

# SIGNALS

**THE MAGAZINE OF THE ARTHUR RANSOME SOCIETY**

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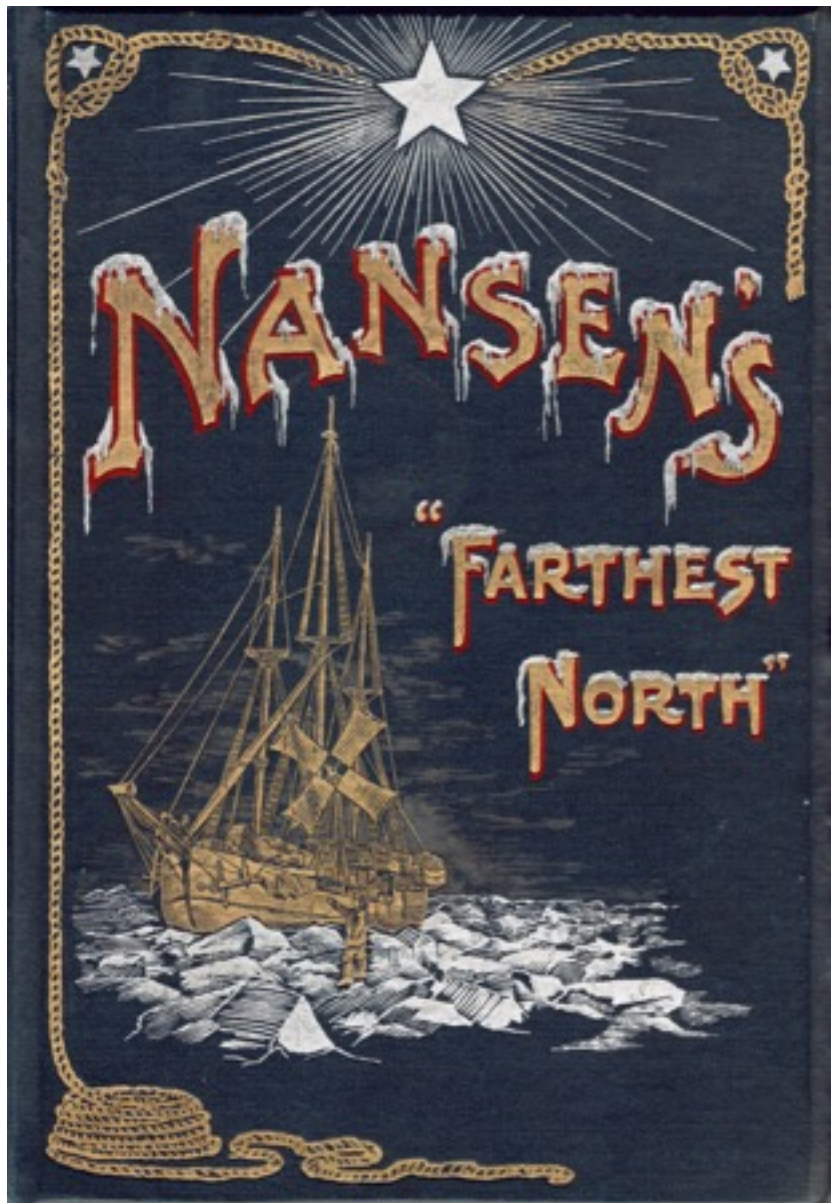
**WINTER HOLIDAY  
and  
RANSOME'S NANSEN**

**Enjoy Belle's  
Lakeland Summer**

**Discover  
allthingsransome**

**Meet Catherine  
Lamont**

**Book for the  
2021 IAGM**



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**JANUARY-APRIL 2021 INCLUDING DESPATCHES**

# The Arthur Ransome Society

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# SIGNALS



## THE MAGAZINE OF THE ARTHUR RANSOME SOCIETY JANUARY-APRIL 2021

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### From the Editor

## The darkness before teatime

When I took on the editorship of *Signals*, I was very conscious of the need to provide something for those members – possibly the majority – who don't choose to attend the events organised by the Society, and possibly don't even regard themselves as members of the geographical regions they happen to live in.

Right now, what with a triple-tiered lockdown, more of us than ever are probably confined indoors more than we might choose to be. The good news is that whatever Nancy might think, there are plenty of ways to keep this long, dark, covid-laced afternoon of winter at bay while we await the brief, bright teatime of Christmas.

And not just with a quiet game of dominoes; I have to marvel at the ingenuity of some of us who seem to regard lockdown as a challenge rather than a restriction. Nor is it all Zoom quizzes. Read about Fiona Fyfe's virtual row to Wild Cat Island (p27). And why not explore Nansen's *Fram* at its museum in Oslo online (p13)? Or use our handy introduction to enjoy a rummage in All Things Ransome (p9)?

For some of us in the Eastern Region, the last few months have involved preparing for next year's IAGM. Even though we have to recognise it may not actually happen, this has been an enjoyable activity in itself. And the possibility that it will come to pass after all seems to be increasing on an almost daily basis.

By coincidence (or design?) the last *Furthest South* included a well-researched article about our own (and the *Goblin's*) Harwich Harbour and its ferry services in the 1930s by New Zealander Garry Wood, which I've purloined (p40). Alas I had no room for some splendid photos – but I urge you to look up the whole thing (and more) in *Furthest South* on the arthur-ransome.org website.

Meanwhile Christmas itself is the next feast to look forward to. We all have our little rituals to help celebrate it - in our household they include a book called *The Mousehole Cat* (and a fish pie) and listening to Gabriel Woolf reading *Winter Holiday*. However you choose to celebrate, I hope we all have an enjoyable festive season!

*Peter Willis*

**This issue's cover:** Was this the cover of the houseboat's edition of *Farthest North*? Let's hope so! More about this on p12.

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# The TARS Stall



## Adult T-Shirts

£22+ £3.50 p+p

### Unisex,

mid blue or white

Medium W 21in L 28in

Large W 22in L 30in

X Large W 23in L 31in

XX Large W 24in L 32in

### Ladies,

mint green or white

Small W 16.5in L 24in

Medium W 19in L 25in



## Polo Shirts

£20+ £3.50 p+p

Unisex, light blue or maroon

Medium Width 21in Length 28in

Large Width 22in Length 30in

X Large Width 23in Length 32in

XX Large Width 26in Length 33in

Ladies, light blue or pink

Small Width 16.5in Length 22in

Medium Width 18in Length 26.5in



## Sweatshirts

£22+ £3.50 p+p

Unisex, maroon

Medium W 23in L 27in

Large W 24.5in L 28.5in

X Large W 26in L 29.5in



## Children's T-Shirt

'TARS AHOY!' logo

£10+ £3.50 p+p

Mid blue or lime green

Ages

W 17.5in L 23in 7-8yrs

W 18.5in L 24in 9-11yrs

W 19.5in L 26in 11-13y

UK postage and packing shown for individual items. Postage rates have gone up. If ordering from previous Signals, add 50p to charge: £3 becomes £3.50 etc or contact Christine.

For multiple items, or overseas costs, please contact:

Christine Rae, The Manor House, Church Lane, Houghton, STOCKBRIDGE, Hampshire SO20 6LJ; by telephone +44 (0)1794 388897, preferably 6-8pm (but not to make card payments, can't be done); e-mail: tarsstall@arthur-ransome.org.uk. or SAE.

Payment may be made by PayPal to: tarsstall@arthur-ransome.org or by cheque payable to: TARS Stall. BACS payment details on request.

More Stall selections in this issue on Page 43 or the full list of stock items can be found on the TARS website [arthur-ransome.org](http://arthur-ransome.org)



## CHAIRMAN'S REPORT from Peter Wright

When I wrote the first draft of this note, England had just been put back into a strict lockdown in an attempt to combat the growing second wave of Covid-19 and the other home nations had similar measures in place. Elsewhere in the world, countries have been doing their utmost to counter the virus. Wherever you live (and a fifth of members live outside the UK), I hope you are managing to stay safe and well and coping with all the limitations and restrictions that are in place. In the last few weeks, however, positive results from Covid-19 vaccine trials have provided much-needed good news and there is now much more optimism that at some stage in 2021 we may be able to get on top of the virus and return to something like normal.



In common with most other organisations, we had to cancel or postpone nearly all our planned events, including The IAGM at Lechlade and the trip to Russia and the Baltic states. Planning of the 2021 IAGM however has continued (and our thanks go to the Eastern Region), and although we cannot yet say with certainty it will go ahead, there is now much more hope that it may be possible. Plans for the 2021 Literary Weekend have also been disrupted, not least as potential venues have been unwilling to allow us to visit or are not yet entertaining bookings. Hopefully by the spring edition of *Signals* we will have secured a venue and put together a full programme of speakers.

If there is one silver lining to the Covid cloud it is that many of us have become familiar with the benefits of Zoom or Skype. I know that many regions and countries have organised virtual events and activities. I for one have taken part in three TARS quizzes, several discussions and two business meetings. I know that more activities are being planned this way and I would thoroughly recommend this form of virtual get together, there is plenty of TARS fun to be had.

I must highlight one of the Zoom meet-ups I had. I, along with Krysia Clack, the newly appointed overseas representative on the Board, had been invited to join a get-together of Australian and New Zealand members. Despite having to join at midnight, it was a great privilege and pleasure to be able to join with members down-under. Krysia and

I were able to update the 25 or so members about the most recent TARS news and explain how we are both keen to ensure that overseas groups and members are seen as just as much a part of TARS as members in the home countries. We then enjoyed a debate, introduced by Cheryl Paget, about Ransome's love of fairy stories and to what extent they or their influence could be detected in the 12 *S&A* books.

Mentioning Cheryl Paget, I would like to express my thanks to her for all her hard work and enthusiasm in recent years in co-ordinating TARS in New Zealand. Cheryl has had to stand down from her co-ordination role due to serious ill health but typically had already sorted out a handover plan. My thanks go to Barbara and Neil Robertson who will look after the subs and financial matters in NZ, and to Jan Allen and the Australian Committee who will help with the administrative side. This co-operation between the two countries (already seen in the production of *Furthest South*) is exemplary – long may it continue.

Turning to other matters, you may recall that I have been reading all the Carnegie medal winning books. About a month ago I finally finished the task. I will now write an article for *Mixed Moss* summing up my experience, sharing a few opinions and setting out a couple of ideas the Carnegie selection committee might wish to ponder. There's a short update by Peter Willis (Signals editor) on the subject in this issue – see page 7.

Reading is one of the great pleasures we can all do during the pandemic and I know many have used the opportunity to re-read the *Swallows and Amazons* series, or revisit the many excellent Amazon publications. I have recently been dipping into *Before a Peak in Darien* and note in Paul Crisp's introduction that Ransome in his autobiography wrote, "A Leeds weekly magazine the very name of which I forget printed some small rubbish that I wrote". Paul goes on to say, "It is a great pity one does not know the name of that weekly magazine. If any copies of it still exist in some archive, therein lies the very first published work of Arthur Ransome – an admirable research project which I leave to you to carry out!" Paul wrote that in 2008 – I wonder if anyone has undertaken the research and discovered Ransome's first work? If so, I'd be pleased to hear of it; if not, then can I endorse Paul's plea and encourage someone to take up the challenge. **Peter**

## NEWS FROM THE BOARD

Due to the coronavirus pandemic the Board was unable to meet in York on 3<sup>rd</sup> October as originally planned. Instead, for the first time ever, we met virtually via Zoom. The following are the major points and actions arising from the meeting.

### Chairman's opening remarks

**IAGM:** Given it had not been possible to meet at Lechlade, the key motions put forward in the IAGM papers had been voted upon by members using a proxy vote. 57 votes had been returned and all motions had been passed either unanimously or with a very substantial majority. Accordingly, Diana Wright and Marc Grimston were welcomed and congratulated as newly elected trustees.

**Regional Trustees:** Barry Gouldbourne, Elizabeth Williams and Iain Khan-Gilchrist were appointed by the Board as the new regional trustees for South West, North and South regions respectively.

**Overseas Co-ordinator:** Krysia Clack volunteered to be the new overseas co-ordinator.

**News of members:** It was noted with sadness that due to serious illness, Cheryl Paget, the New Zealand co-ordinator, has had to step down from her role. Arrangements have been put in place with Neil and Barbara Robertson (NZ) and Jan Allen (Australia) to cover the financial and administrative arrangements going forward. The recent sudden death of Peter Truelove was noted with sadness.

### Report of the Literary & Resources Committee

The Committee had met via Zoom on 24<sup>th</sup> September.

**Copyright Libraries:** Krysia Clack confirmed that all books published by **Amazon**

**Publications** should be lodged with the British Library and other copyright libraries. Although most have been, a few have slipped through the net and this will now be put right. It was noted *Mixed Moss* is always deposited with the copyright libraries. Explorations will be made as to whether in future the libraries would prefer to receive versions electronically and whether they would also like to receive copies of the transcripts of the literary weekends.

**Index for Mixed Moss:** Paul Wilson had prepared a fine index to the *Mixed Moss* articles for the years from 2007 – now available on the website. He has also volunteered to index the Literary Weekend transcripts.

### Donation to Moat Brae:

Winifred Wilson, TARS Librarian, has recently presented a set of the 12 books in the S&A series to Moat Brae.

### Publications Committee

**Publications:** The September mail out of *Signals*, *The Outlaw* and *Mixed Moss* had gone smoothly. This included 127 electronic transmissions of which 27 were copies of *Mixed Moss*.

**Sustainable Packaging:** The Committee (endorsed by the Board) is to explore a more sustainable type of envelope than the current plastic one. It is hoped this can be achieved for the next mail out.

### TARS Website

The Board congratulated Diana on the production and launch of the new website which has received widespread praise. It also agreed she should receive support on the technical aspects of 'Wordpress', the website content management system we use. A small sub group (under the L&R Committee) will be formed to assist Diana on the management of the site.

### Future IAGMs

Eastern region have plans in hand for the **2021 IAGM**, which will include a talk by TARS President Libby Purves. It remains possible the Coronavirus pandemic will not allow the event to take place, in which case a decision to cancel will be taken no later than early April. Should this happen the possibility of a virtual IAGM business meeting will be explored.

It was confirmed that **future IAGMs** will be organised by: Scotland in 2022, Midland in 2023 and South/SW (joint) in 2024, the latter possibly running the aborted 2020 IAGM programme at Lechlade.

### 2021 Literary Weekend

Oxford is being explored as a possible location, with Ruskin College a potential venue.

### AusTARS Cup

Following a recommendation from the Australian Committee, new arrangements for awarding the AusTARS Cup have been agreed. Paul Wilson is to receive the 2020 award (see elsewhere in *Signals*). Nominations for the 2021 award were discussed.

### Relations with other AR related organisations:

A proposal outlining the mutual relationship between TARS and the Nancy Blackett Trust (NBT) has been agreed with the NBT.

It sets out how we can work and co-operate with each other to our mutual benefit. The Board awaits a response from a similar approach to the Arthur Ransome Trust.

**TARS Insurance:** Further work will be done to explore whether we can find a better insurance policy that gives greater protection to TARS and its members.

**Data Protection and Privacy:** The Board has adopted a new policy outlining how members' personal information will be used and protected in compliance with the European General Data Protection Regulations. The policy may be viewed on the TARS website.

**Visit to Russia and the Baltic:** Due to the coronavirus pandemic the proposed September 2020 trip has had to be postponed. Although an alternative option in April/May 2021 is being explored, this will only proceed if regulations and Government guidance permit.

**Coch-y-Bonddhu:** The Scotland Committee was charged with exploring options for the future location and safekeeping of *Cochy* once the current 5-year arrangement with Windermere Jetty expires, at the end of December 2022.

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Date of next  
Board Meeting

Saturday  
13 March 2021

Location to be  
arranged, but probably  
over Zoom



## AusTARS CUP

### 2020 winner: multi-tasking Paul Wilson

The 2020 winner of the AusTARS Cup is **Paul Wilson**, recognising his major and varied contributions to the society, first through running the Society Stall for four years, and then editing *Signals* for three years to January-April 2020. Since then he has been compiling

an index for *Mixed Moss*, and is now undertaking the long-overdue task of doing the same for the transcripts of the literary weekends. He also serves on the Literary & Resources Committee, and provides support for his wife Winifred, TARS Librarian who herself won the award in 2018. TARS Chairman Peter Wright comments: "If ever a volunteer deserved recognition it is Paul – he is a most worthy winner and we send him our heartiest thanks and congratulations."

