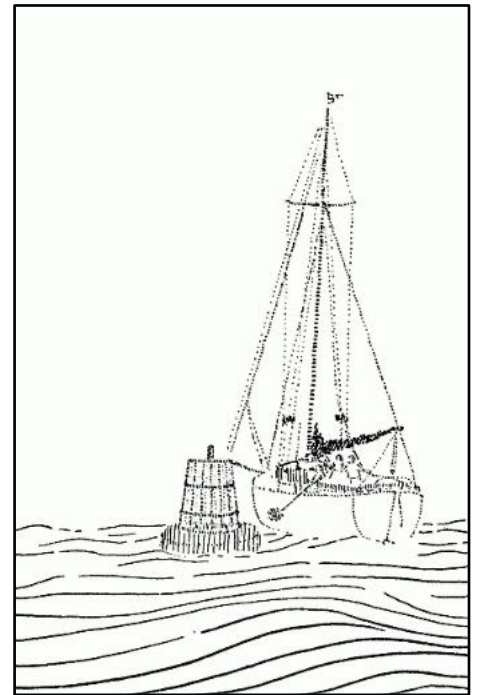
Letting fly

- Titty finds out she can dowse for water, first doing it by herself, then in front of everyone, thus allowing them to move right up to the High Topps.

- When they see the fell fire, Titty writes the desperate message "FIRE HELP QUICK" to be carried to Beckfoot by Sappho, and Roger lets her fly.

In *We Didn't Mean to Go to Sea*:

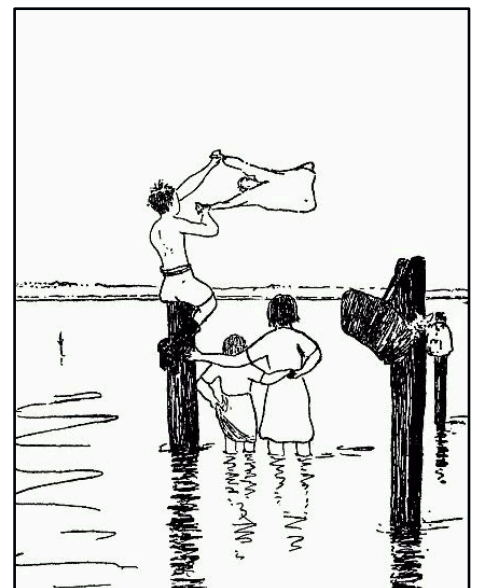
- In her bunk below, Titty thinks of how terrible it is about Mother and Jim Brading, but listening to the hiss of the water on the other side of the Goblin's thin planks, she thinks "But a real voyage at last ... If only Captain Nancy knew..."



Fending off with a mop

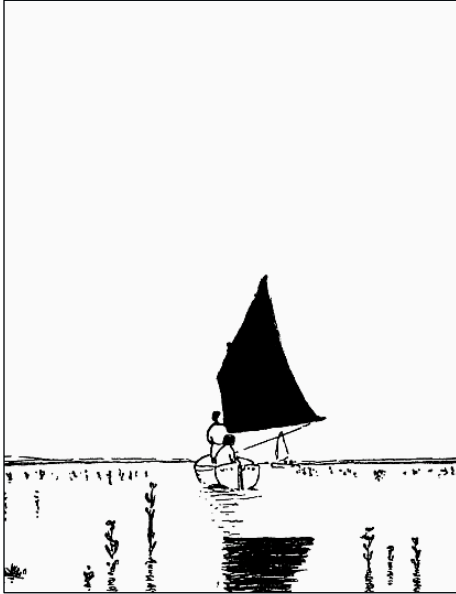
In *Secret Water*:

- When they first cross the Red Sea, this time as the Israelites, Titty looks up and imagines high water and the hulls of ships passing above them.
- Titty and Roger and Bridget explore Sinbad's Creek, but as a result are late and get marooned in the middle of the Red Sea.



Signal of Distress

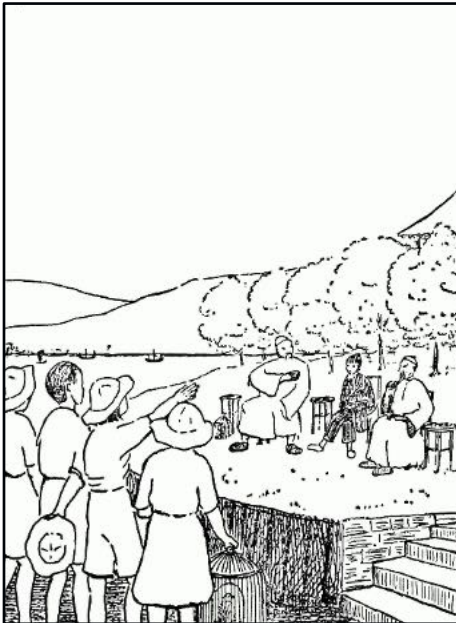
• Titty and Roger take *Wizard* through the Northern Sea, proving that the Blackberry coast is an island, while the Amazons in *Firefly* do the same around Peewitland, thus finishing the map.



Like a flooded field

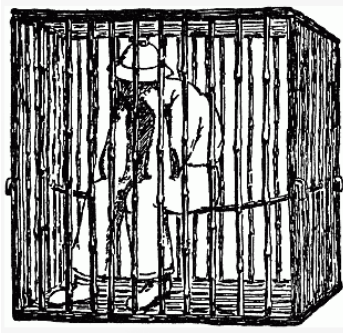
In *Missee Lee*:

• When the Swallows and Amazons are “mutinying” against Missee Lee, saying “buy Captain Flint or we



Bargaining for Captain Flint

won't study Latin”, it is Titty's statement “if you knew your father was a prisoner” which persuades Missee Lee to buy Captain Flint.



• Titty's parrot, Polly, really impresses Taicoon Chang. Titty offers Polly to Chang when bargaining for Captain Flint.

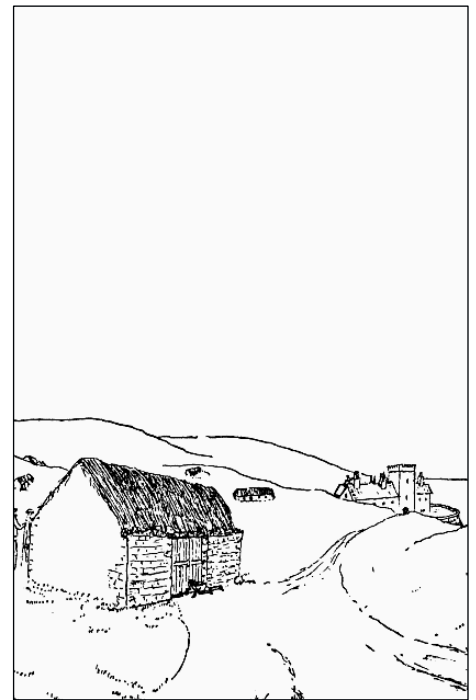
• It is Roger's writing in the dictionary and his knowledge of latin which saves them all.

Hic liber est meus
Testis est deus
Si quis furetur
Per collum pendetur
Like this poor creature



In *Great Northern*?:

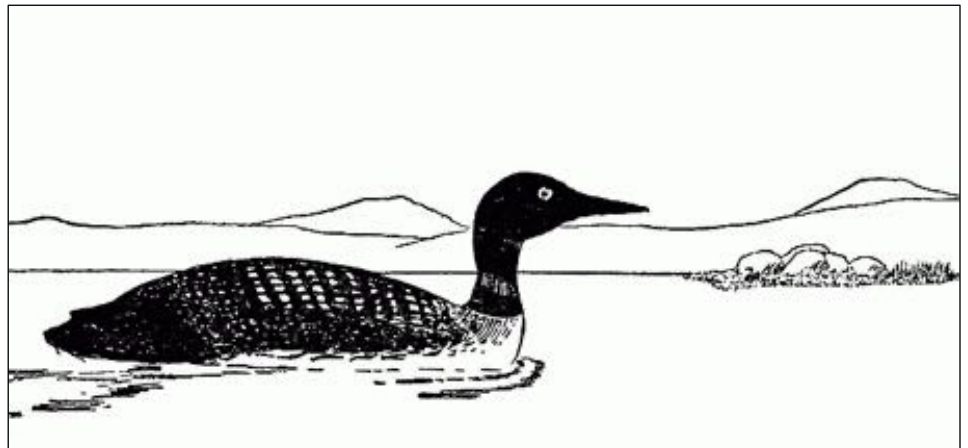
• As Roger stays at the Pict-house, he sees all the others and Captain Flint



Roger at the Prison Door

being captured, but most importantly, he sees the egg collector with his man and a gun going toward the Great Northern divers' loch. Roger informs the others of this fact before he is captured too.

• At the very end, Dick and Titty go out in the folding boat to return the eggs to the divers' nest, After they have rowed away from the island, Titty uses the binoculars to see that the bird is sitting on the nest, and she sheds tears of joy.



The Tooth, and Nothing but the Tooth

by Molly McGinnis (Manteca, California)

"If you were to give that tooth a little bit of a jerk," said Mrs. Barrable...

"Upper tooth," Tom said. "And just hanging... I say, Pete, I know a way of getting it out so that you'll never feel it go."...

"Oo," squeaked Pete. "You're hurting my tooth."

"What tooth?" said Tom. "It's gone."

...there was a crash of breaking glass. Something heavy fell on the floor of the loft ... "It's that brick..."

"Gosh!" said Tom. "There must have been someone down there on the slip. Hi! Hullo!"

