

MIXED MOSS

THE JOURNAL OF THE
ARTHUR RANSOME SOCIETY
2021

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unexplored



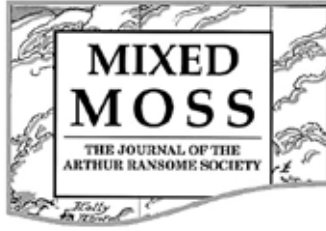
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OUT OF CAPTAIN FLINT'S TRUNK



WHEN I noticed the vacancy for an editor for *Mixed Moss* on joining AusTARS in 2019, my first response was: 'I'd love to do that, but it would be silly to apply for the role when I don't know the organisation, have only just discovered Arthur Ransome, have no experience in editing anything (other than friends' essays and my own work) and live 'down under'. Yet here I am, editing TARS' flagship, *Mixed Moss* ... in the year of living 'Covidly', to boot!

You may well wonder – as I still do – if the decision to try such an interesting experiment was an act of destiny, delusion or desperation ... or perhaps there are elements of all three. In some ways, mine is not unlike the story of Ransome becoming a journalist (when the incumbent was too ill) or getting his first book published under his name (see the article on AR's ghost writing). Becoming editor has certainly been a wonderful way to start filling in all those gaps in my knowledge base and skill set ... and a great privilege to witness and participate in the creative process of our contributors.

I am very keen to honour the traditions established by my predecessors, particularly Julian Lovelock whose encouragement has been so critical in not only developing my editing skills but in re-igniting my 'spark' and confidence in writing. One of my first challenges was to respond to what may be a classic editor's dilemma: two people wanting the exact opposite from the journal – one more interested in facts or analysis; the other in the 'magic' and personal responses. 'Balance' seemed to be one of Julian's particular achievements. This theme guided me in seeking/choosing extra material – balance in gender, age, length of time in TARS, distance from the UK, genre,

Out of Captain Flint's Trunk

length, style and topic. While AR's own work was as diverse as TARS membership, AR is perhaps better remembered for his creative work than his academic essays (despite his being highly talented in both). To this end, I am happy to announce a TARS-wide poetry competition and a 'regular column' for 2–3 'personal responses' to balance the more academic articles. As I say on the TARS website, 'something for everyone, not everything for someone'.

At the same time as respecting tradition, TARS is always evolving. I would like to bring in my own 'upside-down expertise' ... *as* a novice, a new member and one living in a large country at some distance from the nearest Tar. I remember wondering who these amazing contributors were, about current research, who to contact about different topics and how I could get these questions answered from Australia. I thought that an 'About our Contributors' section and a research page might satisfy any such curiosity.

In the year of three anniversaries (*Missee Lee* (80), *Peter Duck* (90) and *The Crisis in Russia* (100)) and a global health situation reminiscent of *Winter Holiday*, I need not have worried about getting enough material. There were so many excellent pieces that I gained approval for a larger 'Covid special' edition (*Mixed Moss* is usually 80–88 pages long) and an online supplement to cater for the overflow. I hope this will be on the website by Christmas.

People keep telling me that being an editor is a thankless task. That is not how I experience it. Yes, there is a lot more to being an editor than I realised. I had no idea how many questions on style would need to be answered *before* editing my first article, for starters! With the added complications of communicating in information-poor, text-based media (email) with people I'd never met, all with different expectations and levels of computer expertise, I may have trodden on some toes. I hope they recover soon, if so. I 'grabbed a chance', learned a lot (not least of all about myself), and met some wonderful people along the way. I can't name them all, but particular thanks are due to my mentors Julian Lovelock, Peter Wright and Peter Willis, and a technical/advisory team (Paul Wilson, Linda Phillips and Mark Walker) that sprang up in response to my request for proofreaders. Without their clear feedback (always welcome) and support (and all those helping with the style guides), *Mixed Moss* 2021 would not have got to the printers. I hope you enjoy it.

Catherine Lamont

ABOUT OUR CONTRIBUTORS

TARS publications are sometimes the only forums available to more isolated members to connect with fellow Tars. I hope you find their personal stories, and the story of how these articles came into being, as interesting as I did, so I'll introduce them in the order I 'met' them.

Julian Lovelock, my predecessor, already had a number of articles in the pipeline when he began to hand over the reins in 2020. For starters, **Peter Wright**, the current TARS chairman, had promised to write on the Carnegie Medal winners. As you may read in a 2021 edition of *Furthest South* (accessible on the TARS website), Peter first encountered SA books in the 1963 BBC serial, moving to the books when he was eight. He joined TARS in 1999, indulging in and sharing his love of both outdoor and literary TARS activities in many official roles, as well as with his family through two generations.

Also promised were the winning entries from two junior poetry competitions, including the Chairman's own. Winners **Aurora, Esme and Martha Blue** are co-editors of TARS' junior magazine, *The Outlaw*. **Charlotte Seyler** is proud to be French-Canadian and loves chocolate. She was introduced to TARS by her step-father. Four generations of her family love the books.

An article about the evolution of the *MM* indexes from **Paul Wilson**, *MM* proofreader, previous editor of *Signals* and member of the L&R committee, was eagerly awaited. Paul spent several years in medical research. A career change to library and information work in the dairy industry gave him professional editing experience. He and Winifred spent over 12 years living on a canal narrowboat, before settling in Dumfries.

The next two articles came from people who were new to *Mixed Moss*. **John Fletcher** is a retired marine and maintenance engineer. Ransomania inspired by reading *PP* led John to explore and enjoy sailing, archery, mountain walking, photography and nature conservation, and *BS* matured a desire to confront injustice. He believes that Ransome has been the third most influential person in his life (after his wife of 44 years and the

Carpenter from Nazareth). As a teenager, he wanted to be John Walker, but suspects he is more of a Dick Callum with a touch of Roger thrown in.

Stephen Sykes' varied career includes astrophysics, financial investment, and writing. He is author of *The Last Witness* (about the testing of the first atomic bomb). Stephen and Janine bought Hill Top in 2012, knowing little about Ransome and having read none of his works. This has now been remedied! They simply saw Hill Top as a splendid house to which to retire ...

Nicholas Hancox's email suggesting that an article about the Ransome statuettes might be of interest led Peter Wright to point me in the direction of **Ted Alexander**. Ted is a TARS founding member who has worked full-time in TARS in many roles, travelling all over the country and as far as Russia on TARS business. A retired merchant seaman, he has published four books on Ransome, including *Ransome at Home* (a copy of which arrived as I was editing an article about one of them – an insightful and helpful read).

Another new contributor, retired engineer, **Paul Thicke**, sent me his delightful personal reflections in November. This inspired me to start a regular 'personal response' section for future editions. You'll find his story in his article. To ensure I had enough material, I then set about commissioning what became the article from **Kirsty Nichol Findlay**. Kirsty's introduction to the Swallows at the age of seven, in NZ, led to an academic career in English literature. She initiated the first MA course on children's literature in NZ, and now at home in Cumbria works as the Senior Consultant in Drama for Trinity College London. She has contributed to TARS in many roles and publications, and she edited the long-lost study of Robert Louis Stevenson.

In January, all my Christmases came at once. **Alan Kennedy** wrote to ask if I would be interested in an article on *GN*. Now, Julian had pointed out that it was *ML*'s 80th anniversary ... dare I ask Alan to shift his focus to the 'birthday girl'? As you can see, Alan was happy to humour me. Alan is the author of several books and many journal articles. He is Emeritus Professor of Psychology in the University of Dundee. He lives in France with his wife Elizabeth and their Weimaraner, Caesar, who gets a walk-on role in his 'autobiographical tribute' to Arthur Ransome, *The Boat in the Bay*.

Kryisia Clack was seven when her brother brought *PM* home from the library for her to read when she was ill. She spent seven happy years

employed at a bookshop before moving to the British Library (the topic of her article) where she worked for 30 years until retirement. She was so excited to learn of TARS from the back of a book at a Coniston newsagent in 1994 that she alarmed the shop assistant ... and joined immediately.

Shortly after receiving Krysia's offer, **Brian Key** forwarded some research done by **Jeff Cooper**, grandson of the poet Lascelles Abercrombie, on Ransome's first book, *The ABC of Physical Culture*. Brian's introduction to Jeff may be found in the article. Researching this article in turn led me to contact **Wayne Hammond** in the hopes that he had a copy of the elusive *ABC* – a lucky coincidence, since it led not only to the *ABC* (and a photograph), but to Wayne himself offering me a short piece on an early AR article he had just discovered. Wayne, who worked as a rare books librarian in Massachusetts, discovered 'the twelve' only in his 30s. He has published comprehensive bibliographies of both Ransome and J. R. R. Tolkien.

In February, another piece from a new member, **Martin Beech**, arrived. The SA novels have all played some part in his life story. They accompanied him on many a family holiday in the Lake District and the Norfolk Broads. Dick Callum played a considerable part in determining his future career as an astronomer (with research interests in Martian meteorites). With a recent move from the prairies of Saskatchewan to Vancouver Island, Martin intends to climb a Kanchenjunga or two, hunt for fossils and explore some coastal bays by canoe.

Finally, I sat down to finish my own article. **Catherine Lamont** only discovered Ransome 'properly' four years ago, when she started reading SA to her teenager. London-born to Aussie parents, she lives 60 km north of Ransome's grandfather's (Mrs Walker's?) sheep station. After various travels, jobs and studies in psychology/therapy, education, literature, the Army and her own résumé-writing business, she is now focusing on family and writing.

I'd also like to thank those who sent book reviews, and contributions for which the printed edition of *Mixed Moss* did not seem to be the best forum at this time. Some came from outside TARS. While it is difficult to write for a publication one has never seen, this dilemma did result in one person joining TARS! We intend to publish his delightful family memoir (and biographies of book reviewers) in the online supplement.

PERSONAL REFLECTIONS – LITERARY LICENCE ON MARS

Paul Thicke

I AM, I confess, not particularly interested in Arthur Ransome's life story. The *Swallows and Amazons* books could have been written by a little green man from Mars for all I care, as long as they came into my hands exactly as they are.



I was introduced to the magical twelve in 1946 (aged eight years old) when my Auntie Jackie gave me *Swallows and Amazons* for Christmas. I can still vividly remember unwrapping it and looking at the weird dust-jacket and funny title, thinking 'Just the sort of rubbish you get from an Aunt!' But I started reading and instantly fell into the enchanted world of John, Susan, Titty and Roger. I retired to my bedroom to continue my exploration; much later, my mother came in and told me 'Put that book down and join the rest of the family!'

Peter Duck arrived for Christmas 1947 and *Swallowdale* for 1948. At this time, after a long campaign of begging and pleading, I gave *Swallows and Amazons* and *Peter Duck* to a friend emigrating to New Zealand where they would *never* have heard of them. (I wouldn't give him *Swallowdale* as it was still quite new, and I had only read it a couple of times. I still have that copy, but it has been pretty comprehensively trashed by my younger sister.)

When I reached the age of 11, I was able to join the local library (5–6 miles away in Chatham) and every Saturday searched the shelves for others in the series ... and vowed that when I grew up, I would own the complete set. This finally happened in 1964 when I got a better-paid job and over the next year bought the set for 16/- (80p!) each. They now have pride of place on my bookshelf, together with copies of every series published in the UK and many overseas editions.



Copies of Swallowdale, 'still much loved and often read'

I hate articles that take novels apart, but the article on 'Literary Licence' (MM 2020) did make me address a question that I have thought about frequently for the last few decades:

Question: What, for me, is the most magical moment in all of 'the twelve'?

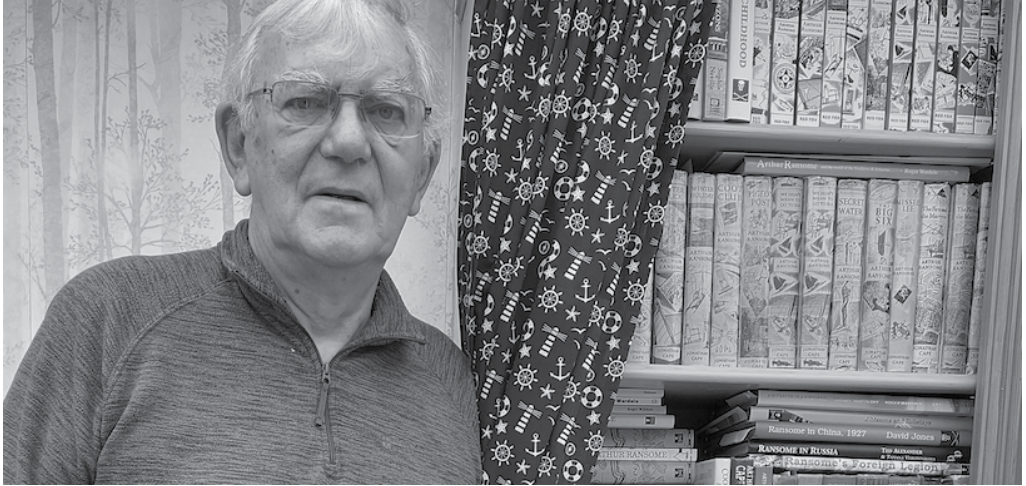
Answer: Chapter 2 in Winter Holiday 'Signalling to Mars'.

I feel for Dick in his unscientific urge to shout in triumph at the stars. I envy Dot her sharp young eyes and the combination of no light pollution and the clear skies of a cold January night that enable her to see six separate stars in the Pleiades cluster.

I wondered for a long time why they were not entranced by the magic of Orion and then remembered Nancy's quote, 'Dark at tea-time and sleeping indoors: nothing ever happens in the winter holidays' (*WH*, Ch. 3, p. 46). It's too early, and in combination with the hills of High Greenland, Orion has not yet risen.

It's the magic that matters, not that the barn is at 54° 18'46.7"N; 2° 54' 56.4"W. And when I take my little dog for a last walk before bedtime and see the same night sky, it's the magic that brings the emotion welling up inside me.

P.S. Yes, Mars is the Red One!



The author standing proudly by his bookshelf with 'copies of every series published in the UK and many overseas editions' (and quite a collection of publications about AR, too)



Editor's note: If any readers would like to share their favourite moments, do send them in for the next edition.



MIXED MOSS POETRY COMPETITION 2022

FOLLOWING the success of the poetry competition for Juniors held in 2020, TARS is now running a second competition, but this time inviting members of all ages to participate.

Categories: Entries are invited in the following categories:

- 1) Structured poem (e.g. sonnet, haiku, rhyming verse, limerick) up to 24 lines long;
- 2) Humorous poem up to 24 lines long; and
- 3) Open – any other poem up to 52 lines long. If writing in language other than English; please provide a translation.

You may enter up to four poems in total, which may be spread across all categories, or all poems in one category. You may also enter the same poem in different categories.

Prizes: A single prize will be offered for each category, plus a fourth prize for the editor's choice. Winners will receive a £25 book token or book of choice from TARS Stall. Prize-winning entries will be published in *Mixed Moss (MM)*.

Theme: Arthur Ransome's life and work. This could include poems in your own style or 'in the style of Arthur Ransome (or one of his characters)'. Two Ransome poems are provided on p. 68.

Please send entries and any enquiries to the editor by emailing mixedmoss@arthur-ransome.org (preferred) or by post to TARS, c/o Abbot Hall, Kirkland, Kendal, Cumbria LA9 5AL.

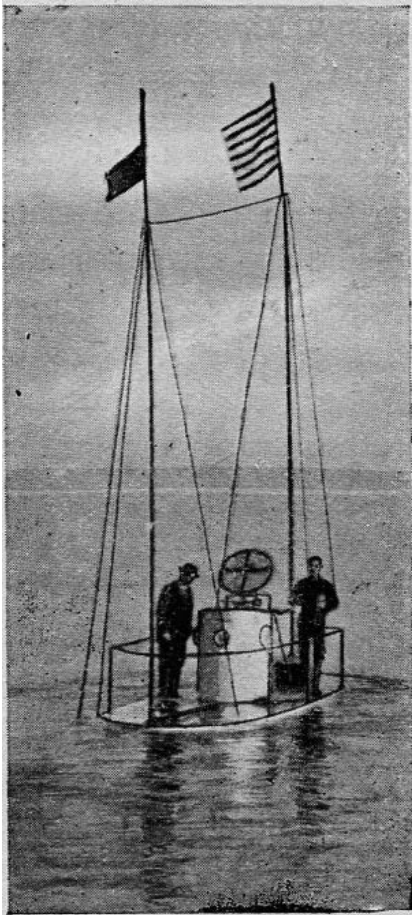
Deadline: 31 January 2022. Please clearly state your name and contact details clearly, and the categories each poem is to be entered in.

Judging: Entries (de-identified) will be judged by independent specialists who have some familiarity with Ransome's work. Merit and relevance to a TARS audience will be major considerations in selecting winning entries.



SUBMARINE SHIPS AND SUBMARINE CITIES

Wayne G. Hammond



THE "ARGONAUT" AWASH.

IN *Arthur Ransome: A Bibliography* (2000) I remarked that a complete list of Ransome's contributions to periodicals probably could not be made, in part because 'some appeared in publications now difficult or impossible to find, let alone identify'. It's safe to say that I never would have learned of an article by Ransome in *The Young Engineer and Amateur Carpenter & Electrician*, published in London by Guilbert Pitman, had a volume of the magazine not been offered for sale on eBay by someone who recognised Ransome among its authors and put his name in the description. The work in question, 'Submarine Ships and Submarine Cities: A Retrospect and a Forecast', signed 'Arthur M. Ransome', appeared in the October 1902 issue (Vol. 1, No. 12) on pp. 429–35. In the *Bibliography* this would fall between C1 and C3, so is very early among Ransome's writings. The image accompanying the article (left) seems to be a copy of an original photo of Lake's *Argonaut*, which can be found at

<https://www.history.navy.mil/our-collections/photography/numerical-list-of-images/nhhc-series/nh-series/NH-57000/NH-57033.html>.

‘Submarine Ships and Submarine Cities’ in fact says very little about submarine cities (that is, human habitats on the ocean bed), merely forecasting that ‘eligible mansions of the sea’ (p. 434) would be built one day. Ransome mainly summarises the history of submersible vessels, from ancient diving-bells to the *Holland* class of the early 20th century, emphasising the technology of submarines and torpedoes. He quotes from *Twenty Thousand Leagues Under the Sea* and cites Jules Verne several times for having inspired ‘the inventors of amphibious boats’ (p. 429).

Early in 1902 Ransome joined the London publisher Grant Richards as an errand- or office-boy. He hoped to learn about the publishing business while learning to write, and in his *Autobiography* recalled that he wrote frequently, anything that came to mind, though it was ‘rubbish’. He stayed with Grant Richards only six months before taking a less demanding job with the Unicorn Press, also in London, which gave him more time to develop his craft. ‘I wrote essays, whole books of them and could then write articles, similarly discursive, for which I began to find buyers. ... I wrote articles on new inventions for trade journals, travel-articles to fit sets of photographs of countries I had never seen, articles on the dead to chime with their centenaries, anything in fact for which I could find a market’ (*Autobiography*, pp. 79, 84).

In his *Autobiography* Ransome dates these first activities as a professional author to 1903, but as we see from ‘Submarine Ships and Submarine Cities’, he began to have work accepted for publication already in 1902. It may be significant that he cites in his article M. P. Shiel's *The Lord of the Sea* (1901) and Herbert C. Fyfe's *Submarine Warfare: Past, Present, and Future* (1902), both recently published by Grant Richards; was Ransome inspired to write ‘Submarine Ships’ by books he saw while still in Richards' employ? It is also interesting to note, though maybe only a coincidence, that in 1902 the offices of Guilbert Pitman, publisher of *The Young Engineer*, and of the Unicorn Press, which Ransome joined late that year, were both located in Cecil Court.

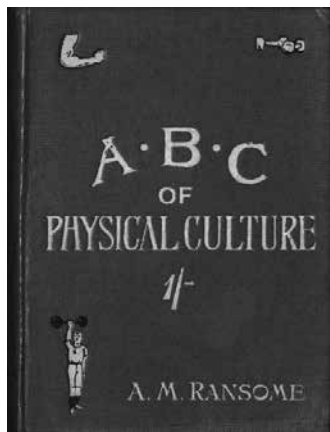
Ransome's entire article may be downloaded from the following link:
https://drive.google.com/file/d/1sD7AQB1_hG5bx1Jo3ODWkOOTGGgKveCl/view?usp=sharing.

THE GHOST WRITER WHO WASN'T

Ransome's first *ABC*

'A. Bohemian', J. Cooper and B. Key

MORE than half of Arthur Ransome's output of books (at least 22 of the 38 known to be written by him) were published before he wrote *Swallows and Amazons*. He started in 1904 with a book that no one would consider reading these days, and it is doubtful that he would have read it himself if he hadn't written it. This little red book was *The ABC of Physical Culture*, one of a collection of 'ABCs'¹ published by Drane on various topics in the early part of the 20th century. Curiously Ransome never claimed to have written this book, for reasons which will hopefully become clear, if not a little ghostly ...



For someone who professed to have disliked anything physical at that time in his life, it is surprising that he considered writing it, but it was a way for him to satisfy his desire to be a writer. He was drawn in by an advertisement in the *Daily News*. A person who seemed to have an aversion to 'physical culture' would presumably have had problems writing a book that would be held up to scrutiny and approval by people who were interested in the subject. So where did he get his information?

There were various books available on 'physical culture', gymnastics and body building, but the journal *Sandon's Magazine of Physical Culture* (which had started publication a few years before Ransome looked into the subject), would have been a mine of information. One of the most influential writers

¹ The publisher variously used 'A.B.C.', 'A B C' and 'The ABC' in text and advertising copy. All are listed at <http://www.librarything.com/nseries/121602/Dranes-A-B-C-books>.

in the journal was William Hope Hodgson (1877–1918), who later became famous for writing horror and fantasy novels and short stories. His first story, 'The Goddess of Death', was published in the *Royal Magazine* in April 1904. But before that he had been a sailor, and trained himself as a body builder to protect himself from constant bullying on board ship. This led him to opening a School of Physical Culture in Blackburn, Lancashire, and writing a number of articles in 1903, such as 'Physical Culture versus Recreative Exercise' and 'Hints on Physical Culture' (both published in *Sandow's Magazine*) and 'Health from Scientific Exercise' (in *Cassell's Magazine*).