**The AusTARS Cup** was donated to the Society in 1997 by James (Jim) Hawkins from Mosman, New South Wales, the first Antipodean to join TARS and subsequently the AusTARS liaison person. In recognition of this, he was presented, informally, with a Dartington glass beer mug from the TARS South-West Region, by a member who was visiting Australia in August 1994.

When Jim and his wife came to the 1997 IAGM, he thought it would be a nice touch to reciprocate a similar gift to TARS. He obtained an EPNS souvenir beer mug, from a marine antique dealer and had it engraved as the AusTARS Cup. Jim did not stipulate any rules for its award but at the end of the IAGM the Board announced it should be awarded annually to a member who had contributed significantly to the ideals of TARS in the previous year.

By the mid 2010's however the tradition appeared to be waning with no award made for a couple of years and its purpose becoming obscure. Keen to maintain its significance, the Australian Committee proposed, and the Board agreed, a new set of criteria for the Cup and since 2017 it has regained its prominence. A perpetual trophy, the Cup is held for one year by a serving member and there is an aim to award it alternately between a UK member and an overseas one, although this can be varied according to worth. Additionally, each winner receives a small Lakeland slate drink coaster, called a *Slater Bob*, also donated by Jim, as a permanent memento.

More recently the guidelines have been tweaked to recognise contributions to TARS over many years rather than for a single year; also to align the award to the year in which it is presented rather than the previous year. Thus we've had two presentations in 2020; the 2019 winner, Simon Horn, was announced earlier this year.







A welcome at Windermere Jetty - but which AR do they mean? Right: filming *Swallow*

## Swallows out in force at Antiques Roadshow shoot

*In September, Windermere Jetty was sealed off for two days to enable closed-set filming for an episode of the BBC's Antiques Roadshow. Ransome-related items featured on both days, with Swallow, the dinghy from the 1974 film, invited for filming on day one, and Sophie Neville on day two.*

### Swallow afloat

I assumed *Swallow* – the dinghy used in the 1974 film – would be standing on her trailer while I talked to an expert about how the Sail Ransome group got her at auction, and our objective of keeping her sailing and taking people out, writes Rob Boden.

However, when Rupert Maas, the art expert, walked up and introduced himself it became clear we would be conducting the interview afloat. Rupert proved to be a keen Swallows and Amazons enthusiast, and especially a fan of the film which he saw as a teenager and which encouraged him to take up sailing – with some effect, as he sailed the Atlantic in his 20s. He owns boats still.

*Swallow* was moored up next to a RIB used by the cameraman. We were carefully measured to make sure we were two metres apart, which was achieved by me sitting on the forward thwart and Rupert Maas in the stern. The filming took more than half an hour; at the end we cast off and sailed out a bit, but the wind was dropping. Apparently the director was suggesting sending out the rib to rescue us, but we sailed then rowed back in.

You can find out more about *Swallow* on our Facebook page – “The Swallow from the film”.

*Peter Willis adds:* Rob was given a valuation for *Swallow*, but like Sophie and all other *Antique Roadshow* participants he was sworn to secrecy until the show goes out - probably in March. However, when I pressed him on whether we – the contributors to the auction fund when she came up for sale back in 2010 – would discover we were robbed, he reassured me that we weren't.



### Sophie ashore

**‘it became clear that I was the antique they wanted to feature’**

When Lakeland Arts declared the *Antiques Roadshow* was coming to Windermere Jetty, writes Sophie Neville, I sent the BBC a photograph of some of the props from the 1974 film of *'Swallows and Amazons'*, hoping their expert on movie memorabilia might be interested in the posters, but not thinking that a hand-whittled bow and arrow could be worth much.

However, when the BBC invited me up to the Lake District, it became clear that I was the antique they wanted to feature. The need for my date of birth turned out to be due to Covid-19 restrictions, but apparently provenance is all-important.

Filming was already in progress when we arrived at the museum. It was pouring with rain, but numerous marquees had been erected to protect the impressive camera and lighting equipment. *Antiques Roadshow's* art expert, Rupert Maas, a great Arthur Ransome fan, came to say Hello.

We were then introduced to Marc Allum, the antiques expert interested in memorabilia, and the designer, who whisked off various items I'd brought with me.

Once at the water's edge, I met Debbie, the director, who asked if she could call me Titty.

My position in front of the cameras was marked by small sticks in exactly the same way as when filming of *'Swallows and Amazons'*. Camera tape would not stick to the slate shingle.

A measuring rod was used to ensure we remained two meters apart, even whilst on camera, before I was asked to take up my bow and arrow which had been made on location long ago. The display included Captain Flint's white elephant flag and *Swallow's* burgee. I did ask for the other flags to be crossed, but the significance of this was lost on the design team.



Sophie with Marc Allum, memorabilia expert; below: flags, properly crossed, and photos

There is already a framed movie poster at the Windermere Jetty museum. I'd dug out a large, sepia poster designed for cinemas that has not been seen since 1974, but it was not featured for copyright reasons. Instead, we talked about the film premiere and influence that *Swallows and Amazons* has had in encouraging children to get out into the wild.

When it came to being given an estimate for the value of what anyone might call 'junk', I was truly amazed, especially since I'd nearly chucked half of it away in a fit of de-cluttering. I am sworn to secrecy, so you will have to watch the show to find out, but my bizarre collection of movie memorabilia is certainly of worth. I have put everything straight back on my bookshelves but the sepia poster is currently being framed.

After the filming, I was taken around the museum where we found the museum's founder George Pattinson's steam launch, *Lady Elizabeth*, being carefully restored. I sent in the photographs of her, and him, that my father took on location in Rio nearly fifty years ago when she was already making history.

**This episode of *BBC Antiques Roadshow* is expected to be broadcast in March 2021.**



## CHILDREN'S LITERATURE

### Peter completes 81-book Carnegie marathon

When **Peter Wright** became TARS Chairman, he set himself the challenge of reading all the Carnegie Medal children's books, in chronological order. That meant, of course, starting with the first, *Pigeon Post* by Arthur Ransome, in 1936, and finishing, a month or so ago, with this year's winner, *Lark* by Anthony McGowan.

The Carnegie medal is awarded annually by children's librarians for an outstanding book written in English for children and young people. Since 1936 there have been 81 awards – in three years no award was made, as no book was considered worthy.

Peter credits the idea to fellow Midland-region Tar and friend Sarah Samuel, "who having read several of the winners herself, encouraged and inspired me."

Getting hold of the books was easy - "they are all available to borrow from the TARS Library and I have enjoyed exchanging news and views on them with Winifred Wilson".

So does Peter consider these to be counted as the best 81 books written for children? "The answer most definitely is no! Assessing a book is surely a subjective matter and I have to say in my opinion there have been a few strange decisions - both inclusions and omissions!"

Peter is writing an article on the books for the next *Mixed Moss*. "I will give my views on the overall experience of reading all the books, pulling out some thoughts on how the style, type and subject matter of books has changed over 80 years, which books I enjoyed and think deserved the medal and which I didn't and why. I will also have some suggestions for the judges and will make other observations on the Carnegie canon."

#### ***Lark*: in Ransome tradition?**

Meanwhile, *Lark* seems to be upholding the Ransome tradition. According to the Carnegie website, it "tells the story of two brothers, Nicky and Kenny, who set out for an adventure in the North Yorkshire Moors only to be caught in a precarious blizzard when weather conditions take a turn. Throughout the book, the brothers display a deep respect and understanding of nature, which ultimately grants them consolation as they wait to be rescued. McGowan's prose paints nature as a source of wonder and joy, but also peril."



## THE SIGNALS PROFILE

# Catherine Lamont

Meet the new Editor of *Mixed Moss*: Australian, educationist, explorer, mother... and more  
Peter Willis introduces her

When she was four years old, in 1967, Catherine Lamont unwittingly followed in the wake of Ransome's artistic grandfather Edward Baker Boulton 150 years previously, when her family moved to Armidale, New South Wales, 40 miles from the town of Walcha where EBB had his sheep station and is buried.

This link with Ransome lay largely dormant until recently, when she decided to explore the homeland of the Swallows' mother, Mary Walker.

Although she recalls reading *We Didn't Mean to Go to Sea*, *Missee Lee* and *Great Northern?* when she was nine or ten, Catherine didn't read the rest until 2017 when her 11-year-old son Nicholas was due to attend a sailing camp, and getting anxious about it.

Seeking a source of reassurance, she recalled the Ransome books, and headed for the local library. Nicholas enjoyed the camp, and loved his mum reading those books to him – so much that he asked for a repeat performance in 2019.

By this time Catherine was studying Steiner education, "These books look like an 'artistic record' of Steiner education on holidays," she realised – and discovered that she was not alone in thinking this. She wrote a major assignment on it, followed by an article on the 'holistic intelligence' she saw in the S&A collection. This is included in the current (2020) issue of *Mixed Moss*, and – if you haven't already – is well worth reading, particularly if you are interested in why we adults continue to find Ransome's "children's books" so rewarding. (One reason is the amount of space he devotes to the feelings and reactions of his characters – "Ransome made discussing emotions acceptable," she argues.)

She adds that during the course "I had a lot of fun developing a small collection of educational materials for my university assignment, including my first-ever *papier-mâché* model of Wildcat Island."

Her interest in Edward Baker Boulton, his sheep station (and the frequency with which the name Mary occurs among his wife and daughters), led her to embark on what she calls The Mary Walker

Tour. "If you have ever wondered about the exact locations and events that may have inspired AR to have Mary Walker learn to sail on Sydney Harbour and live on an Australian sheep station through a drought, then digging into the story of his grandfather, Edward Baker Boulton, may yield some gold (or at least copper!)."

She was inspired to develop a self-guided "In Search of Mary Walker" tour of 'the colonies', trialling the Sydney portion of the tour recently.

"I was lucky enough to be offered an opportunity to learn to use a jib for the first time and hence learn to sail in Sydney harbour – on a Mirror Dinghy called *Roger*. And at the last

moment, I was given the opportunity to meet EBB's 95-year-old great grandson and view the EBB paintings he has inherited, so I cancelled my visit to the State Library, where 'ordinary mortals' can view another collection of EBB's beautiful watercolours if they wish. I think EBB was justified in spending more time painting than managing sheep if, indeed, that claim is correct.

Catherine is hoping to publish a booklet on the significance of these locations. She also says she's excited about taking over at *Mixed Moss*. I think we can look forward to a different perspective during her incumbency.



*"Ransome made discussing emotions acceptable"*



**FELLOW RANSOME GROUPS 1:  
ALL THINGS RANSOME** by Peter Willis

‘The trunk in the TARS attic’

To my mind the All Things Ransome website ([allthingsransome.net](http://allthingsransome.net)) resembles nothing so much as a trunk in the attic of TARS. It is covered, like all good trunks, with a selection of labels denoting past travels, most of which have been there a very long time, and many of its contents, which are similarly venerable, are the makings of fascinating discoveries – and disappearances. You close a file and forget where it came from – signposting is, frankly, not its strongest point.

Once upon a time its main constituents were part of TARS, though All Things Ransome itself, established in 2008, is independent. Its origins however can be dated back to the early days of the Internet as a consumer medium with *Signalling to Mars*, started in 1994 by Peter Dowden in New Zealand. Self-described as “The Official Electronic Newsletter of the Arthur Ransome Society”, it was available to the few members at the time who had e-mail and was strictly text-based as its ingenious header shows. Dave Thewlis and Doug Faunt (both in the USA) were among those also involved.

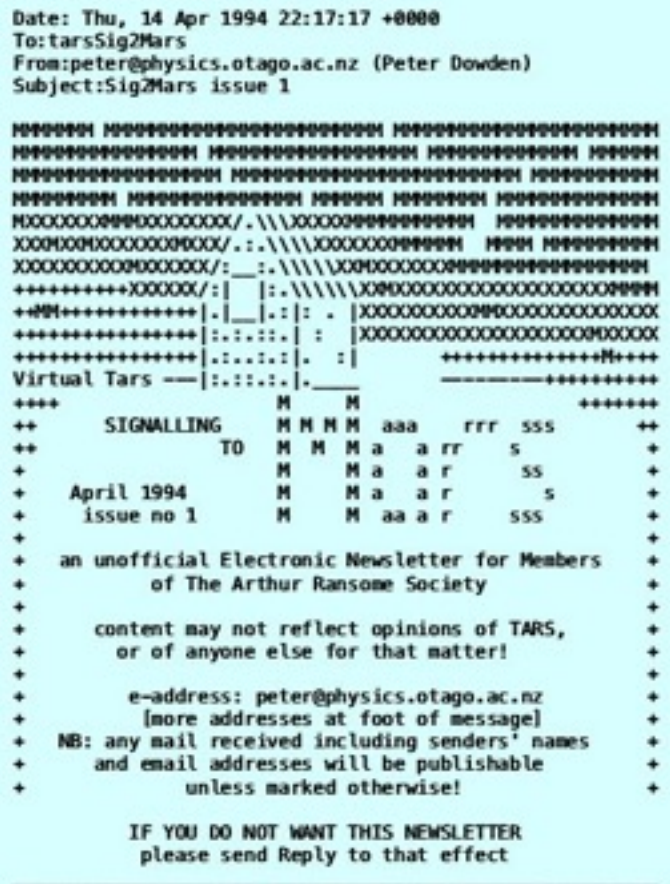
In issue 11, February 1995, a “Virtual General Meeting of Virtual TARS” takes place – somehow. (Wouldn’t they have just loved Zoom!). The status of the electronic group proved to be a major point of debate at the 1995 Chichester IAGM. It was approved, but *Signalling to Mars* itself stuttered to a halt at the end of that year. A fair amount of good reading in the 16 or so issues, all now on ATR.

**Literary Pages rescued**

Another major source of ATR material, and the impetus for its establishment, were the Literary Pages, started in 1997 by Tim Johns. The Pages had been dropped from the TARS website when a new version was designed in 2006.

About the same time, TarBoard, the discussion forum started by Ian Edmundson-Noble in 1996 using the server at Lancaster University, had also become independent of TARS, and when Ian wanted to retire from running it, ATR again rescued it. TarBoard is still active, although mainly among a reduced coterie of users, its main function having migrated to the Facebook Arthur Ransome Group.

Much of the content of ATR is therefore of historical interest; very little new material has been added in recent years. There are, though, two notable exceptions: All issues of the TARS US/Canada newsletter, *Signals from TARSUS and North Pole News*, are held there, and so, somewhat surprisingly, is an up-to-date index to *Mixed Moss*. This was originally something that Peter Hyland had continued to update for his own use after



Maurice Rowlandson had been obliged to discontinue his original index. (According to Peter, the index was offered to the TARS website, and accepted, but nothing then happened). Alan Hakim took over the updating in 2015. However, it’s a tribute to ATR’s capacity for self-effacement that the TARS Literary and Resources Committee were unaware of the index’s existence when they recently commissioned Paul Wilson to create one. Peter Hyland says the two indices operate somewhat differently and offer different benefits. The ATR index is updated to 2020 but it’s not clear yet whether it will now continue.

**Some of the many delights to be found, if you’re lucky or persistent, on All Things Ransome:**

- ★ **What Happened to *Swallow*?** A letter from Roger Fothergill, who bought her from Ransome in 1935
- ★ **‘The Boats of Swallows and Amazons’** by Stuart Wier – a thorough and beautifully illustrated treatise on these two dinghies
- ★ **‘Arthur Ransome’s Railways’** by David Carter – a detailed booklet, with illustrations
- ★ **Philippa Ryan** – a revealing interview, by Roger Wardale, with the daughter of Ursula Collingwood
- ★ **Bohemia in London and *The Elixir of Life***, read aloud (by the US Speaking Clock)
- ★ **Semaphore fonts, Ship’s clock, Morse code,**
- ★ **Inspirations for AR’s characters**

# Belle's Lakeland Holiday Journal

Ahoy there! I'm Belle and I am 12 and live in Leeds. Three years ago I read some of my Grandad's old *Swallows and Amazons* books and loved them. I've since read them all many times and two years ago I started sailing lessons because I wanted to be a pirate just like Nancy Blackett.

For a while I have wanted to visit the Lake District to see some of the settings that have inspired the books. We went in August and all week it was brilliant weather - 26 degrees and sunny! We stayed in a log cabin in the grounds of Bank Ground Farm, known as Holly Howe in the books. This was a special experience for me as it made the stories seem even more real. Here are some highlights...

## Day 1 Coniston and Amazon

We drove to Coniston with a detour to see Arthur Ransome's grave. It's in a beautiful, quiet place underneath a tree. A lovely final resting spot.