I've always assumed it was George Owdon who threw the brick back, but that's the last we hear of it. Does a near miss with a lethal brick explain the fury of George's vendetta against the Coots, or is he really just trying to get them out of his way so he can sell bitterns' eggs?

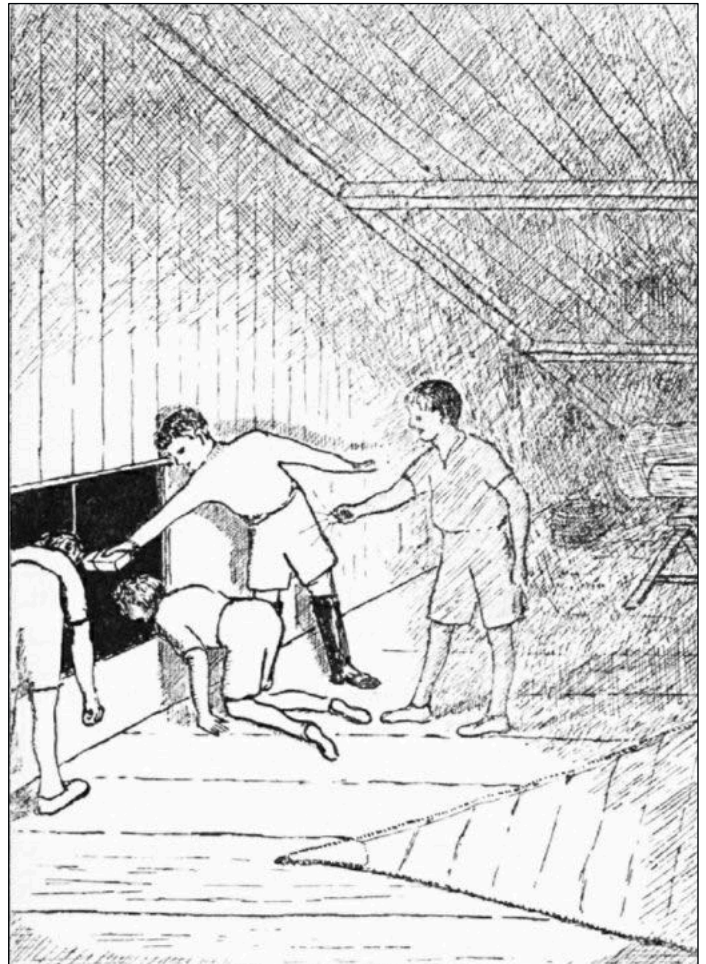
Pete's tooth might answer another question, too. We know it's an upper tooth and one of the front teeth, because Pete uses the gap for blowing on his tea to cool it. It would be a central incisor, one of the middle two teeth, or a lateral incisor, the smaller cutting tooth to each side of the bigger ones. Those two teeth fall out between age 6 and age 8, give or take a year. The next teeth to fall are in the back of the mouth, then the pointed canine next over from the incisors, and I can tell you that the gap left by a canine isn't good for blowing on anything.

I'm voting for a lateral incisor, because Pete just doesn't seem like a six- or seven-year-old to me, no matter how much the Death and Glories' independent lives mature them beyond others' years. And later, Pete bites into an apple, which is hard to do without middle teeth.

Out, Out, Loose Tooth

My mother gave my brother and I a nice crunchy apple to bite when she got tired of watching us play with a loose incisor. Tempting us to bite into a hard caramel Sugar Daddy lollipop never worked.

Her mother would tie a strong thread to a front tooth just as Tom did Pete's, tie the other end to a doorknob and slam the door. I know this because of Mom's mutterings when we wouldn't let her tweak a hanging tooth out, but I don't remember having a tooth outed by doorknob myself. We didn't get thruppence, we put an outed tooth under our pillows and next morning the tooth fairy would have



left a quarter. It probably bought about as much as Pete's thruppence, so when his dad matched it with another, Pete had a real bonanza.

The Professor's Laboratory — Ideas, instructions & fixes

Nancy's "Scarecrow" Figures, Doyle's Dancing Men, and a Chance Encounter with Baden-Powell

by Martin Beech (Courtenay, B.C.)

While secret signaling, in one form or another, is a feature in all of the Swallows and Amazons adventures, in *Winter Holiday* it predominates. Indeed, in this wonderful wintertime story we encounter signaling to Mars (with a flashlight), geometric signal boards, Morse code, flag hoisting, semaphore, and coded-pictures. The use of such signaling, of course, allows for rapid and silent communication, in code, over long distances.

For all this, if we learn nothing else from it is that codes and signals can be simple, subtle, and complex. A simple signal is that written into Dick's notebook, "flag on Beckfoot = start for Pole". To the outsider it is just a flag on a flagpole, but to the cognizant, however, it carries an important instruction (although the code makers do need to remember what the actual signal was supposed to mean¹). On a more complex level, the code based upon the north and south cones (▲ ▼), along with the square and diamond (■ ◆) allows for the development of a clear signal obvious to any observer, but the specifically assigned meanings of the hoisted shape-combinations are known only to the code makers.

While the latter coding can be arbitrarily assigned, other means of communication are more rigidly designed, and are in principle readable to anyone who chances to see, or intercept them. Such standardized codes include semaphore and Morse code. The Swallows, Amazons and Ds use both these standard methods of communication in *Winter Holiday*,

but we are also introduced to a pictorial twist with respect to semaphore – the "scarecrow signaling" of Nancy turned into Lowry-esc, matchstick-men pictures. Nancy explains to Dick that the arms pick-out the actual semaphore message, but the body and legs can be doing anything one likes.

The idea of incorporating a semaphore message into the arms portrayed by a crowd of figures appears to be an invention due to Nancy alone, since, as we learn in chapter 17 of *Winter Holiday*, "Nancy Sends a Picture" (figure 1), neither Peggy, nor the Swallows have seen such coding before. But they eventually work out the semaphore connection, and are able to interpret the picture once they have navigated a second coding trick.²

By introducing the semaphore figure pictures, Ransome opened-up a whole new way for the Swallows,

Amazons and Ds to send and receive secret messages, and he used the idea of such signaling again in *Secret Water* and in *Missee Lee*.

While Ransome appears, to the author's knowledge, to be the first writer to introduce such pictorial semaphore signaling, he was not the first writer to employ figurative encryption. This attribution falls to Arthur Conan Doyle, and specifically, to Doyle's *The Adventure of the Dancing Men*, first published in December 1903.

Deemed by Doyle to be his third most favorite adventure, the story of the *Dancing Men* hinges upon Holmes being able to decode a series of mysterious, child-like drawings. The code is in the form of stick-figures (dancing men), with the figures being distinguished according to arm and leg positions, as well as body rotations (figures standing upon their heads). Indeed, in Doyle's code the legs,

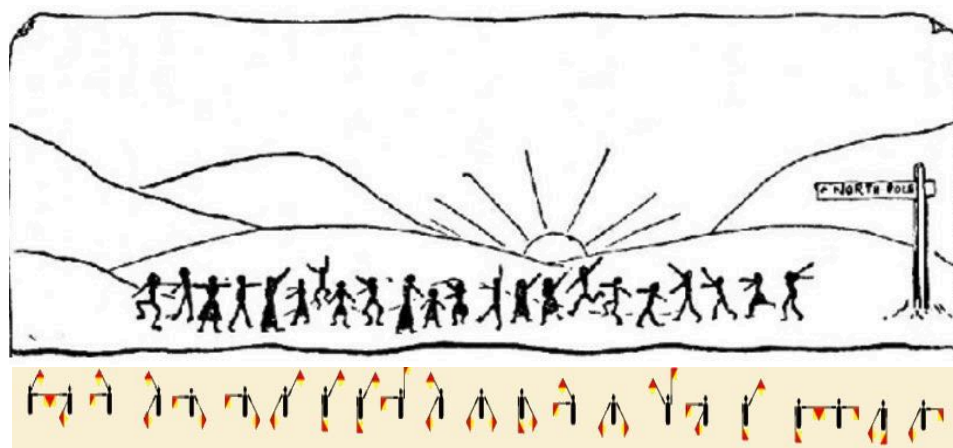


Figure 1: At the top is Nancy's picture with the onshore crowd signaling (to be read from right to left) the semaphore message, "Who is sleeping in the Fram". At bottom is the actual semaphore message. The semaphore figures are taken from Wikipedia.

rather than the arms, do most of the signaling.

Doyle was apparently inspired to develop the dancing men idea after reviewing the pages of an autograph-book that he had been asked to sign while on holiday at the Hill House Hotel, Norfolk, in May of 1903. Specifically, the autograph book contained a set of earlier signatures and images drawn by two children: Gilbert and Edith Cubitt³.

The drawing by Gilbert Cubitt shows a large ship and a sailboat along with an apparent crowd of waving figures. A closer look at these figures, however, reveals that the expression HASBRO, 1902 has been disguised amidst the figures by adding arms, legs, hats, and faces to the individual letters and numbers⁴ (figure 2). The letters are not so much encrypted in Cubitt's diagram, but are changed and reformed to the eye, disguising each letter somewhat in the style of a dazzle camouflage.

Neither the arms in Cubitt's picture, nor those in Doyle's encryption are based upon semaphore, and out of the entire alphabet, Doyle only defined 18 letter-to-stick-figure encryptions. Holmes is eventually able to crack the dancing men code, however, by carefully scrutinizing a set five messages exchanged between Elsie Cubitt and her would-be ex-suitor Abe Slaney.

