

The Arthur Ransome Society

Literary and Resources Committee

Note of the Committee's 21st meeting, held on 28 January 2017 in Birmingham

Present: Peter Wright (in the chair)
Chris Birt
Nick Brewster
Ann Farr
Julian Lovelock
John Pearson

Apologies for absence

Apologies had been received from Winifred and Paul Wilson.

Note of the previous meeting (1 October 2016 in Kendal)

This was adopted as a true record.

Matters arising from the previous meeting note

Peter would contact the new TARS Treasurer, Susan Gouldbourne, about the transfer to the Committee's account of the 2017 allocation of £250 for the Red Slipper Fund. He would take the opportunity of the next IAGM to invite the Literary Executors to prepare for the Committee a note on their main orientations and activities.

Helen Lewis had reported that the new Swallows and Amazons film had reached the top ten of the national DVD rankings.

Julian confirmed that the Arthur Ransome Trust had recently publicised a new volume, recently published, including 'Old Peter's Russian Tales' and 'Coots in the North'.

The Alliance of Literary Societies

Peter informed the Committee of the agenda of the Alliance's AGM (2 – 4 June 2017 at Edinburgh Napier University), at which he would represent TARS. Certain TARS members living in or near Edinburgh (Winifred Wilson, Kirstie Taylor...) should be informed of the meeting. Peter could indicate at the meeting TARS' willingness in principle to host, probably in the Lake District, a future Alliance AGM.

TARS 2017 Literary Weekend

Peter presented the proposed programme of speakers. It was noted that the accommodation now offered to TARS at Edinburgh University was superior to that initially offered but would be made available at the same price. Peter would seek confirmation that David Middleton would again be willing to process members' bookings.

Leeds Russian Archive

This archive would be marking its 25th anniversary this year. Its exhibition 'Caught in the Russian Revolution' was due to open on 1 March in the Treasures Gallery of Leeds University Library. In this context Ann had offered the TARS Petrograd plan to Richard Davies, founder of the archive, but the offer had not been taken up as another map from the archive had already been selected. Richard had accepted an invitation to speak at the Literary Weekend on the subject of the British community in Petrograd, 1917-1918. Winifred should be asked to bring the plan to the Weekend.

TARS Library

The Committee considered Winifred's written report and noted that most of her recent library-linked activity had been the answering of email queries. Book borrowings remained at a low and indeed slowly diminishing level. The Committee asked Winifred to let it have available information on levels of borrowing and of other library work, e.g. correspondence, in recent years, together with an estimate of annual postage costs, as one way of seeking to increase borrowings might be for TARS to cover all postage costs. Another possibility might be to place on the TARS website regular brief pieces about specific books. The Committee recorded its thanks to Winifred and decided to continue at its next meeting its discussion of possible ways of encouraging library use.

TARS Stall, Amazon Publications

The Committee took note of Paul's written report and thanked him for managing the stall through to the end of 2016. There had so far been no response to the piece in 'Signals' seeking a volunteer to take over the stall. A number of possible candidates were mentioned in discussion and should be approached with a view to making an appointment - possibly for a limited period - at the latest by the IAGM, at which the stall was in danger of being conspicuous by its absence.

It was almost certain that the stock of the stall would have to be moved from Dumfries. The Committee asked Paul to inform it of the total remaining stock by categories, including Amazon Publications books. It was noted that whatever the future location of the stall it would remain possible for event organisers to collect and return wanted items themselves. The situation regarding the stall, together with the gradual increase in size of the library, made it all the more important for the bulk of the stock of Amazon Publications held in the library to be found a home elsewhere. Peter would raise this issue with Paul Crisp and ask him to look for a solution with Margaret Ratcliffe and Alan Hakim. A date should be agreed by which the stock in Dumfries would need to be removed; after that date any remaining stock would be disposed of.

Red Slipper Research Fund

The Committee noted that since its previous meeting it had agreed to make a grant to Cheryl Paget, the TARS New Zealand coordinator, on children's literature in New Zealand in the Art Deco period. Cheryl should be asked to envisage an article for 'Mixed Moss' on this project.

The Committee recalled that the sums available from the fund were not intended to finance major research programmes but to encourage TARS members to undertake relatively modest investigatory projects related to AR and his heritage.

Report of Publicity Officer

Julian reported that articles by him had been published recently in 'Ambleside Life' on AR

in the Lake District and in the East Anglian Daily Times on AR and the Broads. There had also been an item in the Daily Telegraph. His book had received a good review in the Times Literary Supplement.

Filmed Reminiscences Project

It should very soon be possible to start production of the DVDs; they might well be ready in time for the IAGM. The product would probably now consist of three rather than two DVDs. Decisions would be needed on the number to be produced, price, storage arrangements etc. The Committee's initial feeling was that sales might reach two hundred sets. It should be checked how much more it would cost to produce that total in two successive batches of one hundred rather than in a single batch of two hundred. A reasonable price might be £18 for a three DVD set and £15 for a two DVD set.

It was noted that the recordings comprised three main sections: Russia; the S & A books; the post S & A period.

Ann had begun work on an article for 'Mixed Moss'.

TARS Archives

Ann, Chris and Veronica Priest had approached a number of likely holders of possible archive material but the response so far had been minimal. The material which emerged should be divided into three main categories: true historical archive material; significant administrative material, for example series of meeting papers; items of limited value which could be discarded. A home or homes would need to be found for what was to be retained, which would need to be catalogued. Ann and Winifred might be able to identify relatively quickly the probably sizeable element which need not be retained. This treatment should be applied soon to at least a part of the material, including that held by Helen and Geraint Lewis. Chris would discuss initial action with Winifred and the Lewises.

Follow-up to TARS Baltic trip of September 2016

Chris said he intended to raise this subject at the Trustees' next meeting. The main questions which appeared to arise were what kind of further TARS visits might be desirable concerning this important period of AR's life; and what specific items of further research might be pursued following the recent visit.

An article for 'Mixed Moss' would also be needed.

Date and place of next meeting

Sunday 3 September 2017, during the Literary Weekend in Edinburgh.

John Pearson

Meeting Secretary

12 February 2017