In Coniston we visited the Ruskin museum to see *Mavis*, aka *Amazon*. She was a wonderful little boat. We then went on the Coniston Launch 'Swallows and Amazons' tour of the lake. Skipper Robert was very knowledgeable and friendly and I do believe he was impressed by my superior knowledge of the books! I even got his super hard question correct but I can't tell you it or the answer because I was sworn to secrecy.

## Day 2 Kanchenjunga

Today was the 11th of August so we HAD to climb Kanchenjunga as it was the 89th anniversary of the *Swallows and Amazons* climbing it. Like them we took a tin with a message inside for other explorers to find, with a 1931 penny like they did. Looking round the cairn for somewhere to hide it, I found a brilliant place – that someone else had already used! The tin was rusted away and the message inside was almost lost. However we could make out the words 'August', 'Kanchenjunga' and 'was foggy'.

## Day 3 Sailing with Helen and Peggy Blackett

Helen Lewis came to take me out in her sailing dinghy *Peggy Blackett*, a reproduction of *Coch-y-Bonddhu*, the inspiration for *Scarab*. She is a beautiful boat and I hope to have one like her one day. Unfortunately, there was hardly any wind! However, it was still an incredibly enjoyable trip and really nice to talk *Swallows and Amazons* with Helen.





### Day 4 Windermere Jetty

We spent today at Windermere Jetty Museum. In the morning we spent our time on the lakeside taking part in their Wildcat Island experience.

We built a den, learnt/read about sailing, saw their wildflower meadow installation, played in the lake and had stew for lunch cooked over the campfire (well, hot coals) and toasted marshmallows.

There was a small Swallows and Amazons exhibition on. I liked seeing the rough draft of *Swallows and Amazons*. I found it interesting that the original title was '*The Swallows and The Amazons*'. I also liked seeing some of Arthur Ransome's sketches and, of course, *Coch-y-Bonddhu* (that's her in the photo, left).

### Day 5 Brantwood (cake!)

This was our only non-Swallows and Amazons day. Today we went for a walk round the grounds of Brantwood in the morning and then had lunch on the terrace. I can highly recommend the cakes! In the afternoon we hired a motorboat on Coniston for a couple of hours. It was good fun but not as good as sailing.

### Day 6 Wild Cat Island

We canoed from Bank Ground Farm all the way to Wildcat Island. It was perfect weather (sunny and no wind) so it only took us an hour and a half each way.

Wildcat Island was just as I imagined and we even managed to paddle into the secret harbour. I swam all the way round the island just like Captain John.

### Day 7 Dogs' Home and more cake

Our last day and the last things we had to do were find the Dogs' Home and eat more cake. We tried to follow some instructions from an old TARS publication about how to find the Dogs' Home but spent an hour and half getting lost.

We therefore went to Brantwood for lunch (cake!) and did some Googling and map reading before trying again. This time we were successful and found we were only metres from where we had been at one point in the morning!

### Next time: copper mines and Swallowdale?

It was a most excellent week and I will definitely be going back as I want to explore the fells and copper mines in *Pigeon Post* and search the many possible locations of Swallowdale.







*A key fell out on the floor... There was a luggage label tied to it and on the label, in capital letters was a single word: **FRAM***

*“The Fram was Nansen’s ship that was frozen in the ice,” said John.*

*“Of course it was,’ said Peggy. “I remember Captain Flint reading about it, when they went into the ice on purpose, and were frozen there and drifted right across the Polar sea.”*

*Dick had found the very book he wanted. “Here it is,” he said, “Farthest North. The Voyage and Exploration of the Fram, and the Fifteen-Months Sledge Expedition. This’ll tell us everything we need to know.”*

On first looking into

## Nansen’s Farthest North

by Peter Willis



“THE HOUSEBOAT’S FROZEN IN”



AMONG THE FRAM

On the face of it, Dick – acting as usual about four years older than his actual age of ten – looks likely to be disappointed if he expects to find “everything we need to know” in *Farthest North*. Their own *Fram* is stuck in the ice, but unlike Nansen’s isn’t going anywhere. And it’s not immediately clear what, if anything, they need to know. Until, that is, they see the ice-yacht, when Nansen, who by now has become their favourite author, with Dick poring over *Farthest North* and Titty reading his earlier *The First Crossing of Greenland*, provides exactly what they now realise they need.

*“Can’t we put a sail on the sledge?” asked Titty. “The whole lake’s frozen now.”*

*“Nansen did it,” said Roger.*

*There was again a silence.... In both Nansen’s books they had found pictures of his sledges under sail.*

*Farthest North* had, at some stage, become an obsession of mine. I very much wanted a copy, and not just any copy. One which Ransome would have had, and would therefore have graced the shelves of Captain Flint’s Houseboat.

I quickly discovered that the one to have was the two-volume edition published by George Newnes in 1898, with the gorgeous, gaudy gilt cover decoration. Technically it wasn’t the first edition, though it’s often referred to as such – there had been one from Constable the previous year, quite nice in its way, but somewhat lacking in oomph.

Eventually I came across one of the Newnes editions in Ireland - this was about 25 years ago - for £60, when comparable copies in London were asking twice that (they now command very silly money indeed). I carried it home in triumph and reverence... but then was oddly reluctant to look inside it. What if, after all, I found it unreadable? Perhaps I should just settle for the thing itself as a trophy and forget about its purpose.

And when, eventually, I looked, the opening lines seemed to confirm my misgivings. “*Unseen and untrodden under their spotless mantle of ice the rigid polar regions slept their profound sleep of death from the earliest dawn of time.*”

Could I really take nigh on a thousand pages in this vein? Mercifully, dear fellow-reader, we don’t have to. There’s three or four paragraphs in this style - as I realised, a sort of verbal libation poured on the bows of this newly-launched project (expedition, boat, book itself..) before he settles down into a delightfully easy, informal, self-deprecating and humorous style.

Some of the most enjoyable passages come early on, when he considers the shortfalls of previous, unsuccessful Polar expeditions, and then expounds his theory of being carried along, trapped in the ice.

And then there’s the description of the *Fram* herself, 128ft long, conceived and created by the legendary Norwegian boatbuilder/designer Colin Archer to be round-hulled so as to be lifted rather than crushed by the ice. As Nansen puts it, “the hull assumed a plump and rounded form. Bow, stern and keel were all rounded off so that the ice should not be able to get a grip of her anywhere... the whole craft should be able to slip like an eel out of the embraces of the ice.”

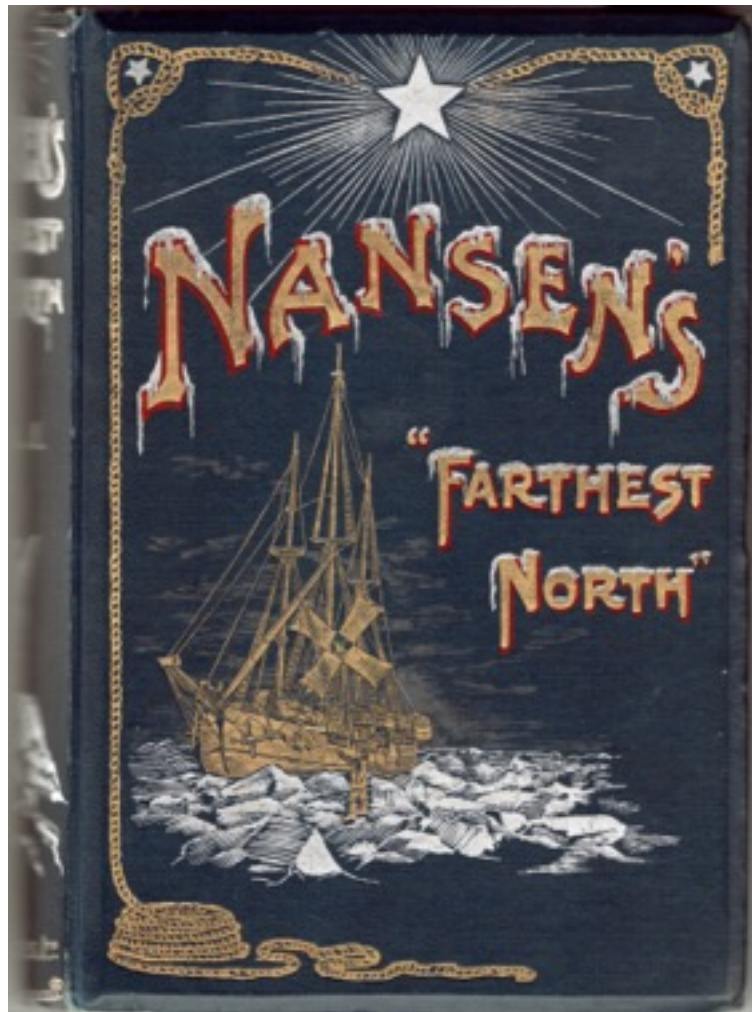
And that thing that looks like a windmill on the side-deck is in fact a windmill, used to help power the electric light system.

Of course the *Fram* survived, as did Nansen and all his crew - she’s now in a museum in Oslo, and can be ‘virtually’ explored online.

### Ransome’s Nansen: ‘The most civilised person of his generation’

In his autobiography, Ransome mentions meeting Nansen several times in 1921 when he was living in the Baltic states. “I spent an afternoon sitting with him on the shore of the Gulf of Riga being smilingly scolded for swimming much too far out to sea... I shall always see him as I saw him that day, the great blond Norseman sitting under the tall pines... the most civilised person of his generation.” After World War I, Nansen had become the League of Nations high commissioner for refugees, for which he was awarded the Nobel Peace Prize in 1923.

Ransome describes him as “a hero since my childhood”. The *Fram*’s Polar voyage took place between 1897-98, by which time Ransome (born 1884) would have been 13 or 14, very close to the intellectual age displayed by Dick in *Winter Holiday*. That whole book can be seen as Ransome’s tribute to his childhood hero – except that, unlike Nansen, Dick and his sister, and eventually all the rest of them do reach their North Pole.



The *Fram* in her Oslo museum:  
explore her online at  
[framuseum.no](http://framuseum.no)



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# EBB & FLOW

## *Eastern Pages*



### WE DID MEAN TO GO TO SEA

*Back in May twelve intrepid, if a little apprehensive, Tars stood on a rain soaked quay in Lowestoft eager to board the Excelsior for their long awaited trip to Holland.*

That was 21 years ago when TARS events were at their height. Now with lockdown forcing us to stay put week after week with no events in sight all we can do is look back at old and happier times. Thinking of our epic journey across the North Sea I was surprised just how many old records I still had, filed (haphazardly piled), photos, written notes, maps and drawings which are now coming into their own.

I was surprised just how much I remembered not counting being seasick (that will never be forgotten), especially, as we left the harbour the skipper had announced that the Force 4/5 which was blowing at the time was ideal sailing conditions. When it reached 5/6 eleven out of twelve of us succumbed. On our return voyage 4 days later, the wind reached Force 10 but by then we were all hardened old sea dogs so no one was sick.

I remember watching the waves, shaped like so many Table Mountains rising in slow motion, hovering for a moment before merging once more into the dark sea. Of sitting around the gally table discussing why John and Roger were given two eggs for breakfast while Susan and Titty only got one each. None of the males in the party remembered the event while all the females did.

We had moored in Middlesberg (Flushing) then motored off down the Walcheren Canal, into the Veerse Meer north into the Oosterschelde and on to Zierikzee where we went ashore and ate plates of chips, much to the mock disgust of the local restaurant waiter. Leaving Zierikzee we hove to and some Tars went over the side for a swim. On the return voyage we passed through a massive dam where the topmast had to be lowered than raised again. The wind dropped to a complete calm then blew hard, then increased. Sails were lowered then raised. At one point once clear of the land the



ship had to beat to windward assisted by the engine. A force 11 was forecast which ultimately reached Force 10. Throughout the night the noise in the galley, where there were six births, was horrendous, the large flaps either side of the dinner table were banging, pots and pans hanging on the bulkhead crashed together and the noise from the chains and blocks dragging across the deck above added to the crescendo.



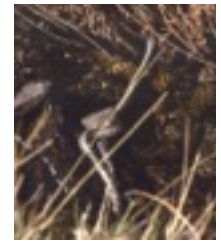
Throughout the night no one was allowed on deck but by the morning the wind had abated and life on board returned to normal. Then the water ran out. We all received half a mug of thick coffee which didn't help with our thirst.

We had crossed the North Sea in just 16 hours; our return took 33 hours. All in all a great adventure. Everyone agreed we wouldn't have missed it.



### *A TINY CAVE IN SWALLOWDALE*

Being locked down with plenty of listening time I have been playing some old Ransome tapes including Swallowdale. I remembered my first finding of the elusive valley way back in 1993. I had followed the beck up from Horseshoe Cove, not going under the bridge, like Roger and Titty, but crossed the road like a native. On the way up I came across an adder sunning itself alongside the beck. It rapidly crossed the beck's chilly water, making good its escape but not before I got one good camera shot.



On reaching the waterfall I dutifully climbed the steep side like a good Tar should entering the valley itself and began exploring. About a third of the way down, on the left, just where it should be, is a tiny cave, the opening being around a foot or so square. Accumulation of earth and decaying plant matter over a century may have silted up the entrance, which may have been much larger. A young small Roger

could just about squeeze through the entrance even now and looks larger on the inside.

Ransome often used real locations, changing them around to fit his stories so could this be the inspiration for Peter Duck's cave. Probably not but I like to think it might have been.

RW.



# Southern Region

**The Region currently has no committee. Iain Kahn-Gilchrist** as Treasurer is currently holding things together - anyone interested in helping him organise regional events or with ideas for events is very welcome to contact him on 07760 454767 or iainkg@gmail.com



## A Swallow-made summer

Over this summer we have not been able to hold our usual camps, much as we would have liked to.

The one thing we did manage was a day meeting at Bosham, on Chichester Harbour. This was on the Saturday of the weekend that we would have been camping in nearby Cobnor.

It was, I would say, a rather good turn-out for the circumstances – 7 adults and 6 juniors, arriving by 3 boats and a few cars. A self-brought picnic lunch was had in company (even if we couldn't actually share food) and a walk over a sort of 'Wade' (Israelite style) was walked.

For my own part, I was so pleased to have some time with like-minded Tars, and chat about TARRY things, even if it was only once in the year.

A reflection on our cancelled camp: The campsite was open, and we could have held our camp, but only if we had our own toilet/washing facilities, the campsite ones being small and reserved for the sailing people who keep boats there. OK for caravans, but we mainly are in tents.

The same conditions may very well apply next summer as well.

We might need solutions if we are to resume events and gatherings in places with limited facilities.

Solutions welcome!!!! Think outside the box!!!!

Many Tars have been able to have their own Ransome-esque activities, such as sailing, perhaps camping, bird watching, star gazing, etc. As individuals, not as a group.

As we haven't met so much as a group, it would be nice to hear and share what people have been doing themselves. Accounts and pictures of people's adventures would make good reading for the next issue of Signals. If anyone wants to send me some, I could collate them and that would be encouragement for other members.

**Southern Region is still somewhat short of committee members, in fact, we are actually short of a committee at all. There is nothing terribly difficult, or onerous in being on the committee, and it would be great if we had a group of people to take us out of this rather dry period on to exciting events and activities in the next year or two.**

Remember, it's about the FUN! And sharing that with others.

Iain Khan-Gilchrist



## Grabbing a Chance: a message to Southern Region members

A variation on a well-worn joke might be, “How many Tars does it take to change a light bulb?” – the answer being, “One, with 185 others watching on.” As you will have read in Iain Khan-Gilchrist’s report opposite, putting a programme together for the Southern region is quite a difficult task at present as Iain has been struggling to form a Committee. This is a position noted with some concern by the Board.

It seems ironic that the region with the largest number of members struggles most to find volunteers. One of Ransome’s most famous quotes comes in *We Didn’t Mean to Go to Sea*, when Titty reminds her mother that Daddy always says, “Grab a chance and you won’t be sorry for a might-have-been.” Interestingly John follows this up with, “We’d learn an awful lot” and Mother says, “They’d love it of course.”

Putting an interesting and varied programme of activities together for the Southern region will only happen if a few people volunteer to help. The Board knows from its regional representatives that joining a committee can be great fun. Here’s your chance to discuss what activities you might like, what trips to go on, what events to plan. You’ll make new friends and get to know other enthusiasts – surely that’s a good thing!

Being on a regional committee is not onerous. Some regions have met virtually using Zoom or Skype, others plan their meetings solely through email discussion. When committees do meet, travel expenses can be paid.

It would be a very sad state of affairs if there was no programme for the Southern region because there was no committee! So come on Southern members, who’s going to volunteer to help Iain out? Here’s your opportunity to “Grab a chance” – you won’t regret it. Please do give Iain a call on **07760 454767** or email him on [iainkg@gmail.com](mailto:iainkg@gmail.com).