It seems conceivable that Ransome came across this journal and these articles, using them as the basis of his own book. A similar beginning to an article by P. G. Wodehouse in *Sandow's Magazine* in 1902 entitled 'Wrestling at the Halls' might have been an appropriate start to Ransome's publication:

I should like to remark at once, to prevent disappointment, as they say in the advertisements, that I am not an authority on the subject of wrestling. I have never wrestled myself except with my conscience, and though on such occasions I invariably won, I feel that this can scarcely entitle me to speak of myself as an expert.

Indeed, Ransome writes specifically about the dubious basis of his own authority to write about the subjects he wrote about, firstly in the chapter entitled 'Ways and Means' in *Bohemia in London* (p. 181 of the Amazon Publications edition):

A LITTLE time ago there was a great outcry against what was called "literary ghosting," a fraudulent passing off of the work of unknown writers under more famous names. ... Indeed, when we consider only how many prominent athletes of no particular literary ability are able to publish books on their profession, it is obvious that a good deal of this kind of business must be done. Indeed, in one form or another, ghosting is one of the usual ways by which the unfortunate young writer sustains himself in Grub Street, or Bohemia, or whatever else you like to call that indefinite country where big longings and high hopes are matched by short purposes and present discomforts.

Many a man has been saved from what seemed a descent into the drudgeries of clerkship by the different drudgery of writing, say, the reminiscences of an Admiral, the history of a parish, or innumerable short reviews, for which other people got the credit. ...

... Here is a true account of a youthful ghost.

He was a poet, and in those days a bad one. He carried more poor verses than good money in his pocket. And one day, when he had little more than a few coppers and some penny stamps, he happened to see an advertisement for “a young and experienced writer with a thorough knowledge of athletics”. He kept the appointment suggested by the newspaper, and found a mean house in one of the southern suburbs. A herd of lean fellows were waiting in a dirty passage, and presently a cheerful business-like little man came out, and chose him with one companion as the likeliest-looking of the lot. They were set to write, at tables in the corners of an undusted, cat-haunted room, specimen chapters of a book on croquet. They were both appointed, and the other man, an old hand, borrowed five shillings in advance. Next day, when the young fellow arrived in the morning, he found that his colleague was there before him, drunk, holding the garden railings, and shouting blasphemies at a bedraggled cat that slunk about the waste scrap of ground behind them. The agent held up the drunkard to him as a warning, told him that sobriety was the spirit of success, and that, as he had the job to himself, he would be allowed to gain extra experience by doing the other man's work as well as his own. He was young, enthusiastic, glad to have an opportunity of working at all. In two months he had finished six books, that still annoy him by showing their bright lettered covers on the railway bookstalls. He wrote on an average between two and four thousand words a day. At last, one day when he was working in an upper room of the agent's house, the little creature came upstairs and saw fit to congratulate him. “You are doing very well indeed,” he said, “for one so unaccustomed to literary labour.” That brought an end to the engagement. He left immediately, lest he should be unable to refrain from throwing an inkpot at the agent's head. It is in its way rather fun to be suddenly an authority on subjects of which you knew nothing till you sat down to write about them. And it is very good practice in journalism – though it is always easier to write when you are ignorant than when you know too much; you have a freer hand. But for a poet to hear such work called literary labour! That was too much. He never returned, and the agent was left sorrowing for the loss of an industrious hack.

This passage refers to six books. How do we know the name of one of them? Incredibly, *The ABC of Physical Culture* bears the ghost's name: Arthur M. Ransome. Not only did it bear the ghost's name, but it was the first book officially written by this ghost, and the only book to include his middle initial.

Why?

Wayne Hammond's *Bibliography* of AR's works explains that *The ABC* was the third of a new series of 'DRANE'S WELL-KNOWN A B C handbooks ... Every Subject under the Sun as easily explained as A B C ... Written by *Specialists*' (p.1). Published in 1904, it had an introduction and seven chapters: Exercises for General Health, Muscular, Breathing, Smoking, Food, Drinking and Sleep. Hammond makes no mention of Ransome's sources for the book, although he has identified the advertisement in the *Daily News* for 7 October 1903 that Ransome answered:

**Journalist Wanted Temporarily.
Good knowledge of football and athletics.**

Ransome later wrote in his *Autobiography* (p. 85):

I could hardly claim to be an experienced journalist, but I had suffered enough from athletics at school to justify my saying that I knew something about them. ... I was asked about athletics and mentioned Rugby. Instead of being immediately flung out I was put into a dining-room that smelt of cats, given some paper, told to write something about football, and given an hour in which to do it...

I settled down to be an industrious ghost. My ingenious and plausible employer made a business of hawking round ideas for popular books about games. These were commissioned by various publishers, some of whom bore great names and should have known better. It was then my employer's business to provide two things, first an adequate book, and secondly a name well enough known to sell it. Some sterling, illiterate footballer, cricketer or swimmer would pocket a windfall of five pounds for the use of his name. And I, in that catty dining-room, and later at home when I proved that I could write faster there, poured out the books. I wrote from two to sixⁱⁱ thousand words a day

As mentioned in the introduction, helping his employer provide the **first item** (an adequate book on physical culture) would be seemingly problematic for someone who was rarely photographed without his pipe, frequently remained awake all night 'Talking, Drinking and Smoking' (the title of the chapter immediately following 'Ways and Means' in *Bohemia*), and abused his digestive system so badly (preferring to buy books over healthy food) that he suffered from chronic health issues most of his adult life. (To be fair, he was

ⁱⁱ As opposed to the four thousand recorded in *Bohemia*.

an inveterate walker even at that time.) *Sandow's Magazine* could well have provided some answers, or perhaps he consulted the famous athletes whose names might appear as the authors? He never mentions meeting one.

But the **second task**, providing a famous person as 'author', was usually his employer's job. Why use a totally unknown writer instead? Wayne Hammond picks up the tale in his *Bibliography* (pp. 3–4):

Hugh Brogan was the first to connect (in his *Life*) the subject of this book ... with the 'Arthur M. Ransome' of *The A.B.C. of Physical Culture*. ... among Ransome's contemporaries was a physician named Arthur Ransome (1834–1922). Dr Ransome wrote widely on medical subjects, though never, it seems, signed his name with a middle initial, nor is a middle initial recorded in his entries in *Who's Who*. Moreover, the style of writing in *The A.B.C. of Physical Culture* is wholly consistent with that of Arthur Michell Ransome in, for example, his earliest essays for periodicals.

But the plot thickens ...

The British Museum library catalogue enters the books of Dr Ransome under 'Ransome, Arthur, M.D.' *Who Was Who 1916–1928*, in a remarkable lapse, printed as the entry for Dr Ransome the *Who's Who* biography of Arthur Michell Ransome, to which was added the physician's date of death.

And remember that this is the only *book* in which Ransome's middle initial is used. There is little doubt that if Arthur M. Ransome had not had an almost identical name to that of a famous physician,ⁱⁱⁱ his name would never have been printed on *The ABC of Physical Culture* ... and we would never have known that this was one of the books he was referring to when writing about 'ghosting' in *Bohemia*. He himself didn't seem to be aware that his name had been used in any of them; he didn't divulge the titles even when writing about them 50 years later (although his annoyance with them may also have contributed to his reticence); is it even possible that his not being 'immediately flung out' was initially more to do with his having a useful name than his ability to write?

ⁱⁱⁱ Actually, a distant cousin (Judy Andrew's *Arthur Ransome's Family 1649-1975*).

As far as I am aware, no-one has then asked about the other five 'books about games', some of which may be lurking in the same stable (or cattery).^{iv} Indeed, ABCs on the following topics were published at the same time or within six years: Golf (1904), Bridge (1904), Progressive Whist (1906), Billiards (1907), Diabolo (1907), Chess (1910) and Croquet (1910) (the topic he said he was asked to write 'specimen chapters about' for his interview in the 1907 version of the story; dates supplied by Wayne Hammond).

Those 'popular books about games' in 'their bright lettered covers' are still out there, just waiting for someone to compare them with those early articles (possibly with the help of the **Red Slipper Fund**). The editor bought *The ABC of Bridge* on spec ... well, yes, there is a certain familiar 'bounce' to the writing, but that may be wishful thinking! Who knows, perhaps another edition of *Mixed Moss* will be revealing and reviewing one, two or maybe even five 'new' Arthur Ransome no-longer-ghosts.

This article is based on research conducted by Jeff Cooper, Brian Key and Catherine Lamont. Jeff has spoken at a number of TARS events on the friendship between AR and his grandfather, Lascelles Abercrombie. This was one of the longest associations that AR ever enjoyed. Jeff, who is a long-standing member of the Friends of the Dymock Poets, provided the information about Sandow's Magazine. Brian provided an introduction to Jeff and some further context from Hammond's Bibliography. This led to Catherine contacting Wayne (who kindly supplied the photograph), then finding and incorporating the comments on ghost-writing by the 'ghost' himself. The ABC was published while he was living at 1 Gunter Grove, Chelsea, where the blue plaque (below) is now installed – Ed.



^{iv} Hammond notes that Ransome talks about *several publishers* using his employer's services; it is not clear whether Ransome also wrote for many or just the one.

FACTS, TRUTH AND SIGNALLING TO MARS

Martin Beech

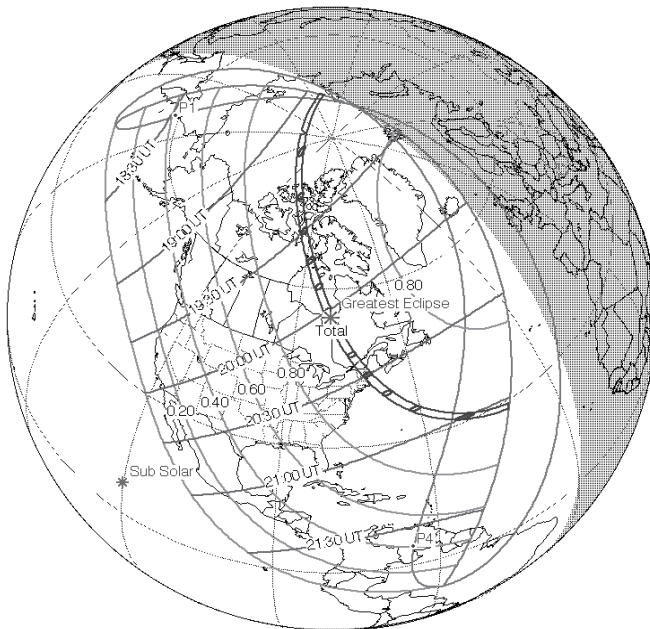
THERE is a long history of many authors introducing astronomical detail and/or phenomena for their literary effect rather than for some specific point of fact,ⁱ but I would suggest that there are also situations where an author might deliberately leave a topic well alone for the sake of narrative imperative. Goodwin writes at the end of ‘Literary Licence or Error of Fact?’ (in the 2020 edition of *Mixed Moss*), ‘Perhaps he [Ransome] couldn't care less. Perhaps we hear an echo of his voice through Nancy: “I suppose you’ve come to the Arctic to watch an eclipse?” she asks Dick.’ To which Dick replies that there isn't going to be an eclipse – a reply that prompts Nancy to retort, ‘Oh well ... don't be so particular’. The conversation is taken from the end of Chapter 3 in *Winter Holiday*, ‘Strangers no More’, and occurs as the Walkers and Blacketts first meet the Callums.

This dialogue, I would suggest, is an attempt by Ransome to invoke a very specific astronomical back-story that, if not readily understood by his youngest readers (at that time), would be appreciated by his older ones, and especially so to his growing readership in the United States. Indeed, there had been a very well publicised and extensively observed solar eclipse on 31 August 1932, the year before *Winter Holiday* was written and published. In this particular event, the path of totality began in the high Arctic, above northern Siberia, passed close to the geographic North Pole, and then followed a path over Axel Heiberg Island, down through Arctic Canada, across Hudson Bay and Quebec, and finally through Vermont and Maine,

ⁱ Perhaps the best known such novel is that of *Two on a Tower: A Romance* by Thomas Hardy (published in 1882) – a work certainly known to Ransome. Hardy deliberately set out in this particular novel to contrast two star-crossed lovers with a cold and indifferent back-drop of the greater cosmos.

and eventually out over the Atlantic, as depicted below. This eclipse saw much media coverage on both sides of the Atlantic (e.g. *The [London] Times* newspaper, 20 July and 31 August 1932), with astronomers from the Royal Greenwich Observatory travelling to Quebec in order to make their observations.

Not only does it seem reasonable to suggest that Ransome would have been fully aware (through media coverage) of the 1932 eclipse and its Arctic connection at the time of writing *Winter Holiday*, but he would also have known of at least one more polar solar eclipse – this time an Arctic eclipse that occurred on 6 April 1894 (as Peter Willis explains)¹. Indeed, this specific event was observed by Nansen from an ice-entrapped *Fram*. Writing in Volume 1 of his *Farthest North* series describing the *Fram* Expedition (1893–1896), Nansen records its double importance – not only for its potential scientific value, but for the regulation of the ship's chronometers. The eclipse observations indicated, in fact, that their chronometers were set some 7½ seconds fast.



The path of totality for the 1932 eclipse (two lines decorated with circles). The eclipse track began in the high Arctic, passed over the geographic North Pole and ended over the mid-Atlantic.²

TOTAL ECLIPSE

Q MONTREAL

TOTAL ECLIPSE of the SUN.

August 31st.
... 1932

Begins in the Arctic Ocean, moving across
Hudson Bay, the Province of Quebec,
Northern Vermont

The White Mountain Region of
the Maine Central
and ends in the Atlantic Ocean

Total Eclipse timed at about 3.28 P. M., Eastern Standard Time

Newspaper advertisement revealing the stations of the Maine Central Railroad Company from which the eclipse could be viewed.³



Observing the solar eclipse of 6 April, 1894. The ice-bound Fram is in the background, and Nansen is the (standing) middle figure of the three observers. The image may be found at the Norwegian National Library (bldsa-q3c035).⁴

The fact that Nancy suggests Dick might be ‘in the Arctic’ to observe an eclipse is, it turns out, not a far-fetched idea, and it would have had a certain contemporary resonance with many of the readers of *Winter Holiday*. Furthermore, rather than introduce a predicted eclipse event, Ransome could have allowed for a surprise one to occur – such as the unanticipated lunar eclipse that he and Evgenia witnessed from *Racundra* while cruising in 1924.⁵ The fact that no such story-lines were developed, however, is arguably deliberate in the sense that it would expand the already activity-crammed narrative, and that it would add little to the development of the end-story, which was concerned with the race to the North Pole. To include yet another sub-story, and the inevitable tension that it would induce (especially for Dick) concerning weather conditions and observatory preparations, while entirely à propos to the *Winter Holiday* story line would, none the less, change the whole dynamic of the opening narrative. Indeed, the character of Dick, while being that of the young scientist, was also of one prone to the angst of uncertainty and worry in technical matters – this being especially so, for example, with respect to the chemistry described in *Pigeon Post* and in the hide-construction and photographs to be taken in *Great Northern?* Rather than not caring about the astronomical possibility of an eclipse expedition, I would suggest that Ransome may have deliberately chosen not to pursue the idea.

That Ransome was attempting to build astronomical ambience within Chapter 2 of *Winter Holiday* is evidenced by its very title: ‘Signalling to Mars’. The idea of signalling to an inhabited Mars, while strangely quaint to us today, would have been readily accepted as entirely possible to many of Ransome's readers in the 1930s: ‘“Why not?” said Dick. “Of course they may not see it. And even if they do see it they may not understand. A different world. That makes it all the more like signalling to Mars” ’ (*WH*, Ch. 1). Indeed, the idea of communicating with Martians was a topic that had been widely reported in the news media since the turn of the 20th century. The actual signalling story essentially began in 1901 when observers at the Lowell Observatory in Arizona reported that they had seen a shaft of light projecting from Mars – the emanation lasting for more than an hour. Such an unusual, unexpected and inexplicable phenomenon required an explanation, and interplanetary signalling by intelligent Martians seemed to fit the zeitgeist of the times. Indeed, while American astronomer William Pickering later

suggested using a giant mirror helioscope to signal Mars in 1909, charismatic inventor Nikola Tesla was advocating the use of his Teslascope to exchange radio messages with the Martians as late as 1931.⁶ Writing in 1933, Ransome could certainly assume that the general opinion of the public, if not that of the scientific community, was that Mars was truly inhabited by intelligent beings. Indeed, as late as 1938, the famous radio play version of *War of the Worlds* by Orson Wellesⁱⁱ would send many parts of America into a state of uproar and panic, with members of the populace genuinely believing that a Martian invasion had begun.

The idea of signalling to Mars, to potentially communicate with far-off peoples, was very much something that Dick, as a science-minded youngster, would have been well aware of, and it is an entirely appropriate story-line that Ransome could, if he had wished, have further developed. In addition to including actual astronomy (that is constellation locations) in *Winter Holiday*, it is also the case that Ransome employed astronomical imagery in an effort to invoke a sense of contemporary familiarity into Chapter 2. Was Ransome careless, therefore, with his astronomy? Mostly no, I would argue, and it would seem that he was far removed from advocating a 'don't care' attitude to the astronomical details that he used. In this sense, Ransome is certainly not cut from the same cloth as Arthur Conan Doyle, who famously didn't care about the inconsistencies that appeared in his Sherlock Holmes adventures.⁷ Indeed, Ransome carefully worked on plot-line and background details with a seriousness similar to that exemplified by J. R. R. Tolkien.^{8,9} The appropriate final (and comfotingly correct) astronomical image we take from *Winter Holiday* is that of Dick and the newly returned Captain Flint in the houseboat (the erstwhile *Fram*):

... the talk at the end of the cabin table was about orbits and eclipses, and how it is that the planets are not to be found on a map of the constellations, and how they have their own time-tables, to be found in the Nautical

ⁱⁱ Broadcast on the night of Halloween, 30 November, 1938, Welles' radio play version of H. G. Wells' *War of the Worlds* (first published in 1898) dramatized the initial arrival of the Martian cylinders, and the subsequent emergence of the war machines. In spite of the fact that multiple announcements were made during the broadcast that it was a play-adaptation, many in the greater listening audience were apparently unconvinced and became fearful of an actual Martian invasion.

Almanac, and how it is that the Pole Star keeps over the North Pole in spite of the world's spinning on its axis and flying round the sun at the same time (*WH*, Ch. 21).



¹ Peter Willis, 'On first looking into Nansen's Farthest North', *Signals*, Jan–Apr 2021, p. 12.

² http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Solar_eclipse_of_August_31,_1932#/media/File:SE1932Aug31T.png

³ http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Solar_eclipse_of_August_31,_1932#/media/File:August_31,_1932_Total_Solar_Eclipse_MEC.jpg.

⁴ <http://www.nb.no/items/c3ae46da5c63dfbc28aa9bb4e9b09001?page=0&searchText=>

⁵ Arthur Ransome, *Racundra's Third Cruise*. Brian Hammett (ed.), (Arundel, Fernhurst Books, 2002), p. 49.

⁶ As reported in a 75th birthday interview published in *Time Magazine* on 20 July, 1931.

⁷ Dick Riley and Pam McAllister, *The Bedside, Bathtub and Armchair Companion to Sherlock Holmes* (New York, The Continuum Publishing Company, 1999).

⁸ Codex Regius, *The Moon in 'The Hobbit'* (CreateSpace Independent Publishing Platform, 4th extended edition, 2018).

⁹ Martin Beech, 'In the Moon Gleaming', *Mallorn: The Journal of the Tolkien Society*, Issue 60, 2020, pp. 24–27.



MISSEE LEE AND THE JOURNEY INTO NIGHT

Alan Kennedy

CLASSICAL literature is replete with stories of perilous night sea journeys. It is an extremely ancient mythological *motif*, the first written accounts appearing on Babylonian clay tablets at least 4000 years ago. Homer's account of the voyage of Odysseus must have been written (or at least spoken) not long after that. What is it about tales of heroic men (always men) setting out to sea in this way that captures our imagination? What accounts for the eerie fascination exerted by journeys into the dark, with or without the possibility of return? Part of the answer is relatively banal: speculation about the fate of the sun, swallowed up by its daily descent into the sea is reflected in stories where heroes decide to follow it and visit the darkness of hell. The biblical story of Jonah is one such – and gave rise to literally thousands of similar tales in which heroes are swallowed up by whales, dragons, monsters and the like. Fairy tale quests for buried treasure, or the search for *pearls beyond price*, bring things a little closer to our own time, reflecting the possibility that the infernal descent may not, after all, be completely irrevocable – perhaps one can come back? In his extraordinary book *Psychology and Alchemy*, the psychoanalyst Carl Jung offered even more sophisticated reflections on the Night Sea Journey, claiming to find it a commonplace of both his own dreams and fantasies and those of his patients. He saw in these accounts of the dark night of the soul a primordial desire (shared by all humanity) to escape from a thoughtless, even neurotic, mode of existence and find an authentic way of living.

Swallows and Amazons, the innocent holiday romance we all know so well, opens with an allusion to Homer; it also describes characters diving for pearls. Perhaps these are coincidences, although the fact that the denouement of the story turns out to be a search for buried treasure might cause us to wonder a little. But it can surely be no coincidence that it is also a

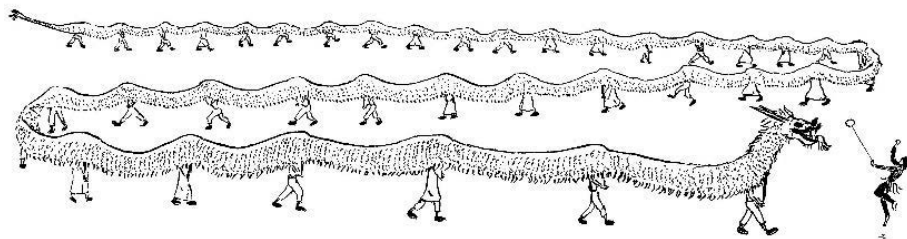
story with a perilous journey into the night at its heart. In fact, I believe the myth of a Night Sea Journey symbolised something profoundly significant to Arthur Ransome. Fortunately, we do not need to turn to Jung to determine what he had in mind. In the preface to *The Blue Treacle*, written in 1903 for his three-year-old daughter, he was perfectly explicit about the matter, using terms that Jung himself would have readily understood. The existential problem dominating his life, he claimed, was the quest for an authentic mode of existence: ‘... this book is merely the story of the escape from this unconscious living – a realisation of a moment of experience, such a realisation as we all continually perform’ (p. 1).