Specifically, the decoding methodology hinges upon that of frequency analysis. In this manner, Holmes uses the fact that e is by far the most common letter in any English language text (followed statistically by t, a, o and i). With this knowledge in place, he then successively identified and substituted letters for the variously repeating dancing men figures.

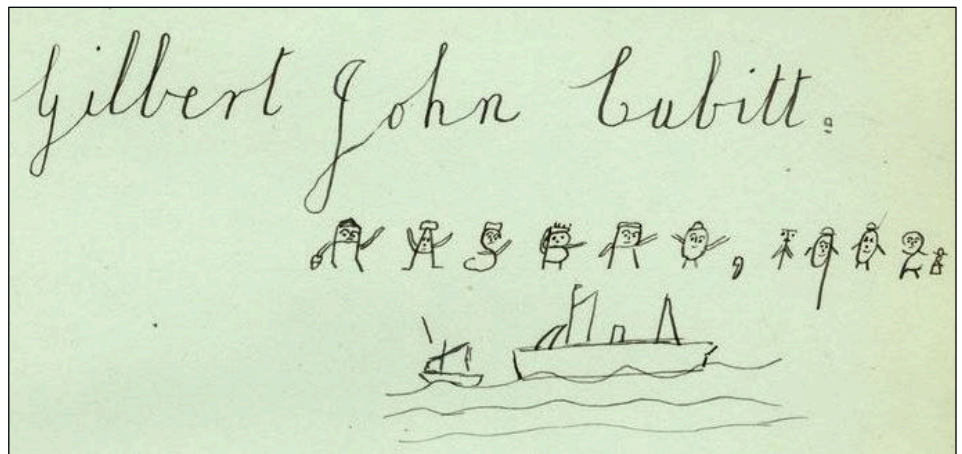


Figure 2: Extract from the autograph book showing the message from Gilbert John Cubitt. The disguised letters and words below the signature were the apparent inspiration for Doyle's dancing men cipher. The autograph book is now part of the Conan Doyle archive, located in the Baldwin Room, at the Toronto Reference Library. Image courtesy of the Toronto Public Library⁵.

In terms of the original dancing men figures given by Doyle, Nancy's message "who is sleeping in the Fram" would appear as shown in figure 3. The blanks in the first and last words, correspond to the letters w and f respectively, these letters not being defined in Doyle's encryption.

In common with other instances in the Holmesian canon, Doyle is somewhat slap-dash, and inconsistent with his facts and figures, and there is actually a mistake in one of the encrypted messages sent by Elsie Cubitt. The r in the supposed message "never" is incorrectly encrypted, and the stick-figure representing the letter b has been used instead (technically the message translates as: "neveb"). This may, of course, have been simply a typo, or a result of the excited state in which Elsie found herself after discovering

Slaney had tracked her down. Ransome (writing as Captain Flint) suffered from a similar mis-coding problem (eight times!) in the first version of his lengthy, conger-dance-like message in *Missee Lee*.

As with all things Sherlockian, his dancing men have been minutely analyzed and greatly discussed, and several computer fonts, with stick-figures covering the entire alphabet, have been developed. Danish expert on all matters Holmesian, Aage Rieck Sørensen claimed to have found a pattern in Doyle's original drawings, but this is a somewhat exaggerated claim, since he changed a number of the original figures so that they would agree with his proposed scheme. None-the-less, Nancy's message under Sørensen's encryption would appear as shown in figure 4. Given a need for individual-



Figure 3: "Who is sleeping in the Fram" according to Doyle's original dancing men code. Blanks fill in for the W in who and the F in Fram since there are no figures for these specific letters in Doyle's original encryption scheme. Figure images are from: http://www.arthur-conan-doyle.com/index.php/The_Adventure_of_the_Dancing_Men

ity and distinctiveness, however, the various dancing men fonts now available differ significantly in their representation of the 8 characters (f, j, k, q, u, w, x, z) left-out of Doyle’s original encryption scheme⁶. Figure 5 shows how Nancy’s message would appear in the dancing men font as developed by Gutenberg Labo, and it can be seen that the w and f stick figures are distinctly different from those in the Sørensen scheme displayed in figure 4.

One of the characteristic features of the encryptions used by Doyle and Ransome is that they are necessarily shown as individual figures, with the string or dance-line being necessarily

of the Scouting Movement, but in 1916 he was described as, “the famous British officer” who had distinguished himself during the Second Matabele Campaign (1896-1897), and in the Second Boer War at the siege of Mafeking (1899-1900). Along with the information needed on how to become a spy⁷, Baden-Powell described a method of semaphore coding that he had used during his time in Africa. In this scheme it is just the different arm angles that are displayed, with heads, bodies, and legs being completely omitted. In this manner, for example, the letter N becomes simply ^, the letter L becomes /, and the letter U becomes v, and each semaphore letter is joined

gles⁸. Indeed, figure 7 shows how Nancy’s message would look under Baden-Powell’s coding scheme. Interestingly, Baden-Powell indicated that such messages were often rolled into a pellet and then pressed into a small hole that had been drilled into a walking stick. This activity has a (semi)parallel with the *Swallowdale* ruse in which an arrow is secretly fired to onlookers in Horseshoe Bay from the Beckfoot launch. The message around the arrow’s exterior says to show the parrot its feathers – the real message being concealed inside of the hollow arrow shaft, and it being well-known to the Swallows (but few others) that Polly will shred and break apart any arrow that has been made with its own feathers as flights.



Figure 4: “Who is sleeping in the Fram” in the dancing men font developed by Aage Sørensen. In this diagram the figures with flags indicate word endings (Ransome didn’t actually adopt this notation). Figure generated from script at: rumkin.com/tools/cipher/dancing-men/.



Figure 5: “Who is sleeping in the Fram” in the dancing men font developed by Gutenberg Labo. Figure generated from script at: rumkin.com/tools/cipher/dancing-men/.

printed. Recently, however, purely by chance, when looking for something entirely different, I happened upon a form of semaphore encryption that is more akin to cursive, that is joined-up, semaphore writing than unitary printing.

The unexpected gem was found in the April, 1916, issue of *Popular Science Monthly*. What caught my eye was the article’s title “My Adventures as a Spy”. The 3-page article had in fact been extracted from the then recently published book, under the same title, by Robert Baden-Powell. Baden-Powell, of course, is perhaps best known today for his founding

to its companion, hand-to-hand as it were, by a dot, with the composite word being read from the top down. The word spy, for example, would translate as shown in figure 6.

Baden-Powell called his messages hieroglyphs, and at first glance they are just like random, dot-to-dot, squig-

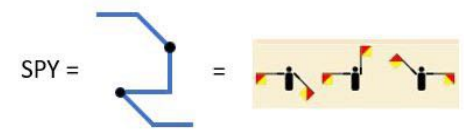


Figure 6: The word spy transcribed according to Baden-Powell’s ‘joined arms’ rule (center) and in ordinary semaphore (right).

The stickman figure is remarkably ancient in its origins, with examples dating back many thousands of years being found in neolithic cave drawings. Interestingly, the stickman figure seems to carry meaning beyond language and societal make-up, and it is instantly recognizable, as ‘a human figure’, to all cultures across both time and geographic location.

In the early to mid-20th century, when Ransome was working on his *Swallows and Amazons* books, however, the stickman figure had gained some notable traction as a popular icon through such animation shorts as Émile Cohl’s 1908 *Fantasmagoria*, and Walt Disney’s 1929 *The Skeleton Dance*. The word-guessing game of hangman also has a long history of play, but books and drawings in which a stick figure is figuratively hung (as per Roger’s doodle in *Missee Lee’s dictionary*) first began to appear in the early 1900s.

Furthermore, sociologist Otto Neurath began developing his ideas for a universal language in the early 1920s,

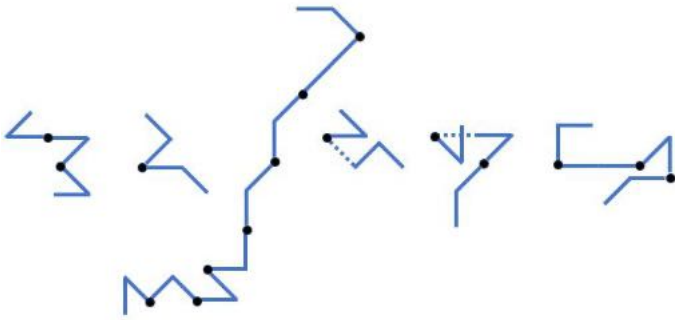


Figure 7: “Who is sleeping in the Fram” using Baden-Powell’s joined-up semaphore encryption. The dotted lines indicate where a slide ‘handshake connection’ has been made, with the two arm sequences being displaced from each other in order to avoid confusing arm overlaps (Baden-Powell didn’t actually specify this, but it seems like a useful, clarifying ploy).

and by 1925 these ideas had extended to the development of the international system of typographic picture education (isotype). The idea behind each isotype being that their appearance would provide a universally recognizable, non-verbal warning or instruction. Stick figures were (and still are) one of the prominent features of such isotype designs.

While such history, games, animations, and universal language isotypes seem an unlikely inspiration for Ransome’s “scarecrow figures”, they may perhaps have primed his artistic imagination. For all this, Ransome introduced his signaling-figures in 1933, post-dating Doyle’s usage of dancing men by some 30 years. It seems highly likely that Ransome was familiar with Doyle’s Holmesian canon, and it is also quite possible that he was aware of, and may have even read, Baden-Powell’s book *My Adventures as a Spy* (published in 1915)⁹.

While Ransome was likely not inspired by Baden-Powell’s notation of semaphore writing, it is entirely possible that he was inspired by reading Doyle’s *Dancing Men*. The use of

semaphore figures, however, is entirely new to Ransome, and absolutely appropriate for the exploration-themed Swallows and Amazons series of books.