### TARS Board

By way of inspiration, nostalgia from the Southern archives – one of the Region’s ‘Bohemians’ after-work pub evenings, in, we think, 1996. This one, appropriately, in the Antelope in Chelsea, is undated (and we’re unsure who took it). If you recognise yourself, or anyone else, do get in touch.



# TARS IAGM 2021 May 28-31

(Spring Bank Holiday Weekend)

*TARS East welcomes you to*



## *Arthur Ransome's East Coast*

*Pin Mill, Nancy Blackett, Secret Water, Libby Purves and much more, including a trip on a Thames Sailing Barge*

*With low-cost accommodation - just £50 per person per night including all meals (breakfast, lunch, dinner) - £150 for the three-day weekend - at the historic Royal Hospital School*

### **The IAGM and Covid-19. Please read:**

At the time of writing we are in the middle of the Covid-19 pandemic and we cannot be sure how our plans for the 2021 IAGM at the Royal Hospital School at Holbrook will work out. TARS as a responsible organisation must act in line with all medical and Government advice and regulations and we are sure that you will understand if we have to cancel this event.

**We can assure you that all booking fees will be fully refunded in the event of cancellation, so please help our planning by booking as early as possible.**



Nelson House

**The Royal Hospital School**

The meeting and dining rooms are in the main building, to the left of the tower (11 and 12 on the plan below)  
 Nelson House will be our residential block  
 The large tarmac 'Parade Square' will be available for car-parking

**Your Accommodation**

The Eastern Region is delighted to invite TARS to our 30<sup>th</sup> annual IAGM weekend, from Friday 28<sup>th</sup> to Monday 31<sup>st</sup> May 2021. It is being held at the **Royal Hospital School**, Holbrook, on Suffolk's Shotley Peninsula, and celebrates a return to the settings of *We Didn't Mean to Go to Sea* and *Secret Water*, as well as Arthur Ransome's home when he was writing them.

The school occupies a superb site overlooking the River Stour with views across to Harwich. The dining facilities are excellent with a first rate choice of food. We aim to provide an evening bar service.

**Accommodation and meals**

Accommodation is provided on site - please see page 7 – and **all meals are included** in the accommodation price, including a packed lunch on Saturday and Monday and a sit-down Sunday lunch after the AGM.

**Campers and other non-residents requiring meals will need to book them separately** – please see the booking form for details. All meals need to be pre-booked. Tea and coffee will be available during the day.

**Camping and motorhomes**

Camping and motorhome spaces are available on site close to the school buildings but there are no electrical hook-ups, and camping facilities are cheap – but basic (there is a toilet block).

A larger and well-equipped campsite with full facilities is available close by at **Alton Water** about a mile from the School. Those planning to use this site will need to make their own arrangements by contacting Alton Water Camping and Caravanning, Holbrook Road, Stutton, IP9 2RY via their website:

[anglianwaterparks.co.uk/alton-water-park/camping](http://anglianwaterparks.co.uk/alton-water-park/camping)





# The Programme

**Please note only two items on this programme are pre-bookable and carry a charge, payable on booking: These are the Sailing Barge trip and the alternative seal-watch boat trip, both on Saturday. ‘Red Skies’ will carry a ticket price, but this is yet to be advised. Other daytime activities are local exploration at your own choice on Saturday (if you wish), Sunday afternoon and Monday morning. Guides (leaflets or people) may be available.**

## Friday 28 May

17.00 Registration

18.00 Evening meal and bar

19.00 Welcome and talk

by **TARS President Libby Purves**  
(the Brian Hammett Memorial Talk)

20.30 additional talk or film (tba)

## Saturday 29 May

8.00 Breakfast and collect packed lunches

10.00 **Barge trip to Secret Water** (all day)

**Pre-booking needed**

or **2-hour boat trip** (2 hours) from Titchmarsh Marina, Walton on the Naze

**Pre-booking needed**

14.00 **Harwich tour**

**Any time: Local exploration**  
(see panel)

18.00 Evening meal and bar

19.00 (provisional) ‘**Red Skies**’ (see p 6)

## Sunday 30 May

8.00 Breakfast

9.00 Church Service

10.00 **Annual General Meeting**  
and **Members Forum**

12.30 **Lunch**

14.00 **Local exploration**

18.00 Evening meal and bar

19.00 Talk (tba)

20.00 **Dick Callum Cup**

## Monday 31 May

8.00 Breakfast and take luggage from rooms –  
(secure space for storage provided)  
collect packed lunches

9.00 Flag handover

9.30 **Local exploration**, including visits to Ransome homes Broke Farm at Levington (by arrangement, see px) and Harkstead Hall (view from the road)

Visit the start of **the Wade** and drive past the Witch’s Cottage as well as Beaumont Quay as described in ‘**Secret Water**’.

## Local exploration

**Discover Arthur Ransome’s East Coast for yourself - visit Pin Mill, Levington, Shotley,**

**see the *Nancy Blackett*,**

**follow the Arthur Ransome Trail.**

**Free time mainly Sunday afternoon and Monday morning.**

**More details page 5.**

**Stalls and Displays: the TARS stall, the TARS Library stall, the Arthur Ransome Trust stall and the Nancy Blackett Trust stall will be present and open at arranged times.**

**Arthur Ransome’s *Nancy Blackett* will be open for visits nearby during the weekend.**

## DAYTIME EXCURSIONS

### Pin Mill: ‘this happy place’

Pin Mill remains much as it did in Ransome’s day, at the bottom of the “deep green lane” as “this happy place where almost everybody wore sea-boots”.

The view he sketched in the late thirties is instantly recognisable – barges still lie on the Hard and the Orwell still laps at the walls of the Butt and Oyster where Arthur and Evgenia would have gazed out over the river with *Nancy Blackett* moored nearby, and where Jim Brading thought he might see what it would do for ‘breakfast’ at 7pm.

Alma Cottage lies nearby – the name attaches now just to the top one of the three houses in the pink-washed terrace that used to be the Alma Inn. Miss Powell really did live there, in the middle house with the bay window.

Her brother Jack Powell, sailmaker and chandler, used the lean-to between the cottages and the Butt, now the home of the Pin Mill Studio, where Anthony Cullen’s restorations of Ransome’s own photos of the building of *Selina King* can be seen. *Selina* - and *Peter Duck* - were built at Harry King’s yard a little further round the bay.

### The Arthur Ransome Trail

Pin Mill is also the start of the Arthur Ransome Trail, a six-mile stretch of the Stour and Orwell Long-Distance Path, which follows the voyage of the *Goblin* down the Orwell as described in Chapter 4 of *We Didn’t Mean to Go to Sea*, from the Butt and Oyster to Shotley Pier. It includes a series of witty *Goblin*-related geocaches along the way, which, if you stop to examine them all, would extend the timing of the walk above its basic three hours or so. (left: Geocache clog)



### Shotley Pier

This is the pier off which the *Goblin* drops anchor at the end of her trip down the Orwell, and along which the Swallows walk to the pub - the Bristol Arms - to buy ‘grog’ and phone Mother. The Victorian pier is currently in the process of being restored. Shotley Marina, nearby, is on the site of HMS Ganges, the naval base to which Commander Walker was returning from the Far East. Its famous mast is still there, and there’s also a small museum.



### Ransome’s houses

Although he regarded Pin Mill as ‘home’, and kept *Nancy Blackett* there, Arthur and Evgenia lived for most of their time in the area across the river at Levington in Broke Farm, now Broke House (below). He wrote all of *We Didn’t Mean to Go to Sea* there, and most of *Secret Water*.

Its present owner, Elizabeth Courtauld, widow of Chris Courtauld, has kindly invited Tars to visit the house on the Monday morning - a rota of visiting times will be organised for those interested (Spaces will be strictly limited, so be sure to tick it on the booking form if you wish to see inside!).

In 1939 the Ransomes moved to Harkstead Hall, a couple of miles inland from Pin Mill, and lived there until the end of 1940, when they moved back to the Lakes. It can be viewed from the road.



### Secret Water (ashore)

Secret Water (Hamford Water on all ordinary maps) is known locally as the Walton Backwaters. It lies between Harwich and Walton on the Naze and covers some nine square miles. It remains still somewhat remote and rather mysterious as it was when Arthur chose it for the setting for *Secret Water*. Details of how to find the The Wade, Witches Cottage and Beaumont Quay will be available, and it is suggested that Monday, possibly on the way home, would be a suitable time for a co-ordinated visit.

## By Sailing Barge to Secret Water – ‘a better sense of mystery’



Thames Sailing Barge *Hydrogen*, built 1906 and the largest Thames barge still sailing, will be ours for the day on the Saturday.

We will board her at Harwich for departure at 11am (return c4pm), sailing out of Harwich Harbour and down the coast to enter the Walton Backwaters - the still-mysterious ‘Secret Water’. Seeing this tidal archipelago from the water is an opportunity that relatively few Tars will have experienced. As Christina Hardyment explained in her book *Arthur Ransome and Captain Flint’s Trunk*, being on the water gives a much better sense of the mystery of the place than seeing it from the land. We will have our packed lunches, and there will be drinks and light snacks for sale on board. She has a maximum capacity of 50 people, so places will be limited and allocated on a first-booked basis. A shorter (two-hour) trip, loading at Titchmarsh Marina in the Backwaters, is also on offer.



## Nancy Blackett

Arthur Ransome’s own *Nancy Blackett*, the inspiration for the *Goblin* in *We Didn’t Mean to Go to Sea* will of course be present – these are her home waters! You’ll be able to go aboard, identify the bunks the Swallows slept in, and imagine yourself at sea in the *Goblin*. Short sails may even be possible. She’ll be moored in nearby Shotley Marina – a short drive from the school with ample free parking and fine views of Harwich Harbour. The ferry to Harwich also goes from here, and Shotley Pier is nearby.

## Harwich Town

Historic Harwich is well worth a visit if you’ve time - take the yellow Harbour Ferry from its pier at Shotley Marina (book tickets via [www.harwichharbourferry.com](http://www.harwichharbourferry.com)) - it also goes to Felixstowe so a round trip is also an option. There are two lighthouses, actually sea marks, one low, one high, the unique Tread Wheel Crane and a grid of quaint streets to explore.

## Alton Water

Alton Water is a man-made reservoir covering about 400 acres which lies a short distance from the school. It offers cycling routes, nature trails, fishing spots and a wide range of water sports. Tars may choose to hire boats or bring their own. For those with windsurfing equipment, canoes or stand-up paddle boards, day and half-day launch permits are on offer but there are no storage facilities. This option is also available for boats trailered to Alton Water and launched on an ad hoc basis. Full details of what the site offers can be found on the Alton Water website: [anglianwaterparks.co.uk/alton-water-park](http://anglianwaterparks.co.uk/alton-water-park)



## EVENING ENTERTAINMENTS



### TARS President Libby Purves:

‘Sailing: a Serious Kind of Joy’  
The Brian Hammett Memorial Talk

**This will be Libby’s first official TARS event since her appointment as President in 2019; it will start off the IAGM weekend on the Friday evening.**

Within months of Libby’s appointment she was struck down with a rare and aggressive form of lymphoma, which necessitated complete isolation for several months; then, when she was just about ready to return to society, and enter into her presidential role, Covid 19 hit and TARS activities were put on hold. Now we are very much hoping nothing else will prevent her joining us.

Her first planned engagement as President had been to give the first Brian Hammett Memorial Talk – Brian was an active and energetic committee member of TARS Eastern Region, as well as being a board member and vice-president of the Nancy Blakett Trust, National President of the Old Gaffers Association and a mainstay of the Cruising Association. He died in September 2018.

So many things have conspired to postpone and reschedule the talk that it seemed wise to ‘grab a chance’ and include it in this IAGM in his home region. Local Tars, NBT members and those of the CA, the OGA and others, who were included in the original audience will be invited to join us as visitors.

As for Libby - sailor, broadcaster, journalist, novelist, theatre critic, and relentlessly entertaining speaker, we, in her home TARS region, are delighted to be able to give her a platform for her inaugural Presidential occasion.



**Red Skies is a play by Ivan Cutting, presented by the Eastern Angles Theatre Company. A date on its regional tour, postponed from last year, is being planned to coincide with the IAGM.**

The play features an imaginary meeting between Arthur and Evgenia Ransome and George Orwell in Southwold in September 1939 – Arthur was en route to lay up *Selina King* for the duration of the War while George had returned to the family home for the funeral of his father.

Although there is no evidence for them having met, Ivan Cutting’s play asks what might have happened had they done so. Orwell, on the verge of writing *Animal Farm*, is intrigued by the Ransomes’ Russian background and his suspicion of spies is piqued by their unwillingness to explain how they got out of Russia after the Revolution.

They have experiences of revolutionary conflicts in common – Arthur in Russia and Orwell in the Spanish Civil War, but it is a mutual love of fishing that helps break down Ransome’s initial resistance.

Later, Orwell establishes a greater rapport with Evgenia, too, leading her to question some of her experiences in greater depth. Why for instance was she allowed to leave Russia with Arthur?

Ivan Cutting explores the facts, part-facts and counter-facts in this complex and intriguing play. For Tars this production could provoke some thoughtful and possibly new reflections on an important part of Arthur’s formative experiences.

**Details of the Red Skies tour are still being evolved, including the venue and ticket prices. But if you are interested in seeing it, please tick Red Skies on the Booking Form.**

**Other talks and entertainments are being planned, including the Dick Callum Cup, to ensure a full programme over the weekend.**

## **PLEASE READ THIS BEFORE COMPLETING THE BOOKING FORM**

**Please send your booking form as early as possible;** this is a great help to the organising committee, and will help to ensure your place(s) on limited-capacity activities. Bookings should arrive no later than 31<sup>st</sup> March 2021. A late booking fee is payable after 1<sup>st</sup> April 2021.

**Accommodation** is provided on site and three meals per day are included in the accommodation price. Campers and non-residents requiring meals should book them separately as indicated on the booking form.

Accommodation is predominantly in single rooms in the senior boarding house, Nelson. Although the rooms are not en-suite each has a washbasin and each pair of rooms shares a shower/toilet accessed off the corridor. Accommodation for a parent and a small child can also be arranged in these single rooms with the child using a camp bed or a mattress. There is no extra charge for this arrangement but meals for the child will be charged at £9 per day for under 5 years and £15 per day for 5-10 years.

**Accommodation for people with disabilities** may be available. Please contact Brian Key to discuss your requirements before booking: **briankey18@outlook.com or 01245 263579.**

**Pre-booking is needed** for the Barge trip or the Secret Water seal-watching boat, with payment, using the booking form. Places on the barge will be on a first-booked, first-served basis.

The sailing barge will depart from Harwich on Saturday morning at 11am for a 5 hour trip. Car sharing to Harwich where possible is advised, or there is a Harbour Ferry from Shotley

The shorter (2 hour) trip for seal-watching on Secret Water will depart from Titchmarsh Marina at Walton on the Naze. Again car sharing should be considered.

**Please also indicate on the Booking form:**

Interest in visiting Broke Farm on Monday Morning – places are limited.

Interest in *Red Skies*: more details of the venue and ticket prices will be circulated when available.

### **How to get there:**

#### **Royal Hospital School, Holbrook, Ipswich IP9 2RX**

#### **By Road:**

From the North or the Midlands on the A14 follow the signs for Felixstowe. If travelling on the A12 from the South of Ipswich exit at Copdock Interchange onto the A14 East. If approaching on the A12 from the North join the A14 (Signposted Bury St Edmunds/Colchester), cross the Orwell Bridge and take the next exit. From west or east, then leave the A14 at Jct 56 for the A137.

At the end of the slip road take signs for the A137 'Ipswich Central and Ipswich Docks' and go down the hill. At the roundabout take the B1456 for Shotley and Holbrook. Follow the B1456 alongside the River Orwell. The road ascends a hill. Continue for 1 mile until you see a water tower. At the water tower indicate right for the B1080 signposted Holbrook and Stutton. Stay on the B1080 for 2 miles, passing through Holbrook Village and down the hill past the Old Mill. After a sharp right-hand bend you will find the School on the left at the top of the next hill. Enter the grounds, then go left round the main building to find parking on the Parade Square.

#### **By Rail:**

From London Liverpool Street, to Manningtree or Ipswich Station. Trains run about every hour and the journey takes about an hour. (Other routes available to Ipswich via Peterborough.) It takes a further 10 minutes by road (taxi) from Manningtree and 15 minutes from Ipswich.