The strongest evidence for the significance of the Night Sea Journey *motif* is also the most obvious: Ransome used it repeatedly (indeed, almost obsessively) as a plot device in his fiction, the same theme recurring, sometimes in plain sight, sometimes disguised a little, but invariably associated with a strangely *negative* repertoire of psychological properties. This is true of the very first voyage of the *Swallow*, with its crew of three: broken promises and almost reckless error leaves us with Titty abandoned, alone and in real danger. She emerges heroically, but the others have had no part in this and, in truth, hers is little more than an accidental victory.

The perilous sea journey into the night finds its most obvious – and most literal – expression in *We Didn't Mean to go to Sea*. Often considered Ransome's masterpiece, it is a novel in which he makes at least one aspect of his motivation relatively explicit. The arrival of *Goblin* in Holland follows, as ever, the same catalogue of avoidable error, accident, fault, abandonment, loss, even betrayal; but in the masterly description of the rising storm we discover something of crucial symbolic significance. It comes in the exchange between John and Susan as they scream at each other against the fury of the wind. It has been much analysed,¹ Victor Watson, for example, detecting ‘a strong authorial need to “deal with” whatever Susan represents’, adding, somewhat wistfully, that ‘what she represented in Ransome's life can only be guessed at’² I believe it may be possible to do more than guess. However we choose to interpret the storm itself, the debate between these two is quite obviously about *turning back*. And Ransome's intentions are clear. Susan's demand, ‘Let's turn back now,’ is not wholly unreasonable, but we are left in no doubt that of the two it is John who must prevail. And prevail he does –

even at the risk of his life (and by extension, that of the crew). We must surely conclude that, whatever the Journey into the Night symbolised more generally for Ransome, the notion of *no return* was not some incidental feature – it lay at its heart. With that in mind we can perhaps better understand Dick and Dorothea blundering through their own personal blizzard in *Winter Holiday*, Dorothea screaming, ‘Let's stop! ... Now! At once!’ And recall Dick's reply, perhaps touching something deeper than we realised: ‘We can't go back We can't help coming somewhere if we go on’ (Ch. 26).

Did these repeated references to the *motif* of the Night Sea Journey have some specifically psychological purpose? Should we, after all, turn to Jung for an explanation? Did Ransome deploy its symbolism to conscious or unconscious effect? Indeed, did he deploy it at all? These are perennial questions, with no definite answer. Although there is little doubt he understood the use of symbolism to secure a psychological effect, it is unclear whether this implied any wider sympathy for the ‘psychoanalytic project’ underway in the early years of the last century. It is a question I shall come back to because, in any case, his intentions can best be understood by examining the fiction he created.¹ And it is this fact which brings us to *Missee Lee*, a novel in which the Night Sea Journey is not some incidental feature, but its *raison d'être*. If, in Brogan's memorable phrase, *Swallows and Amazons* ‘recapitulates several of the most important dramas of its author's life,’²³ in *Missee Lee* we find an attempt at their resolution. The ‘dramas’ of which Brogan speaks broadly fall into three categories: intellectual, personal and political. And aspects of each are symbolically acted out in *Missee Lee*.



¹ If – as some claim – Ransome was uninterested in psychoanalysis, its practitioners certainly had grounds to be interested in him.

Intellectually, Ransome came to regret the fact he had abandoned a university career for life as a literary free spirit.⁴ He read voraciously and rapidly and became extremely well-informed, easily out-stripping those of his contemporaries who counted themselves ‘university men’. Nonetheless, he had underestimated the social and intellectual context provided by collegiate university life: in particular, never experiencing the rough and tumble of debate; never learning the art of shaking off hard knocks. The result was a paradox: he rubbed shoulders with the major literary and intellectual figures of his age (Edward Thomas, Robin Collingwood, Madox Ford, Hugh Walpole, Jone Nogushi, Remy de Gourmont ...) yet somehow failed to notice – far less acknowledge – the flowering of his own extraordinary talent. Even at the height of his powers, this confident master of a genre he had largely invented would buckle at the merest hint of critical censure, leaving him touchy and overly quick to take offence. He was, in fact, quite literally plagued by the stress of intellectual insecurity. In *Missee Lee* these fears and insecurities are vividly projected onto Captain Flint. Defined by Miss Lee as something less than a university man, he spends his time humiliated and infantilised, a caged figure of fun for little boys to mock. All this said, Ransome never allows the reader to lose faith. Flawed he may be, but even Miss Lee comes to accept that if there is to be a resolution, it will be Captain Flint (surely Ransome's *alter ego*) who will bring it about. Of all the captives, it is only Flint who knows where they are – his rescue of the emblematic sextant (his only positive act in the whole novel) will redeem him. Uniquely – and thanks to this crucial secret – there will be a way of going back after all.

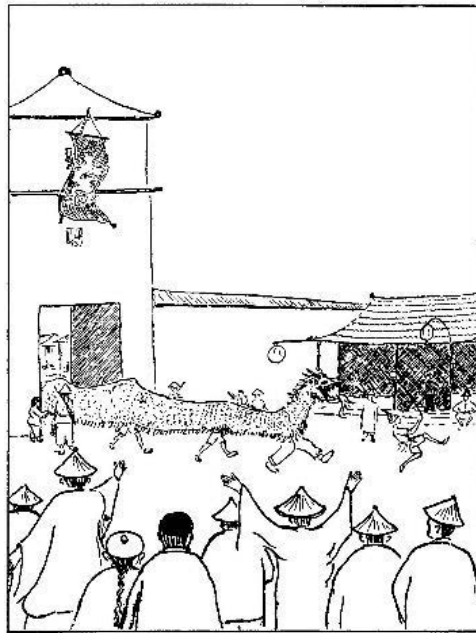
The second of Brogan's ‘dramas’ is personal. It cast a shadow over much of Ransome's life and found expression, in one way or another, in virtually all his fiction. It concerns his only daughter, the little girl to whom he dedicated *The Blue Treacle*. Already aware that his marriage to Ivy was disintegrating, he wrote in the story *The Footways of Dream* (a book dedicated to his wife) that such footways are ‘like slender bridges, that will bear two in safety, but will not carry three’. Certainly tactless and disagreeable, Ivy may not, in fact, have noticed that this pessimistic literary conceit is also ambiguous. Ensnared, as he saw it, in a hopeless life with Ivy, life with Tabitha seemed more plausible. It was a fantasy that led to long remorseful years, vainly hoping to ‘recover’ a

lost girl.ⁱⁱ Miss Lee's father is long dead, but in *Missie Lee* he reaches out from beyond the grave to woo her back. The novel offers a resolution to this second drama of Ransome's life through an appeal to 'the path of duty'. Father and daughter are reconciled. Crucially, however, this is by no means a meeting of equals. As with Susan at the height of the storm, it is 'poor Miss Lee' who must concede – a conclusion already determined by the disposition of the three islands in *Missie Lee*. Clumsily presented as a crude Freudian caricature, two conflicting Taicoons – the savage Chang and the sly Wu – are governed by the essential rationality of Miss Lee. Viewed in purely 'Freudian' symbolic terms, her *duty* is to provide the way home: a safe retreat. It is surely no accident she sets her pupils to reading the *Aeneid* with Virgil's account of the descent into darkness; equally no accident that she sends them out hidden inside a dragon. It is only when faced with the cataclysmic descent of the gorge that the blinded Captain Flint finally comes to terms with his dependence, calling out of the dark, 'Sorry, Susan.... I was wrong.... Thought there'd be more light than this.... I can't do anything with her....' (Ch. 26).

There is, of course, a third great drama in Ransome's life. One in which rescue and escape became literally matters of life and death. Ten years spent close to the cynical masters of revolution led Ransome finally to realise – far too late – that Russia in 1918 was no place for honest brokers – indeed, no place for honesty at all. He witnessed the Terror at its height, producing curiously detached, even insouciant, despatches that contrasted painfully with the horrific reality of day to day life at that time – 'life' in which the price of naiveté was often death. When the 'intervention force' finally arrived at Archangel, with the quixotic support of the power-brokers of English politics, dozens of 'secret agents' in Petrograd were abandoned and left to face the daily risk of arbitrary death. This included two, not wholly convincing, amateur spies – Arthur Ransome and Evgenia Shelepina – who found themselves, like the characters in some improbable novel, stranded in a land more alien than they could have ever imagined, friendless and horribly exposed. It was Karl Radek, one of the architects of Terror, who explained

ⁱⁱ Writing in 1940 about the dispute over the disposal of his library: 'After my first wife's death I had hoped to recover my daughter ...' *The Life*, p. 376.

what was to become of enemies of the revolution: ‘Incarcerated or executed. To show Bolshevik contempt for officers of a capitalist power.’²⁵ Taicoon Chang is equally casual: ‘Missee Lee chop heads’ he says, before we even meet her – this in a novel where we must learn that casual death has its comic side. As in *Missee Lee* it was to their captors that those stranded in Petrograd turned for rescue. For Ransome, writing in his autobiography, ‘Radek solved the problem ... and I got through the Baltic as a Russian courier I carried an immense despatch case ...’ (p. 261). He fails to mention, of course, what was inside.²³ⁱⁱⁱ Needless to say, the little dragon snaking its way to freedom was also bearing smuggled goods.



THE LITTLE DRAGON LEAVES THE YAMEN

Since my claim in this essay is that the symbolic content of *Missee Lee* at least partly reflects the psychological concerns of its author, some brief comment is necessary on Ransome's approach to psychoanalysis. It is sometimes claimed he was hostile to the sexual revolution that analytical psychology set in train in the early 20th century. Roland Chambers, for

ⁱⁱⁱ Radek provided Soviet passports for the couple. As *quid pro quo* Ransome smuggled 3 million roubles in cash for delivery to the Bolshevik International Bureau in Sweden. (*Russian Roulette*, p. 133).

example, declared him a ‘ferocious opponent[s] of Freud and the modern obsession with introversion and sex.’⁷⁶ But if so, those cannot have always been Ransome's opinions. The man who wrote *Bohemia in London* in 1907, vividly describing the life of ‘people who lived in squares and loved in circles,’⁷⁷ may not have read Freud (few had then in English) but he had certainly read Remy de Gourmont in its original French. He plainly understood, and explicitly approved, the implications of books like *Physique de l'Amour* (1903) which anticipated themes Freud discussed in his *Three Essays on Sexuality* (1905). Indeed, newly married to Ivy Walker, Ransome devoted part of their Paris honeymoon to a visit to de Gourmont, to discuss translating the fantasy novel *Une Nuit au Luxembourg*. Symbolism (perhaps particularly sexual symbolism) was the defining feature of de Gourmont's work. Given that he provided a literary vehicle for many of the associations that Freud uncovered in *The Interpretation of Dreams*, it is simply impossible to claim Ransome at that time was ignorant of ‘Freudian’ ideas. Far from being repelled, the short stories and novels of de Gourmont provided a model he used in his own fiction: one in which, through the use of mythological, folkloric, and personal allusion, an author ‘could gain access to otherwise unconscious aspects of himself.’⁷⁸ It hardly needs saying this is more or less a definition of the goal of psychoanalysis.

There is other – admittedly second-hand – evidence of Ransome's interest in the language of psychoanalysis. Robin Collingwood – perhaps his closest childhood friend – was sufficiently impressed by Freud's therapeutic methods to undertake (in 1938) 50 sessions of psychoanalysis, describing the technique in *The Principles of Art* (1938) as ‘a magnificent moral endeavour ... an enterprise that has already won a great place in the history of man's warfare with the powers of darkness’ (p. 221). As for Jung, he considered the link he had established between myth and dream as a ‘towering achievement’. Ransome greatly admired Collingwood (intellectually he stood in awe of him); there is every reason to imagine he shared his views on psychoanalysis.

There is a more compelling biographical argument. For much of his short life the poet Edward Thomas was close to Ransome, the two even sharing a flat for a time. The Oxford-trained Thomas was the older man by six years, making for an uneasy kind of ‘asymmetric’ relationship. As with Collingwood, Ransome stood in awe of someone steadily establishing a

reputation as one of England's major poets. In 1912, Thomas, began a course of 'talking therapy' with Helton Godwyn Baynes as a treatment for his chronic depression. Baynes was an early disciple (and eventually translator) of Carl Jung.^{iv} It is inconceivable Ransome was unaware that Thomas was undergoing this treatment – far more likely that they spent time discussing topics that both found of consuming interest. For Edward Thomas the therapy (albeit unsuccessful medically) was a crucial introduction to Jung's concept of 'the Other', a parallel, 'Shadow', persona functioning unconsciously as an intrinsic part of personality – something that became a defining feature of his mature poetry. Ransome never mentions the matter; we are simply left to accept as coincidental the fact that psychological 'doubles' feature in the works of Stevenson, Poe and Wilde, and he chose to write critical biographies of all three.⁹

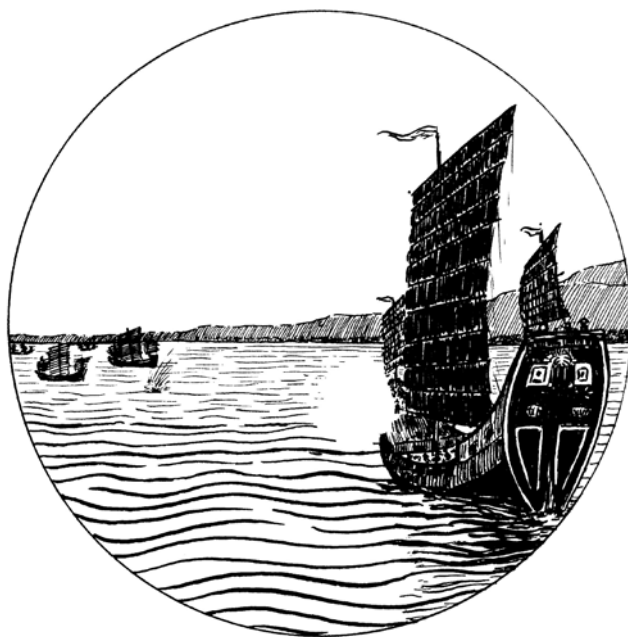
It is 80 years since *Missee Lee* was written. Hammered out when – to borrow Collingwood's phrase – 'man's warfare with the powers of darkness' had never been so greatly tested. Not a particular favourite with children, adult readers nonetheless find the themes within it strangely consoling. They were the adult concerns of another man and another age: insecurity, a sense of personal loss, and regrets for a conflicted life. But these are the fault lines of all of us, and we are content to watch their resolution here. Indeed, the appeal of this strange book, for all its quaint faults, is that the resolutions offered, while optimistic, are never unduly so – they seem within our grasp. It is a book speaking to the possibility of new beginnings, of going back and starting again: never possible, but somehow convincing here, against the odds – at least while there are pages still to turn.

Ransome enjoyed writing it and, uniquely, the book found favour with his fiercest critic.^v If the mythological allusions were more than usually transparent it was a price worth paying to secure a remarkable denouement which bears comparison with Joseph Conrad at his best. Jung, in a rare burst

^{iv} Part of the London 'Bohemian' scene, Baynes translated Jung's *Psychological Types* in 1921. From 1927 to 1931 he was married to the Jungian scholar Cary Fink. See Virginia Nicholson, *Among the Bohemians*, 2002, Viking, p. 107.

^v Evgenia – no stranger to smuggled goods herself – enjoyed the joke.

of lyricism, saw the promise of rebirth in the setting sun. After the descent into the gorge, waiting for the wind which would carry them home, the crew silently stare into the dark. 'In the East, the rising sun split the horizon like an explosion. A path of fire ran from it towards them over the sea ... Sunlight lit all faces, and the crew of the *Shining Moon* looked at each other as if meeting for the first time.'



¹ Julian Lovelock, *Swallows, Amazons and Coots* (Lutterworth, 2016), Ch. 7.

² Victor Watson, *Reading Series Fiction* (Routledge, 2000), p. 45.

³ Hugh Brogan, *The Life of Arthur Ransome* (Jonathan Cape, 1984), p. 314.

⁴ Arthur Ransome (ed. Rupert Hart-Davis), *The Autobiography of Arthur Ransome* (Jonathan Cape, 1976), p. 101. See also *The Life*, p. 56.

⁵ Giles Milton, *Russian Roulette* (Hodder & Stoughton, 2013), p. 135.

⁶ Roland Chambers, *The Last Englishman: the Double Life of Arthur Ransome* (Faber and Faber, 2009), p. 335.

⁷ Virginia Nicholson, *Among the Bohemians* (Viking, 2002), p. 40.

⁸ Arthur Ransome, *Remy de Gourmont: Portraits and Speculations* (Macmillan, 1913), p. 163.

⁹ See Jean Moorcroft Wilson, *Edward Thomas* (Bloomsbury, 2015), p. 232.

SWALLOWS AND AMAZONS – WHAT HAPPENED NEXT

John Fletcher

ARTHUR Ransome ceased writing about the Swallows, Amazons and Scarabs after Great Northern? What happened when they were finally allowed to acquire hormones and become adults? 'Extensive research' conducted by John Fletcher has revealed some surprising 'facts'.

Nancy Blackett should have been head girl in her final year at school. She would have been a popular choice with the pupils and (most of) the staff. In the end, the headmistress's visions of having a head girl who might-do-anything-and-probably-would (and thus finding herself confronted by indignant parents and/or governors) led her to appoint a safer, though far less interesting, candidate. As Nancy approached the end of her schooling, the question of what she should do next was raised. A letter from Harrogate included the words 'finishing school' and some forceful recommendations, but the question was answered by her school – she was invited to join the staff as an outdoor activities instructor. This she did with great enthusiasm for five years. **Great Aunt Maria** was not happy, but resolutely applied the best spin she could, informing her circle of friends that her great niece had become a schoolmistress in an independent girls' school which – though less than the whole truth – was not untrue.

At the outbreak of WWII, the WRNS was re-established; Nancy immediately enlisted as a Wren. It surprised no one that within a year she had been appointed to the rank of Chief Officer; what no one knew then was that soon she was a senior officer at the Bletchley Park code-breaking centre. She later led a detachment that was sent to the Far East (India) to work on Japanese codes. She loved every minute of her war service.

At the end of the war, she left the Navy and took a job with Outward Bound, continuing to pass on her infectious enthusiasm for all things outdoors to a new generation of young people. Periodically she would take

leave of absence to travel the world on various expeditions. When Outward Bound opened its Eskdale centre, she became part of the team. She never expected to marry; most men found her too scary. But in her 40th year a fellow instructor, seven years her junior, showed himself to have the right mix of humour, patience, resilience and strength of character to take her on. It was a stormy but ultimately successful pairing. To her own – and others' – astonishment, despite her age, Nancy produced two daughters and a son, each two years apart. Her haphazard approach to motherhood ensured they were tough! A boy born to Nancy was always going to be called Jim (not James) in honour of Captain Flint.

John Walker joined the Royal Navy on leaving school, following in his father's footsteps. Aged just 21, he married **Peggy Blackett**. For the previous four years they had both been certain there was no one else in the world with whom they wanted to share the rest of their lives. Susan was Peggy's bridesmaid – Nancy was never going to fit that particular bill! The couple seriously contemplated having Nancy as John's 'best man', but in the end decided that John would have a far better chance of arriving at the church in a fit state if his friend and fellow-officer from Naval College performed that duty. Peggy had a honeymoon baby son. Nancy's ribald observations on this made John laugh and blush at the same time. Young Robert (Bob) Walker was named for Peggy's father whom she never had the chance to meet.

The Second World War broke out that year. John's father was by this time a senior figure in the Admiralty, but John's rapid rise through the ranks was entirely on his own merit. His superb seamanship, his calmness, clear-headedness and quiet courage in the heat of battle earned esteem from his superiors and those under his command. His remarkable tactical skills, honed as a teenager against the Amazon Pirates, resulted in his enemies being wrong-footed and defeated time and again. By 1943 his outstanding courage had twice been officially recognised – accolades he received with a mixture of quiet satisfaction and bemusement – in his mind, he had merely been doing his job. Very British! He and Peggy added twin daughters to their family in 1940. The girls were just old enough to acquire some memories of daddy home on leave before he was killed in action on the bridge of his ship, escorting troops in the D-Day landings of 1944.

Peggy had moved with the children to Beckfoot for the duration of the war, very much appreciating the support of her mother, **Molly (Mary)**, in raising her offspring. Now a young war widow, just like her mother had been, she too faced the future bravely, raising a trio of web-footed Walker children who loved the lake and its environs. From time to time, Nancy (*never* 'Aunt Nancy' to her nephew and nieces) would explode onto the scene, immediately engaging them in all manner of escapades before disappearing again for months. Peggy's strength of character had necessarily blossomed while her sister was mostly absent; after Nancy married, she soon discovered that her little sister was shockingly capable of giving her the dressing-down she occasionally needed to safeguard her marriage. Following due reflection, Nancy was invariably grateful to Peggy for these outbursts. The support of her in-laws and the Blackett wealth meant the one thing Peggy never had to worry about was money. Like her mother, she never remarried, but that wasn't for lack of would-be suitors.

Susan Walker trained as a primary school teacher on leaving school. In 1940, she married the son of a gentleman farmer from the village of her first – and only – teaching appointment. She avoided Peggy's misfortune because farming was a Reserved Occupation. She eventually had four children; after the war the tradition of an annual holiday at Holly Howe resumed. When her husband inherited his father's title, she became Lady Susan, which provided great opportunities for her still-impudent little brother Roger to mock her.

Titty Walker (given name Mavis, but never known as that except on official forms) started teacher-training like her elder sister. She soon realised that teaching wasn't for her but didn't know what to do about it. It was a great relief in 1942 when the government started a training scheme for what became known as the 'Idle Women'. They were anything but idle: they were trained to handle narrowboats on the inland waterways in place of the men who had gone to war – tough work for anyone, but especially for the mostly middle-class women who enlisted in the scheme. Titty took to it like the proverbial – it was boating, even if it wasn't sailing. Still a keen diarist, she kept copious notes which, after the war, she wrote up into a book about her experiences. She also maintained regular correspondence with Dorothea, which helped Titty to find a publisher.

