

The Arthur Ransome Society

Note of the 79th meeting of the Board of Trustees, held on 6 October 2018 at Bishopthorpe near York

Present: Peter Wright (in the chair)
Amanda Ardagh-Walter
Stephen Benham
Chris Birt
Krysia Clack
Ted Evans
Ann Farr
Susan Gouldbourne
Linda Hendry
Brian Key
John Pearson
Kirstie Taylor

Action

1. Apologies for absence

Apologies had been received from Paul Crisp, Michael Glover, Julian Lovelock, Veronica Priest and Paul Wilson.

2. Chair's opening remarks

Peter said that it was an honour and a privilege to have been appointed TARS Chair. He thanked Chris for his four years of notable service as his predecessor. Peter intended to attach particular importance -to giving a more prominent place to the work and recommendations of the Literary and Resources Committee and Publications Committee; -to seeking effective action regarding the problem of declining membership numbers; -to ensuring the support and encouragement of TARS' junior members. Peter said that TARS had many powerful strengths and a wide range of successful activities. There was much to be positive about, in spite of certain weaknesses of which he had heard a good deal immediately following his appointment.

In discussion, it was suggested that it would be useful to include on the TARS membership application form the question "Were you a junior member?". Of the numerous people who contacted TARS with requests for information or advice, a good proportion appeared not to be members. In our replies we should include a link by which they could apply for membership. A more general discussion of how to increase membership should be held at the Board's next meeting.

John

3. Minutes of the previous meeting (27 May 2018)

These were approved with minor amendments as a true record; the final version would be

circulated.

John

4. Matters arising from those minutes and those of the Board's March 2018 meeting and not covered elsewhere on the agenda

-AusTARS Cup: Cheryl Paget (New Zealand) had now been informed that she had been awarded the cup for 2017 on the recommendation of AusTARS, which had been asked to send her directly a 'Slater Bob' coaster as a personal souvenir of the award. The cup itself should be mounted on a plinth to provide adequate space for engraving the names of the annual winners. Susan would look into having this done and took possession of the cup. Peter would inform AusTARS of the latest situation.

Susan
Peter

-Petrograd plan: Ted Alexander had expressed satisfaction that the plan would continue to be kept in the TARS library. Ann was exploring suitable archival boxing arrangements for the plan and would report back to the Board's next meeting. The problem of cooking fumes and smells from the café below the library would be drawn to the local authority's attention.

Ann

Peter

-'Encountering the Ransomes' DVDs: Chris asked to be informed if Board members heard of difficulties arising in navigating the DVDs. Ann would contact Christine Rae with a view to replacing if necessary one apparently faulty set.

Ann

5. Vice Chair of the Board

On a proposal from Peter, seconded by Susan, Michael Glover was appointed by unanimous approval Vice Chair of the Board. Peter would so inform him.

Peter

6. Report of the Literary and Resources Committee

In discussion of the note of the Committee's meeting of 7 July 2018 the following main points were made:

-Association of Literary Societies (ALS): the Board agreed that TARS should host the ALS 2024 AGM in late May or early June; the ALS would like the event to be held in the Lake District and could supply guidelines on organisation. A planning group consisting of Amanda, Susan, Chris, Stephen and Peter was constituted and would prepare a note for the Board's next meeting.

-Publicity: an advertisement for a new TARS Publicity Officer should be drafted for 'Signals' following Julian Lovelock's retirement from that post.

L&R

It was noted that the ALS might be able to advise on possibilities for boosting membership.

-Red Slipper grants: the Board noted with satisfaction the award of a grant to Karen Babayan for a book exploring the relationships between AR and the Altounyan children.

-TARS archives: an item would be placed in 'Signals' in search of suitable premises for collecting, examining and organising the archive material.

L&R

-2019 Literary Weekend: after a trawl of numerous possibilities a suitable Midlands venue had been chosen: the Agricultural University at Cirencester. The date would be the second or fourth weekend of September. An announcement would be made in 'Signals'.

L&R

-TARS Stall and merchandising: Peter had been informed by the Literary Executors that a licensing agreement would be required to authorise certain sales. Using the TARS logo of two crossed flags with the words 'The Arthur Ransome Society' would be permissible, but not the phrases 'Swallows and Amazons' or 'Swallows and Amazons for ever'. The Executors were, however, allowing some

flexibility for junior items with 'TARS for ever' or 'TARS ahoy!'. It would be advisable to start merchandising operations on a small scale, though attractive discounts might be available from suppliers of greater volumes.

-Peter had stepped down from the Committee's chairmanship; Julian would take the chair for a year and Ann would prepare meeting notes for a year.

7. Report of the Publications Committee

The Board took note of the minutes of the Committee's meeting of 22 September 2018.

Following a letter to "Mixed Moss" suggesting that new members should receive a brief historical note about TARS, AR and his works, Peter, Kirstie and John agreed to prepare a draft, much of the material for which might be found on the website.

