

The Arthur Ransome Society

Minutes of the 85th meeting of the Board of Trustees, held via Zoom on 13 March 2021

Present: Peter Wright (in the chair)
Amanda Ardagh-Walter
Krysia Clack
Ted Evans (Vice-President)
Michael Glover
Barry Gouldbourne
Susan Gouldbourne
Marc Grimston
Linda Hendry
Brian Key
John Pearson
Elizabeth Williams
Peter Willis
Diana Wright

1. Apologies for absence

An apology had been received from Iain Khan-Gilchrist. A technical problem prevented Kirstie Taylor from participating in the meeting.

2. Chair's introductory remarks

Peter welcomed Marc Grimston to his first Board meeting. The present meeting would be Amanda's last full meeting before standing down under the six year rule. He thanked her for all her work as a Board member. Midland region had proposed that she be succeeded as regional representative trustee by Jules Blue, whom the Board would appoint at its next meeting.

Peter had received reports of a limited number of inappropriate remarks at recent TARS meetings or events or in members' emails. He asked Board members to be on guard against such incidents.

For the first time in many years, membership numbers were increasing. New members had joined TARS in each of the last four months, this being no doubt attributable in part to the new website.

Peter informed the Board of the death of Brian Keane, who had been TARS' very first member. An obituary would appear in the next edition of *Signals*.

Peter recalled that 2024 would see the 50th anniversary of the Swallows and Amazons film starring Sophie Neville. The Board was sympathetic to the idea of celebrating this, in a manner to be decided; it would return to this subject at its September meeting.

3. Minutes of Board meeting of 3 October 2020

These were approved as a true record of that meeting.

4. Matters arising from those minutes

The Board agreed with the proposal from TARS Scotland that TARS should seek to roll forward the agreement with Lakeland Arts for the exhibition and care of the boat Coch-y-Bonddhu at the Windermere Jetty museum when the agreement expired on 14 December 2022.

The proposed TARS visit to Eastern Europe could not take place in current circumstances but could be revived once conditions permitted.

5. Treasurer's presentation of 2020 accounts and draft 2021 budget

The Board noted that the 2020 income and expenditure account showed a surplus of £339. Meeting costs had been unusually low because of the pandemic; it had also been possible to reduce significantly the cost of TARS' publications. The Board approved the 2020 accounts subject to minor drafting amendment; it also approved the proposed 2021 budget. In the absence of a written draft of the 2020 balance sheet because of the late arrival of information, Susan informed the Board of its content and the Board approved it. The agreed 2020 accounts and balance sheet would now be prepared for presentation to the IAGM.

The Board expressed its thanks to Susan for all her good work as TARS Treasurer.

6. Literary and Resources Committee report

The Board took note of the minutes of the committee's meeting of 20 February 2021. Peter Wr confirmed that it had been agreed with the British Library that TARS would send it electronic copies of our publications (including the Literary Weekend Transcripts); the Library would copy these to the other legal deposit libraries.

The Board considered Peter Wi's note about a TARS book club and expressed broad support for this proposal. It requested a group consisting of Peter Wi, Amanda, Diana, Elizabeth and a representative of the Blue family to bring the club into operation. The group should also examine Peter Wi's proposal for a TARS book award and report to the Board's September meeting.

7. Publications Committee report

The Board took note of the minutes of the committee's meeting of 27 February 2021. The committee had considered the possible organisation of TARS writing competitions, one for adults, another for children. The Board decided that a group including Susan, Jules Blue, Barry, Marc and Peter Wr should consider how and by whom these could be organised and make a proposal to the Board's September meeting.

The committee had also considered aspects of TARS' membership arrangements. It was concerned to note that a large number of subscriptions had not been renewed for 2021 and that many standing orders had not been updated to reflect the changes in subscription levels. It appeared that the overseas co-ordinators succeeded in minimising such irregularities. The Board decided that each UK region should be informed by the membership team about which of its members had not renewed their subscription and should then contact each of these individually; there was evidence that the great majority of the members concerned would welcome rather than resent this.

8. TARS IAGMs

The Board considered Peter Wr's note on this subject. It agreed that it would not be feasible to organise a physical IAGM in 2021. Instead, Eastern region was ready to

organise, along the lines indicated by Peter, a virtual IAGM via Zoom on the morning of Saturday 29 May. The IAGM should be followed immediately by a Members' Forum and a short Board meeting. Members wishing to participate would need to book in advance; they would be able to present questions or comments both in advance and during the meetings. Marc would organise a virtual Dick Callum Cup in association with the IAGM. These arrangements would be explained in the next *Signals*, on the website and in the IAGM documentation.

In discussion of post-2021 IAGMs, Eastern region were thanked by the Board for their readiness to organise the physical IAGM of 2022; this would have to be on the weekend of 26 - 29 August. Subsequent IAGMs would now therefore be organised by TARS Scotland, Midland and South (perhaps jointly with South West) regions in 2023, 2024 and 2025 respectively.