*When destiny brought Arthur to the East Coast he felt he was coming home... he liked it, and he liked it for all the right reasons*

**HUGH BROGAN**

# Arthur Ransome's East Coast

The TARS 2021 IAGM May 28-31 Royal Hospital School, Holbrook

## Booking Form

Please read all of Despatches before completing the loose copy of the form. Then make a note of your choices on this Despatches page and bring it with you to the AGM.

Please insert your Name and Postal Address


for your booking confirmation and receipt

When completed, send this white form with full payment in pound (£) sterling cheque, payable to TARS East to David Middleton, 9 Merrow Avenue, POOLE BH12 1PY. A receipt will be sent by return.

Your actual tickets will be in your arrival Welcome Pack.

A: Name (for badge) of member booking:		Diet?
Membership Number:	First IAGM? Yes / No	
Tel:	Mobile:	
E-mail:		
Vehicle Registration:		
Other Names (for badges) with Date of Birth for Juniors		Diet?
B:		
C:		
D:		
E:		

Diet: Use V for Vegetarian. For anything else, use "P.T.O." and add the details on the reverse of this form.

Please use overleaf for disability issues.

**Late arrival Friday?** What is your e.t.a? \_\_\_\_\_

Please save meal(s)? Yes / No

**Car Share:** I can offer \_\_\_\_\_ places on the relevant trips.

I / we need \_\_\_\_\_ places.

Registration & Camping Fees	Rate	Nos.	£ Total
Adult registration whole weekend	£30		£
Adult Fri £5 / Sat £10 / Sun £10 / Mon £5 p.p.			£
U18 registration whole w/e or per day	£nil		n/a
Camping pitch per night	£5		£
<b>Pre-Pay Activities Subtotal</b> (from right column)			£
<b>Accommodation Subtotal</b> (from right column)			£
<b>Camp &amp; Non-Res. Meals Subtotal</b> (from right column)			£
Late Booking (April 1st) + £20 per booking			£
<b>Chq No.</b>	<b>Grand Total Payable:</b>		£

Day	Indication of Interest	Adults	U18
Friday	Talk by Libby Purves		
tba	Play: <i>Red Skies</i>		
Saturday	Harwich Walking Tour		
Saturday	Arthur Ransome's Walking Trail		
Sat/Sun	Pin Mill visit		
Saturday	Alton Water		
Sat/Sun	Visit: <i>Nancy Blackett</i>		
Saturday	Film: <i>Ha'penny Breeze</i>		
Sunday	Service of Worship		
Sunday	AGM & Open Forum		n/a
Sunday	Coming just for the AGM		n/a
Sunday	<i>Dick Callum Cup</i>		
Monday	Broke Farm, Levington		
Monday	Harkstead Hall		
Monday	SW, Wade, Witch's Quay etc.		

Saturday	Secret Water	Pre-Pay	Rate	Nos.	£Total
5hr	barge trip from Harwich (Adult)		£35		
5hr	barge trip from Harwich (U18)		£16		
2hr	seal watching from Walton (Adult)		£15		
2hr	seal watching from Walton (U15)		£8		
<b>Pre-Pay Activities Subtotal:</b>					£

Full Board per night (includes all 3 meals per day)				
<i>Couples and Families will be in adjacent rooms.</i>				
<i>All rooms are "Single".</i>				
	Rate	Nos.	Nights	£Total
Adult	£50			
Junior (10-18)	£50			
Adult with 1 Child (5-10) *	£65			
Adult with 1 Child (U5) *	£59			
* in Camp Bed				
<b>Full Board Accommodation Sub-Total:</b>				

Campers & Non-Residents Meals					
Day	Meals	Type	Rate	Nos.	£ Total
Friday	Dinner	Adult/5-18	£5		
Friday	Dinner	U5	£3		
Saturday	Breakfast	Adult/5-18	£5		
Saturday	Breakfast	U5	£3		
Saturday	Packed Lunch	Adult/5-18	£5		
Saturday	Packed Lunch	U5	£3		
Saturday	Dinner	Adult/5-18	£5		
Saturday	Dinner	U5	£3		
Sunday	Breakfast	Adult/5-18	£5		
Sunday	Breakfast	U5	£3		
Sunday	Lunch	Adult/5-18	£5		
Sunday	Lunch	U5	£3		
Sunday	Dinner	Adult/5-18	£5		
Sunday	Dinner	U5	£3		
Monday	Breakfast	Adult/5-18	£5		
Monday	Breakfast	U5	£3		
Monday	Packed Lunch	Adult/5-18	£5		
Monday	Packed Lunch	U5	£3		
<b>Campers &amp; Non-Residents Meals Subtotal:</b>					£

Please use this Despatches page for your copy of the booking. Please use the loose sheet for your actual booking.





## A VIRTUAL VOYAGE

### Fiona Fyfe explains how she enjoyed an active Wild Cat Island adventure without leaving the living room.

The date 21 June 2020 had been in the diary for a long time as the day my friend Wendy and I would finally get to sail to Wild Cat Island. It was all arranged months ahead, but like so many activities planned for 2020 it couldn't happen as we'd intended it to.

Not to be defeated, however, we applied some initiative and did the next best thing: we rowed. We are fortunate that both Wendy's household and mine own rowing machines, so the night before we enlisted our families to help drag our rowing machines to prime slots in front of our televisions. In the morning we got up early, before the rest of our households were awake, and slipped downstairs for our adventure. I was wearing a T-shirt printed with 'I wish I could sail all day'; Wendy's said 'Keep calm and sail on'. Both were quite apt in the circumstances. 80 miles apart, we made drinks in our matching *Swallows and Amazons* mugs, and fetched appropriate provisions. I attached my TARS burgee to a cane and flew it from the rowing machine. Then we made contact through a WhatsApp chat (which enables participants to both see and hear each other through their smartphones).

Preparations and contact made, we then set about the really tricky bit: synching our DVD players to play the 1974 *Swallows and Amazons* film at exactly at the same time. This was particularly challenging as my DVD player ran ever-so-slightly faster than Wendy's, so every 10 minutes or so I had to pause it for a few seconds to let hers catch up!

As the opening sequence started to roll, and the glorious, positive, atmospheric music filled our living rooms, we settled to our 'oars'. Wendy's rowing machine is rather more sophisticated than mine, and makes splashy noises which were quite authentic and complemented the film sound track. In the length of the film we reckoned that we covered the distance from the campsite on Coniston Water (where we should have been staying) to Peel Island. As we rowed we watched the film, chatted over WhatsApp, and generally had a lovely time in mutual appreciation of friendship, *Swallows and Amazons*, and what modern technology can enable.

These are really tough times for us all at the moment, with human contact and personal freedoms so severely restricted. However our adventure was great escapism, and an uplifting way to be 'together in spirit'. I heartily recommend other TARS members to use their abundant imagination and try similar things themselves, with or without a rowing machine! Hopefully it won't be too many more months before we can all see each other properly again, and Wendy and I will finally get to sail to Wild Cat Island for real.

# ON TRACK WITH A QUIZ!

Saturday 24 October saw the Midland TARS transform what was due to be their Travelling on a Steam Train event to the next best thing – a Zoom train quiz! Invitations were sent out along with two dining car recipes to prepare beforehand ready for the break (we imagined travelling to the buffet car and have included the recipes for scones and cocoa below if you would like to partake!)

We had six rounds of railway questions in all, aiming to meet and challenge all ages and levels of train knowledge. In round 1 we started with our Ransome questions and round 2 some general train knowledge puzzlers – how many will you get right? (No cheating!) We had a lovely couple of hours with our get-together and look forward to the next!

Rachel Blue

## ARTHUR RANSOME RAILWAYS

1. At the beginning of *Pigeon Post*, what was Roger doing as he leaned out of the carriage with Titty?
2. What is the name of the junction where Roger and Titty were stopped?
3. What was in the basket that Roger had to sign for?
4. In *The Picts and the Martyrs*, which station does Dorothea start her journey from?
5. In *The Picts and the Martyrs*, which station does Dick start his journey from?
6. Staying with *The Picts and the Martyrs*, Mary Swainson rows her boat to the village, leaves it with the boatman and then catches a bus to the station. She then catches a train to where?
7. As they sit in the carriage at Thorpe Station at Norwich, at the beginning of *Coot Club*, why have the D's been waiting for 10 minutes?
8. What do the Porter and Ticket Inspector want Tom to do when we first meet him in *Coot Club*?
9. In *Swallowdale*, who are The Swallows expecting to see at the little station?
10. In *Winter Holiday*, who had Dick and Dorothea travelled on the train with?

## GENERAL RAILWAY QUESTIONS

1. In Australia, the Indian Pacific Railway travels between which two cities?
2. St David's, St Thomas and St James Park are all railway stations in which British city?
3. In which country was the world's first public railway?
4. What is the colloquial name in the UK of a very early morning train?
5. What is the name of the safety mechanism on a train which automatically applies the brake if a lever is released? It is intended to stop a train if the driver is incapacitated.
6. Between which two cities is the longest scheduled train journey in the world?
7. What was the name of the report in the early 1960s that reshaped the British railways?
8. The Night Riviera sleeper train, one of only two sleeper services in the UK, runs six nights a week between London and which town?
9. Which station is the London terminus for Eurostar?
10. What's the iconic name of the famous sleeping cars built and operated on most American railways from 1867 to 1968?

You will find the answers on the TARS website.

## SCONES

Makes 6

8oz self-raising flour  
2oz butter  
1 tsp baking powder  
Pinch of salt  
¼ pint milk  
1 egg beaten

Preheat oven to 200°C. Grease and flour a baking sheet. Sieve flour into large bowl and add the butter, baking powder and salt and rub until the mixture resembles breadcrumbs. Add enough of the milk to form a soft dough and knead on a floured board until smooth.

Roll out to ½ inch thickness and cut into rounds with a 3-inch pastry cutter.

Place on the baking tray and brush with beaten egg; bake for 15 minutes or until risen and golden brown.

Cool on a wire rack and serve with filling of choice – clotted cream, jam, butter or plain!



## COCOA

Serves 4

1/3 mug cocoa powder  
½ mug sugar  
1/3 mug hot water  
3 ½ mugs of milk  
1/3 mug cream  
Pinch salt  
½ tsp vanilla extract

(Use a mug that you will serve from to measure with)

Combine cocoa powder, sugar and salt in a saucepan. Blend in the hot water, mix well and then bring to a boil and simmer gently for 2 minutes, stirring all the time.

Next, stir in the milk and bring back to nearly boiling point. Remove from the heat and add the vanilla extract and cream and then serve in mugs. Enjoy!



# FORTHCOMING EVENTS IN MIDLAND REGION

Listed below are a number of events planned for the next few months. Some of them involve meeting up for real and will only be able to take place if lockdown restrictions, or lack of them, permit. Others are virtual events which will enable members to 'get together' using Zoom - these will happen regardless.

## ZOOM AGM & JUNIOR PARLEY

**Saturday 16 January**

2pm: Junior Parley (TARS Juniors plus parental supervision), Creative (on screen) challenges - word search and white board AR themed Pictionary. Approximately 45 minutes.

3pm.: AGM, Option of AR themed Pictionary afterwards. 45-60 minutes. Please contact [sec.mid@arthur-ransome.org](mailto:sec.mid@arthur-ransome.org) to request a Zoom link for either meeting.



## TELL US A TALE ON ZOOM

**Saturday 6 February**

Get creative with fellow TARS members by joining in with story-writing challenges and games on Zoom. If you would like to take part please get in touch with Sarah Samuel on 07952 587273 or [sarah@sarahsamuel.plus.com](mailto:sarah@sarahsamuel.plus.com) so that she can send you the Zoom link details.



## TELL US A TALE IN OXFORD

**Saturday 13 February**

Follow on into the imaginations of Titty and Dot as they inspire us to further explore Oxford's literary connections. Meet at the Story Museum at 11am to explore the galleries then adjourn to the café for tea and story writing or illustrating. Admittance is £8 per person, with Junior fees being paid by the region. There is an additional charge of £7 a head for anyone who would like to join the 'City of Stories' audio-visual experience. Contact Sarah Samuel on 07952 587273 or [sarah@sarahsamuel.plus.com](mailto:sarah@sarahsamuel.plus.com) to book or for further information.



## AMAZON ARCHERY

**Saturday 27 March**

See how your skills with a bow and arrow match up to Nancy and Peggy's during a day with the Centura Field Bowmen at Aston-on-Trent near Derby. During the morning they will train us at the butts, then after lunch there will be the opportunity to be escorted around their woodland trail to try our hands at a wide variety of 'animal' targets at different ranges and elevations.

Meet at 11am and bring a packed lunch. The cost will be £5 per person, with fees for Juniors paid by the region. For further information and to book please get in touch with Paul Green on [paul-midstars@gmx.co.uk](mailto:paul-midstars@gmx.co.uk) or 01654 791256.

If this is not possible there will be a Zoom alternative – contact Paul for a link.

## EXPLORE THE ROACHES

**Friday 23 - Sunday 25 April**



Come and stay in the Don Whillans Hut on The Roaches in the Peak District National Park, mid-way between Leek and Buxton. This Grade II listed former game keeper's cottage, built into the rock face, was renovated in 1991 in memory of legendary British mountaineer Don Whillans.

The weekend will offer supervised rock climbing, walking the ridge and riverside valley, scenic moorland views and a sunset vista. The hut sleeps 12 in two bedrooms with alpine-style bunks, one room has 8 bunks, the other 4. The cost of staying is £22 per person for two nights. Please book with Jules Blue by the end of January, paying a deposit of £11 to the Midland TARS account.

For further information about the event and to book e-mail [julesbluerachel@btinternet.com](mailto:julesbluerachel@btinternet.com) or phone 07856 262042.

If the event cannot take place there will be a Zoom alternative, Please use the contact details above to get a link.

## WALK AND WILD SWIM

**Saturday 12 June**



An opportunity to walk in the Brecon Beacons. Meet at Pont Melin-Fach car park north of Pontneddfechan (in the Neath Valley just off A465) at 10.30. The walk is about 5 miles, fairly leisurely. The second half of the route follows the river, passing some spectacular waterfalls with a few swimming opportunities in the pools (at your own risk). Contact Sarah Samuel on [sarah@sarahsamuel.plus.com](mailto:sarah@sarahsamuel.plus.com) or 07952 587273.

If this is not possible there will be a Zoom alternative – contact Sarah for a link.

## CAMP BY CONISTON WATER

**Friday 6 to Sunday 15 August**



Provided that the National Trust campsite at Hoathwaite Farm, Torver, is up and running again we will be using their group camping field. Come for as many nights as you wish. For further details contact Paul Green by e-mailing him on [paul-midstars@gmx.co.uk](mailto:paul-midstars@gmx.co.uk) or phoning 01654 791256.

Material for inclusion in the next issue of *The Gulch* must be sent by 1 February 2021 to:  
[jane.pippinfort@googlemail.com](mailto:jane.pippinfort@googlemail.com)

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



Adventure Event



Nautical Event



Discovery Event



Titty's Challenge  
(Able Seaman Log Book)



Susan's Challenge  
(Mate Log Book)



John's Challenge  
(Captain Log Book)





## Northern Despatches

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

*We do not have any 'proper' events to report on – instead we asked members for their S and A type adventures over the Summer and some who were able to get away obliged! Helen Lewis*



## Kanchenjunga, copper mines and thunder

Kryisia Clack enjoyed a week of wandering around Coniston

I had booked a cottage for one for the same week that the Hoathwaite camp was due to happen. Sadly, the camp could not take place but, as I was fairly isolated, the owners were still happy for me to use it. It was a hot and humid week with the threat of thunderstorms hanging over each day. It made climbing to the tops a bit risky and I kept an eye on the clouds throughout.

The first ascent was of Wetherlam, on the Coniston Ridge, which fits the description of the ascent of Kanchenjunga a little better with a natural campsite half way up. In any case, I am sure that Ransome would have included it in his walks. Kanchenjunga itself was duly climbed on the 11th in what felt like jungle heat. Unfortunately I missed other TARS members who made the ascent on the same day and so there was no sharing of doughnuts.

Other days I investigated the route from the Coniston Copper Mines Valley to Tilberthwaite but was beaten back by bracken. It is probably best to try it the other way round. Instead, I retreated back to the Coppermines Heritage Centre ([www.coppermines.co.uk](http://www.coppermines.co.uk)) which is being developed and now has information and an exhibition of Victorian artefacts relating to the copper mining period in that valley. If you are really keen you can book a cottage and stay there.