Dorothea Callum remained passionate about writing, but was under little illusion about the commercial viability of her early efforts. On leaving school she got a job on a regional newspaper, mainly writing routine reports of matters pertaining to the community served by the paper. Her early offerings usually required rewrites to convert her flowery prose into something sufficiently mundane for the pages of a newspaper; she soon learned a style suitable for her paid work, while simultaneously cultivating a far more exotic approach to her attempts at fiction. She came to realise that children's adventure stories most suited her style, and she applied herself to putting her best ideas into one of these. The finished draft was sent first to Titty for honest appraisal. It was returned with much encouragement and a number of constructive comments which Dorothea duly incorporated. The first two publishers rejected it, but a third came back to her with revision suggestions and, in due course, they published it. Its sales were good enough for the publisher to encourage her in further literary endeavours. Her visits to the publisher's office usually entailed discussions with the founder's grandson; he took an immediate liking to this quiet, unassuming young woman with the vivid imagination. He courted her, and they married.

In later life, recounting the adventures of the Bix Six to her own children, Dorothea reflected on her role in bringing justice to the Coots. She was astonished to realise just how much *she* had led that process; she'd never considered herself a leader, and yet without her even the GP's son Tom, the sort of person she regarded as a natural leader, would never have established the innocence of the Coot Club. She approached the Citizens Advice Bureau, and was welcomed with open arms. She rejoiced time and again at the power a well-worded letter had to deliver justice to those who could never have penned such a missive for themselves. She also developed a considerable telephone aptitude for penetrating the secretarial firewalls that were supposed to keep her from talking to senior managers. She would then convince these men – they were always men – to put right the injustices perpetrated by their staff. She soon found herself being asked to run training courses for other CAB volunteers. She was always nervous before she stood up but, once started, she loved every minute of them.

This in turn led her to wondering what had happened to the Coots. Following what turned out to be their last visit to **The Admiral**, she'd sent

Christmas cards c/o **Tom Dudgeon**, each with a letter asking after the Club members, but after a couple of years with no reply she gave up. She knew that Tom had little enthusiasm for writing. A family holiday on the Broads was long overdue: a cottage was booked and, without prior warning, she turned up in Horning. Her first port of call was Jonatt's boatyard; she introduced herself at the office and enquired after **Joe, Bill and Pete**. Nobody in the office showed any indication they remembered her, but she was encouraged to go and find Bill and Pete in the shed. Brief expressions of bafflement were followed by huge joyful grins and the warmest of grubby handshakes. Bill stuck his head in at the office and told them that he and Pete would be out for an hour or two.

'It's okay, I'm the foreman,' he explained to a surprised Dorothea. He took them home and introduced his wife, who produced tea for this legendary character from her husband's childhood. On their way they greeted the retired **PC Tedder** tending his garden.

'You won't be surprised to know he never made it to sergeant, never mind detective!' whispered Bill with a grin.

As Dorothea expected, all three Death and Glories were boatbuilders. Tom, they informed her, had endured school to attain his Higher School Certificate (equivalent to A-levels) by which time he'd had more than enough of formal education. Old Mr Sonning at Potter Heigham had a very high regard for Tom and was looking for a manager. Tom had jumped at the chance to learn how to run a boatyard, and loved every minute of his apprenticeship. In due course, he was appointed manager, and one of his first acts was to invite Joe to come as his foreman. Jonatt's were somewhat miffed at losing one of their best boatbuilders, but it was good for Bill, giving him a clear path into the role of Jonatt's foreman.

The next day, Dorothea dropped in at Sonning's boatyard, delighting Tom and Joe. She was ushered round the back of a shed where a tarpaulin was lifted, and there was the *Death and Glory*. She was clearly never going to sail again, but Dorothea quite understood how Joe could not bring himself to put a match to her.

She also visited old **Dr Dudgeon**, now retired. He was delighted to learn how she was still using her gifts to help those less able to help themselves. He

told her how **Mr Farland** had died relatively young. **Port and Starboard**, freed from their self-imposed responsibilities towards the AP, headed off on what would now be termed a ‘gap year’ which turned into a ‘gap two years’, working their way through all kinds of adventures, and fending off marriage proposals from a number of suitors, some of whom already had a wife or two – *‘You will be making me very fine wives!’* On their return, they soon realised that Norfolk’s ‘big skies’ actually had rather limited horizons in comparison with their recent adventures. They applied to and were accepted by the Foreign and Commonwealth Office, their fluency in several languages and appreciation of the nuances of many foreign cultures making them ideal candidates. Each married diplomats, and slotted well into the elitist nomadic lifestyle this entailed.

The young **Dick Callum** had expected to become a naturalist. He never lost his passion for natural history, especially for birds and for conservation in general but, being the polymath he was, his interests broadened, and he started a more general science degree at university. This was interrupted by the war. His tutors, by now aware of his exceptional talent, advised him to apply to the RAF which he did. The Old Boy network swung smoothly into action, and Dick was soon a commissioned officer in the RAF after the bare minimum of square-bashing. He carried out a few research and development projects before he was co-opted into the newly formed SOE, the forerunner of the SAS and SBS. His role was devising and developing any new technology that might help British forces, including devices to help downed Allied airmen escape from German-occupied Europe.

On one occasion he was sent to Bletchley Park to apply his analytical brain to a technological problem there. He was most surprised to bump into Chief Officer Blackett. During his 10-day stint, he and Nancy spent many happy hours reminiscing about their childhood adventures and learning a little of what each had done since. Nancy’s subordinates were bemused. It was known that several visiting officers had fancied their chances with the WRNS Commander. One in particular had rashly ‘tried it on’ with her after a few too many beers; he could barely hobble back to his jeering mates after she had forcefully declined his advances, and men had generally left her well alone after that. Dick’s arrival baffled them: whatever did this earnest, bespectacled young officer have? She clearly enjoyed spending time with him.

They knew of no one else who was on first-name terms with her. Nancy chose to keep them in the dark, which merely added to her mystique. As Dick prepared to return to London, they agreed it would be safest to say nothing at all to friends or family about their having met up. They never spoke of it until the history of Bletchley Park began to emerge in the 1980s, when they could finally explain what they had been up to during the war.

After the war, Dick resumed his studies, completing his first degree followed by a Masters and, with every encouragement from the university, a PhD. All seemed set for him to become Professor Callum II, but it was not to be. Bletchley Park had wanted to hang on to him after his successful work with them but the SOE had insisted he was returned to them. With Dick's university education complete, key people in the intelligence services were certain that his talents would be wasted in academia and could be better deployed at GCHQ. Accordingly, he was head-hunted to Eastcote, the headquarters of GCHQ at that time.

His sister was married, but he was still single. It wasn't that he didn't want to be married; he'd met several women whom he would have liked to date, but he knew some of them mocked him behind his back. Understanding how to set about courting a marriageable young woman was far beyond even his prodigious intellect. Dorothea decided he needed help: the following Christmas (1949) she invited not just her brother, but also her close friend Titty, to join her and her husband. Titty had always had a deep fondness and respect for 'The Prof'; he had always liked the fact that Titty was not altogether conventional. Through Dorothea they had both been kept up to date with what the other was doing, but they hadn't seen each other since before the war. Meeting again, they greatly enjoyed each other's company. For Dick, here was a woman who understood him; she didn't get upset if his attention was so focused on something that he failed to notice her speaking to him. Titty herself was no stranger to being utterly absorbed in her task to the exclusion of all else. At the end of the holiday they arranged to meet up again. Soon.

They married before the year was out. It was Titty who made the proposal; Dick was surprised and delighted, stammering his acceptance and wiping his glasses. Dorothea said afterwards that she enjoyed Dick's wedding

day far more than her own. Her wedding day had been wonderful, but being the centre of attention had been stressful for one who usually shunned the limelight. Dick's marriage was a story which, to some extent, she had authored: for Dorothea, Dick's wedding day was her triumphant Publication Day. The following year, Dick and Titty moved to Cheltenham, the new location for GCHQ, where they remained for the rest of their long and happy marriage; they had two gifted children, a boy and a girl. When he had learned to drive, Dick was delighted to realise that the Slimbridge Wildfowl & Wetlands Trust was not far away, and much of the family's leisure time was dedicated to visiting – and working for – the centre.

Roger Walker inevitably became a marine engineer. He knew his bump-tiousness would not be well received in the Royal Navy and set his sights on the Merchant Navy instead. He spent the war years learning his trade at a company building marine propulsion machinery on Tyneside. The war was over by the time he went to sea, and he progressed through the ranks, gaining his Second's and then his Chief's ticket. Although he sometimes sailed as Chief Engineer, he much preferred the hands-on role of a Second Engineer, even though it meant watch-keeping turns on most of the smaller vessels in which he sailed. Big chunks of his leave were spent with his sister-in-law, nephew and nieces at Beckfoot. The children adored their Uncle Roger.

The adult Roger didn't succumb to marriage until he was in his 40s, when he met a delightful widow. She was 10 years his junior, with two boys aged 10 and 8. Initially, he continued at sea, but found it had lost its appeal. He wanted to be a full-time step-dad, the best he could be and, like so many ex-marine engineers before and since, he became a land-based engineer surveyor, inspecting boilers for the National Vulcan Engineering Insurance Company. The district allocated to him was North West Wales, and he moved his family to Caernarfon. The sailing opportunities were unrivalled, and the job was sufficiently flexible in those days for him to be able to take advantage of good weather to sneak in half a day's sailing when he was theoretically working. Nobody troubled him as long as he got the work done sometime. Nancy and her family were regular house guests, and they shared some gloriously hairy moments in the notorious Menai Strait. His talent for languages soon enabled him to converse adequately, if not fluently, in Welsh, and suspicion about the English incomer soon evaporated into a warm welcome.

Bridget Walker always felt cheated of the chance to become a ‘fully-fledged Swallow’. She became a very capable Able Seaman, but big brother John was at Naval College by the time she was eight. She compensated for this by following Nancy's example and joining the WRNS as soon as she could. The war was over, but her duties took her to all corners of the diminishing Empire and this was not without its excitement. Eventually she was wooed and won by a Royal Navy Commander, at which point she left the WRNS and set up home for them in Portsmouth.

Captain Flint/Jim Turner worked at his copper mine with **Timothy** for several years. They never made much money, but the job satisfaction was huge. He also spent more time writing. When war came again, the mine was closed down for good. He often disappeared for weeks on end, saying little or nothing about where he'd been. Nobody ever established what he had been doing, and he invariably changed the subject if asked about it. The family understood he was probably working for some of the same people he had worked with during the First World War, but this was never verified. Since they knew nothing about his earlier exploits, they had no means of digging up his wartime stories after he died.

After the war, he travelled a bit, wrote a bit, and entertained his great-nephew and great-nieces a lot. He still lived mostly on the houseboat. When he failed to show up for his post for a second day running, Molly got Peggy to take her across to the houseboat. She found her brother seated at his typewriter. He had had a massive heart attack.

The houseboat became Nancy's *pied-à-terre*, or rather *pied-à-mer*, whenever she visited her family and during her unmarried time at Eskdale. Battles for possession of the houseboat took on a whole new energy, and the young attackers were often in for a surprise when they made their assaults, surprises that often necessitated first aid for the assailants.

The Swallows, Amazons and Scarabs always hankered for a grand reunion at the Lake, but with families all at different stages and some of their number liable to be on the other side of the world, they never quite achieved it; however, they did stay in touch, and partial gatherings were joyous occasions. Through these, their respective children learned to sail, to camp, to explore, and generally become self-reliant – just like their parents before them.

PIGEON POST TO LARK

Reflections on the 81 Carnegie Medal-winning books

Peter Wright



I SET myself the challenge of reading all the Carnegie Medal-winning books to experience the very best of children's literature and to see how *Pigeon Post*, the first winner, stood up against today's successful titles. It has been a hugely enjoyable experience, and one I would thoroughly recommend. Despite reading many excellent and enjoyable books, I wasn't convinced I'd really read the cream of children's literature. I was puzzled why some books had merited the award, and perplexed that other great titles and authors were missing. I've now given this further consideration and set out my observations here.

Named after Andrew Carnegie, the philanthropist who funded the building of 660 libraries in the UK,ⁱ the medal was founded in 1936 by The Library Association (now the Chartered Institute of Library and Information

ⁱ Andrew Carnegie (1835-1919) was a Scotsman who emigrated to America and amassed a fortune in the steel industry. He funded over 2500 libraries worldwide by providing funds to build and equip the library, but only on the condition that the Local Authority matched that by providing the land, staff and maintenance.

Professionals – CILIP) and presented every year sinceⁱⁱ. Originally it was awarded for the ‘best’ children’s book published during the preceding year by a British author, but later changed to an ‘outstanding’ book. Eligibility has now expanded to include some overseas authors and foreign-language translations.^{iii,2} Most genres can be found in the list: adventure, fantasy, myth, fairy tale, historical, short stories and gritty realism, although no school stories. The prize is also open to non-fiction books and poetry.

The initiative nearly got off to a disastrous start thanks to Arthur Ransome, who initially refused to attend the award ceremony, saying he would be too busy fishing. Eventually he relented, but was unimpressed with the occasion, the lack of publicity and the fact that the medal wasn’t made of gold! Famously, he grumbled that they may as well have posted him the medal and saved him the journey.^{iv,3}

It is generally accepted that Ransome’s masterpiece is *We Didn’t Mean to go to Sea*, and surveys amongst TARS members reveal *Winter Holiday* to be his most popular; thus, one observation is that the Carnegies don’t necessarily represent an author’s best or most popular work. There are some obvious examples. C. S. Lewis won the award for *The Last Battle*, described by Keith Barker as ‘the one which is generally regarded as the weakest of the whole [Narnia] series’.⁴ Similarly, Noel Streatfield’s, *The Circus is Coming*, does not readily compare with her accepted ‘classic’, *Ballet Shoes*.

So why did C. S. Lewis win with an under-par book? As Barker explains, CILIP has stated that there were occasions in the early years when they ignored their own criteria, recognising a lifetime’s work with what was

ⁱⁱ With the exception of 1943, 1945 and 1966, when no books were considered suitable.

ⁱⁱⁱ Books first published in another country must have been co-published in the UK or Ireland within three months of the original publication date. The book must be written in the English language (either as an original work in English or a first English translation of a foreign-language work) and specifically published for children and young people.

^{iv} His apparent lack of interest was that neither he nor his publishers had heard of, or knew anything about, the award. He wrote to Cape’s asking, ‘Has the award (if not a hoax) been announced in the newspapers or is it something that the Library Ass. does, so to speak on the sly? Or do we have to boost the Library Ass. by announcing it ourselves. The whole thing seems to me extremely odd ...’ Despite his misgivings, he did attend the presentation in Scarborough in front of 1200 people and, according to his mother, was ‘dithering with fright’.

probably an author's last book, instead. Thus, Walter de la Mare – *Collected Stories for Children*, and Eleanor Farjeon – *The Little Bookroom* received awards. I thought that all three books were sub-standard and that this sentimentalism devalued the award at the time. They also prevented arguably better books from winning in those years, notably Ian Serrailier's *The Silver Sword*.

Three of several books I felt were lucky to win were:

- Dr I. W. Cornwall's *The Making of Man* – an account of man's evolution, largely told through the study of prehistoric skulls. Over 40 are illustrated and described, but the minutiae of detail reminded me more of a graduate thesis than a book for children.^v
- Peter Dickinson's *City of Gold* – a strange collection of largely unfamiliar stories taken from the first 12 books of the Old Testament. Although told in a novel way, the unappealing subject matter – sacrifices, mass killings, polygamy, plagues, revenge, and a God who doesn't forgive – made me wonder why this would appeal to anyone, let alone children.
- Patrick Ness's – *Monsters of Men*, the third book of a much-acclaimed fantasy trilogy, doesn't work as a stand-alone book, and assumes you have read the previous two. No attempt is made to explain what the context is, who the characters are or why three armies are fighting each other – one using bows and arrows, another with a space ship with sophisticated weaponry and a third with supernatural powers. I found its 600 pages of warfare boring and almost unreadable.

With so many books not coming up to the standard I expected, I decided to see how I would have voted had I been a judge. I concluded that 43 of the winners were thoroughly deserved; I disagreed with 22 awards; and I could be persuaded one way or the other about the other 16. Clearly the enjoyment and appreciation of literature is always going to be both personal and subjective: your favourites are unlikely to be mine. For example, *The Borrowers* (Mary Norton), *The Owl Service* (Alan Garner) and *A Stranger at Green Knowe* (Lucy M. Boston) are all praised and popular books, but they were not to my personal taste. To be a judge, therefore, must require a degree of objectivity. So what do the assessment panel look for when choosing?

^v Sadly, many of its assumptions have been discredited through recent work on the genome.

CILIP's aim has always been to promote and reward *literary quality* with the hope of raising the overall standard of children's books. The assessment process has changed periodically; currently, judges are asked to consider 43 criteria! The preamble on the CILIP website states that the winning book ...

... should be a book that creates an outstanding reading experience through writing. The whole work should provide pleasure, not merely from the surface enjoyment of a good read, but also the deeper subconscious satisfaction of having gone through a vicarious, but at the time of reading, a real experience that is retained afterwards.

I don't envy the judges! Peter Hunt, a pioneer of the academic study of children's literature, has been quite critical of the award, noting 'it became a byword of librarians that the Carnegie-winning books were the ones least likely to be borrowed from children's libraries.'⁵ If the chosen book doesn't actually provide pleasure for a child, does this mean a failure in the process? A comment Hunt cites from Robert Westall, who won in 1975 for *The Machine Gunners*, is revealing. Westall questioned the real target of authors, saying, 'Today it may well be that books are written to *challenge* the judges.'

There is much in Westall's view, not least as I often felt the books had been chosen as 'worthy' winners, deemed by adults as books children *should* read, rather than would *want* to. This was particularly the case where I felt storytelling and a good plot were subservient to a particular social issue being addressed. There's hardly one of these not covered amongst the winners: physical disability, mental health, learning, broken marriages, single parents, alcoholic fathers, teenage pregnancy, homelessness, sexuality and sexual awakening, race, oppression, bullying, violence, loneliness, drugs and more.

Something Charlotte Ryton said at the Greenwich Literary Weekend rang a bell:

Just because it is about race or sex or gender or handicap does not mean that it is a good book and I have to tell you that I have taught children who have problems with race, who have problems with handicap, who have problems of social inclusion because they've got single parents or they live in a slum and they are bored silly with books that are supposed to be about their situation and are without a real story.⁶

I couldn't agree more. Jan Mark's *Handles*, Ivan Southall's *Josh*, Gillian Cross's *Wolf* and Geraldine McCaughrean's *A Pack of Lies* seemed to me to fall into this 'worthy' category. Others, however, such as Berlie Doherty's *Dear Nobody*, Sarah Crossan's *One*, Patrick Ness's, *A Monster Calls*, Tim Bowler's *River Boy* and Beverly Naidoo's *The Other Side of Truth* were excellent, fully justifying their award.

I read the books in chronological order and noted clear trends reflecting social changes in society. Those written in immediate pre- and post-war Britain reflected class and colonial values; the 1960s the growth of teen culture; and the awareness of inequalities in race, gender, disability and sexuality in the 1980s and 1990s. More recently, there has been the explosion in young adult fiction as a specialism. Many of the latter are excellent. Aiden Chamber's *Postcards from No Man's Land*, Siobhan Dowd's *Bog Child*, Tanya Landman's *Buffalo Soldier*, and Elizabeth Acevedo's *The Poet X* are all compelling reading. I do question, however, why these books are winning a *children's* book prize. It's a long way from the original criteria set out by W. C. Berwick Sayers, cited by Barker as saying that the winning book should be for a child between the ages of 9 and 12.

Nowhere is this shift more apparent than in the Carnegie's two most controversial awards: *Junk* by Melvin Burgess and *The Bunker Diary* by Kevin Brookes. The former describes two 14-year-olds running away from home and getting involved in drug addiction, under age sex, prostitution, theft and anarchy. It also includes an unsupported homeless girl of 16 bringing up a baby whilst addicted to heroin. *The Bunker Diary* was another book I found made for depressing reading. Six unsuspecting people are captured, put in a bunker and watched over by an unseen, unknown captor. Their food supplies are gradually cut, and the people are simply left to die, which they do. The book attempts to study how different people cope in these dire circumstances, bringing in themes of rape, addiction and torture. We never learn who inflicted these horrors. It is a very dark book. My gripe with the Carnegie judges is not that these two books are not well written or raise important issues, but that they should be deemed suitable for what is marketed as a children's book award. I didn't enjoy either book and certainly wouldn't want anyone under the age of about 14 reading them.

Books for young children seem to be increasingly forgotten. Of the 81 winners, possibly only half a dozen would appeal to the infant or younger junior school pupil. I believe this is due to a problem that CILIP could easily rectify. Their sister award – the Kate Greenaway medal – is given for *illustration* in pre-school and young children's books. This means that any book bridging the gap between picture books and longer chapter books misses out on the award. Authors who have succeeded here, such as Roald Dahl, Dick King-Smith, Jaqueline Wilson and Michael Morpurgo, to name but a few, are conspicuous by their absence. Although not acclaimed for their deep literary content, their books are successful, hugely popular and perform one of the most valuable roles in developing a child's reading and understanding – surely something CILIP should be recognising and promoting. I would therefore suggest to CILIP that, instead of comparing young adult books alongside children's fiction, they should present two awards: one for young adults, (e.g. 14 years plus) and one for children under that age, which could then incorporate the 6-8 years range currently neglected.

Other recommendations I would suggest to CILIP are:

- 1) Either drop or award a separate prize for non-fiction. There have been only four non-fiction winners in its history, the last being in 1960. Why continue the pretence that they can win the award? The standard of non-fiction books has never been higher. All the DK (formerly Dorling Kindersley) books I have seen are first rate; it's almost incomprehensible that none of these has won the award.
- 2) Either drop or award a separate prize for poetry. Although poetry has been eligible since inception, no prize has ever been awarded for a poetry collection. Whilst two books in free verse have recently won the award, these are effectively novels written in that form.

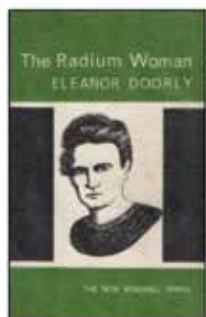
Another observation is that successful novels and popular authors appear to be religiously avoided by the judges, but such books often possess qualities not found in many of the more literary winners; namely, they engross the reader. The sheer imagination of some of these authors, their complex plot structures, ability to create tension and suspense such that you want to keep turning the pages is surely a skill in its own right and – more

importantly – the one that appeals to children. Two prime examples would be J. K. Rowling's Harry Potter and Michael Horowitz's Alex Rider series.