Ransome certainly used his “scarecrow figures” in a more picturesque and charming manner than Doyle’s stark pictographs, and they are certainly

less obscure than the pointillist hieroglyphs of Baden-Powell. The glory of encryption, however, is that, within bounds, any scheme that is consistent ‘goes’, and that sometimes the best way to hide a secret message is to place it within full view, and Ransome (through Nancy) achieved this gloriously.

Notes

1: A major twist in the otherwise orderly progression of the *Winter Holiday* storyline comes about because Nancy forgets the agreed upon meaning of hoisting a flag at Beckfoot. Another example of a near disastrous use of a misplaced signal is that concerning John’s noon-time owl call at Beckfoot in Swallowdale. This signal-call, at such a time of day, had the unwanted effect of directly rousing the Great Aunt’s attention.

2: The message is written in mirror writing, and is to be read from right to left. Perhaps the best secret messaging system that Nancy came-up with, and she clearly excelled at the subject, is that within *The Picts and the*

Martyrs, when she cuts “no go” into the lawn at Beckfoot. I entirely agree with John Fletcher, that perhaps the most likely role that Nancy might have found for herself during the second world war would have been that of a codebreaker at Bletchley Park (John Fletcher. “Swallows and Amazons – what happened next”. *Mixed Moss* (2021), pp. 34-42).

3: It is no coincidence that Holmes’s hapless client in “The Adventure of the Dancing Men” is named Hilton Cubitt from Thorpe Manor, Norfolk. The adventure itself first appeared in the December 1903 issues of *The Strand Magazine* (in the UK) and *Collier’s* (in the USA).

4: This is possibly a shortening (or misspelling) of the Haisborough, or Haisbro, sand bank located off the Norfolk coast.

5: See: torontopubliclibrary.typepad.com/trl/2012/09/decoding-sherlock-holmes.html. In addition to including stick figure messages in “The Adventure of the Dancing Men”, Doyle also introduces the reader to the Caesar cipher, in which words are coded by shifting each letter in a word up or down a fixed number of places in the alphabet. In “The Adventure of the Red Circle”, Doyle introduces the reader to the Playfair cipher. In this case, a secret ‘key’ is required to unravel a message. A book cipher is introduced by Doyle in *The Valley of Fear*, where letters have been coded according to a page, line and line placement in a ‘key’ reference book (*Whitakers Almanac* in this particular instance). The fiendishly difficult to decode Vigenère cipher is introduced by Doyle in “The Adventure of the Three Napoleon’s”.

6: NASA fell afoul of such font differences when they added a dancing

men pictograph to the front of an instrument package called SHERLOC (The Scanning Habitable Environments with Raman & Luminescence for Organics & Chemicals) carried aboard the Mar's Rover *Perseverance* (Marc Fries, et al. "The SHERLOC Calibration Target on the Mars 2020 Perseverance Rover: Design, Operations, Outreach, and Future Human Exploration Functions". *Space Science Reviews*, 218, article 46 (2022)).

In this case NASA used, without reference, the dancing men font developed by Gutenberg Labo. If one tries to interpret the actual message "cache me if you can" using other dancing men encryptions, then the symbols used for f in the third word 'if' and that for u in the fourth word 'you' have no apparent translation, although the meaning of the chain would still remain clear.

7: Sherlock Holmes would presumably have recommended Baden-Powell's *My Adventures as a Spy* as vital background reading. Indeed, it covers such important topics as how to be a spy, how to change one's appear-

ance and walking style, how to recognize and catch a spy, how to lay down trails, and how to apply subterfuge in order to escape being caught as a spy. In matter of fact, Baden-Powell turns the tables on us, and while having described spies as being "like ghosts", in a section entitled "The Sport of Spying", he writes that one has, "on occasion to be a veritable Sherlock Holmes".

8: The only other example, that I am aware of, where a composite paring of semaphore symbols has been deliberately used, is that in the Campaign for Nuclear Disarmament (CND) symbol ☸, as designed by Gerald Holtom in 1958. In this case the semaphore symbols for N = ^ and D = |, are superimposed and placed within a circle. The N and D standing for nuclear disarmament.

9: Certainly, one of the key skills that the Swallows and Amazons, and to a certain extent the Ds, appreciated, and practiced was 'lurking', and not being seen by adults – that is, hostile natives. In this respect there is an obvious parallel between Ransome's stories and Baden-Powell's spy ad-

ventures, and the promotion of scouting skills.

Nonetheless I am not convinced that Ransome was trying to write stories with the intent of training young adults to be capable guerilla agents, who could defend England in the case of a hostile take-over and/or military invasion (see: Michael Bender, "Arthur Ransome's 'Swallows and Amazons' series: Harmless holiday adventures, or detailed preparations for the next war?". *The International Journal of Maritime History*, vol. 30, 508-518, 2018).

Baden-Powell's book would have had little practical value for Ransome, and while he acted as what might be called a 'gentleman spy' in Russia (see, Roland Chambers, *The Last Englishman: the Double Life of Arthur Ransome*. David R. Godine Publisher, Boston (2009)), as far as is known, he was never secretly amassing military information or passing-on highly-sensitive, top-secret political information.

Thole Pins, Rowlocks and Forcola

by Ian Sacré (Royston, British Columbia)

...In another minute the Mastodon, resting on his oars, floated up to them. He could hardly speak, he had been rowing so hard, and he looked much more worried than any of the Swallows.

"You're pretty lucky," he panted. "The tide comes in jolly fast. In another half hour you'd be swimming. What are you doing here? You might have drowned yourselves..."

(Secret Water, Chapter 27)

And so another Swallows adventure ended safely as the Mastodon, rowing his small dinghy, rescued Titty, Roger and Bridget and of course Sinbad from their perches on the pilings in the Red Sea, all in a manually, oar-propelled dinghy.

Oars have been used to propel small craft since



Modern pole propulsion

humans first started building boats and began venturing out on the waters of the earth. With the 'boatman' precariously straddling a blown down tree trunk, he probably propelled his 'craft' with a pole. The pole was later likely displaced by the paddle which in turn would have been displaced by the oar. But of course poles, paddles and oars are still all used today, with each device being selected to best serve the circumstances and propulsive needs of the boatman.

It is interesting to note that oars and paddles are in fact levers. The oar works on the principle of a first-class lever and the paddle works on the principle of a third-class lever. The thole pin, oarlock and forcola are the fulcrums of the propulsion systems. Because the oar is being used as a first-class lever the energy imparted by the rower probably results in the most efficient utilization of the energy expended, if you compare the three methods of propulsion available. (Big, eight-oared racing shells have been clocked at 14 miles per hour over a 2000-metre course!)

(For those of you determined to figure out how rowing, paddling and levers work, try the article on [Wikipedia](#). I looked but did not quite understand! – Ed.)



Thole pin

Thole pins are usually made of strong hardwood about an inch in diameter or slightly less, and in their simplest form are used singly, with the pin being inserted in a hole in a block fitted to the top cap of each gunwale, about 12 inches aft of the rowing thwarts. The oar is placed over the gunwale, aft of the thole pin to which it held captive by means of a simple rope grommet or quoit which passes around both the oar and the pin. The beauty of this simple system is that when one takes their hands off the handles of the oars the oars will lie quietly alongside the hull with the oar's blade facing aft. A useful feature if one needs a hand to quickly do something else for a moment.



Double thole pin

In heavier craft such as the cutters and launches used by the early North American Royal Navy marine hydrographers such as Captains Cook and Vancouver, their survey craft had thole pins fitted in pairs at the rowing stations and in rough water a lanyard would be passed around the tops of both pins, above the oar to prevent the oar jumping out from between the pins.

Many craft today still use thole pins instead of oarlocks, and thole pins will



Bronze oarlocks

often be found fitted in east coast dories and such like craft. They are easily replaced if lost or broken.

In early 1900's metal oarlocks, rowlocks or crutches were developed. They were made of brass, bronze or cast iron, which was often galvanized.

In common, they all had a single pin mounting, which fitted into a hole drilled in the top of the gunwale. Each manufacturer had different shaped crutches into which the loom (the shaft) of the oar was placed and rested.

In more recent times other oarlock forms have been developed to hopefully suit the specific needs of the rower. For instance, ultralight racing shells have their oarlocks mounted on outriggers. Rough water river rowers frequently use carbon fibre oars and strong oarlocks locked to the oar and gunwale. But the cox'n (steerperson) will often use old fashioned tried and true double thole pins. Dragon boat steerers will also often use double thole pins.

Perhaps one of the most unique rowing fulcrums was developed by the Venetian gondoliers for use on the narrow canals of Venice using single oar propulsion for their

famous gondolas. The oarlock or thole pin is called a forcola, and it serves as the fulcrum for their long rowing/steering oar.

The forcolas are beautifully made and carved from hardwoods. The base fits into a square or rectangular socket on the gondola's starboard gunwale aft.

To watch a gondolier manoeuvre his beautiful long craft through the narrow crooks and bends of the Venice canal system using a single oar is to watch poetry in motion!



Forcola in use

We do not need to be a Venetian gondolier using a single oar to propel a boat. Many 'proper' dinghies are built with a socket mounted on the transom into which can be fitted a single rowlock where an oar can be shipped to allow the craft to be 'sculled'. Better still, proper dinghies have a half circle cut out of the upper edge of the transom for the same purpose. I

have personally always made such a cut-out or fitted a rowlock socket in all the transoms of the small craft we've owned over the years.