A walk to Beacon Tarn was more successful although long trousers are still recommended. My legs were still stinging the next day! Three of us met together to visit the Dogs' Home which did not disappoint. The thunderstorms did come (four in all that week) and one night was reminiscent of the Wild Cat Island storm rolling around the hills and the lake for a good six hours. The rain came down hard and I could picture the tents shrinking and collapsing under the weight of the water in *Swallows and Amazons*.

**“Flashes of lightning lit up the whole lake and showed great waves stretching across it with curling tops. Then it was dark again. Then more lightning showed her (Titty) the fields and woods and hills on the other side of the lake, beyond the raging water.”**

Photo shows Peter, top right, with Eel totem, and Jacky, bottom left, with some of the Northern Tars at an AR Birthday Party

## Peter Truelove

Peter was a member of TARS from the earliest days, initially living in the southern region, but later moving to Cumbria, where he and his wife Jacky became well known and well loved members of the Northern Region.

Before his retirement Peter had served in the Metropolitan Police. This had involved motorbikes, fast cars, boats and firearms, which he modestly described as 'big boys' toys', all of which experiences had left him with a fund of fascinating anecdotes.

In addition to serving on the Northern Regional Committee, and the *Cochy* committee, Peter was one of 'the Magnificent Seven' who masterminded the Tenth Anniversary IAGM, which remains the largest ever gathering of TARS members. As well as his other contributions to the event, Peter was the leading light among the IAGM team of 'Radio Hams' who during the course of the weekend communicated with hundreds of operators in dozens of different countries across the globe.

He had a great capacity for making friends, whether socially or while volunteering as a skipper at the old Windermere Steamboat Museum. Many TARS were fortunate enough to have known Peter as a friend, to have shared with him his passions for nature, sailing, photography and walking, and to have experienced his ever-present, often mischievous sense of humour. He had enjoyed a love affair with all things Ransome since boyhood and spoke for many of us when, at a regional birthday party, Peter said that as his love of Arthur's work had grown, so he found himself encountering AR again and again - on the rivers of the Broads, the northern lakes and in the surrounding fells. He will be greatly missed by all who knew him.



## Wandering around Windermere with Elizabeth Williams

The TARS camp at Hoathwaite was cancelled but I was determined to go anyway. I managed to find a space to camp at Hoathwaite as an individual for four nights and a reasonably priced b&b for three nights in Windermere. I drove there via Ullswater on a beautiful Saturday in time for a socially distanced lunch with other Tars at Liz Haworth's beautiful garden nearby so by the time I arrived in the town I could park.

I didn't know Windermere – for me it was just the road into *Rio* (Bowness). That evening I just about got my bearings in the maze of streets, but armed with *In the Footsteps of the Swallows and Amazons* by Claire Kendall-Price and my OS map I set off next day in brilliant sunshine to explore. Although the town is much bigger and undergrowth by the beck known to Ransome in childhood has gone, you can still 'listen for the music of the beck that wound its way down the woods with many little waterfalls' as it was really quiet even near the town centre. The crowds must take a different route to the lake – my footpath wasn't that obvious, and it emerged by the Windermere Jetty museum which I visited last year, so after giving some TARS leaflets to the lady on reception, I sat outside their café (*right*) with a spectacular view of the lake and had a welcome drink.

Following the lakeshore, I arrived in Bowness and was taken aback with how busy it was. No-one was making any attempt to avoid each other. There was a restaurant overlooking the lake so I bought a drink in their beer garden. From there I could see the wooden huts where Claire Kendall-Price says that a man named John Walker had a hut one time and looked after Ransome's *Swallow* when she was moored in Bowness Bay. >>continued



I followed the path to Cockshott point for another view of the lake. Great, but after that I fear that the book rather let me down— it directed me up Brantfell Road. Walking up a long steep hill on a tarmac road in blazing sunshine is not ideal. After a short stretch along a National Trust path and up to another good viewpoint at Biskey Howe, I was back on a metalled road where the walk directs you to Annisgarth House.

Taqui, Susan and Titty Altounyan were all sent here to boarding school in the 1930s, but didn't do much work. Taqui said "During the lessons the girls did anything but learn; some varnished their nails, another was absorbed in a paper spider calendar, with as many legs as days to the end of term, and some even practised handstands". It was very hot, my knee hurt and I was not impressed. As Taqui said "too near Lanehead and yet not Lanehead". Still, it is part of a Ransome trail.

I abandoned the book the next day after a terrific thunderstorm during the night, and went on a lovely walk to Holehird Gardens via Orrest Head. I recommend this walk, as the Bowness crowds do not penetrate into the woods. No Ransome connections, but I bet he went up there.



## The Rocket stove

The first time in Covid time that we were allowed to, two Support Bubbles met for a BBQ near Windermere. We had at our disposal some logs and the right tools and knowhow to make a rocket stove. It works well although you don't have to be in a hurry for your coffee. And remember not to light it in the porch of your house – the lady of the house will soon take you to task for thoughtlessness!

To make your own Rocket Stove, take a dry log at least 12in long and bore a hole in the centre about 1 1/2in in diameter (you may need a special wood drilling bit for this) then drill a hole to meet it at right angles about 3/4 of the way down. Pack the hole with wood shavings soaked in paraffin or use a firelighter. Use three small pebbles to lift your billy-can off the top hole or you will put your fire out!

## Results of the Northern Region AGM

We had to have a virtual AGM and a postal ballot for the things that needed to be voted on. The resulting committee changes are: Chair, Elizabeth Williams; Secretary and NR Signals pages editor, Helen Lewis; Treasurer, Elizabeth Haworth; Board Rep, Krysia Clack; Committee members, Veronica Priest and Ann Farr.

The committee would welcome any ideas for innovative events/activities to keep our spirits up during the current restrictions on meeting physically.

## Future Events

Planning is going to be difficult but we hope to run a **virtual AGM on March 20th** but before that we would like all our members to design a **Birthday Card for AR's 137th Birthday on Jan 18th 2021**. If you would like to send us your card, we will publish them in the next edition of Signals and offer a reward for the one we think is the best.

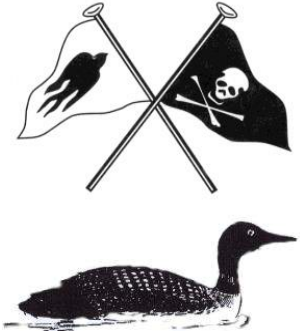
And, if you would like to, make a cake for him, take a photo of it and send it to us. It will be a shame we can't all share it but it will be the next best thing!

Details of addresses are elsewhere in the Regional Gateway page of this Signals



NEWS  
FROM  
THE GAELS

TARS Scotland



*Gòbhlanan-gaoithe 's Bana-gaisgich gu sìorraidh!*

October 17 should have been the date for our Literary Day, returning to Moat Brae and the Library by popular request but, like so many other events, it had to be postponed. As a result of last year's event, the suggestion was made that TARS should present a set of the 12 Swallows and Amazons books to Moat Brae, and this was agreed by the Trustees. It was decided that this could go ahead, albeit with only two members and the Chair of the Trustees of the Peter Pan Moat Brae Trust present, to comply with present restrictions.

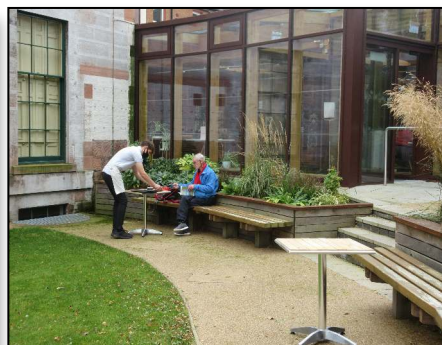


*Winifred & Flora*

On an early October morning, Paul and Winifred Wilson met Flora Burns, who at last year's visit guided us round the house, in the Storytelling room

on the first floor, with the sun pouring in, so much so that we had to close some of the shutters for photography to take place. Paul made videos on his tablet of both Winifred and Flora making little speeches, and a joyful time was had by all, followed by lunch in the café, where the enthusiastic staff and volunteers are keeping things going, even though the house is not open to the public at the time of writing.

Users of the café may explore the garden at no cost, and there is seating outside too. Inside, there are



Perspex screens between tables, and a very efficient table service. And there is certainly plenty to explore in the garden, with new wire sculptures of Barrie's friends dotted around, some sitting high up in the

branches, some on swings, and even one who appears to be swimming in the river. These were specially made earlier in the year by Edinburgh artist Aliisa Hyslop. And, there is the newest attraction, a large crocodile carved from the bough which broke off the

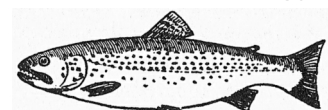


tulip tree in a storm 2 years ago. So roll on the day when we can have the next Literary Day, whenever that might be.

If you would like to see the videos of the presentation, e-mail Paul – he can send you a link:

[paulwilson204@hotmail.co.uk](mailto:paulwilson204@hotmail.co.uk)

*Winifred Wilson*



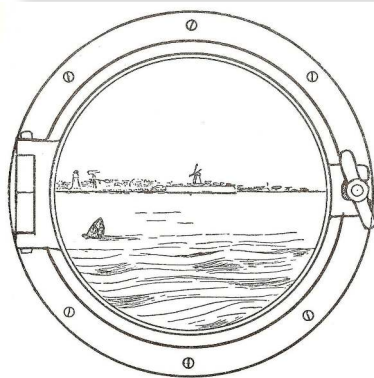




# What's that over there?

During the months of lockdown, as I explored the immediate vicinity looking for new walks for my daily exercise, I became intrigued by some of the things I could see and wanted to find out more. There's a well established footpath along a ridge by a field up behind my house from which you get this wonderful view out over Linlithgow Palace and Loch.

The thing that particularly interested me has been the distant view highlighted in the black box. It can be difficult to see in a smartphone image like this but there are some windmills there and I wanted to know just where they are. After all, when the children saw windmills through *Goblin's* porthole in *WDMTGTS*



they became certain that the pilot was bringing them in to Holland, but Holland's not in that direction from Linlithgow.

In best *S&A* fashion I got out the chart (Ordnance Survey map)

and tried to work it out. I got off to a bad start in that I thought I was facing due south when, in fact, it's just south of west. Next problem was that my chart is not the latest (almost 20 years old), so doesn't necessarily show these new-fangled things. It's difficult to see in the photos but there's a built-up area to the right of the windmills, and I felt sure that

if I could locate that I would be able to identify where and what I was looking at. Sure enough, once I realised that I was looking west(-ish) it all fell into place – it's California! (No, honestly, there's a community between here and Falkirk with that name. Probably the original, you know what these explorers were like when they found a new place – named it after somewhere back home, as like as not.) With a temporary subscription to Ordnance Survey online to view the latest mapping, I was able to confirm that the two windmills are by a farm called Gardrum, about 7 miles distant as the homing pigeon flies.

Now I wonder what other Ransome influenced activities or enquiries I can find to occupy me as the restrictions begin to bite again ....

*Andrew Jones*

James Rebanks is on Twitter and there has been publicity for his new book just out, *English Pastoral*. So I got his older book *The shepherd's life* from the local library. It's an interesting read covering his work in the Lake District during the four seasons of the year, as well as his upbringing and extended family. He was a very naughty pupil at secondary school because the teachers looked down on farming. There is lots of detail about sheep and nature. At one point he writes 'It is a curious thing to slowly discover that your landscape is loved by other people ... when you discover by stages that you as a native are not really part of the story and meaning they attach to that place ....' I visualise the Swallows watching him from Darien at that point.

I've carried on with the TARS Twitter feed most days. It now has 535 followers. In lockdown, we read all the books in order. A side topic started when Roger wanted to try marmalade with pemmican but Susan did not let him. I had no marmalade but I did have corned beef as well as cherry jam. Other Twitterers had marmalade but no pemmican :(

This is the starter I made: cheese oatcake bites with pemmican and cherry jam. They were nice. Sweet and salty at the same time. Meat often has a fruit with it when you think of cranberry sauce, apple sauce with pork or Duck à l'orange.

*Linda Hendry*



We had so many plans for this year, both as part of organised TARS activities and on our own. Unfortunately, instead of the adventures we had anticipated, the Great Aunt descended upon us in the form of the COVID-19 pandemic and resulting lockdown. Unlike Dick & Dorothea, however, we managed to avoid having to hide in the Dogs' Home: instead, as we are in the long-term process of moving house, we settled down to shield and self-isolate in our new home, passing the time getting it and the garden much more shipshape than we had expected to do in year one. Neither did we have to suffer like Ruth and Margaret did with wearing best clothes all the time.

There have been lots of S, A & D moments over the last few months. Like Dick, I'm a bit of a nerd and have been keeping an eye on the weather with a personal weather station. April was exceptionally dry (only 7 mm of rain here) and there were certainly areas elsewhere in Scotland that could have done with the assistance of Colonel Jolys and his volunteers to fight moorland fires.

Over the months, like Dick surely would have done, I have had the telescope out and looked at the sun (using an appropriate professional safety filter, I must add), the Moon, a lovely crescent Venus, Jupiter and its four bright moons, Saturn and its rings, Mars, the Andromeda Galaxy (M31) and, with the naked eye, the spring, summer and autumn stars. In mid-April I was out late at night viewing the Lyrid meteor shower and then the Perseids in early August. The astronomical highlight was the summer passage of Comet C/2020 F3 NEOWISE, although from NE Scotland the all-night twilight ('da simmer dim' in Shetland) made the naked eye spectacle far less imposing than further south.

We have had a regular flock of feathered visitors to the garden in the shape of sparrows, blue tits, robins, blackbirds, pigeons, starlings, seagulls, plus one or two we didn't get a good enough look at to identify – I'm sure Dick & Dorothea wouldn't have been stumped! Once we were able to meet up outside again I started exploring the local area, accompanied by my youngest granddaughter, a very Titty-like young lady who stays in the next town:

lots of exploration around the local cliffs, ponds, and woodland walks. Miss K and I even managed to get our Broads fix right here in Arbroath, keeping an eye on the local family of coots in Keptie Pond.



Some of our woodland walks were more reminiscent of Tolkien than Ransome, distinct feelings of being in the

Old Forest, with more chance of meeting Tom Bombadil and Goldberry than charcoal burners. There was certainly no sign of the Billies or charcoal mounds nor, thankfully, any adders, although Miss K would not be perturbed – she quite likes snakes.



Our last expedition started on the bustling seafront. We encountered a real-life working example of 'signalling to Mars' with the lovely Signal Tower, now a museum, that used to communicate visually with the Bell Rock (Inchcape) lighthouse that lies some 12 miles offshore, clearly visible on the horizon on a clear day.

Hopefully, 2021 will be a lot less restrictive travel wise and we can visit for real for the IAGM but, in the meantime, this will have to be our Pin Mill 'fix': the marina at Arbroath harbour [below].

*Sandy Allan*



**Birthday lunch & AGM: Saturday 16th January 2021 – Hawes Inn, South Queensferry**

Please see website for updates on whether this event will take place

**Postponed programme for 2021**

- Another chance to see Moat Brae, Dumfries and TARS Library, with a talk by journalist Carol Hogarth, whose childhood reading of Ransome's books turned her into a sailor
- Trip on Loch Lomond water buses, landing on one of the islands
- The Highland Pictish Trail and Pictish Museum, Rosemarkie
- The Falkirk Wheel experience, ascending by boat from the Union Canal to the Forth & Clyde Canal





## **Sou'westers and Seaboats News from the SW Region**

# **The high wood, tors, talking trees - and Tars**

It was the Big Six.... and a few, striding out from the Two Bridges Hotel to hike across Dartmoor to the high-altitude oakwood, Wistman's Wood, SSSI and one of the highest native oak woodlands in the UK.

We head off with a range of mobilities and hiking aptitudes which gave a natural rhythm to our social distancing. The gentler path took some around the edge of the dwarf habitat, pedunculate oak woodland with a smattering of rowan, holly and hazel. Others took on the 'technical' walk through the woodland braving the clamber over the 'clatter' of moss-covered, ankle-twisting granite boulders and navigating the procumbent trunks with branches twisting and lollygagging on the fern-covered rocks. And the robust continued up to the tors that surround the wood for some great views. The West Dart River flowed musically to the further side.

It was so good to see everyone. Lockdown has kept us apart since last January's birthday celebration. Susan Gouldbourne organised the walk, Barry came too and it was really good to see John Strickland, the master of the moor, out on Dartmoor again. As always, he spun tales of history and lore bringing the moor to life from the nearby Crocken Tor being the Stannary Parliament for local tin miners in the 15<sup>th</sup> – 18<sup>th</sup> centuries and also



taking us to the Druid or Buller Stone. This standing stone notes that in 1866 Wentworth Buller, with permission from the Duchy, felled an oak to age it – it was 168 years old.