There are other notable absentees from the list, including books now deemed 'classics' and authors who do write more literary novels. Tolkien does not appear on the list, nor Antonia Forest – a TARS favourite. Malorie Blackman is a strange omission; her *Noughts and Crosses* regularly features in all-time great children's lists, as does Michelle Magorian's *Goodnight Mr Tom* and Mark Haddon's *The Curious Incident of the Dog in the Night-time*. Even stranger, perhaps, is a world classic – *The Lord of the Flies* by William Golding.

Despite these omissions, and lest this article appears too negative, there is plenty to love and admire amongst the winners. It was not an easy task to select my favourites, but here are my top 10 picks, listed by date of award:

Pigeon Post (1936) is an obvious choice for a Ransome fan, but it really is up there as one of the best.

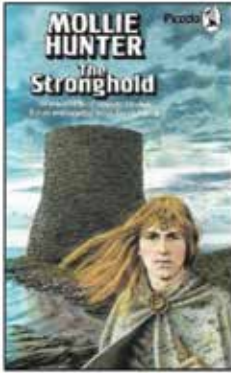


Radium Woman (1939), written by Eleanor Doorly, was the first award for non-fiction. An account of Marie Curie's life, it is at all times interesting and engaging – a superb example of how to write biography for children.

The Twelve and the Genii (1962) is a brilliant mix of factual literary history with creative storytelling written by Pauline Clarke. The Brontë children's toy soldiers, the basis of their 'Gondol' stories, are found 120 years later, come to life and have adventures with their new owner.

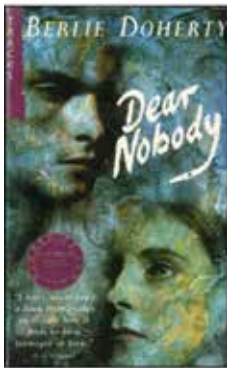
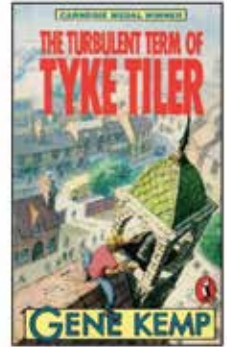


Watership Down (1972) surprised me. I had always thought I would not like Richard Adams' story about rabbits, but how wrong I was. A brilliant concept coupled with compulsive storytelling.



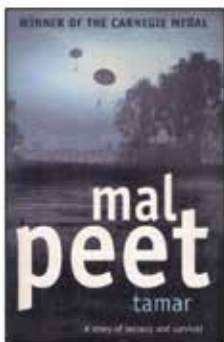
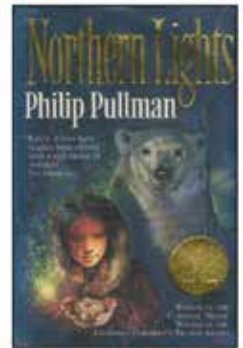
The Stronghold (1974) is, to my mind, the best of the historical novels. Set on Orkney, this clever story by Mollie Hunter tells of how the first stone broch was built as a defence against Roman raiders.

The Turbulent Term of Tyke Tyler (1977) by Gene Kemp felt to me like a ground-breaking book, as it was the first one in which the children's language and feelings felt truly believable. It also has a surprise ending.



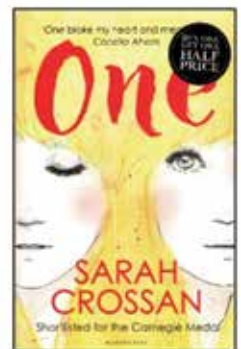
Dear Nobody (1991) is an early young adult novel by Berlie Doherty which cleverly and sensitively explores the angst of unplanned teenage pregnancy – superbly written, wholly believable and moving.

Northern Lights (1995) is the first in Philip Pullman's famous *Dark Materials* trilogy. The breadth of Pullman's imagination is breath-taking and – coupled with excellent storytelling – makes for a great read. In a 70th anniversary poll in 2007, it was voted the Carnegie of Carnegies.



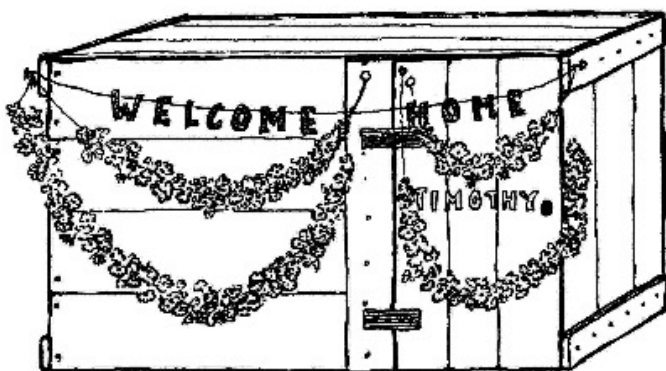
Tamar (2005) by Mal Peet is set in two time periods. A teenage girl inherits memorabilia from her grandfather and sets off to explore his past. She discovers he was a special agent working with the Dutch resistance in 1945 with secrets to tell – a gripping read.

One (2016), by Sarah Crossan, is a truly memorable and incredible novel, both in terms of the subject matter (twins) and the story that unfolds. I don't want to spoil



the surprises for you, but this is an emotional, powerful and unique book. It's also written in free verse which adds to its appeal. I have to admit to having a 'something ... going wrong with [John's] eyes' moment (i.e. after his father had said, 'You'll be a seaman yet, my son,' in *WD*, Ch. 23).

And yes, Ransome's *Pigeon Post* does stand comparison with any of the Carnegie winners. It's a cracking good tale, but for me it's the enduring sheer quality of Arthur's prose that ensures it's a worthy winner. Still being in print 85 years after publication would seem to support both this assessment and its ongoing popularity. Finally, I borrowed all the books from the TARS Library, along with three others written about the medal, and would like to thank Winifred Wilson for all her help and encouragement. I'm sure she'd be happy to send you any of the books.



¹ Hugh Chisholm (ed.), 'Carnegie, Andrew', *Encyclopædia Britannica*, 11th edn (Cambridge University Press, 1911).

² www.cilip.org.uk.

³ Roger Wardale, *Arthur Ransome Master Storyteller* (Great Northern Books, 2010).

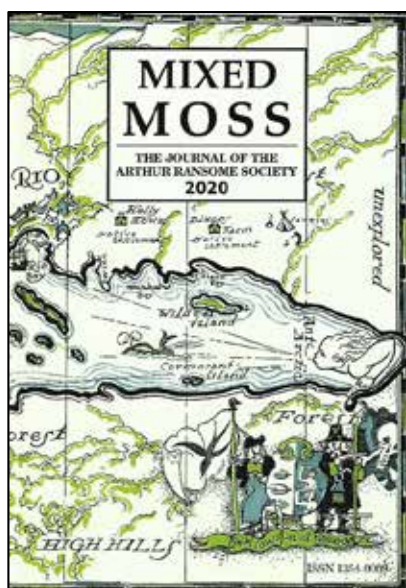
⁴ Keith Barker, *In the Realms of Gold – The Story of the Carnegie Medal* (Julia MacRae Books, 1986).

⁵ Peter Hunt, 'And which is *the* best', in *Why was Billy Bunter Never Really Expelled?* ed. by Dennis Butts and Peter Hunt (Lutterworth, 2019).

⁶ Charlotte Ryton, 'Ransome – the inclusive writer: Racism, sexism, class, etc., in children's books' in *TARS 7th Literary Weekend Transcripts, Greenwich*, (TARS, 2003), pp. 31–38.

MIXED MOSS INDEXES

(A conversation with) Paul Wilson



[Volumes Index](#) by MR

[Subject Index](#) by MR

[Article Index](#) by MR

[Author Index](#) by MR

New version 2007-2020

[MM Volumes 2007...](#)

[MM Authors 2007...](#)

[MM Subjects 2007...](#)

WHEN you look for *Mixed Moss* on the web, you will hopefully notice two sets of indexes (currently entitled ‘Directory’) if you scroll through the main *MM* page, available under the Publications and Events/TARS Publication/ menu (at <https://members.arthur-ransome.org/mixed-moss/>). The copy of the section with the indexes is reproduced next to the cover, above. *Paul Wilson*, who developed the second set, provided most of the text for the story, so he is listed as the principal author – Ed.

Mixed Moss was first published in 1990 (Vol. 1, No. 1) and the most recent edition in August 2020, 30 years later. The Journal of The Arthur Ransome Society is now an annual publication, but in some years two issues have been published. The complete run now comprises 36 editions (with over 550 illustrations, 500 articles and 150 reviews), which clearly needed to be indexed.

The first index was compiled by Peter Hyland, covering all 14 issues up to Summer 2000. Comprising Authors and Subjects indexes, it was printed on pp. 56-63 of Vol. 3, No. 8 (*MM*, Winter 2000).

Maurice Rowlandson compiled a set of cumulated indexes to include the next eight issues from Winter 2000 as well – a total of 22 issues from 1990 to 2006 [Summer/Autumn 1997; Summer/Winter 1998; 1999; 2000; 2003]. These were uploaded as spreadsheets to the old TARS website, and include:

Subject = sub-heading and other information

Article = article and subject.

Prompted by TARS Librarian (Paul's wife, Winifred), and with the endorsement of the Literary and Resources committee of TARS, Paul then completed the indexes for the 14 issues of *Mixed Moss* from 2007 to 2020. He plans to add each new edition as it becomes available to keep up to date. For these 14 issues, the indexes run to a total of 57 pages. There are Volume, Author and Subject sections, to complement Maurice Rowlandson's indexes from 1990 to 2006. As with Peter Hyland's index, book reviews are arranged alphabetically by title. There are quite a few cross references in the subject index, but inevitably this is subjective. Paul welcomes feedback on the content or format and any corrections or errors. (Please email: paulwilson204@hotmail.co.uk directly).

As you can see, these are not cumulated with the earlier indexes by Peter Hyland and Maurice Rowlandson ... yet. So the next stage is for Paul to amalgamate the two sets of indexes, to give a comprehensive set for the complete run of *Mixed Moss*. This will be a big project and will probably mean starting almost from scratch with the 1990-2006 issues.

The indexes are a really important resource, which I (*ed.*) found invaluable when I first joined the Society, both to follow up an interest and to discover what the society was interested in. It is also useful for *MM* editors needing to check whether a topic has already been covered recently, and even if members have unintentionally submitted the same article twice (which Paul tells me has happened). I hope the updating of the *MM* indexes will be helpful in allowing members to find articles relevant to their interests. The efforts of all our indexers are very much appreciated.

AR AT THE BRITISH LIBRARY

Krysia Clack

THE UK has six Legal Deposit libraries – one of which is the British Library. Every publisher in the UK is obliged to supply a copy of a publication, **whether it has an ISBN or not**, to each one. This has been the law since 1662. ISBNs were only introduced in 1965. There have been some incorrect assumptions recently about what qualifies for Legal Deposit.

I have checked what has been deposited at the British Library. As someone who worked there for 31 years until retirement two years ago, I am familiar with the library catalogue and also other procedures within the organisation.

The starting point for searching is the catalogue at <http://explore.bl.uk>. It combines both publications and sound material, and so there is no need to consult a separate catalogue for the latter. Entering ‘Arthur Ransome’ provides 447 hits, but these include other people with the same name. ‘Arthur Ransome 1884–1967’ reduces the number to 174 hits, but then does not include the catalogue records where his dates were not listed.

The British Library collection can only be accessed within its Reading Rooms, unless the item is also held separately as part of the Document Supply collection from which publications can be loaned (via a public or university library) and scanned copies of articles ordered. TARS members would be wise to always try the TARS Library first, as this collection is loanable and very substantial in its content. Those researching Arthur Ransome who are not members of TARS and who, therefore, do not have access to the TARS Library can consult the same material via the British Library but probably not as comfortably.

All TARS publications are held at the British Library. *The Outlaw, Signals* and *Mixed Moss* have all been deposited regularly. There is one deposit of the *The Ship's Log* (2003) and the *Transactions of the First Literary*

Conference is also held. TARS is in the process of supplying the more recent transcripts. **Amazon Publications are held, even though they have rarely been allocated an ISBN.** Unfortunately, *Ransome at Sea* is not held. It was supplied, but subsequently mislaid. The only publications actually rejected by the British Library were *A Swallows and Amazons Colouring Book* (2005) and *The Swallows and the Amazons* (1997). Regarding the latter, I suspect the cataloguer erroneously mistook the publication as a reprint.

Having checked against a bibliography, I can confirm that all of Ransome's UK published works have been deposited. The catalogue search also lists the publications where Ransome wrote the introduction, as with the 'Mariners Library', of which there is a complete collection.

Other interesting items emerge: 'A Serious Kind of Joy: Autobiographical Elements in the Arthur Ransome Books for Children' by Mary Haynes (Thesis (MA), Loughborough University of Technology, 1989).

The move to store material electronically, as opposed to hard copy, has been accompanied by additional information being available in a catalogue record. The search for 'Arthur Ransome' also includes articles within publications where he is discussed. In this way, we can learn that:

- 'Arthur Ransome's Rewriting of the Russian Folktale Historicised' by Tatiana Bogrdanova can be found in *Slavonica* 2015, Volume 21, Parts 1–2, pp. 79–94, Maney.
- 'Was Arthur Ransome's John Walker a Competent Seaman?' by Mike Bender is published in *The Mariner's Mirror* 2019, Volume 105, Part 1, pp. 81–85, Routledge.
- 'Bobstays and Billygoats: Arthur Ransome's *Nancy Blackett*, the Image of the New Woman' by Catherine M. Lynch and edited by Sylvia Patterson Iskander is in *The Image of the Child* 1991, May, pp. 194–199, The Association, Hattiesburg, MS.

There are plenty more.

The audio collection reveals that the British Library holds the recordings of Ransome readings for the BBC Third Programme. These are listed on the following page.

- ‘Benign moment’ (8 min. 23 sec) – shelfmark: **1CE0003838**
(alternative copy at T11870)
- ‘On Watching Fisherman’ (8 min. 13 sec.) – shelfmark: **1CE0004023**
- ‘On Giving Advice to Beginners’ (8 min. 46 sec) –
shelfmark: **1CE0004023**
- ‘*Old Peter's Russian Tales*’ (39 min. 19 sec) –
shelfmark: **1CE0004022** (alternative copy at T11848)
- ‘The Stolen Turnips’ (29 min. 37 sec) – shelfmark: **1CE0004022**
(alternative copy at T11848)

In some cases Ransome is shown as being the speaker, in others he is called the contributor, which is more ambiguous. There is an interesting BBC interview about the BBC recordings posted on the *Nancy Blackett* website (<https://nancyblackett.org/2013/08/22/arthur-ransome-recordings-bbc-interview/>). The recordings listed above can be listened to at the British Library. Alternatively, it is possible to apply for a copy, but the cost is prohibitive, starting at a minimum £45 to a maximum of £150 for each one (VAT to be added.) Copyright restrictions mean that the recordings can only be for personal use.

Other audio material includes interviews with people who were influenced by *Swallows and Amazons*, such as Labi Siffre, or who read the book in their childhood (Millennium Memory Bank). The written details of the interviews are very comprehensive and can throw up unexpected information, e.g. Mary Shepard who illustrated P. L. Travers Mary Poppins series says ‘she did illustrations for an Arthur Ransome book but these were not used’ (Part 3, Tape 2 (F8745), Side A). (Mary Shepard illustrated the American edition of *Pigeon Post*, so are these additional ones?)

The Newspaper Library is lodged within the British Library and has a near-complete collection of all newspapers to which Ransome supplied articles.

Finally, there is some material that can be accessed directly from the laptop. I have found three PhD theses about Ransome. Two have been scanned and can be downloaded for free via www.ethos.bl.uk.

Camping and Tramping, Swallows and Amazons

Author: Sheeky, Hazel

Awarding Body: University of Newcastle Upon Tyne

Awarded: 2012

There and Back Again: Imperial and National Space in British Children's Fantasy

Author: Subramanian, Aishwarya

Awarding Body: Newcastle University

Awarded: 2018

Those who are concerned about Ransome's legacy will also be pleased to know that he has been featured in British Library temporary exhibitions when appropriate. Arthur Ransome was well represented in the 'Russian Revolution: hope, tragedy, myths' (2017) but mysteriously his name is not present on the web page: [https://www.bl.uk/russian-\[revolution/articles/1reporting-the-russian-revolution](https://www.bl.uk/russian-[revolution/articles/1reporting-the-russian-revolution) – an article written by Katie McElvanney. He was also included in the 2012 exhibition 'Writing Britain: Wastelands to Waterlands', for which Christina Hardyment wrote the book of the same name. The British Library is limited in what it can include, without hiring from other collections, as Ransome's personal writings and artefacts are shared between the Brotherton Library and the Museum of Lakeland Life and Industry in Kendal.

And now for a bit of fun If you have ever wondered what the Coniston local dialect was like in Ransome's time, you can listen to a very short extract where Boss and Tom share memories about quarrying and work in the copper mine: <https://sounds.bl.uk/Accents-and-dialects/survey-of-English-dialects>. Select 'J-L' and then 'Lancashire' and then 'Coniston'. No prizes, but a transcript would be useful from someone who can understand what is being said!

Note. If you wish to visit the British Library Reading Rooms, you will need to register for a Reader Pass, which is free. Full information is on <https://www.bl.uk/help/how-to-get-a-reader-pass>.

NEWS OF DR RANSOME

Ransome Research

ALTHOUGH Arthur Ransome only completed two terms at Yorkshire College (now Leeds University), his contributions to literary criticism and literature were considered worthy of an honorary doctorate in 1951 from Leeds University. He continues to be the subject of scholarly enquiry today. TARS encourages research into all aspects of Ransome's life and writings. These pages will hopefully assist researchers, particularly new members, to collaborate with others in expanding our knowledge.

Useful resources for researchers

Repositories for Ransome research are the Brotherton Library special collection at Leeds University and Abbot Hall Museum, Kendal. Collections of articles on AR's life and works may be found on the web at <http://arthur-ransome.fandom.com/wiki/>, <https://allthingsransome.net/> and, of course, our own website <https://arthur-ransome.org/>. In addition to our current librarian (Winifred Wilson), the team at Amazon Publications and *MM* contributors, the following members have confirmed that they would be delighted to hear from others interested in their particular enthusiasms:

- Life, people and places – Ted Alexander, Ann Farr, Paul Flint, Margaret Ratcliffe
- Film and TV – Sophie Neville
- Ransome's boats – Peter Willis
- Ransome on fishing – Paul Crisp
- Ransome in Syria – Jill Goulder

Through the **Red Slipper Fund**, TARS offer grants (£50–£250) to assist with research/copyright fees, travel expenses or contributions towards publishing costs for talks, articles, pamphlets, books or academic theses. For further details and an application form, please email Peter Wright at peterwright180@btinternet.com, or telephone (UK) 0121 443 2910.

Current research projects

'**The Best of Evgenia's Pencil**' is the working title of Margaret Ratcliffe's book on Evgenia's diaries (1928–1933), which she has transcribed. She hopes to publish these, 'with little "extras" and illustrations', as an Amazon Publication.

Catherine Lamont is researching '**Black Swans and Petticoats in Captain Flint's Trunk**' – influences on Ransome that may have led to him giving an Australian childhood (and the name Mary) to the mother of the Swallows. This research is supported by the Red Slipper Grant.

Recently published work/mentions

'Far away and close to home: Children's toponyms and imagined geographies, c. 1870–1950' by Jeremy Burchardt in *Journal of Historical Geography*, Vol. 69, July 2020 explores Ransome's as the best example of 'transfigurative naming'.

Ransome's *Bohemia in London* is mentioned in British Art Studies' Issue 11 (2019), 'Theatres of War: Experimental Performance in London, 1914–1918 and Beyond'. A phrase from his Russian journals appears in the title of Tracy Gillman's thesis, 'The disappearance of spoons ...'.

Dr Penny Bradshaw reports that several students in the **University of Cumbria's new Master of Arts** have referred to Ransome's works in submissions. The course includes two weeks on *SA* and *WH*. A masterclass led by TARS members may lead to some more focused

project work soon. Penny mentions AR in her podcast:

<https://www.countrystride.co.uk/single-post/countrystride-35-the-childrens-literature-of-lakeland> (especially at 26.40 mins; 45 mins).



Please advise the Editor or TARS Chair if you would like to contact one of the members listed on this page, or if you would like to suggest a name, topic or project for this page next year.

DEEP DEMOCRACY, RANSOME AND ‘THE TWELVE’

Catherine Lamont¹

WHILE writing children's books may have been something Arthur Ransome wanted to do since the age of eight,ⁱ he was also forever ‘championing’ the underdog.ⁱⁱ Rather than argue about rights, he sang the praises of the less powerful (children, women, workers, artists) instead. His ‘hymn’ to the artist's model (‘In the studio’, from *Bohemia in London*) is an early (1907) example. His ‘philosophical explanation of life in general and creativity in particular’, expounded in *The Blue Treacle*,² implies that he may have chosen fiction quite deliberately to convey his ideas about society to his readers.

Far from being just ‘nice’ nostalgic holiday adventures written and read by people who don’t want to grow up, as some critics suggest,³ I see Ransome's child-focused novels as portraits of the effective use of power when you don't seem to have any (as children conventionally don't). At the same time as I was reading *Swallows and Amazons* to my 13-year-old, I was studying a university text on the very same theme. *Sitting in the Fire* was written by a quantum-physicist-turned-Jungian-analyst, Arnold Mindell, about what he firstly called ‘Worldwork’ and later ‘Deep Democracy’: effective and compassionate use of ‘power, rank and privilege’ for the good of all concerned.

Reading these books side by side was uncanny: on the one hand, I was reading (as an adult) a clearly articulated theory on Deep Democracy; on the other, I was reading (to a child) vivid portraits of how the principles of Deep Democracy might be applied (primarily by children) in realistic situations in

ⁱ Peter Hunt tells the story of how Ransome (aged eight) came to write his first ‘book’ for children (‘The Desert Island’) and reproduces its 1100 words in *Approaching Arthur Ransome*.