In Chapter 4 of *Swallows and Amazons*, Arthur Ransome wrote:

In the stern of Swallow there was a half-circle cut out of the transom, like the bite

out of the edge of a bit of bread and butter. There was just enough room for an oar to lie loosely in it, so that the boat could be moved along by one oar worked from side to side, and twisted this way and that so that it always pushes against the water. A lot of people do not know how to scull over the stern of a boat, but it is easy enough if you do know, and John had been taught by his father long ago in Falmouth harbour...

Are you on Facebook

Despite the many problems with Facebook, it does enable groups of like-minded people to share and exchange. (These are the Ransome-related groups I can find. Let me know if you find any others — Ed.)

The Arthur Ransome Society (TARS) Facebook Group: www.facebook.com/groups/762560473886537/
(This is a closed group, so you will have to ask to join.)

Arthur Ransome's Swallows and Amazons in North America: www.facebook.com/groups/tarsfriends/

The Arthur Ransome Society in New Zealand & Australia: www.facebook.com/tarsnz/

The Arthur Ransome Group: www.facebook.com/groups/2612950856/

Ship's Library — Books (and movies) we've read and want to share

Collecting our Thoughts, Essays reflecting Arthur Ransome's reading

Edited by Margaret Ratcliffe (Amazon Publications, 2015)

Reviewed by Simon Horn (Montreal, Quebec)

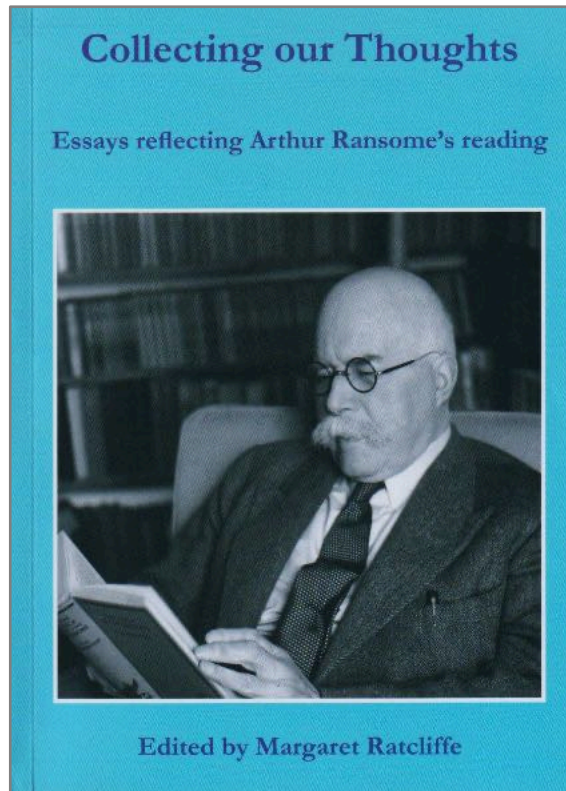
Collecting our Thoughts was the 2015 Amazon Publication. It brings together essays originally published in the TARS Library catalogs from 2000 to 2009, along with 10 new essays “on TARS Library, Swallows and Amazons and Arthur Ransome Themes”.

Margaret Ratcliffe's introduction explains that when the TARS Library was first set up, “Read as Ransome Read” was its motif.

The essays in that first Library catalog all dealt with what had happened to Ransome's books after his death, how they were first appraised and then later sold as a collection to the Pollak Library at the California State University, Fullerton, apart from some Ransome items that Evgenia Ransome donated to the Abbot Hall Museum in Kendal.

The essays from the following nine Library catalogs cover a wide range of subjects:

Christina Hardyment's essay “Buried Treasure”, which was first published in *The Independent* in 1994, talks about about Ransome's work on Robert Louis Stevenson (later put out by Amazon Publications in 2011). Commenting on *Treasure Island* Ransome remarks: “I open it to remind myself of some detail of technique, and, from that page I read willy-nilly to the end... In the last twenty years I must have read it at least twenty times.”



Ransome's own “Books and Under Twelves” (from the *Guardian*, 1935) discusses what matters to children. In his own words: “It seems to me... that what was true for me is true for under-twelves to-day, and that writers of stories enormously overestimate the value of the story as such, in comparison with the incidents for which it is an excuse. Children, I feel sure, do not worry much about the wood if they get a thoroughly good view of a few particular trees.”

Two other essays talk about Robin Collingwood and Ernest Altounyan, while Jeremy Gibson's “Combat and Gender Roles” contrasts attitudes to both fighting and the roles of boys and girls in 1882's *Bevis*, Ransome's

own work, and 1953's *The Honey Siege*.

Gordon Harrison's “So Similar, Yet So different” looks at the Oxus trilogy by Katherine Hull and Pamela Whitlock, while Lynn Mellone's “Ransome and The Hobbit” tells about our favourite author's correspondence with J.R.R. Tolkien and the corrections to the manuscript that Ransome suggested and Tolkien accepted.

The second half of *Collecting Our Thoughts* presents 10 new essays written for the volume by authors including Kirstie Taylor, Roger Wardale, Winnifred Wilson, Alan Hakim... the list goes on.

Did Ransome really teach the Altounyans to sail? Why did the Ransomes name two of their boats Lottie Blossom, a name straight out of P.G. Wodehouse? Did Arthur Ransome use libraries? What are we to think of Geoffrey Trease's Bannardale books?

The answers to these and many other questions can be found in the second half of *Collecting Our Thoughts*. Not to be missed, and you don't have to, since the 2015 Amazon Publication may still be available.

Like *Ransome on Blue Water Sailing*, reviewed in the last newsletter, as we go to press (if you will pardon the anachronism) copies are still available from the TARS Stall, for £15 plus shipping.

Beckfoot Kitchen — Eating with the Swallows and Amazons

The Search for the Cake

by Molly McGinnis (Manteca, California)

There was a hunk, the sort of hunk that really is a hunk, a hunk big enough for twelve indoor people and just right for six sailors, of the blackest and juiciest and stickiest fruit cake.

'And here's one of her best cakes, one of the black and sticky ones.' "The sort the G.A. said was indigestible," said Peggy.'

— Swallowdale

I was sure it would be one of my best cakes too, if I could figure out how to make one, so I tried. Who wouldn't want to have a cake like this ready for any occasion? After searching online and through my cookbooks, I concluded that pretty much anything goes, and made up a basic mixture with ingredients anyone in North America should have.

I used the following mixture a half cup at a time to make several trial cakes:

2 c all-purpose flour (mine was unbleached)
1/2 c dark brown sugar
1/2 c soft or melted butter
(pinch salt)

I stirred and rubbed this together with my fingers, but a hand or electric mixer or food processor would do as well. The idea is just to have a uniform mix base for the rest of the ingredients: soaked dried fruit, liquid, perhaps a bit of spice, and baking soda.

After one trial cake in a custard cup, I baked in small foil loaf pans and baked a final batch in a muffin tin, all well buttered. The cakes in the cup and the muffin tin were easier and came out more easily – they were certainly better looking. You can slice them or pretend they're hunks that really are hunks and just bite in.

I sampled the baked cakes right away, then left the pans overnight, tightly covered -- the cakes were even better next day. Dark cakes like these keep for a long time but not in my house!

The Fruit's the Thing

I experimented with various fruit and spice mixtures, and so should you. Every cook who makes dark sticky fruitcakes develops a unique recipe. Softened dried fruits are what

make the cake dark and sticky --whatever you have or can easily buy – black raisins, currants, chopped prunes were what I had. I'm not sure the currants were necessary – they didn't seem to add much to the cakes. Candied citrus peel or mixed fruit and a touch of spice livened flavor and looks.

About half my raisins were big fat juicy raisins from seeded grapes, with the seeds removed – the kind Cook would have had. I had some seedless raisins that needed to be used up, too, so my mix had both kinds.

Softening the Fruits

All recipes said to soften the fruits, usually by soaking. Red wine or port wine with some brandy or rum were often used, so I filled a widemouthed quart jar about 3/4 full with raisins, currants, and candied peel, poured in about 1 1/2 inches (two fingers) of brandy, and added red wine to the top of the jar, covering the fruits by an inch or so. I keep my candied peel in the freezer and it is quite dry and hard, so my mix included about 1/3 cup of candied peel. Fruitcake mix or soft candied peel might not need soaking, but it was handy having everything mixed together ready to add to the flour mix.



Prunes to make it sticky: Prunes in bags from the supermarket are very soft already and might not need soaking, or just a half hour in a bit of tea, wine, juice or – My Trader Joe’s prunes were very firm, as Cook’s would have been, so I cut them up and soaked them overnight in tea – tea was a standard soak for chopped prunes for baking.

(We know the GA wasn’t a teetotaller – that ginger wine Nancy swiped for Scarab’s christening – but these cakes aren’t “rich” with butter or eggs; could “too rich” just have been “too delicious” in her view?)

Other ways to soften fruits: tea, fruit juice and even hot water were mentioned in other recipes. A few suggested a last-minute method: cover the fruit with water (why not wine?), bring to a simmer, cook at a simmer until soft.

The Cakes

The mixtures go together so quickly that you need to heat the oven and butter the pan(s) before you start mixing fruit and flour. If the butter is hard, put a little chunk in the pan and warm the pan in the oven for a moment while it is heating.