Clambering through the treacherous, enchanted woods with twisting, gnarled branches festooned with hanging fronds of grey-green bearded lichen and mosses of a myriad colours we got to talking about trees. German forestry ecologist, Peter Wohlleben, has written that trees communicate with each other (*The Hidden Life of Trees: What They Feel, How They Communicate*). In this close community of trees you can speculate that they do communicate from wind-borne chemical essence to a relationship with mycorrhizal fungi. We hugged a few to see what they were saying.

The wood is a unique place. Andrew Motion calls it "one of wild nature's most precious survivors." The name, Wistman, is thought to come from the Devon word "wischt" which means eerie, uncanny or pixie-led. And the legendary Dartmoor hellhounds or wischt hounds (huge black dogs with red eyes and a taste for blood) are said to run through the wood. We had Archie, black but not very scary.



No charcoal burners were found nor adders, although there are reputed to be many living in the wood. Wistman's Wood was one of the originating 284 sites of the Society for Promotion of Nature Reserves established by Charles Rothschild, naturalist and banker, in 1912. A flagship in the beginning of habitat and nature conservation the wood is well worthy of a visit today.

As with all good TARS events, the walk ended with grub in the garden at the Two Bridges Hotel. Find the wood at SX605766, PL19 9NA. *Diana Dicker*



## Lechlade: Trains and swans and distancing but no IAGM

A small number of intrepid TARS had decided to retain their bookings at the New Inn Lechlade over what would have been the IAGM Weekend on an entirely individual basis. Supplemented by a couple of non-resident Tars, who just coincidentally happened to be there as well, two dinners were shared in convivial company by the twelve on Friday and Saturday evening at tables for four, suitably socially distanced, in the restaurant.

During the weekend, and the week preceding, visits were made to STEAM – the Museum of the Great Western Railway in Swindon, Buscot Park in the furthest south, and Chedworth Roman Villa in the furthest north. Three TARS experienced travel as the Swallows and Ds might have done by taking a steam train between Toddington, Cheltenham Racecourse and Broadway on the Gloucestershire and Warwickshire Railway. Walks along the Thames towpath and the crewing of a swan pedalo were activities enjoyed at Lechlade. *Andrew Silk*







Taking to the river at Lechlade on the Swan Pedaloos



## The Diana and Dick (not that Dick) Quiz

As we couldn't have a 'Dick Callum Cup' this year, **Diana Wright** and '**Dick Dastardly**' have put together a quiz. Please send your answers to [souwesters@gmail.com](mailto:souwesters@gmail.com) or to Susan Gouldbourne, Lothlorien, Gunn, Barnstaple, Devon, EX32 7NZ. All entries will receive a "Rogerish" prize.

### Starter round – S&A

1. What is the surname of the two pirates?
2. Where was the treasure found?
3. What did they call the pike?
4. What were the Billies?
5. What animal was on Captain Flint's flag?
6. What colour was Swallow's sail?

### Intermediate – all books in the 12

1. What was the serpent?
2. What was the BPS?
3. Who darned Roger's knickerbockers?
4. AR used the name Mc Ginty twice. Who for?
5. Who was the Norfolk villain in CC?
6. What colour were Nancy's shorts?

### Hard – all 12 books

1. What was Goblin's tonnage?
2. Where was PD's wherry when he said he would ship with the Wild Cat?
3. What drink did Cap Flint bring to Nancy and Titty when they were being seasick?
4. Which is the only real village mentioned in the Lakes books?
5. What is the melting point of gold?
6. How many pears did Mrs Dudgeon ask for?

### Dick Dastardly

1. In the Lake District, which properties were owned by AR?
2. What was his favourite club in London?
3. Who wrote *Thorstein of the Mere*?
4. Name the sisters who resided at Lanehead.
5. In which North Sea harbour did *Nancy Blackett* sink whilst moored to the pier?
6. Who wrote '*The Ransoming*'? And what was the title of the book re the author's version of the origins of Swallows and Amazons?

### Upcoming Events

**12<sup>th</sup> December 2020** – Virtual get together, further details to follow

**16<sup>th</sup> January 2021** – Virtual AGM: Prepare an AR themed lunch, then eat it while chatting to friends.

**27<sup>th</sup> March 2021** – Visit to Donkey Sanctuary

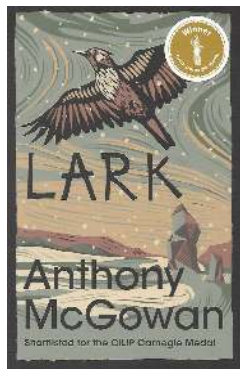


## Library in lockdown

Contrary to what might have been expected in the present circumstances, the time seems to have flown past since the last issue of *Signals*. Keeper, the Library Dog, received a piece of fan-mail as a result of her letter to the editor, in the form of a card from her great friend Mary Pritchard. She disapproves of the spaniel's behaviour, while secretly envying her pose.



We were able to access the Library a few times during lockdown, when the caretaker at Moat Brae went to do his checks on the building, so the books requested were collected and sent out. Every couple of weeks,

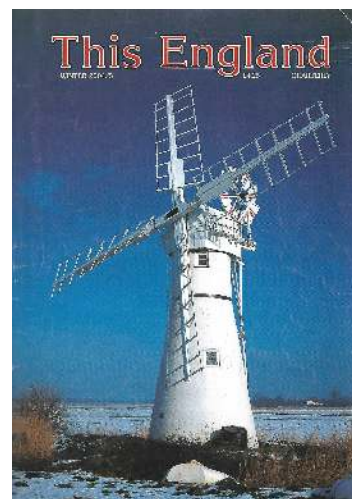


*The Carnegie shelf and this year's winner*

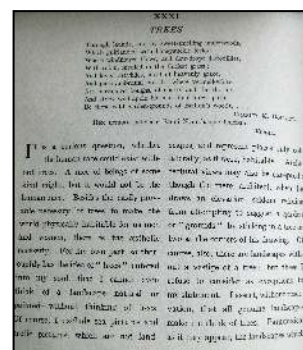
more Carnegie Medal winners went off to Peter Wright, who at the time of writing is trying to finish the only one he has really struggled with, after reading all of the others. I will leave it to him to tell you which one it is – or not as the case may be – in next year's edition of *Mixed Moss*. He deserves a medal of his own for reading all 81 books in less than 3 years. His first request for books from the Library was on 7 January 2018, when he was about to re-read his own copy of *Pigeon Post* which, as everyone knows, was the very first winner. All of this was on top of becoming the Chair of TARS, and the many other things which occupy Peter's time.

More books have been added to stock, largely as a result of the home-schooled Blue family winning poetry prizes! In addition to the book token we received as Martha Blue's chosen library, her sister Aurora nominated us to receive a substantial cheque from the Chaucer Heritage Trust, who awarded her a prize in their competition. Look out for the titles bought as a result in next year's Library Update in *Signals*, and also for some very good donations of books, sent from Gordon in Canada, Kate in the USA and Cheryl in New Zealand. Gordon also gave me some

tips about articles on AR in past issues of *Book and Magazine Collector* and *This England*, all of which I managed to buy online. The latter has a cover illustration of Thurne Mill on the banks of the River Bure, which, although Ransome doesn't mention it as such in *Coot Club*, the Ds and members of the Club must have passed on their voyages.



One which I should highlight here is *Book of the open air*, Book II (Autumn and Winter), edited by Edward Thomas and published in 1908, which contains a chapter by 'Arthur Ransome' [*sic*], entitled 'Trees'. This has been on the 'Wants list' since Margaret Ratcliffe was running the Library. It's a very large, heavy volume, with some beautiful illustrations tipped in. The strange thing about it is that there is no title-page or table of contents in this edition, but I managed to find those in later editions online, which verified the details. Book II and Book I (Spring and Summer) are both available to buy on Kindle.



*Wind – W. Tatton Winter*



*The Heron – Frank Southgate*

The Blue family visited Moat Brae on the way back from their climbing holiday in the Scottish Highlands and, after exchanging their books in the Library, went to have a look in the shop, where Mother asked Esme if she would like to buy a book. Esme's reply would delight the heart of any librarian – 'Why would we want to buy a book when we've just borrowed some?' So saying, she gives me a cue for saying 'Why not borrow some books from your own TARS Library?'

*Winifred Wilson*

\*Please note the new **TARS Library e-mail** address:  
[tarslib@arthur-ransome.org](mailto:tarslib@arthur-ransome.org)

## FROM Furthest South

Coincidentally, as the East Coast IAGM was being put together, down in New Zealand Garry Wood contributed a detailed study of the Harwich Harbour to the September issue of *Furthest South* on the TARS website. This is an edited version - for the full article, with photos and maps, see the website.

# The Harwich Harbour ferries

by Garry Wood

When in *WD Goblin* sails down the Orwell River, Jim Brading points out to the Swallows, far ahead of them, the little grey town of Harwich with its church spire and lighthouse tower.

This light tower was probably the taller of the two known as Harwich High and Low lighthouses, built in 1818. Though usually referred to as lighthouses their actual purpose was to act as guiding lights so as to lead ships safely through the shoals and into the harbour. However, by 1863 they were declared redundant because the shifting sands had changed the position of the ship channel. Both towers are still present today and have been restored as maritime museums.

### Seaplane sheds

As the *Goblin* proceeded downriver, to her left was the town of Felixstowe with its tall waterside mills, and, further on, but unmentioned, were the seaplane sheds and gantry. Aircraft enthusiasts, watching off the Marine Aircraft Experimental Establishment at Felixstowe in the 1930s, would have been fascinated with the many flying boats, float planes and amphibians being tested for their ability to take off and alight on the water.

Passing the Shotley Spit buoy, *Goblin* sailed on up the Stour river and it is here that she met a passenger ferry which had just left one of the Harwich jetties.

Ferry services on Harwich Harbour in one sort or another had been present for decades, but in the 1920s the London and North Eastern Railway (LNER) decided to become involved, and in 1925 had the motor vessel *Brightlingsea* built and introduced to the service between Harwich and Felixstowe. A somewhat unusual looking vessel, she was built by Rowhedge Ironworks, surprisingly with a wooden hull, to a length of 20.6m, and having a 152-passenger capacity. However, the upper deck, both ahead and aft of the wheelhouse was initially without cover, so that most passengers unless the weather was particularly good, would travel in the below-deck saloons. In more recent



years the after-deck acquired an overhead canopy. She remained in service till the 1980s, and is now included in the National Register of HistoricVessels. Because of her largish size, *Brightlingsea* (above, with a flying boat) would be unlikely to be the ferry AR referred to in the novel.

Three smaller motor vessels from earlier in the 20<sup>th</sup> century were retained in ferry service by the LNER, and were probably used in off-peak hours when there were not many passengers to be carried.

The motor vessel *Pinmill* (13.4 m, below), with a two-cylinder paraffin-oil engine, was built in 1910 by the Whitstable Barge Co. (Anon. 2005). In ferry service from 1912, her engine was later replaced by a diesel, and so powered she was subsequently also used as a work boat around Parkeston Quay. Both the *Pinmill* and the *Brightlingsea* had dark blue painted hulls, white and brown upper works, and yellow funnels, the colour scheme probably chosen by the LNER for their ferry fleet.



In *WD*, Ransome describes the ferry that *Goblin* passed as a 'small dumpy steamboat' (p63). This ferry was most likely to have been one of the two other wooden-hulled ferries, either *Epping* or *Hainault*, their ultimate fates now unknown. AR may have been in error here, as all four ferries were motor vessels, not steam driven as he suggests.



When, in *WD*, the injured Jim Brading managed to escape from the Felixstowe Hospital he caught the bus back to the dockside and pier, and found the ferry to Harwich about to cast off from the pontoon below. Staggering aboard, he asked the ferry mate and skipper, the former of whom he knew, if they knew the whereabouts of the *Goblin*, but they did not. Up to the 1960s, the dock area was very much the same as described by AR in the 1930s. The square on the waterfront was the same, as were the railway sidings, dock, pier, ferry terminal, and the hotel. The pier had, however, been shortened during World War 2 for security purposes.

The Pier Hotel as AR described it was a three-storey stone building, completed in 1875 for local landowner Colonel Tomline, whose visions of a Continental ferry service from Felixstowe were in time thwarted by the LNER building their own International ferry terminal at Parkeston Quay, Harwich.

The Pier Hotel of Felixstowe became the headquarters of HMS *Beehive*, a Coastal Forces base, during WW2. After the War, the hotel was renamed 'The Little Ships' in their honour, but was demolished by the Dock Company in 1990. The hotel did have a large signboard name which AR said the Swallows were able to read (p90) while the *Goblin* was about to cruise past in the Felixstowe deep water channel.

Another building mentioned by AR was the Old Dock Office which was about 100 metres from the Pier Hotel. The Dock Office was an ornate and gabled weatherboard building acquired from Norway and reconstructed alongside the Dock Basin in 1888. It was unfortunately destroyed by fire while being renovated in 1997. Also mentioned by AR was the heap of coal which can be seen on the lower right side of the photograph of the Dock Office (see website).

## Ha'penny Pier

At Harwich on the other, Essex, side of the harbour, the ferries in the 1930s berthed at a jetty known as the Half Penny (or Ha'penny) Pier. The little ferry, with Jim aboard, 'throbbed her way across the harbour' (AR's words), and then 'steamed into the camber at Harwich'. A marine camber was an enclosed dock in a dockyard which was used to provide shelter for small boats. Jim climbed up the wooden steps from it to the top of the pier and so to the harbourmaster's office.

This office really existed, but was situated about 100 metres away from the Ha'penny Pier in King's Quay Street, which leads into the old Harwich Town. The harbourmaster told Jim he had seen *Goblin* both anchored off Shotley Pier, and also on the Felixstowe Shelf two days previously, though

whether she was visible from his office in the 1930s can only be conjectured. The ticket office adjacent to the Ha'penny Pier is where in the novel the mate of the ferry told Jim to buy his ticket. The office, an ornate wooden building is still present and is now a harbourside visitor centre.

Harbourside hotels with the name Pier seem to have been popular then, as there is one called the Harwich Pier Hotel near the jetty. AR does not mention this in the novel and it is perhaps surprising he did not do so as it was present there in the 1930s. A striking building of three storeys, it is today festively painted with white walls and blue facings. An octagonal belvedere is perched on the roof.

Despite objections from other publicans the Pier Hotel was built for James Brice in 1860. Originally regarded as unnecessary and a failure, Harwich Pier Hotel has been transformed into a building of international repute, is now classified as 'an eye-catching building of merit', and has a popular harbourside restaurant.

Jim returned to the harbour ferry, which usually worked a triangular course, stopping briefly at Shotley Pier before returning to Felixstowe. He followed the harbourmaster's suggestion that the *Goblin* might be in the Felixstowe dock. She was not, but his dinghy *Imp* was there. As Jim rowed the *Imp* out from the dock the passing Customs launch hailed him telling that a small cutter was coming in from the *Cork* lightship, and looking seaward there was *Goblin* just passing the moored seaplanes, and bringing his search to an end.

*'Looking seaward,  
there was the Goblin,  
just passing the  
moored seaplanes and  
bringing his search  
to an end'*

## Recent updates:

The *Brightlingsea* is now, since 2017, a houseboat at St Osyth, Essex (For many years she lay awaiting restoration at Robertsons Boatyard in Woodbridge, where *Nancy Blackett* winters). It seems the task of making her serviceable again was just too great, particularly with the more onerous safety requirements.

'*Pinmill*', formerly owned by the Ipswich Maritime Trust, was sold to a private owner for restoration in 2005, but was destroyed in a major fire at the Iron Wharf Boatyard in Faversham, where she'd been moved for further restoration, in September 2017.

The current Harbour Foot Ferry was severely damaged in a storm in September 2020 when her mooring ropes at Ha'penny Pier parted. She suffered collision damage and water damage by submersion, and currently has an appeal running to help raise the £20,000 cost (over and above insurance cover) of restoration. It's hoped she'll be back in service by the start of the 2021 season. **PW**





## BOOK REVIEWS

### Russian revelations

**Love in the Revolution** by G Peter Winnington  
LETTERWORTH PRESS ISBN 978-2-9701307-1-0

**The Lockhart Plot** by Jonathan Schneer  
OXFORD ISBN 978-0-19-885298-8

In the end, the Russian revolution shared many of the ruthless and oppressive characteristics of the Tsarist regime it replaced. These two recently-published books in different ways shed a lot of light on the events in which Arthur Ransome was intimately involved, but did not always understand.