ⁱⁱ As Julian Lovelock observes in *Swallows, Amazons and Coots* (p. 12). Lovelock also cites Ransome describing his opposition to his father as ‘an early manifestation of my ineradicable tendency to disagree with any majority wherever I happened to be’ (*Autobiography*, p. 23).

everyday life. Not only that, my studies were teaching principles of artistic qualitative research reporting at the same time that Ransome was demonstrating the power of literary art to convey the ideas he so passionately wanted to share. Could teaching the effective and compassionate use of power be the 'legacy' of Arthur Ransome, and its underlying hopefulness the reason Ransome matters to so many Tars?



Towards the end of *Swallows and Amazons*, nine-year-old Titty calmly asserts 'I'm not going fishing tomorrow. ... I'm going treasure-hunting' (Chs 27 and 28). Her older and bigger siblings, John and Susan – who are also her commanding officers – clearly want her to join the family fishing expedition. Is Titty's statement an example of insubordination or a judicious use of rank? Similarly, when Commodore John defers to Captain Nancy's superior knowledge of sailing or acknowledges Mate Susan's expertise as the chief cook and welfare officer, is he being weak or wise?

Blind adherence to rank can be problematic – as the chapter title 'The Rashness of the Admiral' in *Coot Club* implies. This reminds me of the advice I heard frequently as an Education Officer in the Army: 'Pay attention to your sergeant – you may outrank him/her, but she/he knows far more than you could possibly have learned in your basic officer training'. Even the military recognises that the lower ranks sometimes have more knowledge (and a different kind of rank, or power) than their formal rank bestows.

The word 'command' is often used and even appears in some chapter headings (e.g. 'The Able-seaman in Command' (*SD*)). Nearly every character is portrayed as having power or rank at some point, using it with varying degrees of success and wisdom. Deep Democracy encourages people to expand and use their awareness of what is happening in the whole 'field' to negotiate solutions that will be in everyone's best interests. Because it respects both the spoken and the *unspoken* aspects of experience – both the clearly articulated ideas and the more subtle messages we send others about

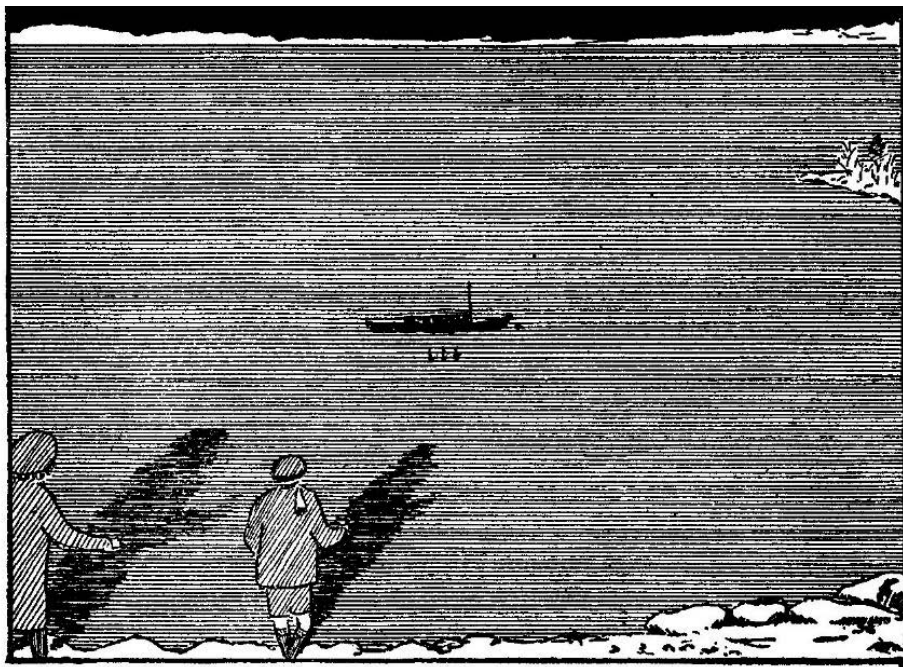
what we really think or feel – Mindell called it *Deep Democracy*. He called the leadership necessary to use this knowledge effectively, for the good of all, 'eldership'. I think this quality is seen very clearly operating and developing throughout the Swallows and Amazons novels, most obviously (but quite differently) in the characters of Nancy, Titty, Dorothea and John.

Mindell and colleague Julie Diamond (whose *Power: A User's Handbook* also informs this article), suggest that 'awareness of rank' is one of the most important life-skills needed to negotiate a complex world. In this, they aren't talking about overt rank such as 'captain' or 'boss', but the more subtle rank systems that we negotiate every day – rank that we either inherit, earn or develop (e.g. gender, race, class, position in the family; resources, specialist knowledge, or confidence). Most of us are unaware of this rank; furthermore, the rank, power or status that we are usually least aware of is our own. This lack of awareness of our rank causes significant problems to not only others, but ourselves, particularly when they think we have more power. For example, the Great Aunt (GA) uses her higher (age-related) rank ruthlessly to get her younger relatives to do what she thinks is best, but in doing so she alienates those she clearly cares for. As Susan says, 'She probably didn't mean to be [bad]' (*SD*, Ch. 36). Rigid use of social power doesn't benefit anyone, least of all Great Aunt Maria.

Closely related to awareness of rank is awareness of roles. Ransome makes quite explicit the invocation of roles to deal with challenging situations in the inner dialogue of his characters. Titty uses a reminder 'that she was not merely Robinson Crusoe ... but was also Able-seaman Titty, who had to hoist the lantern ...' (*SA*, Ch. 18) and to Roger that 'you're a ship's boy. And not the youngest any more' (*SD*, Ch. 29) to help overcome fears of abandonment. Dorothea 'put down [the four] in her mind as the elders' (*WH*, Ch. 4), a term used 18 times in *Winter Holiday* alone, to help her find her own place, and Daddy tells Roger, 'You're the engineer' (*WD*, Ch. 23). Roles simplify decision-making in predictable circumstances, using pre-determined rank systems effectively and automatically. But for novel and unexpected situations, the invocation of role models (e.g. 'What would Nancy/Susan/Father do/say?') seems particularly useful.

The role of leader changes constantly in the *SA* novels. As Peggy says, 'It might have been different in daylight ... But at night, John, naturally, was in command' (*WH*, Ch. 27). 'In matters like this, though she [Dorothea] was the elder ..., she always felt that Dick knew best' (*WH*, Ch. 2) and 'Tom, older though he was, waited for orders and did what he was told. ... Joe was in command [of salvage operations]' (*BS*, Ch. 4). Titty, Roger and Dick may both have low rank generally, but their knowledge is respected and even sought after (e.g. Titty's dowsing in *PP*; Roger's Latin in *ML* and Dick's bird-watching in *Great Northern?*).

Conversely, when leaders fail to remember their roles (and associated responsibilities) and pay attention to other interests instead (e.g. distractions such as birds or their egos), disaster can strike. John's ambition to sail into Horseshoe Cove without jibing in *Swallowdale* leads to the holing of *Swallow*; the elders' desertion of the juniors so that they can sleep in the *Fram* in *Winter Holiday*, and a focus on pleasing parents in *We Didn't Mean to go to Sea* and *Secret Water* endanger the younger children; and the Admiral's curiosity and fanciful daydreaming on Breydon Water, 'gay with yachts', leads to *Teasel* going 'Just a little farther' and foundering on the mud in *Coot Club* (Ch. 25).



THE FRAM IN THE MOONLIGHT

To what purpose is all this attention to rank? The children (indeed, all fictional characters) could be said to be essentially modelling behaviour (and potentially teaching it) to their readers – a subtle, non-violent way to make the world a better place, if a writer has the capacity and desire to do so. And I think it is fairly clear (especially if you consider not only what Ransome read and who he consorted with, but what he wrote for his real 'beloved brat', Tabitha, in *The Blue Treacle*) that Ransome *did*.

Writing about power brings me to its abuse, or bullying. Bullying may be seen as the use of power to get your needs met, often without regard for (or at the expense of) those who *perceive* that you have more power, rank or privilege than they doⁱⁱⁱ. Many people still consider intentionality to be critical to bullying, rather than how it is perceived (in other words, the perspective of the bully has more weight than the perspective of the bullied). Differences in definition may explain why some people say that there is no bullying in the novels (or that only George Owdon qualifies)^{iv}. Another reason for not seeing bullying could be that attempts to bully are handled successfully, as happens with Titty and the treasure (and the eventual integration of the Ds in *Winter Holiday*). Titty is confident in her unique specialist knowledge of the burglary in *Swallows and Amazons* (Chs 27 and 28). Captain Flint's initial 'Waste of time, Able-seaman', John's 'But we've all looked once' and Susan's 'You'll be awfully disappointed' all crumble before her certainty^v.

Mindell calls this confidence in the self and ability to use rank awareness effectively 'psychological rank'; using this rank effectively for everyone's benefit, he calls 'eldership'. Not only does Titty use her psychological rank effectively, but she doesn't gloat about her 'victory':

She had had one idea firm in her head and had held to it when everyone thought she was wrong; and now, when everybody knew she had been right, just for a minute or two she did not want to do any talking (*SA*, Ch. 29).

ⁱⁱⁱ 'Bullying ... involves a real or perceived power imbalance' (www.stopbullying.gov/bullying/what-is-bullying); 'One essential prerequisite is the perception (by the bully or by others) of an imbalance of physical or social power' (en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Bullying).

^{iv} Mike Bender raised this point in a TARS talk conducted by Zoom in 2021.

^v Similarly Bridget's being kidnapped in *Secret Water*, which might be perceived as an abuse of power by an outsider or another child, was not experienced by her as bullying. Her confidence in the role of 'sacrifice' gave her power instead.

Titty demonstrates capacity for kindness and eldership very early on.

Another reason for not seeing bullying in the novels may be a very human preference to minimise, excuse or ignore the bad behaviour of those we love (or ourselves). For example, I am uncomfortable with Nancy's treatment of Sammy the policeman in *SA* and her frequent calling Peggy a galoot, and I either gloss over or excuse this. In a mistake-averse world, denying mistakes is often done in the name of protecting our self-esteem. It may, in reality, be protecting something else – the image we have of others (or ourselves).

Finally, some bullying behaviour has become a common thread in the social fabric and is considered essential to maintaining the status quo. Possibly the most insidious example of normalised bullying may be found in the way many adults treat children. The Great Aunt, Mrs Tyson insisting the children be home for supper at a particular time in *Pigeon Post*; Dr Dudgeon and most of the residents of Horning in *The Big Six*; and Captain Flint in the first half of *Swallows and Amazons* ... all use their rank as adults to impose their world view on those of lesser rank (the children) in ways that are sometimes not in the best interests of all concerned.

We have all probably engaged in this sort of behaviour at some time – not because we are bad people, but because a situation is too challenging, and/or we learned to 'turn a blind eye to' or 'co-operate with' power abuse as a survival strategy in childhood or under stress. Furthermore, parents who attempt to respect their children's innate wisdom often meet with criticism. Indeed, the Walker parents and Mrs Blackett often do, both in the novels and outside. For such democratic parents, Ransome's positive portrayal of parenting in freedom may be not only a tonic but critical to their own survival – and the maintenance of the 'Swallows and Amazons' spirit today.

While it is common to criticise people, rather than situations (what psychologists call the 'False Attribution Error'), blaming undermines self-esteem. Drawing attention to mistakes can cause discomfort, so most of us have learned to repel or ignore discomfort (along with anyone who is seen to cause it). Yet mistake-making is vital to growth. Is there a more positive way of approaching mistakes? Ransome seems to have thought so, as he not only has Captain Flint commit a serious blunder in his initial treatment of John (and explores the children's reactions to it), but he also explores the way the

children respond to the apology. Grown-ups apologising to children is so unfamiliar that Titty can't accept it (at first), and John reflects as follows:

There was a most unpleasant lump in Captain John's throat. He found that it was almost more upsetting to have things put right than it had been when they went wrong. ... (*SA*, Ch. 26).

While many readers appreciate this, some may feel so uncomfortable that they reject the book. Some even transfer or 'project' their discomfort onto some other aspect of the novels (e.g. claiming that they are too nice, childish or nostalgic), and then cite this 'fault' to justify their rejection.

Far from being too 'nice', Nancy (in particular) responds to power abuse with remarkable force and flexibility – ranging from black spots, through apparent compliance, to trickery and outright disobedience (especially where the GA is concerned). Nancy seems to be very aware of the many types of rank, and which rank system is most active, at any one moment. She also has sufficient compassion to be an elder – wielding power in a way that is in everyone's best interests, including the bully's (e.g. the GA's need to save face in *PM*). But Ransome does not have just one elder; he puts different characters (male/female, young/old, town/country, professional/trade) into both similar and different situations, offering an array of responses for an array of individuals to choose from. The multiple genres, settings and character combinations allow him to do this particularly broadly, and his focus on particular characters allow him to do this in depth. This holistic approach, suggesting that everyone can be an elder (whatever their perceived rank), perhaps explains Ransome's wide appeal.

Eldership does not always mean taking charge. Sometimes it means standing back and letting someone else discover their own power, rather than taking control yourself; after all, leaders can't always be present (especially if they have mumps). When leaders allow others to lead (and potentially make mistakes), the teacher/student role relationship is invoked. John's 'Let him see for himself' (*SA*, Ch. 21) reappears in different guises throughout the novels and reflects the underlying attitude of the parents; the 'apprenticeship' of the Ds in *Coot Club* and *The Picts and the Martyrs* (and the plan for this to be repeated with their parents in *Coots in the North*) is covered in depth.

Good leaders also embrace the student role when needed. Mistake-making is the special privilege of the role of student or child. Captain Flint says: 'When a thing's done, it's done, and if it's not done right, do it differently next time' (*SD*, Ch. 8). The fact that John gave in to Susan's obsession with following rules and attempted to turn back to England (*WD*, Ch. 11) is less important than the fact that he overrules her at the next crisis ('Woolworth Plate')^{vi}. Five hours and 40 pages later, he is able to proactively announce an unpopular decision with an authority that all respond to with relief. 'From that moment on not one of them looked astern, not even Susan' (Ch. 16). Mindell would call this 'standing in his high rank'.

This theory of Deep Democracy is all very well. To practise it, however, requires being more aware of the whole environment than Westerners have generally been taught to be. So-called 'scientific rationalism' diverts attention from looking at the whole picture to focusing only on things that can be measured, put into words or quantified. To combat this limited approach, qualitative artistic-scientists (such as John Ruskin, mentor of Ransome's mentor, W. G. Collingwood, Carl Jung and now process-oriented psychologists such as Mindell) have developed observational techniques similar to those practised by Titty in observing the dipper, and by both Titty and Dorothea in observing people. Observing first, then interpreting, is what humans do naturally as babies. It certainly seems simpler than learning a set of social rules or psychological theories to deal with an increasingly complex world. It is only when we have words that we begin to pay attention to 'rules' about what we should do or think, some of which are quite unreasonable. And who was it who said that rules were meant to be thrown out the window in matters of life and death? Commander Walker.



^{vi} 'We've got to get out of the way. ... Oh never MIND the pork pie ...' (i.e. the food and welfare officer is not as important as the captain in matters of life and death) (*WD*, Ch. 13).

Deep Democracy, Ransome and ‘The Twelve’

I believe that the Swallows and Amazons novels offer deeply democratic, compassionate and hopeful life lessons – ones that were very effective, judging by the number of people who have adopted the lifestyle suggested by the novels or continue to re-read them and share them with those they love. Some have been puzzled that he didn’t write more, but if that was his destiny, did he really need to? I suggest that if ‘The Twelve’ were not ‘enough’, we would not still be talking and writing about them today.

¹ With many thanks to the following for invaluable feedback on my drafts: Jill Goulder, Peter Hyland, Alan Kennedy, Julian Lovelock, Mark Walker, Peter Willis and Paul Wilson.

² Christina Hardyment’s Afterword to Arthur Ransome, *The Blue Treacle* (Kendal: Amazon Publications, 1994), fifth page in the Afterword.

³ See Catherine Lamont, ‘Emotional intelligence in children’s books: The case for Arthur Ransome’, *Mixed Moss*, 2020, for details.



ALADDIN



Two Poems by Arthur Ransome

To L.A.¹

You are a poet. I my nose
Grind at the humbler wheel of prose
But now and then I make a stanza
What’s that you say? It does not scan, Sir?
What then? I may be Sancho Panza,
But let not you on Rosinante
Despise my donkey’s crude andante
Yours be the visions, yours the fame,
I have my pleasure all the same;
And those its not high poesy,
Lascalles, its good enough for me.

Seventy one²

Seventy one:
Seventy one!
It isn’t much fun
To be Seventy one.
Wool’s nearly spun:
Sand’s nearly run:
The end has Begun:
Life’s nearly DONE.
It isn’t much fun
To be seventy one.

¹ This dedication to Lascalles Abercrombie appears in Ransome’s *Aladdin and his Wonderful Lamp in Rhyme*. (The punctuation of ‘its’ is taken from the original.)

² Included with a letter to his sister, Joyce Lupton. ‘Thank you for your birthday wishes. Here is a pome concocted in my bath. A nursery rhyme of second childhood.’



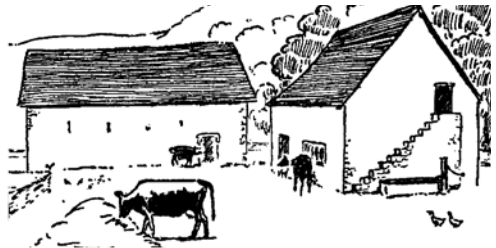
CHAIRMAN'S GRAND POETRY COMPETITION 2020

THE YEAR 2019 saw the anniversary of the publication of Arthur Ransome's Aladdin in Rhyme. I suspected that most Juniors would not have seen this early work and would like to know that Arthur was also fond of making up humorous little ditties to include in his correspondence. It then struck me that a poetry competition for the Juniors would be an ideal way to both introduce them to this little-known side of Ransome and encourage their own poetic creativity. The competition, announced with samples of Ransome's poems, was promoted in their magazine, The Outlaw, with prizes offered in three age categories and a fourth for the most humorous poem. There were 31 entries, all of a high standard. The four winning poems, judged by an external examiner, are set out below.

Peter Wright, Chairman

ODE TO THIRTY COWS

You thirty cows crowd on a hill
swishing long snake-like tails,
you move slowly or keep statue-still,
you come close and I see the glow
of your silky wet noses,
some pink, some black, sniffing curiously.
Thirty thirsty glossy thick-coated cows browse the grass.
I see you all-black, all-brown, black-and-white, brown-and-white,
sandy and brindled-greys.
Horned black is bossy
with a velveteed helmet.
Cows do you moo through your horns?
Please never change.



Esme Blue (Under 8s)

How to Write a Mountain

a hat is needed – a thinking hat,
favourites work best;
pac-a-mac – keep everything dry, especially wit;
make note, keep well-fed,
you need food for thought;
water is always necessary – as is ink;
take a mirror for signalling
and reflecting;
pack your best-kept map
for finding best lines;
you may need spare socks,
in case of tributaries;
stow your poet's first-aid kit –
dictionary, spare pencil, sharpener, paper;
a stamped, blank postcard
is perfect for sending your masterwork on for scrutiny;
a compass helps to find the way forward or backwards –
to retrieve memories or dreams;
if bagging a Munro, bring a net
to battle against midges
or for catching the local language; *taphad leibh*,
write hard, stony words to match the surroundings,
not soft, chocolate words that melt and run –
no running – take your time.
Taphad leibhⁱ



Martha Blue (Over 12s)



ⁱ *Taphad leibh* = *Thank You* in Scottish Gaelic

Building a Ship

Needles and pins,
Needles and pins,
Sew me a sail
To catch the winds.

Sew me a sail
As strong as the gale,
Daddy bring out
Your hammer and nails.

Hammers and nails,
Hammers and nails,
Build me a boat
To go chasing the whales.

Chasing the whales,
Sailing the blue.
Find a captain
And get me a crew.

Captain and crew,
Captain and crew,
Take me, oh take me
To anywhere new.

Charlotte Seylar (8-12 years)



BUTTIES!

‘Which sandwich would you like, sir?’

‘Erm, please could you list them?’

‘Oh: to be precise, they are –
cheesy-jam, soggy, socky-cucumber (still in its skin),
wood shavings sliced ever so thin,
courgette with butter-of-the-nut-pea,
breadcrumbs-and-dried-heather,
peat-and-birdberry juice, ham-dried-like-leather,
and – last, but not least – all of those
mixed together.’

‘All of them, please ... I hear it's quite a delicacy “round here”!’

Esme Blue (Humorous Poem category)



I DREAMT A DREAM THAT DREAMT OF ME

3rd prize, Chaucer Heritage Trust

Aurora Blue aged 10

AURORA was awarded 3rd prize for this poem, which she entered in the 2019/2020 Chaucer Heritage Trust (<http://chaucer.org.uk/>) Canterbury Tales Writing Competition for schools. The theme was 'Hopes and Dreams'. As a home-schooled student, she asked to donate the school portion to our library, an offer we have joyfully accepted. And yes, she is a talented visual artist, as you can see from her artwork 'Tree', too.

Did I awaken throat-moist

and hear rejoicing laughter beside a stream –
stream-bubbles bubbling within bubbles

and see a drift of twisted black crowfeathers
sliding, scavenging

beneath a pale sickly yellowish top-wood corn moon
passing a dangle of skeletal overhang

in helpless plenty
underneath a petal-thin, bruised-black, stand-still stillness?

A quiet ripple ripples quietly in the shadow of crab apple trees,
whose fruit hang like frozen eggs, ice-tight in their feather-weighted jelly reflection,
but overhead a soft-feathered, bruised-blue, fox-caught-still, new blue tit buds in
fledgling flight, lolling like a leaf over the edge of its nest,

God-wrought I thought ...