A possibility for the future might be to organise in a given year two meetings, for example a virtual IAGM in May or early June (with the advantage of permitting easier participation by overseas members) and a 'fun weekend' later in the summer.

9. 2021 Literary Weekend

Peter Wr said that the pandemic had made it impossible to organise the next Literary Weekend in 2021. The Board agreed that it should be postponed until 2022, at a date, perhaps in the spring, to take account of the new August date for that year's IAGM.

10. Dates of future Board and Committee meetings

The Board considered a note by John suggesting dates for these meetings over the next two years. In the light of comments by Board members he would propose a revised schedule, taking account of the preference of some for midweek rather than Saturday meetings, and the need to fix if possible rather earlier dates for the spring meetings in order to leave more time before the spring *Signals* copy deadline.

11. TARS website

The Board thanked Diana for her report on the website, and for all her work in developing and managing it. Peter Wr encouraged each Board member and region to take an interest in improving it and keeping it up to date. A point for consideration was whether the question to visitors about receiving the newsletter came at the right moment of their exploration of the site.

In this context the Board also considered TARS' experience with Facebook and Twitter. There were two Facebook sites dealing with AR, one unofficial, the other 'official', managed by Chris Rosindale but, it was thought, never formally sanctioned or approved by the Society. Chris should be informed that the Board would like to offer him support by setting up a small team of Diana, Linda and Marc to contact and keep in touch with him.

12. AusTARS Cup

The Board endorsed the proposal of AusTARS to award the Cup in 2021 to Brian Hopton. This should be announced at the IAGM and reported in the September *Signals*. Peter Wi would seek to contact Brian or his son about whether Brian might be able to participate in the IAGM.

13. Administering membership

Please note also in this context the reference, under item 7 above, to the problem of unrenewed subscriptions etc.

Ted confirmed that he would wish to retire from his role on membership matters.

The Board thanked him for all the work he had put into this task and agreed that Susan should succeed him. The two of them would consider how best to manage the handover. It was noted also that membership secretary David Middleton hoped to be relieved of some of his duties; that should be discussed with him.

The Board considered Diana's note proposing the creation of an online membership system. The Board understood the advantages of such a system, while recognising that a number of existing and potential members would prefer the existing 'manual' system of applying for membership. It decided that Peter Wr, Susan, David and John should quickly produce a careful analysis of the cost and the operational pros and cons of going online and present a full proposal to the Board in time for a decision before the summer break.

14. TARS insurance

John reported that progress was still required on

- reviewing and probably improving TARS' existing public liability insurance policy;
- considering taking out insurance to protect TARS' own members.

Detailed personal discussion with our public liability insurers seemed necessary and should be organised when the pandemic permitted. Susan said that insurance for internet and email problems should be considered.

15. Child safeguarding policy

Amanda had circulated an updated text of TARS' existing child safeguarding policy document. She explained the relatively minor changes as compared with the previous text. By a show of hands all the Board members present approved the new document, which also needed to be sent to the UK TARS regions and applied by their committees. It would also be sent for information to the overseas co-ordinators.

Though standing down from the Board, Amanda was happy to continue to lead on this subject, supported by Michael. In particular, she would like to add to the policy document a section on vulnerable adults.

16. Alliance of Literary Societies (ALS)

The Board took note of Amanda's report. TARS was to host the 2024 ALS AGM. It had originally been thought that this should be held in the Lake District, but Amanda understood that an East Anglian location would also be acceptable. At all events, accommodation for the meeting should now be found as soon as possible. The Board decided that a preparatory committee (Amanda, Susan, Peter Willis and perhaps Ann Farr, Chris Birt and Stephen Benham) should take this forward.

17. Relations with other AR entities

Peter Wr had circulated a note recording his recent contacts with the Arthur Ransome Trust (Geraint Lewis) and with Christina Hardyment as founder of Amazon Publications. Future relations with both now seemed likely to be smooth. It was noted that Amazon Publications finances had always been separate from those of TARS. Peter Wi intended to feature these and other AR entities in coming editions of *Signals*.

18. Regions' and Overseas reports

Oral reports were supplied by the UK regions' representatives. It was noted that the 'log book' would now be given to new junior members with their membership pack rather than at the first TARS event they attended.

As Overseas Members' Representative Trustee, Kryisia was in regular touch with the overseas co-ordinators. She would inform them of the decision to hold a virtual IAGM.

19. Other business

The installation by English Heritage of a blue plaque at AR's address in Gunter Grove, Chelsea was now to go ahead as a virtual event. TARS should make an effort to contribute to this occasion; it would be shown the proposed press release and should if possible get TARS mentioned in it.

20. Date of next meeting

29 May 2021, after the virtual IAGM and Members' Forum.

John Pearson
Secretary

27 March 2021