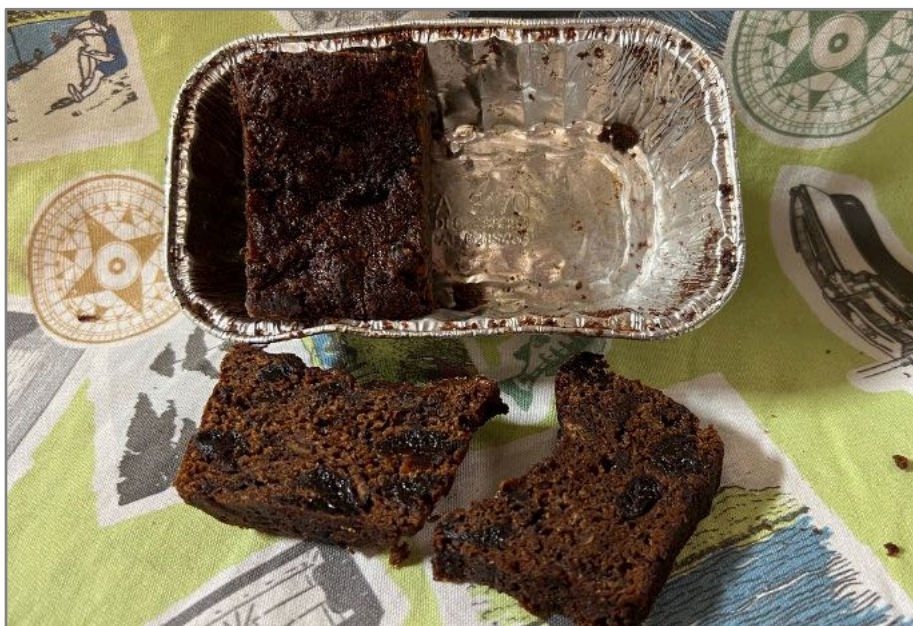
I fished soaked fruit out of the jar with a slotted spoon, held the spoon over the jar for a few moments to drain, filled the measuring cup with the still wet fruit, pressed it down with the spoon, and drained what liquid I could back into the jar.

The batter: I used the soaking liquid for its acid and to make the cake darker.

Testing for doneness: The cake will shrink away from the sides of the pan a tiny bit when it’s done. Testing with a skewer or ice pick is a little tricky, because it can be hard to tell if the sticky stuff on the skewer is raw batter or the fruit. The batter is a little lighter and softer than the fruit; the skewer worked on the muffin pan cakes but not so well on the little loaf cakes.

Cake One

The first trial: dark and delicious but light & fluffy. About half as much fruit as flour mix. I’d make it again anytime.



I baked it in a custard cup – a great way to test the mixture if you have a stovetop oven. Or, you could double the recipe and bake in a muffin pan. Butter the cups well or line with muffin cups. Preheat the oven to 375°F and measure into a small bowl:

1/2 c flour mix

(Coating fruits with the dry ingredient mix is supposed to keep them from sinking to the bottom of a cake.)

Then sprinkle

1/4 – 1/3 c fruit mix, strained as above over the flour mix and and toss with a fork.

Gradually add enough

soaking liquid

to make a stiff batter, beating hard to break up some of the fruit. Then sprinkle over the batter

1/4 tsp soda

Quickly beat in the soda, scrape the batter into the cup, bake about 20 minutes.

Cake 2: Darker and Denser

Equal parts fruit and flour mix, and no, I didn’t take a bite out of the slices! This was the problem with the loaf pans: the cakes rose more than I expected and the batter



The new mix was about half prunes, and I increased the proportion of fruit more.

2/3 c flour mix

1 c new fruit mix

1 heaping tbsp brown sugar, well packed

Sticky, Stickier, Stickest

The #3 cake was sticky enough for me, but some recipes said to melt currant jelly and brush it on top. You could also bake two layers and use melted jelly (almost any kind) to stick them

drooped over the top of the pan and cooked before the rest, which caused the middle to be lower than the sides. (The crispy top bits were delicious.)

1/2 c dry mix

1/2 c fruit mix

1/2 tsp allspice (scant)

1/2 tsp baking soda

soaking liquid to make thick batter

Fruiter, denser, not exactly “sticky” yet. Fill loaf pan no more than half full and lay a piece of buttered foil over the top . Bake at about 300°F (your oven may vary, but keep the heat low) for 35-45 minutes, let cool in turned-off oven.

Note: I baked about 45 minutes, lowered heat from 350°F to 275°F because the top was getting too brown. Allspice was perfect but the cake could have used a bit more sugar.

Cake 3, As Black and Sticky as Cook’s Best?

As usual, I overfilled the pan and when the batter rose and drooped over the top despite the largest ratio of fruit to base mix yet, the middle sank even more. I had very firm prunes from Trader Joe that obviously needed soaking: I chopped about 2/3 cup, added the bits to the fruit jar --less than half full by now-- and let soak overnight.

together. The cake Cook sent with the crew doesn’t sound that sticky.

Afterthoughts

I’m not sure even as much butter as I used was necessary (1 part butter to 4 parts flour).

I would usually use whole wheat pastry flour but wanted the ingredients to be accessible.

If I’d had any blackberry jelly or seedless jam left I’d have used it for the additional sweetening.

Allspice made the best cake; cinnamon, nutmeg, and clove would have a similar flavor but watch out for the clove, it loves to overpower all other flavors. Pumpkin pie spice has all these flavors plus ginger in one shaker bottle; British mixed spice is much the same (different brands vary).

Every kind of dried fruit you ever heard of was included in recipes I found; figs and dates in this kind of cake are quite authentic but what about candied or dried pineapple, mango, sweetened dried cranberries, candied ginger... It doesn’t sound to me like Cook’s cake had nuts in it but that doesn’t mean you can’t add them.

The muffins I made when I was teaching, which sustained me from 5:30 a.m. (driving) and through the afternoon field trip. are almost exactly Cake #1 with a lot of nuts added.

Ship's Papers — A Bit More

New Page Layout Program

I began editing Signals from *TARSUS/North Pole News* almost nine years ago – my how the time goes by – and given my background in editing and publishing a goal was to improve the layout of the newsletter. I wanted to take it from a simple word processor-based document to a proper mini-magazine that would hopefully be attractive to our members.

Now I have always worked on Macintosh computers, so I purchased a Mac page-layout program called iStudio Publisher. It was inexpensive – even today it costs only \$30 – and for the price it was remarkably capable. The “industry-standard” page layout program at the time, Adobe InDesign, cost hundreds of dollars, and today can only be had on a subscription basis that costs as much every month – \$30 – as iStudio Publisher costs once for a perpetual licence.

(Please, do not get me started on the subject of subscription-based software!)

Starting with this issue, however, I am using a different page layout program, Affinity Publisher.

Now, while I fear the rest of this may

sound like an ad for Affinity, all I can say is, just a satisfied customer...

Affinity produces three products: Affinity Photo, Affinity Designer and Affinity Publisher. They can all be purchased on a one-time basis – no subscriptions – either one by one, or as a bundle of three (\$95 Can. each, or \$225 Can for all three). If you buy all three you can essentially replace Adobe's higher cost standards, Photoshop, Illustrator and InDesign, for much less.

I could have continued with iStudio Publisher, and for anyone who is interested in getting started with desktop publishing on a Mac, I recommend it.

Affinity Publisher, however, is a more capable and sophisticated product, and it will let me produce the newsletter more simply and efficiently – which doesn't mean that you the reader will necessarily notice the difference, at least not right away. (And I am still learning it!)

But Affinity Publisher does have one more great advantage: it runs on both Mac and Windows, as well as on iPad (if you buy the 3-in-1 bundle you get licenses for all three platforms for no extra cost).



Now, I have every intention of continuing to edit *Signals from TARSUS/North Pole News* for the foreseeable future, but if for any reason I decided to stop, my replacement would not have to go out and buy a Mac if they already have a Windows computer, they would just need a copy of Affinity Publisher.

As always, let me know if you have any suggestions for the newsletter, and that includes the layout.

—Ed.

Stop Press

While working on this issue I have discovered what is either a bug with Publisher or, more likely, a mistake on my part: reorganizing pages, i.e., moving a page from one location to another in the document, results in messing up the text flow in the following article. I have managed to avoid/fix this problem, but I will have to figure it out for the future.

So much for teaching yourself new software in a “production environment”!

Signals from TARSUS/North Pole News is a joint publication of TARSUS (The Arthur Ransome Society USA) and TARS Canada.

The position of TARSUS coordinator is open; if you are interested, [please volunteer...](#)

The TARS Canada coordinator is Ian Sacré, gallivanterthree@shaw.ca

The editor is Simon Horn, sjhorn@gmail.com

Please send contributions, questions and suggestions for the newsletter to the editor.

Signals from TARSUS/North Pole News Index by Subject February 2016 - January 2024

Compiled by Simon Horn

Here is an updated index to articles in that have appeared in the newsletter since I have been editor, from 2016 through January 2024. The list is sorted by subject and then by issue and includes the title, the section, the author and the issue date.

Note that I have not included the regular Ship's Papers sections from the coordinators and myself, since they appear in every issue.

Remember that your PDF reader can enlarge the type if you find it too small.