I follow the now static stream

and a golden haze sets me into a mid-meltedness of yellows,
within an emptiness of late-light moon-walk hollowness –

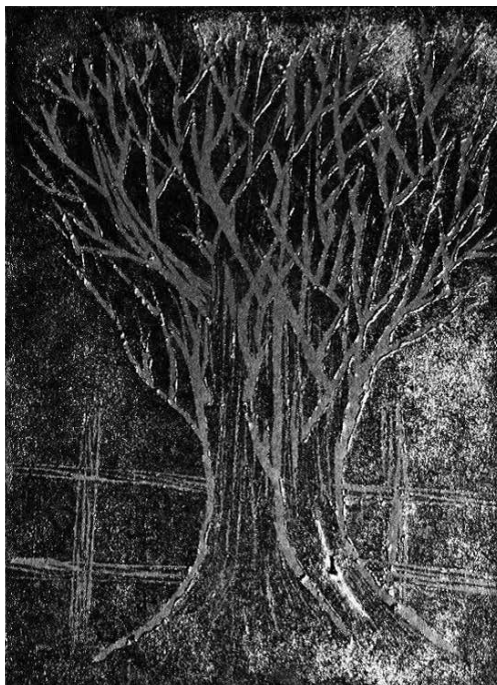
a downward journey as cold air runs from house to house,
and i feel like i am dropping downward,

downwards into a vast world of emptiness,

I dreamt a dream that dreamt of me

an emptiness that fills with smog and illness
and august may fall upon us like dust,
soon will come the blind cruelty of pain,
a feeling that all do not know nor care for me
i am hot with the sweat of fleeing children
as i rush downwards and i feel all the wrong,
unnecessary pain of knowing
as december may blanket the world with snow again
and then the upward journey
as november may be just december in disguise
but my thoughts are all mine, all mined
and kept secretly in a secret box under my bed –
open it and I will explode,
along the alleyway of bewilderment where terror is in the june grass,
like thoughts on a knife-edge kept stock-still,
something towers above me tattooed in grey tiger-skin colours,
i shudder in cold winds towards a blue afternoon
and the sun has leapt – if only all the voices in my head were one

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THE ARTHUR RANSOME STATUETTES

Ted Alexander



*Jan Neiman – Sculptor and Tatiana Verizhnikova – Professor of
Art History, University of St Petersburg, 2000*

THE 2019 Literary Weekend was held in Cirencester. In the room adjoining the Lecture Theatre were various stalls, plus a small photographic display with some supporting research files. Amongst this was a small bronze statuette of Arthur Ransome. This statuette had been on display before, notably at a Swallows and Amazons exhibition held at Abbot Hall in the summers of 1999 and 2000, and at an exhibition held at the Museum of Childhood in Edinburgh.

Since the Cirencester event, however, I have received a number of calls asking where it came from and how I came to have it. To answer the question in full, we have to go back many years to the break-up of the Soviet Union. Greg Palmer, a member of the TARS East Anglian group and the owner at the time of Arthur Ransome's *Peter Duck*, secured a lecturing post at the university in St Petersburg, Western Russia. On taking up the appointment he let it be known that he was interested in Arthur Ransome, the British war correspondent for the *Daily News* during the First World War, and later, during the Russian Revolution.

Russia, it must be said, is very much a place where who you know could be far more important than what you know. So, it was not very long before Greg was introduced to a lady from the university – Tatiana, professor of Art History. Unknown to any of us, Tatiana had already been publishing articles for some years about British authors/authoresses, including AR in appropriate Russian publications. I think she was pleased to meet someone from the UK whom she could talk to, ask questions of and share knowledge with. The academic relationship, then, was off to a good start. In time, and with Greg's assistance, a small branch of TARS was started in St Petersburg which rose to about a dozen members or thereabouts in the late 1990s.

In 1994 at the Charlotte Mason IAGM, some drawings were on display sent by Greg from Russia. These drawings of Arthur Ransome were created by Jan Neiman from photographs and with a 'likeness' which was not in doubt. These drawings, then, were absolutely superb and an indication of Russian artistic skills.

In 1995 and with TARS assistance, Tatiana was able to come to the UK and attend the Rydal Hall Literary Weekend. Having been delegated by the trustees to pick up Tatiana from Heathrow, I displayed a large name sign ... and there she was! Because it was getting late, we stayed the first night with Fiona Haughey in Chiswick, making our way north the following day. Due to language difficulties, our communication was rather restricted, although we seemed to get along well: a lady of few words, but those she spoke carried a message. The visit to the UK was a great success, thanks to the efforts and contributions of many TARS members.

In the following year, 1996, with Greg Palmer and Tatiana organising events in Russia, a dozen TARS visited St Petersburg to sample the city for themselves – the first visit ever by a party of Tars. During our 10 days in Russia we visited many places associated with Ransome, including Vergezha – 140 km to the SW of St Petersburg where Ransome compiled much of *Old Peter's Russian Tales*. To the delight of many in our party, some also attended a ballet show and a few museums before returning home. During this visit I met a number of Russians, most of whom knew something about AR and what we were all about. I also met Jan, a sculptor and lecturer – the artist behind the 1994 drawings of Arthur Ransome. Some of the other Russian members were school teachers and artists.

Turning to the statuette ... I was asked on one of my visits to Russia if I would like a bronze statue of AR. I was quite surprised by this offer, but delighted. This then gave way to thinking about the cost. These things are not cheap in anyone's language! My apprehension must have been detected, because I was assured that it would be no more than the materials, and I should not worry about it. On my return home, I have to say that I more-or-less forgot about it, thinking that it was a nice gesture. However, some months later when Tatiana visited the UK, I went to meet her ... and the statuettes – three of them! Not only that, the original sculptured cast was also delivered, together with six bronze medallions showing a 'head' of AR and the accompanying cast for these as well.

I retained one statuette and one medallion for myself, while the other two statuettes went to two TARS members. One member still has one, while the other member has 'crossed the bar'; the whereabouts of this statuette is unknown. The other five medallions went to various TARS members.

Statuette details. The statuettes were sculpted and cast by Jan Neiman in his own workshop. They are approximately 10 inches tall (about 25 cm) and weigh 3½ lb (about 1.5 kg). Jan was one of Russia's top sculptors and, when you look at them, you are in no doubt as to who the person is – so good is the likeness to the perceived character. These statuettes, then, are truly works of art. Jan's work is to be found in and around St Petersburg with, perhaps, his most famous work being the 4 m-high statue of Marshall Zhukov mounted by the highway on the approach to St Petersburg from the airport.

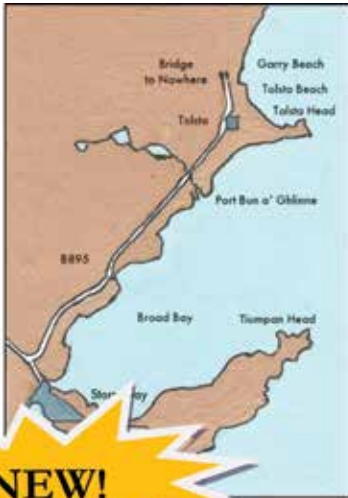
If my memory serves me correctly, I think he also produced the metre-square bronze plaque of musical instruments attached to the outside of the house that Stravinsky occupied when resident in the city.



Jan was a very clever and gifted artist, and apart from his lecturing at the University and professional work, could turn his hand to almost anything. For himself and the family, he built a huge two-storey 'dacha' on an

area of land that he owned some 80 km away to the west of the city from trees he cut down in the nearby forests. If you were to meet him, you would never guess who he was unless you were told. He was unassuming and always ready to help with anything. For relaxation, he had much in common with Ransome, in that he liked to fish – and then cook – the proceeds for tea over an open fire (as pictured above)! I found him great company, although we couldn't communicate directly that much – it's amazing, though, what facial expressions, winks and nudges will do! So sad then, when I learned that he had had a stroke in July 2017 and subsequently passed away.

The relationship between Russia and the West has been fairly volatile for about 200 years, but appears to get worse during times of tension. It was particularly bad during Ransome's time in the country – see what the Foreign Office thought about him and his newspaper reports by viewing their records at Kew! But during my many visits to Russia I only found lovely people, pleased to do anything for you, as all those football fans who went to Russia for the World Cup against the advice of the Foreign Office in the summer of 2018 also found out. When you get down to grass-roots Russia, there are plenty of lovely people about – perhaps you could visit some time.

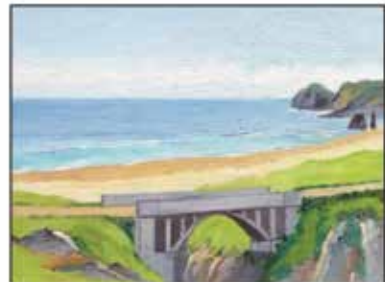


MM Online Supplement

IN 2021, the editor received an unprecedented number of quality articles that could not fit in the printed journal. We decided to compile an online supplement (MMOS) to include the extra material (and more), namely:

- biographies of our contributors
- articles that were too similar in theme to (or by the same author as) another *Mixed Moss* article in the current or previous edition
- articles that have been published elsewhere in TARS (on paper)
- articles that were too large/late for this edition

The luscious illustrations on this page are from Garry Wood's popular article on the 'Furious People' in *Great Northern?* (printed in *Furthest South* in 2019 before it went online, and now planned for the supplement). We hope they will tempt you to view the supplement when the link for it appears at members.arthur-ransome.org/mixed-moss/.



THE CURIOUS CASE OF HIGH EALINGHEARTH

Hill Top, Ealinghearth, Haverthwaite, Cumbria LA12 8JR

Stephen Sykes



IN JANUARY 2012, my wife and I acquired Hill Top in Ealinghearth, a tiny hamlet principally comprising a handful of cottages at a road junction a few hundred yards to the south of Hill Top itself. Though named as such on various maps, the hamlet's miniscule size fails to warrant even a road sign of any kind. Yet if Ealinghearth holds any minor distinction, it is that the centuries-old farmhouse of Hill Top was once the home of Arthur Ransome.

We soon paid a visit to the Museum of Lakeland Life in Kendal, interested to see their section relating to the author of *Swallows and Amazons*, with his intimate connection with the Lake District. There, on his desk, we immediately spotted a document showing the name Hill Top. This turned out to be a copy of the plans drawn up in 1960 by Janet Gnosspelius for the Ransomes in relation to proposed works to their newly acquired Lakeland property. The museum kindly agreed to have made for us a very high-

resolution digital copy, together with a full-size print. In fact, this now forms the basis of a private photographic book in which we have documented all plans and changes to Hill Top, both proposed and enacted, since 1960.

What we noted in particular was the title given to the plans:

Hill Top Cottage – High Ealinghearth

This was our first encounter with any mention of ‘High Ealinghearth’ and, indeed, ‘Cottage’ in connection with Hill Top. Curiously, this title conflicts with the label given to the property on the site plan itself which is:

Hill Top
High Ealinghearth

‘Hill Top Cottage’ has become simply ‘Hill Top’.

Small though Ealinghearth itself is, we naturally assumed from this title that ‘High Ealinghearth’ was the name of a discrete, even smaller locality in which Hill Top itself was situated. Yet we could find no mention of ‘High Ealinghearth’ on any map or historic record, though ‘High’ seemed appropriate, given Hill Top's commanding position some 200 ft above the level of Ealinghearth itself. We asked one of our neighbours who has always lived in Ealinghearth, who knew the Ransomes and whose family both farmed the adjacent fields and used Hill Top for animals and equipment before the Ransomes acquired the property. He had never heard of High Ealinghearth, even though in 1961 his father had sold Ransome a small parcel of land adjacent to Hill Top. Very curious!

It was some time later, whilst assisting Margaret Ratcliffe with Ransome's diaries, which she was painstakingly transcribing at the Brotherton Library (published by Amazon Publications as *The Twilight Years*), I next came across mention of High Ealinghearth ... and from the pen of the man himself. In fact, within the sections of his diaries from 1956 onwards which relate to his life at Hill Top (both as summer visitor and later owner), Ransome makes just three references to High Ealinghearth, in each case as seemingly the name – even alternative name – of his newly-acquired house:

13 May 1960

Paid via H.J. £200 deposit on Hill Top or High Ealinghearth.

G. says she is quite sure she wants it.

[Note – Hart Jackson was Ransome's solicitor in Ulverston]

7 October 1960

Janet's bill for architectural drawing of proposed changes at High Ealinghearth £47.5.0

17 April 1962

Moved to High Ealinghearth.

Ransome makes no reference to Hill Top Cottage (the title shown on Janet's plans) in his diaries, although there is a letter addressed to him at Hill Top Cottage in August 1962 from John Robins of Windsor Films regarding the filming of *Swallows and Amazons* for the BBC television serial. But then there's another letter from Robins a year later addressed to Hill Top House; evidently, neither accuracy nor consistency was of paramount importance.

And this reveals a strange affectation of Ransome's. His own letters show his address as simply 'Haverthwaite'. Not Hill Top. Not Hill Top Cottage. Not even High Ealinghearth. He invariably types his address as if Haverthwaite is the name of his property, rather than the nearby village and postal locality of which Ealinghearth is a part.¹ Perhaps he believed he was sufficiently well-known that the postman would be familiar with where the famous Dr Ransome (as he rather liked himself addressed, somewhat unconventionally using his honorary doctorate) lived and it need not be specified? However, local people to whom we have spoken and who encountered him, generally say they were entirely unaware of his fame!

It seems astonishing that one property could possess such a jumble of names – or even no name at all. However, some light was shone on the mystery of High Ealinghearth in a telephone call in June 2020 from a lady called Nancy whose aunt, Lorna Walker, had recently died in France. Lorna

¹ In the Ransomes' day, Hill Top was situated in a non-contiguous part of the county of Lancashire, sometimes referred to as Lancashire North of the Sands (i.e. Morecambe Bay). In April 1974, it was amalgamated with the then counties of Cumberland, Westmorland and parts of the West Riding of Yorkshire to form the present county of Cumbria. All of Ransome's correspondence therefore shows Hill Top's county address as Lancashire.

and her then husband had purchased Hill Top from Evgenia in 1968, following Arthur's death the previous year. We already knew of Lorna, as the builders we used on our own renovations had also carried out works for her. It was the Walkers who had established a dog kennelling business at Hill Top which only ceased when we bought the property from the subsequent owner.

(And, yes, I know. The coincidence of names: Nancy, Walker It's almost as unlikely as finding Trotsky's secretary once lived here and even tried her hand at writing a script of *Swallows and Amazons* for the BBC. Oh, yes, and there was a resident of nearby Finsthwaite who happened to be a translator of Russian documents and would fluently converse with Evgenia in her native language if he saw her in the garden whilst walking along the road. You couldn't make this up!)

Nancy told us that she was sorting out her aunt's affairs and, whilst almost all of her effects were in France (where she had moved many years ago), a local firm of solicitors in Ulverston (coincidentally our own solicitors) still had possession of various papers relating to Hill Top and would we like to have them? Certainly! A few weeks later, Nancy duly delivered the papers and, rather astonishingly, these included, all in pristine condition:

- the conveyance dated 11 June 1960 signed by Arthur for his purchase of Hill Top
- another conveyance dated 7 June 1961 signed by Arthur for his purchase of a small plot of adjacent land (to secure the water supply which had been a matter of contention)
- the conveyance dated 22 August 1968 signed by Evgenia for her sale of Hill Top

And the shining light? Right there in the 1960 conveyance. Whilst the title page refers to the 'Conveyance of Hill Top Cottage, Ealinghearth', the text later goes on to further refer to the 'dwellinghouse now known as Hill Top Cottage but henceforth to be called or known as High Ealinghearth situated at Ealinghearth' Bingo! High Ealinghearth did not refer to a locality, but to Hill Top itself, just as suggested by Ransome in his diaries. It would appear that the name High Ealinghearth was, for whatever reason, a pure invention of Ransome's.

Yet, somewhat oddly, just a year later, the 1961 conveyance for Ransome's purchase of land immediately adjacent to Hill Top (and now part of the inclusive grounds) makes mention of neither Hill Top nor High Ealinghearth, but refers only to 'a piece of land situated at Ealinghearth'. Furthermore, as already noted, the name High Ealinghearth crops up just three times in his diaries. Otherwise, when he refers to it by name, it is simply Hill Top – and without any 'Cottage' suffix.

So, what was this all about?

Historically, Hill Top was primarily a working farm building, combined with living space, dating from c.1680. It was never merely a 'cottage'. Yet the conveyance refers to Hill Top Cottage rather than Hill Top, and this would appear to have confused even Janet on her plans.

There may be a simple explanation. When the Ransomes first began to rent the accommodation for the summer in 1956, the larger part of the property was still being used for farming purposes. Relating to his negotiations for renting, Ransome writes as follows:

9 January 1956

Hart Jackson at Garrick. Dinner £3.10.0 celebrating the news that we can have the cottage at Ealinghearth.

3 February 1956

Very unsatisfactory letter from Hart Jackson, saying that Saunders will not give up the barn at Hill Top in which he merely keeps agricultural implements unless the landlord builds him at Ealinghearth a shippin etc. allowing him to DOUBLE the scale of his farming. Hopeless. H.J. suggests I negotiate with Saunders. Of course NOT. I deal with the landlord only & if he has not got the place to let, I must do without it.

This makes clear that whilst the entire building was called Hill Top, the modest integral living accommodation was referred to as 'the cottage' in order to create a distinction at that time. Indeed, in his diaries Ransome himself refers to 'the cottage' when renting it. So, it would appear that in the 1960 conveyance the name Hill Top Cottage was simply carried over from the Ransomes' rental years. After all, both Ransome and the vendors used the same solicitors in their local dealings. Yet clearly the name was somewhat inaccurate, as Ransome was acquiring Hill Top in its entirety.

In fact, the simple, rather crude site plan attached to the conveyance labels the property as Hill Top, despite the title to the little drawing stating ‘Hill Top Cottage’. This is, of course, the same oddity shown by Janet on her equally simple drawing. However, upon close inspection of the conveyance plan (drawn up by a firm in Manchester), and Janet's plan (dated June 1960, the same month as the conveyance), the similarity suggests that, with a few minor adjustments, Janet simply copied the conveyance plan, labels and all, using High Ealinghearth instead, doubtless at Ransome's request.

What is certain is that by 1960, Ransome himself almost exclusively refers to his house as Hill Top, with little mention of ‘the cottage’.

But what of High Ealinghearth, a seemingly invented title? Why should a change of name even be mentioned in the conveyance? There is no indication that it was of any concern to the vendors. In that case, it was put in at Ransome's behest, though why Ransome thought it necessary to specify a new name, when it was irrelevant to the transaction, is unclear. Perhaps he considered it prudent assistance should the house be sold in the future under its new name. In reality, this was not the case and Hill Top never became High Ealinghearth.

But why look to change the name at all? I have a theory.

Of course, there are many houses called Hill Top (or Hilltop) in the Lake District and Ransome may simply have felt his Hill Top needed a name that was a little more *distinguished*. However, more specifically, a lady called Beatrix Potter once owned a farmhouse just a few miles north in Far Sawrey. It too was – and still is – called Hill Top. She, too, wrote children's stories and was quite famous for it. In fact, when Ransome bought his Hill Top, her Hill Top was already a major tourist attraction, having been open to the public since 1946 ... I'm sure you're already ahead of me ... Could it be that Ransome considered his also having a property called Hill Top, when he was also very aware of being a rather well-known children's author, a little too much for his liking? A little too *coincidental*? A little too *confusing*? Could he have taken a conscious decision to change the name of his property in order to disambiguate the two? Could he have felt the vague possibility that his house might some day become a tourist attraction (much though he hated tourists)?

No point in having two houses of two famous children's authors a few miles apart if aficionados of either author muddle them up!

Of course, this is pure conjecture, but it's an interesting scenario. And we have had Japanese tourists turn up in the expectation of being shown around Beatrix Potter's farmhouse. They were, however, delighted to learn that they had arrived at Ransome's Hill Top, being familiar with *Swallows and Amazons* as a school book from which to learn English! (Think about it!)

Of course, with only three diarised exceptions, Ransome himself inexplicably failed to abide by the new name. Perhaps Evgenia persuaded him it was a bad idea. Perhaps she felt that the very long-standing historic name should prevail – or even that a change of name might bring bad luck, as an old superstition suggests. And if ‘Hill Top’ is far easier to spell (and pronounce) than ‘High Ealinghearth’, then so much the better!

If a little pomposity is seen as a rather unkind attribute to confer on Ransome in deeming to change the name of his house, either to avoid confusion or to simply sound more grand, it may be remembered that he clearly considered that Dr Ransome, Haverthwaite was quite sufficient to see his mail arrive safely at his door. No need at all for any troublesome house name. (Though even the Queen insists on Buckingham Palace on her letter headings. It is the rest of the address which is deemed unnecessary!)

And when Evgenia came to sell the property the year after Arthur's death? The following notices appeared in the *Westmorland Gazette*, the first relating to the sale of Hill Top, and the second to the sale of effects:

THURSDAY, 11th JULY, 1968

will SELL BY AUCTION at THE SUN HOTEL, ULVERSTON at 2.30 p.m.,
subject to Condition of Sale to be then produced and read.
“HILL TOP”, HAVERTHWAITE

WEDNESDAY 14th AUGUST, 1968

“HILL TOP”
HAVERTHWAITE
Near ULVERSTON
INTERESTING SALE OF HOUSEHOLD FURNITURE, CARPETS, CHINA,
GLASS, FISHING TACKLE AND OUTDOOR EFFECTS.

Indeed, in the conveyance dated 22 August 1968, the property was known – as it always had been – simply as Hill Top, and referred to as such four times in all:

- Conveyance of freehold property known as Hill Top ...
- ... between Eugenia [*sic*] Ransome of Hill Top Haverthwaite ...
- ... Arthur Ransome late of Hill Top Haverthwaite ...
- ... dwellinghouse now known as Hill Top ...

There is no mention of High Ealinghearth, though perhaps the final ‘now known as Hill Top’ was a nod to the requested name change in the 1960 conveyance which never happened. Perhaps it was best to be clear.

If, after all this, you're wondering why anyone would choose to confusingly integrate the name of the tiny hamlet into the name of their own house, as Ransome was once of a mind to do, look no further than Ealinghearth itself where the name of several of its few constituent properties include the name Ealinghearth! (Yes, this does sometimes confuse delivery drivers.)

And the meaning of the name Ealinghearth? Well, therein lies another story,ⁱⁱ and a connection closer to *Swallows and Amazons* than Ransome may have realised. Or did he?

Postscript

After showing this article to a friend, she made a small experiment. A few days later I received an envelope addressed simply as follows:

Mr Stephen Sykes
Haverthwaite
Nr. Newby Bridge
Cumbria

Inside was a note which stated ‘If you're reading this you'll laugh!’