Peter, John,
Kirstie

The Board agreed the Committee's recommendations that

-there should continue to be three editions of 'Signals' per year;

-the summer 'Outlaw' should be a standalone full length publication accompanying 'Signals';

-all TARS members should be offered the possibility of receiving the publications by electronic means, but with, at present, no subscription reduction (see also point 14);

-an advertisement should be placed in 'Signals' for new editors for 'Signals' and 'Mixed Moss', mentioning the possibility of transitional arrangements involving task-sharing, assistant editorships etc. The possibility of TARS covering the cost of a publishing software package should be discussed with the new editors.

Peter, Paul W
Pub. Cttee

The Committee had forwarded to the Board a note from Amazon Publications warning of the likelihood that publication of a new book might have to become biennial rather than annual, given the shortage of potential authors and a relative lack of interest on the part of members in subjects other than the twelve S & A books. Noting this with regret, the Board recorded its congratulations to Amazon Publications for the whole impressive series published so far. It was suggested that AR's play 'Aladdin', presented at the Coniston IAGM, might be published, though there might be copyright problems; the Literary Executors would need to be consulted.

Paul Crisp

8. Next TARS President

The Board considered the large number of possible names which had been suggested from various sources. An informal vote suggested that the following names in the following order were preferred: 1. Libby Purves, 2. John Sergeant, 3. Tony Ross. Peter would approach Libby Purves in the first instance.

Peter

9. Possible charity status for TARS

The Board decided after discussion of an oral report by Ted that a revised application for charity status should be presented to the Charity Commissioners.

Ted

10. Secretary's remarks

John drew attention to certain discrepancies and out-of-date information about regional committees appearing on the 'gateway page' of 'Signals' and on the website. He would email the regional secretaries about this.

John

11. Financial matters

Susan explained how TARS mailing costs in sending its publications to the members depended partly on whether VAT was chargeable, which depended in turn on the status of the carrier, whether for example it was public or private. Susan would contact Paul Wilson about the financial implications of current arrangements for 'Signals' and the possible alternatives.

Susan

Susan presented and commented on the current accounts situation and answered Board members' questions. Chris mentioned that Ted Yeates would be preparing the permanent copies of the 'Encountering the Ransomes' original recordings, etc., the cost of which was likely to be some £750.

12. Child safeguarding policy

The Board approved a slightly revised text which Amanda had prepared of the TARS policy document on this subject, taking account of updates in the national policy and rules concerned. The new text was signed by each Board member present; the absent members would also need to sign it. Amanda would prepare a statement on this subject for the TARS website.

Amanda

13. Equality statement

A statement of TARS policy on this subject, drafted by Peter, was approved by the Board and should be placed on the website. The Board noted that in agreeing at its previous meeting that the reasonable expenses of a carer looking after a TARS member at a TARS event should be covered, it had had in mind officially recognised carers.

Peter

14. Membership fee for Seniors

A number of Trustees considered that the £20 subscription fee for Seniors should be increased to the Adult rate of £25, on the grounds that Seniors - 46 % of the whole membership - were not 'paying their way'. The Board as a whole took the view however that any such decision should await a more considered review of all subscription levels and indeed of TARS' overall income and expenditure. In the first instance Peter would prepare an item for 'Signals' drawing attention to cost increases side by side with the decline of membership, the decision to hold subscription rates at their current level for the time being, the possibility of voluntary additional contributions from members and the probable need for a more general review of TARS finances. The Board should discuss at its next meeting the scope and organisation of such a review.

Peter

15. Report on the first TARS global event, 22 September 2018

The Board congratulated Linda on her successful organisation of this remarkable event, which had brought TARS members together world wide. Linda would organise in co-operation with Paul Wilson a suitable illustrated report on the event for 'Signals'. A new worldwide event should be planned for the year 2020.

Linda

16. Relations with Amazon Publications, the Arthur Ransome Trust and the Nancy Blackett Trust

Peter considered and the Board agreed that it would be useful to prepare with each

of the three organisations a brief statement of TARS' relations with them. This could reduce such problems as lack of communication, clashes of event dates and perhaps in particular questions about the respective rôles of TARS and the AR Trust. Peter would prepare a first draft of each of these texts for the Board's next meeting, and on Stephen's suggestion would consider the possible need for a text on relations with "Sailing 'Swallow".

Peter

17. Update on TARS 2019 IAGM

In the absence of a Southern Region representative the Board confined itself to noting the need for more information on the likely finances of the event and in particular whether financial support from TARS might be required. Susan would request such information.

Susan

18. Regional and other reports

The Board took note with thanks of written reports from Southern Region and on the Junior Adventure Fund. The regional representatives present gave oral reports on a wide range of recent events. A new South West Region Board member was likely to be proposed soon.

19. Date and place of the next meeting

Saturday 23 March 2019, Birmingham. Peter would look for a suitable meeting room.

Peter

John Pearson
Secretary

12 October 2018