Administrative			
NEEDED: a New Hand for the U.S. Helm	Administrative	Simon Horn	January 2023
The 2023 North American TARS Member Survey	Administrative	Simon Horn	January 2023
Is the Coordinator's Role Changing?	Administrative	Simon Horn	May 2023
The 2023 North American Member Survey Results	Administrative	Simon Horn	May 2023
Can North Americans Get Together... In Person or Online?	Administrative	Simon Horn	September 2023
Behind the books			
A Letter from AR to Helene Carter	Dipping our Hands	Marilyn Steele	September 2018
Thomas, Ransome and Adlestrop	Dipping our Hands	Lorne Brown	September 2018
No Moss on Uncle Jim!	Pieces of Eight	Molly McGinnis	January 2019
No Moss on Uncle Jim! Part 2	Pieces of Eight	Molly McGinnis	May 2019
The Beginning of it All	Captain Flint's Trunk	Molly McGinnis	September 2019
A Letter from Ransome, December 1931	Dipping Our Hands	Marilyn Steele	September 2020
Another Letter from Ransome, February 1932	Dipping Our Hands	Marilyn Steele	January 2021
Another Letter from Ransome, June 1932	Dipping Our Hands	Marilyn Steele	May 2021
Literary licence, error of fact, and story-line imperative	The Professor's Lab	Martin Beech	May 2021
Another Letter from Ransome, Nov. 1932	Dipping Our Hands	Marilyn Steele	September 2021
Missee Lee: A Possible Origin Story	Captain Flint's Trunk	Alistair Bryden	January 2022
Mummy, Mother, Mum?	Captain Flint's Trunk	Robert Dilley	January 2022
Animal Characters: Participants, Rescued and Rescuers	Dipping Our Hands	Maida Follini	May 2022
Inspiration for Ransome's Characters	Pieces of Eight	Simon Horn	September 2022
Did the Swallows and Amazons Visit Vancouver?	Dipping Our Hands	Martin Beech	January 2023
It All Hinged on a Folding Boat!	The Professor's Lab	Ian Sacré	January 2023
Swallows & Amazons and Class in 1930's England	Dipping Our Hands	Eric Benke	May 2023
Birds in the Ransome Books	The Professor's Lab	Maida Follini	May 2023
The Consequence of Keeping a Poor Anchor Watch	The Professor's Lab	Ian Sacré	May 2023
Alarm Bells From Far Rockaway to Beckfoot	The Professor's Lab	Molly McGinnis	May 2023
Is Roger Walker a "lazy little beast" to Nancy Blackett?	Dipping Our Hands	Andrew Fisher	September 2023
Camping			
The Tent Maker's Tale	Kanchenjunga's Cairn	Ian Sacré	February 2016
Arthur Ransome's Birthday Corroborree	Pieces of Eight	Nikki McLure	June 2017
Reflections of a Gear Junkie	Kanchenjunga's Cairn	Alistair Bryden	May 2019
Polar Region Sledging Rations & Recipes	Kanchenjunga's Cairn	Ian Sacré	September 2019
Setting Up Camp	Kanchenjunga's Cairn	Maida Follini	January 2024
Reflections on an Older Technology	Kanchenjunga's Cairn	Alistair Bryden	January 2024
History			
Grog!	Kanchenjunga's Cairn	Ian Sacré	September 2016
Vancouver Island, Sri Lanka and Hartlepool	Kanchenjunga's Cairn	Alistair Bryden	January 2018
Uh... um... What's a Telegram?	Captain Flint's Trunk	David Rawcliffe	May 2021
Tea, the Drink	Beckfoot Kitchen	Molly McGinnis	May 2021
In the "World of the Natives" – 1932	Captain Flint's Trunk	David Rawcliffe	September 2021
The Amazons and Other Pirates	Captain Flint's Trunk	Maida Follini	January 2022
Snowy Winter	Pieces of Eight	Molly McGinnis	January 2022
"Stout Cortez"	Captain Flint's Trunk	Alistair Bryden	September 2023
Me and Arthur Ransome			
Peter Duck and the King	Dipping Our Hands	Gordon McGilton	February 2016
Arthur Ransome in my Life	Dipping Our Hands	Gordon Proudfoot	June 2016
Arthur Ransome, Helene Carter & my Introduction to S&A	Dipping Our Hands	Marilyn Steele	September 2016

My Great Northern Coffee Mug	Captain Flint's Trunk	Alistair Bryden	September 2016
Confessions of an Armchair Sailor	Dipping Our Hands	Simon Horn	February 2017
Ransome's Winter	Dipping Our Hands	Peter Calamai	February 2017
Swallows and Amazons in the Far North	Kanchenjunga's Cairn	Catherine Madsen	February 2017
My Children and Arthur Ransome	Dipping Our Hands	Simon Horn	June 2017
Our Private Films	Dipping Our Hands	Peter Calamai	January 2018
Skimming Over the Ice	Dipping Our Hands	Maida Follini	January 2018
A Clay Medallion, circa 1954	Mrs Barrable's Gallery	Marilyn Steele	May 2018
AR Taught Me!	Dipping Our Hands	Richard G. Mills	May 2018
Sailing Around the Horn to the Goldfields	Dipping our Hands	Maida Follini	September 2018
Today's Sixth Graders' on The Big Six: "Booor-ing"!	Dipping our Hands	Richard G. Mills	January 2019
First Fish	Dipping Our Hands	Molly McGinnis	May 2019
On "Ransome's Illustrations"	Dipping Our Hands	Janet Shirley	September 2019
Pirates attack a US Coast Guard Gunship	Kanchenjunga's Cairn	Paul Nelson	September 2019
Pirates, Explorers, Indians, and other Imaginary Roles	Dipping Our Hands	Maida Follini	May 2020
My Discovery of Arthur Ransome	Dipping Our Hands	Audrie Cossar	May 2020
Churchill, Ransome, and Me	Dipping Our Hands	Paul Nelson	May 2020
Old Man Loves Swallows and Amazons...	Dipping Our Hands	Andrew Fisher	January 2023
Conch Shell	Dipping Our Hands	Kate Crosby	January 2023
Old Man Loves Swallows and Amazons... All of Them	Dipping Our Hands	Andrew Fisher	May 2023
My Favourite Book	Dipping Our Hands	Gordon McGilton	May 2023
After Great Northern?...	Dipping Our Hands	Eric Benke	January 2024
Puzzle/quiz			
Which Book? What's Happening?	Pieces of Eight	Simon Horn	February 2016
Winter Holiday Hike	Pieces of Eight	Petr Krist	September 2016
Crab Island Quiz	Pieces of Eight	Petr Krist	February 2017
A Book Maze	Pieces of Eight	Simon Horn	October 2017
Winter Holiday Word Search Challenge	Pieces of Eight	Elizabeth Jolley	January 2018
Swallows and Amazons Book Series Quiz	Pieces of Eight	Elizabeth Jolley	May 2019
All the animals were out searching...	Pieces of Eight	Simon Horn	September 2019
Can you connect Ransome's characters to the books?	Pieces of Eight	Simon Horn	January 2020
A Puzzling Situation	Pieces of Eight	Martha Blue	May 2020
Try out the AR Trust "Home Activities Resource Kit"	Pieces of Eight	Simon Horn	September 2021
Ransome country			
Ransome Country	Captain Flint's Trunk	Simon Horn	September 2016
A View of Tallinn	Kanchenjunga's Cairn	Robert Dilley	January 2019
Don't Count On the Sheep	Captain Flint's Trunk	David Rawcliffe	May 2019
Secret Water from Above	Captain Flint's Trunk	Robert Dilley	May 2019
At Last, Visiting the Lake District	Captain Flint's Trunk	Alistair Bryden	January 2020
Looking for AR Maps?	Pieces of Eight	Simon Horn	May 2021
Ransome's work			
Arthur Ransome in Yiddish	Captain Flint's Trunk	Avi Lank	June 2016
Bananas Everywhere!	Pieces of Eight	Molly McGinnis	June 2016
Ransome's Illustrations	Mrs Barrable's Gallery	Simon Horn	January 2019
Comments on "My reading Ransome's books in French"	The Ship's Library	Simon Horn	September 2021
Why Peter Duck and Missee Lee Are Not Just "Fantasies"	Dipping Our Hands	Simon Horn	May 2022
Reading & Collecting			
Who Before Me?	The Ship's Library	Kate Crosby	January 2021
Recipes			
Banana Blossom Salad	Beckfoot Kitchen	Molly McGinnis	June 2016
Swallows and Amazons and Pemmican	Beckfoot Kitchen	Ian Sacré	June 2017
Fried Cannonballs	Beckfoot Kitchen	Molly McGinnis	October 2017
Edible Igloo	Beckfoot Kitchen	Elizabeth Jolley	January 2018
A Winter's Feast	Beckfoot Kitchen	Molly McGinnis	January 2018
Susan Learns to Make Hot-pot	Beckfoot Kitchen	Molly McGinnis	January 2018
Bacon and Eggs!	Beckfoot Kitchen	Robert Dilley	January 2018
Miss Beckwith's Bunloaf	Dot's Latest Story	Molly McGinnis	May 2018
Blackberry Pudding	Beckfoot Kitchen	Molly McGinnis	September 2018