G Peter Winnington's *Love in the Revolution* contrasts eight individual relationships – two of them involving Ransome – with this background of chaos, fear and suspicion. Ransome liked and admired the Bolsheviks – Winnington describes him as, “dazzled by the personalities propounding an ideal of social equality... (but he) tended to disregard the means by which these ideals were to be achieved.”

However the rise of the Cheka, their feared and ruthless secret police, created problems when he wanted to get Evgenia out of Russia. The charming tale of their flight into Estonia as Ransome told it in his Autobiography concealed the bargain she had to strike with the Cheka, which knew all her family members, to smuggle over a million roubles worth of diamonds and pearls out of the country, sewn into her clothing. No wonder they didn't want to talk about these years in later life.

Rogue British agent Bruce Lockhart and his impressive mistress Moura Budberg also feature in *The Lockhart Plot*, which tells how Lockhart attempted to engineer an anti-Bolshevik rising, unfortunately for him with two disguised Cheka agents. Ransome is something of a bystander here, and an ignorant one, but Schneer's portrayal of life in 1918 Petrograd and Moscow is so well researched and brilliantly told that it, too, makes essential reading for those interested in this ever-elusive period of Ransome's life. *PW*

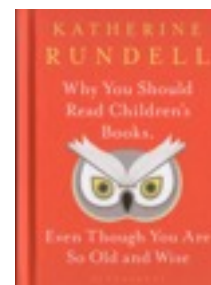


### Bristol Old Vic brings its S&A musical back – to your TV set

The original production of the Bristol Old Vic's acclaimed musical adaptation of **Swallows and Amazons** is part of its 'At Home' programme of YouTube offerings. It's available from 11 December to 28 February, to watch on smart TV sets or home computers.

There are two cost options: a Season Pass for **Season Two**, costing £12.99, and giving unlimited access to five shows, including S&A, or a 48-hour rental for just this show, for £4.50. More details at [bristololdvic.org.uk](http://bristololdvic.org.uk).

**Why You Should Read Children's Books, Even Though You Are So Old And Wise** by Katherine Rundell. BLOOMSBURY, £6.00



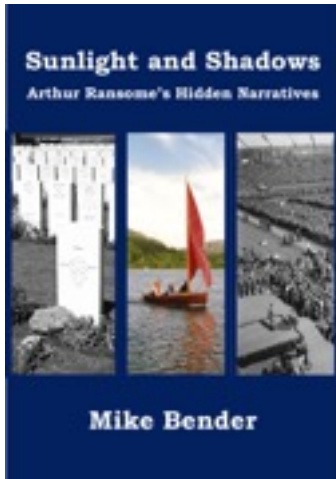
Katherine Rundell, herself a children's author, sums up her argument thus: “Those who write for children are trying to arm them for the life ahead with everything we can find that is true. And perhaps, also, secretly, to arm adults against those necessary compromises and necessary heartbreaks that life involves: to remind them that there are, and always will be, great, sustaining truths to which we can return.”

She doesn't mention Ransome by name – she mentions fairly few authors – but we, his grown-up fans, can see how the argument applies to his books, and equally to those of his disciples such as Julia Jones and Jon Tucker. It's only about 70 pages, little bigger than a pocket diary, and as cheering as its cover suggests. It would make a great stocking-filler for any Ransome fan.

*All the books mentioned on this page can be borrowed from the TARS Library*

# The TARS Stall

See Page 2 for contacts etc, plus NEW TARS Polo/T/Sweat shirts. For full stock list, visit the website: [arthur-ransome.org](http://arthur-ransome.org) Please note: Postage rates have gone up. If ordering from previous Signals, add 50p to charge: £3 becomes £3.50 etc or contact Christine



**NEW FROM  
AMAZON**

## Sunlight and Shadows

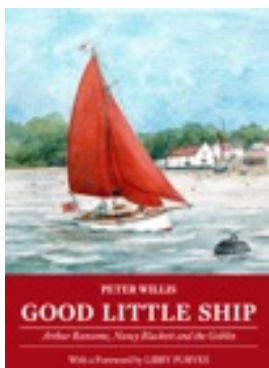
Mike Bender's challenging and groundbreaking reinterpretation of Ransome and his writings.

£14 (+£3.50)



**TARS Teddy** Need a mascot? Or a stocking-filler? Here he/she is! companionable soft toy, 24cm high (plague flag not included) £10 (+£3.50)

## EAST COAST IAGM BACKGROUND



## Good Little Ship: Arthur Ransome, Nancy Blackett and the Goblin, by Peter Willis

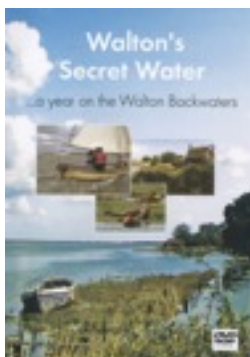
£14 (+ £3.50) The story of Nancy Blackett, inspiration for *Goblin* in AR's *WDMTGTS*, and her restoration by Mike Rines and the Nancy Blackett Trust.



## Racundra's First Cruise (£7+£3.50)

## Racundra's Third Cruise (£5+£3.00)

edited by  
Brian Hammett



## Walton's Secret Water

DVD £15 (+ £2)  
Film by David Webb of the Walton Backwaters of *Secret Water* country, in the 80th year of its publication, and including the River Orwell and Nancy Blackett. Run time 75 Minutes

## Arthur Ransome on the Broads

by Roger Wardale

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

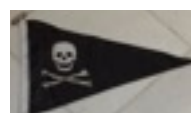
## Swallows and Amazons

the stage musical adapted by Helen

Edmundson, with songs by Neil Hannon  
£9 (+ £2) The script and songs for the Bristol Old Vic production, online this December.

## Audio CDs of 'The 12'

Read by Gabriel Woolf, £14 (+ £3.50) each.



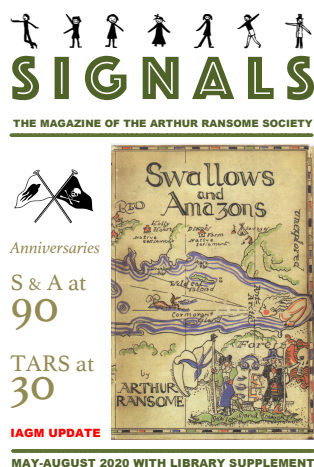
## Burgees

For your boat, or for a 'homely' decoration for your bedroom

Polyester burgees, 50x30cm, including halyard and toggle. Three designs: Swallow, TARS (Swallow+ Skull and Crossbones), Skull and crossbones  
£18 (+ £2.50)



## TARS PUBLICATIONS etc



**SIGNALS** is the Society's Magazine, published three times a year with news of events, activities and Ransome related happenings in the UK and overseas, as well as letters, features, reviews and contributions from members.

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

The May-August issue has the Library Supplement, while the September-December issue includes Ship's Log, which carries reports from the IAGM.

Each of the six UK Regions has up to three pages for its own events and news.

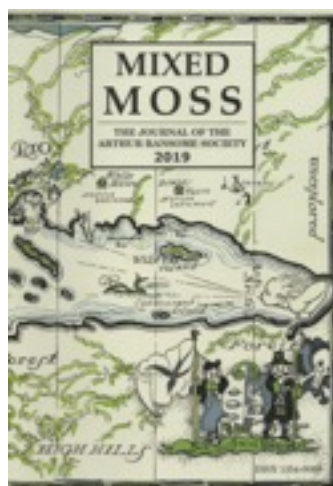
Some overseas material is included; overseas TARS groups also have their own newsletters – see below.

**Signals Editor is Peter Willis**  
[signals@arthur-ransome.org](mailto:signals@arthur-ransome.org)  
01394 387907

**Copy deadlines 1 March,  
1 July, 1 November**

**USA/Canada: Signals from  
Tarsus/North Pole News,**  
Editor: Simon Horn  
[shorn@colba.net](mailto:shorn@colba.net)

**Australia/New Zealand:  
Furthest South** Ed:Jan Allen  
[jp8fillyjonk@bigpond.com](mailto:jp8fillyjonk@bigpond.com)  
See ifc for contact details.



**MIXED MOSS**, the Society's Journal, is published annually and contains generally longer articles on literary, historical and research matters. Potential contributors are invited to contact the Editor with articles or outlines/suggestions.

Copy deadline is June, with distribution to members (not Youth class) in the autumn.

**Mixed Moss 2021 issue  
Editor is Catherine Lamont**  
[mixedmoss@arthur-ransome.org](mailto:mixedmoss@arthur-ransome.org)

**Back issues: most in stock at  
the TARS Stall, £4 + p+p**

### LITERARY WEEKENDS

Transcripts of Talks from the Edinburgh 2017 event and 13 previous biennial events are available from the TARS Stall, £6.50 +pp



**Amazon Publications** produces a book with a Ransome connection roughly every year on a subscription basis. Latest title, *Sunshine and Shadows*. Some back issues on TARS Stall. Enquires to Alan Hakim: [awhakim@btinternet.com](mailto:awhakim@btinternet.com)



**THE OUTLAW** is the TARS magazine specially for Juniors, sent to all Youth members, and to everyone with Group Membership, three times a year, along with Signals.

**Contact the Editors on**  
[outlaw@arthur-ransome.org](mailto:outlaw@arthur-ransome.org)  
or **Outlaw Editors c/o TARS,**  
17 Chesterwood Road, Kings  
Heath Birmingham B13 0QG

## RANSOME ONLINE

**TARS WEBSITE:**  
[arthur-ransome.org](http://arthur-ransome.org)  
with log-in access for  
Members Pages

## OTHER WEBSITES

**The Arthur Ransome Trust:**  
[arthur-ransome-trust.org.uk](http://arthur-ransome-trust.org.uk)

**The Nancy Blackett Trust:**  
[nancyblackett.org](http://nancyblackett.org)

[allthingsransome.net](http://allthingsransome.net)  
a useful resource site

[tarboard.net](http://tarboard.net) discussion forum

## FACEBOOK GROUPS

**The Arthur Ransome Group**  
(monitored public group)

**The Arthur Ransome Society  
(TARS) Facebook Group**  
(private group)





## The TARS Library

contains around 1,000 books written by Ransome, read by him, written about him or in some other way connected with him.

Browse the complete list on the TARS website, or request a paper copy for a small charge.

To borrow a book, contact our Librarian, Winifred Wilson, who will send it post-free in the UK (you pay only the return postage).

**Contact Winifred Wilson on 01387 252696**  
[tarslib@arthur-ransome.org](mailto:tarslib@arthur-ransome.org)

**TARS Library, Moat Brae**  
**101 George Street, Dumfries DG1 1EA**

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## TARS Committees

### Literary & Resources:

Krysia Clack (Chair), Paul Wilson (Secretary), Chris Birt, Paul Crisp, Ann Farr, Julian Lovelock, John Pearson, Christine Rae, Winifred Wilson, Peter Wright

### Publications:

Barry Gouldbourne (Chair), Mike Glover (Secretary), The Blue Family, Paul Crisp (guest), David Middleton, Peter Willis

## Contribute!

Letters, articles, reviews, news, photos always welcome. Send them to the Editor at [peterwillis1144@gmail.com](mailto:peterwillis1144@gmail.com) or Creek View, School Lane, Martlesham, Woodbridge IP12 4RR tel 01394 387907

## Advertise!

We are pleased to accept advertisements in Signals, either included within the magazine or as loose inserts. Half-page £100, quarter page £50, eighth page £25. Insert flyer £100.

## TARS Subscriptions

### 2021 rates

(renewals due 1st January)

**Adult** (now including Seniors) £25

**Family/Group** £35

**Junior or Student** £15

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

**Corporate rate** £60

## RED SLIPPER FUND

**Research and publishing grants available with new grant criteria**

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

To encourage more of you to undertake research, whether for a small article, pamphlet or book, for pleasure or academic study, grants may now be used towards travel costs, incidental expenditure or the costs of publication.

All we ask is that the TARS contribution is acknowledged in your work and that a copy is forwarded to the TARS Library.

For an application form and more details please contact: **Peter Wright**,  
[peterwright180@btinternet.com](mailto:peterwright180@btinternet.com)  
**17 Chesterwood Road, King's Heath**  
**Birmingham B13 0QG Tel: 0121 443 2910**

## Junior Adventure Fund

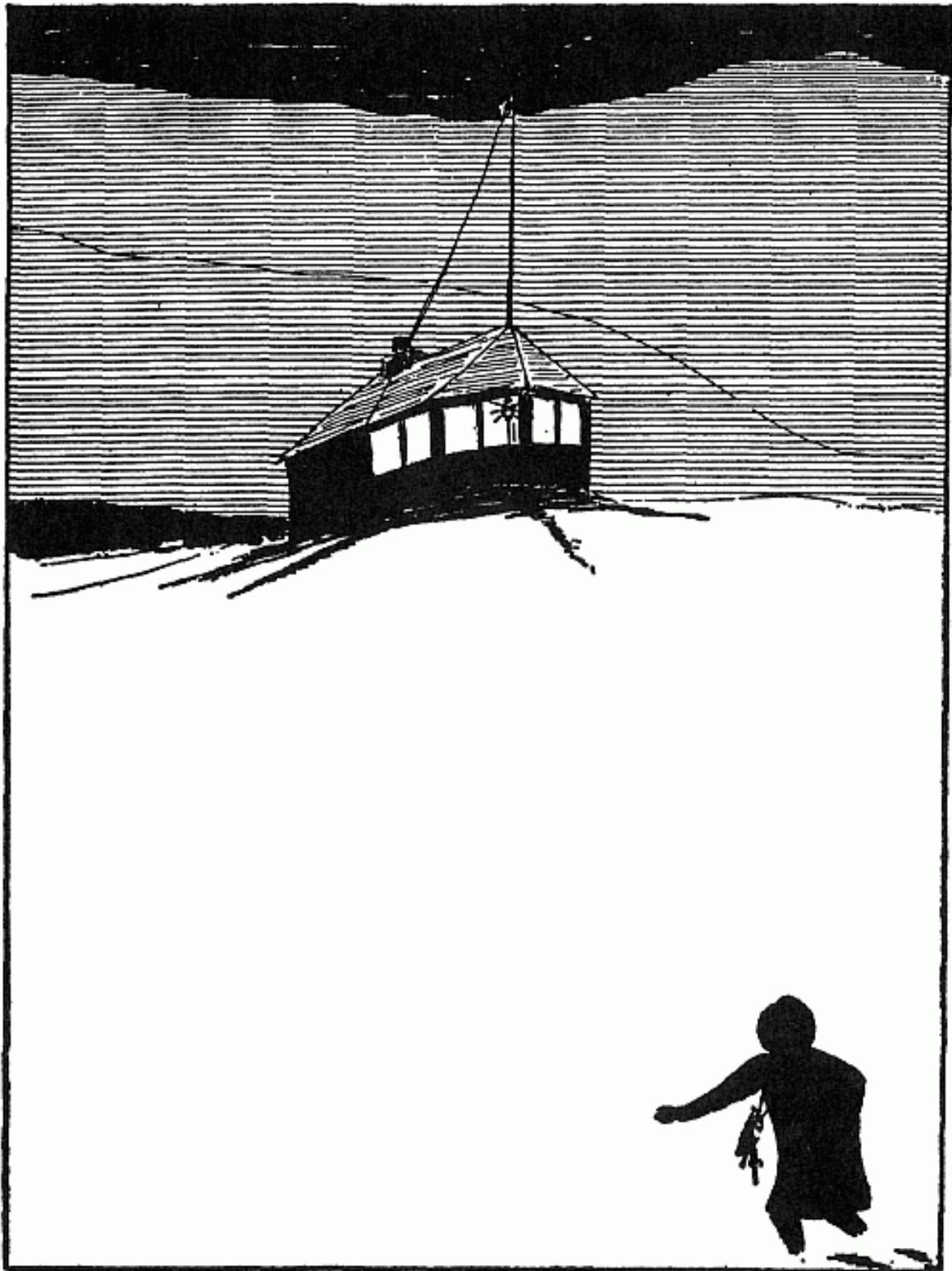
### Calling all young TARS aged 13 to 19

If you are planning to take part in a Ransome inspired outdoor activity, the TARS Junior Adventure Fund (formerly the Ship's Baby Fund) may be able to help with the costs.

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

**Please see the TARS website for further details or contact Paul Crisp,**  
[p.crisp048@btinternet.com](mailto:p.crisp048@btinternet.com)

# **SIGNALS** JANUARY-APRIL 2021



NANCY REACHING THE POLE

**THE MAGAZINE OF THE ARTHUR RANSOME SOCIETY**

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