American Summer Pudding	Beckfoot Kitchen	Molly McGinnis	September 2019
Food for Invalids: Mumps Food, Flu Food	Beckfoot Kitchen	Molly McGinnis	January 2020
Dick's First Catch	Beckfoot Kitchen	Molly McGinnis	May 2020
Cole Slaw	Beckfoot Kitchen	Molly McGinnis	May 2020
Baked Beans	Beckfoot Kitchen	Molly McGinnis	September 2020
Who Is Sleeping in the Fram?	Beckfoot Kitchen	Molly McGinnis	January 2021
Sweet Tea for Summer	Beckfoot Kitchen	Molly McGinnis	May 2021
Foraging in Fall	Beckfoot Kitchen	Molly McGinnis	September 2021
Boats Full of Blackberries – Now What?	Beckfoot Kitchen	Molly McGinnis	September 2021
Mrs Dixon's Pork Pies	Beckfoot Kitchen	Adam Quinan	January 2022
Bringing Home the Catch	Beckfoot Kitchen	Molly McGinnis	May 2022
Great-Aunt Cookery	Beckfoot Kitchen	Molly McGinnis	September 2022
Real Recipes from Imaginary Stories: Missee Lee	Beckfoot Kitchen	Molly McGinnis	January 2023
Squashed Flies, Anyone?	Beckfoot Kitchen	Molly McGinnis	May 2023
Separated by a Common Language	Beckfoot Kitchen	Molly McGinnis	September 2023
Dinner with the Great Aunt	Beckfoot Kitchen	Molly McGinnis	January 2024
Reviews			
Nautical Reading	The Ship's Library	Ian Sacré	June 2016
Dancing on Ice	The Ship's Library	Alistair Bryden	June 2016
"Another Country"	The Ship's Library	Gordon McGilton	September 2016
When Swallows and Amazons meets James Bond	Captain Flint's Trunk	RYA Magazine	February 2017
Imaginary Worlds and Tove Jansson's Moomin Stories	Pieces of Eight	Elizabeth Jolley	February 2017
More Nautical Reading	The Ship's Library	Ian Sacré	June 2017
Try a LitWits Kit	Pieces of Eight	Simon Horn	June 2017
The 2016 Swallows and Amazons Movie	The Ship's Library	Simon Horn	October 2017
The New Movie	The Ship's Library	Donald T. Rice	October 2017
"The Twilight Years - Hill Top"	The Ship's Library	Simon Horn	October 2017
"The Boat in the Bay"	The Ship's Library	Simon Horn	May 2018
"Racundra's Third Cruise"	The Ship's Library	Ian Sacré	September 2018
"Those Snake Island Kids"	The Ship's Library	Lorne Brown	September 2018
"Western Reptiles & Amphibians"	The Ship's Library	Molly McGinnis	September 2018
"The Twilight Years - London"	The Ship's Library	Simon Horn	January 2019
"Those Sugar-Barge Kids"	The Ship's Library	Molly McGinnis	January 2019
"Back to Swallows and Amazons"	The Ship's Library	David R. Elms	January 2019
"The Marvels" by Brian Selznick	Pieces of Eight	Martha Blue	January 2019
"Swallows, Amazons and Coots"	The Ship's Library	David R. Elms	May 2019
"Extraordinary Birds"	The Ship's Library	Molly McGinnis	May 2019
The Mariner's Library	The Ship's Library	Simon Horn	September 2019
Swallows and Armenians	The Ship's Library	Gordon McGilton	January 2020
"Strike of the Shark"	Pieces of Eight	Aurora Blue	May 2020
"The Life of Arthur Ransome"	The Ship's Library	David R. Elms	September 2020
"The Curve of Time"	Pieces of Eight	Paul Nelson	September 2020
"Sunlight and Shadows"	The Ship's Library	Simon Horn	January 2021
The Boy, Me and the Cat	The Ship's Library	Paul Nelson	May 2021
No Holds Barred – Really?	The Ship's Library	Simon Horn	September 2022
Ransome Broadside (the 2005 Amazon publication)	The Ship's Library	Simon Horn	May 2023
Drawn at a Venture (the 2014 Amazon publication)	The Ship's Library	Simon Horn	September 2023
The Wager, A Tale of Shipwreck, Mutiny and Murder	The Ship's Library	Ian Sacré	January 2024
Ransome on Blue Water (the 1999 Amazon publication)	The Ship's Library	Simon Horn	January 2024
Sailing & cruising			
Sail Camping on the Nancy Blackett	Kanchenjunga's Cairn	Diane Tucker	June 2016
Before the Spray	Captain Flint's Trunk	Maida Follini	June 2016
Sailing Woo Hoo Across the Generations	Kanchenjunga's Cairn	Steve Crouch	June 2017
Getting Ready for the Wooden Boat Festival	Captain Flint's Trunk	Nikki McLure	June 2017
Cruise of the Lydia	Kanchenjunga's Cairn	Ian Sacré	October 2017
Cruise of the Sandhawk	Kanchenjunga's Cairn	Ian Sacré	January 2018
Fulfilling a Long Held Ambition	Dipping Our Hands	Alistair Bryden	January 2018
So What about that Wind in the Willows?	The Professor's Lab	Ian Sacré	May 2018

Swallowdale & the Salvage of Swallow	The Professor's Lab	Ian Sacré	May 2019
Biking, Hand Grenades, and Sailing	Kanchenjunga's Cairn	Paul Nelson	January 2020
On Reading Ransome while Sailing Sea Bear	Dipping Our Hands	Ross Cossar	January 2021
"Boxing the Compass"	Pieces of Eight	Ian Sacré	January 2021
Dad's Log: snapshots of sailing history	Dipping Our Hands	Alistair Bryden	May 2021
Favorite Seafaring Writings Remembered	The Ship's Library	Ian Sacré	May 2021
Swallow's Brown Sail and More	The Professor's Lab	Ian Sacré	September 2021
When You Can't Sail... or don't want to...	Kanchenjunga's Cairn	Molly McGinnis	September 2021
On The Spur of The Moment	Kanchenjunga's Cairn	Ian Sacré	January 2022
On The Spur of The Moment (continued)	Kanchenjunga's Cairn	Ian Sacré	May 2022
Voyaging on a Tall Ship	Kanchenjunga's Cairn	Jules Blue	May 2022
Under the Stars Aboard Sea Bear	Kanchenjunga's Cairn	Ross Cossar	September 2022
A Dinghy Mast	The Professor's Lab	Ian Sacré	September 2023
Stories			
Swallows and Amazons Continued	Dot's Latest Story	Louis Springsteen	September 2016
Dot and Dick in California	Dot's Latest Story	Molly McGinnis	May 2018
Dot and Dick in California	Dot's Latest Story	Molly McGinnis	September 2018
Dot and Dick in California - Nighthawks	Dot's Latest Story	Molly McGinnis	May 2020
Dot and Dick in California - Shore Trip	Dot's Latest Story	Molly McGinnis	May 2020
Dot and Dick in California - A Featherboard	Dot's Latest Story	Molly McGinnis	September 2020
"Written"	Pieces of Eight	Martha Blue	January 2021
Swallows and Amazons in Bermuda (NOT!)	Dot's Latest Story	Simon Horn	January 2022
Snake vs Cat: Who Would Win?	Dot's Latest Story	Paul Nelson	May 2022
TARS business			
The TARS 2015 Literary Weekend	Captain Flint's Trunk	Donald T. Rice	February 2016
My First IAGM	Captain Flint's Trunk	Elizabeth Jolley	September 2018
Voyaging & adventures			
The Bucket List Sand Yacht Saga	The Professor's Lab	Ian Sacré	February 2017
Tent for Two: A Year of Adventure	Kanchenjunga's Cairn	Elizabeth Jolley	October 2017
Gators and Pythons and Pirate Boys! Oh, My!	Kanchenjunga's Cairn	Paul Nelson	January 2018
"Catch-a-little"	Kanchenjunga's Cairn	Alistair Bryden	January 2018
Anne of Green Gables Meets a Kiwi Amazon Lobster Pirate	Kanchenjunga's Cairn	Cheryl Paget	May 2018
Tent for Two Roundup	Kanchenjunga's Cairn	Elizabeth Jolley	May 2018
Our Climb of Kinder Scout	Pieces of Eight	The Blue Family	May 2018
Off to Samarkand... via St. Petersburg	Kanchenjunga's Cairn	Alistair Bryden	September 2018
Tent for Two Wraps Up	Kanchenjunga's Cairn	Simon Horn	September 2018
A TARS pilgrimage to Norfolk	Pieces of Eight	The Blue Family	September 2018
Riding a Dromedary from Samarkand to Istanbul	Kanchenjunga's Cairn	Alistair Bryden	January 2019
In Search of the Great Northern Diver's Range	Kanchenjunga's Cairn	Ian Sacré	January 2019
What I Did in the Holidays	Kanchenjunga's Cairn	Alan Hakim	January 2019
My Gritstone Trail	Pieces of Eight	Martha Blue	May 2019
The Other Railway to Windermere	Kanchenjunga's Cairn	Simon Horn	September 2019
The TARS 2019 Literary Weekend	Captain Flint's Trunk	Donald T. Rice	January 2020
The 'Beast' Goes East!	Kanchenjunga's Cairn	Ian Sacré	January 2020
A Road and River Odyssey	Kanchenjunga's Cairn	Jill Blair	May 2020
A Road and River Odyssey - 2	Kanchenjunga's Cairn	Jill Blair	September 2020
On the Road to the Yukon	Kanchenjunga's Cairn	Alistair Bryden	September 2020
Panning for Gold	Kanchenjunga's Cairn	Alistair Bryden	January 2021
The Great and Epic and Magnificent Andele Adventure	Kanchenjunga's Cairn	Paul Nelson	January 2021
Bagging the Monroes	Kanchenjunga's Cairn	Jules Blue	January 2021
Go Fish!	Pieces of Eight	Molly McGinnis	May 2022
Whales Up Close	Kanchenjunga's Cairn	Maida Follini	September 2022
Moving On with the Circle of Time	Kanchenjunga's Cairn	Ian Sacré	September 2022
Adventures and Misadventures in the High Sierra	Kanchenjunga's Cairn	Maida Follini	January 2023
Snakes Rehabilitated	Pieces of Eight	Maida Follini	January 2023
Mountain Walking, East and West	Kanchenjunga's Cairn	Maida Follini	September 2023
Some Pictures from the Lakes	Kanchenjunga's Cairn	John Pappas	September 2023