I was ... and I did!

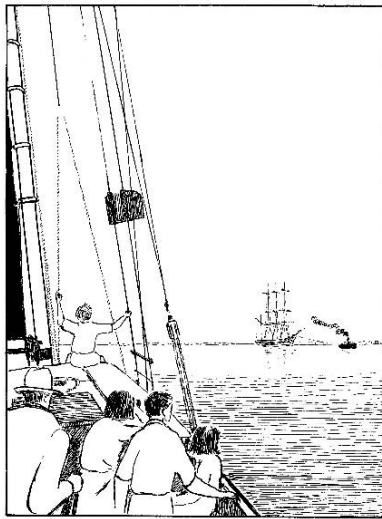
www.hilltopvista.com

ⁱⁱ We intend to publish the full story in the online supplement – *Ed.*

READING RANSOME OVERSEAS

A COMPILATIONⁱ

Kirsty Nichol Findlay



WHEN Arthur Ransome wrote *Swallows and Amazons*, he was not thinking of local readers, or even of English readers, or only of child readers. He was thinking of readers born and living overseas in a very different country and climate – that of Aleppo, in Syria, with its dust and minarets and desert and mountains, with bears and lakes and forests and vineyards: a family not able

ⁱ More than 20% of Tars live outside the UK. Friends of Arthur Ransome who live at a distance were invited on Facebook and in various TARS publications to share their experiences. Responses ranged from two lines to a complete article. (Idiosyncratic/local spelling, punctuation and grammar of contributors have been retained in quotes.) We plan to publish some of these in the online supplement. Many thanks to the 20+ people from seven different countries who contributed, and to Kirsty for crafting this compilation – *Ed.*

to inhabit the beloved English Lakeland at one with its traditions, but who had tasted it on holiday ... and of the children of his old friend who herself had been brought up on that lakeside. He was thinking of his own daughter, who had only ever visited in earliest infancy, and did not know the place. He wanted to recreate his world, for them to know what they were missing.

He was writing for readers in other places, about his own beloved place where at last he was at home. He wanted them to love the place. Would they? His Lakeland was his gift to those distant first readers, as it is to us, wherever we are reading. But I wonder how many 'overseas' readers have felt my longing as a child to be there in reality?

Jean Mason, a soprano in Austria, certainly did. As a child she felt at home in the Lakes books as she never did where she actually lived in provincial New Zealand. The books were her real place, and the characters and community they presented trustworthy and benign. Arriving in England, she felt a sense of homecoming, although she had no family whatsoever there – and when she saw the Lake District, its fells seemed 'so small and friendly' after her childhood view of the Southern Alps. Her son Henry grew up in Austria; now an established opera director in Vienna, his first play, *Requiem for Swallows*, was a prize-winner. He can't even remember a time when he hadn't read the books. He says, 'I've certainly re-read them all more times than I can count.' His brother Orlando, a civil servant in Scotland, says:

For me, place is really important in the books, I loved the description of the island, of *Swallowdale*, of the Gulch, of the Broads, of the barn where Dick and Dorothea signal to Mars. I could picture them really clearly in my mind's eye – accompany the Swallows into the Amazon boathouse, and so on. These were really specific places which I couldn't get enough of. I used to make a lot of imaginary maps as a child in Austria, with a lot of detail, and I'm sure much of this came from Ransome.

Alastair Bryden, now Canadian, clearly remembers his mother reading him *Swallows and Amazons* in Scotland when he was six; he says that after two evenings, 'I was so intrigued that I asked if I could carry on reading it by myself.' That was the start of life-long reading. Jim Bade, retired professor of German literature, now writing young-adult quest stories, had a similar experience. The developing interaction of the characters drew him in as a child. *Winter Holiday* – a frozen lake – so exciting, so

unlike home in New Zealand, and so credible and enviable, as he stood with Dick and Dorothea, hoping to match up to the skills of their new friends. The longest skating lake in the world is another Windermere, in Canada. That expansive space is now superimposed on Alastair Bryden's imagination when reading *Winter Holiday*. He shares a photograph here.



That other Windermere

Martin Connelly, respected educationalist, read *Swallows and Amazons* as a child on a remote New Zealand High Country sheep-station, and couldn't put it down; it slept with him; he read and re-read the books (and, like many, still cherishes his original copies.) The independent, self-reliant life the children led appealed to him immensely. He had a great deal of freedom, but not the company of other children; and Ransome's children were imaginative, resourceful and worked things out for themselves. The landscape they explored became familiar, though he had never even seen a lake; then, with a naval-commander uncle, he was drawn to sailing, and his first thought for a career was the navy. Peter Harland in Auckland, NZ, had a naval father, and enviably experienced East Anglian waters as a child. That enhanced his awareness of truth in the books' places; now re-reading, he plans to trek in the Lakes, and sail again on Secret Water. John Duder, sailor and eminent mining engineer (perhaps encouraged by *Pigeon Post*) was exiled by war in England:

Swallowdale, my seventh birthday present, cheered me through those dark last days of the war; then, packed off to boarding school, unhappiness, homesickness and hunger was relieved by it, and progressively by all the others.

Like Peter, he experienced a wonderful few sailing days at Horning in 1948, before his father moved them home to New Zealand. His desire to visit ‘the lake’ remained latent, but in 2000 he finally gazed at Wild Cat Island ‘with a wild surmise’, not from Darien, but from the nearby lake shore where he visited Holly Howe; and he ‘dutifully tacked up the field like Roger’.



A taste of things to come – a ‘Wild-cat-island’ in New Zealand

Jack Hughes, nearly five years old in hot, dry Adelaide, South Australia, was heard crying later in the evening on which his parents finished reading him *Swallows and Amazons*. They went to find what the trouble was. He sobbed, ‘I’ll never meet those children again!’ His mother explained that there were more books about them. He was overjoyed. Ransome dominated his imaginative play for several years; given a car-body for his fifth birthday, it spent most of its life being a boat – with the tree behind, its mast. As a young academic historian he enjoyed exploring historical aspects of the Lake

District; then he developed a cancer. When he knew he was dying he re-read *Swallows and Amazons*. ‘My God!’ he wrote, ‘It’s so bourgeois!’ He loved it.

Dave Elms, 11-years-old in Ontario, was inspired to buy a ‘Pram Boat Kit’ and, admirably practical, to build his own *Amallow* in his basement – a considerable undertaking! The love and inspiration of Ransome stayed with him and his three children, who have now realised their dream of exploring the islands of English Windermere; but *Amallow* was ceremonially sacrificed to a campfire 50 years after her christening.



Poor old Amallow

Seymour Hamilton, Canadian writer and sailor, first ran down the hill with Roger as a child in Mauritius. He says:

Few authors convey such a sense of place as does Arthur Ransome. Many authors write *about* places: he wrote from *inside* them to create the world of *Swallows and Amazons* that we all inhabit.

I was so caught up in the books that the best aunt in the whole world sent me, Christmas after birthday, that I wrote to Ransome, and he replied.

Unhappily, the copy of S&A with his postcard stuck onto the title page was lost many moves ago. In my trips to the UK I have both wanted and at the same time feared visiting the real places, lest going there might break the world in my head which reading and re-reading made and refined. Now I

am 80, it's unlikely that I shall see Pin Mill, for example, although I have travelled by Google Earth to look in 'street-view' at the island where the Swallows, Amazons, and Eels held corroboree and human sacrifice. No matter. The experience of the books has been and is sufficient. They have influenced my life in more ways than I can count, from first determining that I had to be able to tie a bowline, on through years of sailing, hiking, birdwatching, caving, and swimming in seas and lakes far away from the UK, throughout which the echoes of life at Wildcat Island persisted. The children were and are my secret, invisible friends. Who can say more than that about a book?

Ransome's genius is not only appreciated by those who have spoken English from birth. Naomi Kaye Honova's young Czech-American family in Germany loves singing along to sea-shanties, especially 'Spanish Ladies'. The first translation of *Swallows and Amazons* into German was 1933; translations were very soon available in many languages elsewhere overseas. Eva Hovorková Týlová in Czechia recalls her experience of reading Ransome as a child in a time of socialist and later communist government, when 'big Russian brother' was checking everything, and 'prohibiting everything from the Western countries'. She writes:

In this atmosphere I opened my first Ransome, *Swallows and Amazons*, in 1965.

I will not repeat all the positive aspects about the attraction of Ransome's books. I will not tell how they showed us something we didn't have.

No, we became part of the books from the first or second page, accepted everything, didn't ask questions as adults do. You know very well that when a child asks something, he or she needs very simple and short answers. We – adults – tend to explain in long sentences, are sometimes puzzled and think what to answer, but the child loses patience. He or she doesn't want to be educated, taught, informed.

But in Ransome's books we are exposed to a world of active children on their own, who are organising their own life. (We as well spent a lot of time in nature, on the 'street', not at home, the famous house keys on neck, at our friends' without previous invitations, etc.) They taught us a lot about the Lake district, sailing, camping, English life, but they were no teachers. They adopted us, as they did the two D's, making no differences, not asking useless questions, not setting conditions.

They made mistakes as well, they learnt their 'lesson', they... I could continue.

That was my beginning, my time when I became charmed for life: and many readers of my age as well. I am not sure how young readers in the 1930s and 40s and 50s experienced the book; they were very hard times for quiet, charming reading, and in that I see the reason why the French and Germans tried to translate and publish but didn't dare to repeat it later; the timing was difficult for poor young readers; hard times with victims in all families, and it was difficult to restore ways of living after 1945. But the Czech were successful in translating the books.

And there have been more translations of Ransome into Czech than any other language. How moving it is, to hear Eva's testimony.

Readers living in New Zealand may be especially susceptible; certainly I was:

I didn't realise I was overseas. I didn't question where we lived, surrounded by rainforest, our companions trees and birds. We loved it. In a fissured black beech outside my window, more-porks nested. I spent hours on a smooth dark branch of titoki along with native wood-pigeons, gazing at the Mawaihakona: pure spring water over dangerous mud, with an occasional trout escaping silver-belly eels: not the beck I longed for since first reading *Swallows and Amazons*, at the age of seven. From that moment, their lake became my authentic place and those children, my friends. Like me, their minds were full of the stories and poetry they knew. I wanted to meet them; they had a quality of reality more authentic than other characters in books, or any child I then knew. When I found a like-minded companion, we discovered our own 'Wild-cat-island' (pictured on p. 90), hidden, hidden from the sun in the middle of a waters-meet in dense bush. It was dangerous getting to it across a fallen tree-trunk, but we were satisfied, among tree-nettles, with sandwiches and grog.

We tried to discover where the Swallows' lake was. It must be England – the book was published there. Our atlases were not detailed enough. But that lake in England was the place to be; the valley where we actually lived, for a while somehow lacked substance – not validated by literature, it felt inadequate. The Swallows' lake had history and community. There were layers of use. There were ancient stone walls – to scramble over with useful stones jutting out. I knew exactly what they were like. There were unfamiliar

trees – a coppice (what was that?), larches, hazels, Scots pine. How did those children know their names? Because it was clear to me that they were visitors, as I would be there. I didn't realise that they must have come from somewhere with the same trees. There was history to be discovered in that landscape, and people with unfamiliar ancient occupations – charcoal-burners.

Those exploring children were making discoveries about an environment new to them, and we were with them, too. Our own surrounding history was recent and shallow: trees had been cut down to build houses and create paddocks. My landscape of barbed-wire fences felt wrong, and Ransome's long-occupied landscapes felt right.

What a profound influence that had. I soon possessed all twelve books. No sailing for me: our stream ran into a gravelly mountain river which flooded through the bush and paddocks. Books and land exploration were the thing. I liked Dorothea, because as I child I, too, wrote – plays for the Children's Programme. I paused in reading *Pigeon Post* to ask my mother: 'What is literary criticism?' because Dorothea and Titty were engaged in it. 'I think it's reading books and poetry and talking about it.' Very well, I would get into that sort of life. I would meet those people. Missee Lee thought 'Cambridge' was the place to be – all right then, I would get there, somehow.

And I did. And I'm now on a beckside in the one valley mentioned by its real name in *Swallowdale*. You know which it is.

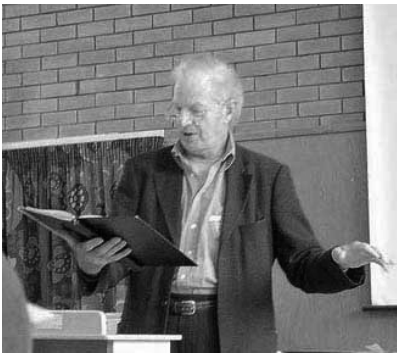
What was the effect on me, that child reading Ransome overseas? Appreciation of possibilities. Some degree of alienation from my real, original place. A search for inventive, creative, imaginative friends. A desire to immerse myself in the past of British history: here, five thousand years of human activity is visible. I longed for such an authentic inhabited place and found it. The books created the reality of this landscape, and they enhanced it, too.

Of course a reader doesn't have to be literally 'overseas' to experience in Ransome a completely different environment from their own, and to long for it. Ransome's literary executor Geraint Lewis was a child in industrial Birmingham. He read *Swallowdale* in the first term of his second year at Junior School, aged eight. Miss Wesson despaired of getting him to finish any book, and doubted if 400 or so pages was a good choice. And then?

By then the reading period was nearly over. I'm pretty sure I didn't get more than a couple of pages into the book. But I do recall some sort of magic in the way John judged the wind on his cheek. I knew nothing about sailing and had never really thought about it as an activity, but in that moment I somehow 'knew' how to sail. I was, indeed, sailing. I was John. Or, at least I could be, if I kept reading. Later I found that I could camp, catch fish, climb trees, storm houseboats, defy Great-Aunts, burgle houses, hunt for gold, reach the North Pole, make important scientific discoveries and 'be' Titty, Peggy, Dick, Captain Flint or any of the others too. All I had to do was pick up a book and disappear into a completely convincing world, in the companionship of completely convincing and engaging characters.

To both Miss Wesson's and my relief I finished *Swallowdale* with no problems at all. I recall rushing straight back to the library to grab *Swallows and Amazons*. After that I ploughed through the rest, both at school and home – getting the books out of the public library nearby. By the end of the year, she had a different problem: I'd read all twelve Ransomes and was insisting on reading them again, so she was scratching her head trying to work out how to make me try someone else. In that task she was only ever partly successful.

For Geraint, this led eventually to 'a rip-roaring life as a literary gamekeeper' now living near *the* lake.



Actor Gabriel Woolf, a past President of TARS, was a child during the London blitz. Like John Duder, he found reading the books aloudⁱⁱ a respite from 'the crazy things the adults were doing'. One can be a world away from the Lakes, even in England. But then – what is Coniston Water without Ransome? 'Just another lake'. The books authenticate their landscapes. What an achievement.

Gabriel reading to us, Durham 2001

Those who come to Ransome's Lake novels first as adults may have a different experience. They appreciate the writer's skill, his craftsmanship, his

ⁱⁱ We cherish his wonderful recordings of AR works, available from the TARS Stall.

creation of benign community, his examples of building good friendships and trust. What is it like to read Ransome 'overseas' as an adult?

Tania Connelly, given *Swallows and Amazons* at 14 when leaving Ireland, refused to read it because it was 'a children's book'. Now a writer and thoroughly reformed, she became a Tar quite recently after attending a Literary Weekend in Winchester. She pictures the Lake as New Zealand's Marlborough Sounds – setting the novel in her known environment.

Tessa Duder (another writer and a speaker at a TARS Literary Weekend) whose *Night Race to Kawanu* uses a realism which nods to *We Didn't Mean to go to Sea*, found Ransome's lake 'rather underwhelming,' used as she was to the cruising grounds of Hauraki Gulf in New Zealand. Of course she admires his craftsmanship (yes, yes, we know he gives us more than craftsmanship). Her father worked alongside Ernest Altounyan, an original Swallow dedicatee, so she knew the books' genesis.

So: it doesn't seem to matter if we are physically 'overseas' or not, reading Ransome can transform us and widen our sense of what the world can hold. Finding like-minded people nearby to share adventures with when we are so far away from Ransome country or other Tars can be more challenging. Glenn Kuring in Brisbane, Queensland, writes of 'the tyranny of distance':

I engage with Arthur Ransome and TARS at a distance because I have no other choice. One day I hope that I can revisit the places where the books were set: to walk on Wild Cat, to continue looking for Swallowdale, to paddle or sail around Secret Water and the Norfolk Broads.

This sense of alienation or separation can lead us down quite different paths. Many make pilgrimages to the lakes. Some emigrate permanently to live within 'cooee' of AR's beloved lake. Some Tars envy readers who can get to the 'real' locations or connect with others living in the same city, and can be so frustrated at being 'left out' that they leave TARS. 'Near neighbour' Catherine Lamont (500 km to the south) of Glenn, in Northern NSW, confesses how her initial frustration with what *wasn't* possible eventually led to her discovering and appreciating what *was*:

I spent quite a bit of time 'trying to make things happen' in my local area before focusing on what TARS does offer to the more remote members. As a writer, I particularly came to appreciate the larger range of opportunities

to contribute to literary activities offered to overseas members by having additional outlets such as *Furthest South* and *USTARS/North Pole News*.

Recently Nicholas, a family member aged 13, was sponsored by TARS' **Junior Adventure Fund** to go on a holiday camp where he experienced Ransome-like activities (sailing, paddling (SUPs), archery, 'diving for pearls') at Lake Ainsworth – in New South Wales! That opened up possibilities, and he has now chosen archery as his elective at school. Being 'overseas' makes no difference to those opportunities and (especially for those in Australia living near places where Mary Walker was supposed to spend her childhood) can even offer opportunities that those living in the Lake District don't have.

Technology has facilitated communication for many. Both Catherine and Glenn enjoy participating in lively Facebook group discussions. (One 'public' group set up by some Tars in 2013 has over 1400 participants.) The regular Zoom meetings set up in response to Covid-19 lockdowns are eagerly anticipated by many Tars, some who have been 'putting faces to names' of people they've known for years for the first time.

Families may bridge the 'overseas' distance reading together, as scholar Christine Ferdinand has. After shared reading of Ransome in Wisconsin with her husband, Senator Russ Feingold, she is reading on Skype with grandchildren in Oxfordshire; now they all long to discover *the* island.

And now Julian, whose comprehensive 'Family Memoir' we plan to feature in the online supplement. Over recent years, Julian Onderdonk, professor of music history, and new to TARS, has read all of Ransome's novels aloud with his family in Pennsylvania; the books have inspired their own adventures on their favourite New England lake.

I bent over the table in Blackwell's bookshop and grew immediately absorbed. Roger zigzagging up and down the back field at Holly Howe enchanted me instantly, and when I saw Ransome's delightful pen and ink drawings of camping, sailing and exploring, I knew I had stumbled on something tremendous. The outdoors and love of the natural world are, with books, central to who I am, and here was everything I valued most brought together in a single package.

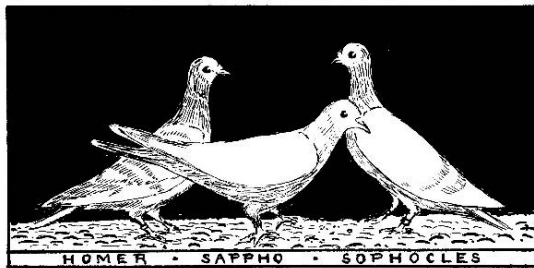
He says:

The world they inhabit was undoubtedly different than today's, and ... I admit that my intense Anglophilia, and the fact that my own scholarship focuses on this period and this class of people, preserves me from getting hung up on class ... Indeed, one of the points of the books, I think, is that it's their exposure to the farmers, fishermen, charcoal burners and river rats, in short the people who really know the outdoor life, that strengthens them as individuals by allowing them a (perhaps unusual) understanding of the lives of others But he has not patronized them. The genuine admiration and respect he feels for them as people and individuals, possessed of vital knowledge and decisive skills uniquely consequential to a rural way of life, is palpable.

And he concludes:

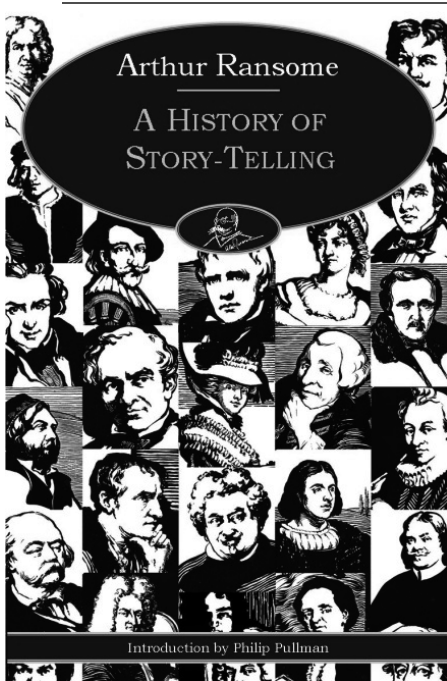
For, in the end, that's what I love most about these books: their focus on the outdoor life as essential to our being. That and Ransome's unerringly skilful writing – storytelling so masterful that it ‘artlessly’ frames this fundamental theme for our steady contemplation.

The storytelling is also key for another reason: that it effortlessly invites reading aloud. What better way to spend delightful hours together in a shared experience – one that itself can bond you together for life! – while also handing down a message of the first importance to the next generation? For all these reasons and more, I consider the day in 2008 that I walked into Blackwell's a lucky day, and the years-long reading of *Swallows and Amazons* to my wife and children that followed one of the great events of my life.



BOOKSHELF

Arthur Ransome, *A History of Story-Telling* (Arthur Ransome Trust, 2021) ISBN: 978-0995568136.



The idea of writing a history of story-telling came to Arthur Ransome early in 1907 when he was visiting his mother in Edinburgh. The publication in the same year of *Bohemia in London*, which he describes in the *Autobiography* as ‘... a real book, of which I was extremely proud’, had convinced him that he could be a

successful author, but he admitted: ‘I was again worrying over the technique of narrative which I found ... so difficult’. On an impulse he went to the offices of publishers T. C. & E. C. Jack and offered to edit a series of volumes that would illustrate the art of story-telling, each volume to contain a study of an individual author or group of authors. Edwin Jack liked the idea, and agreed that the individual volumes, to be issued under the series title *The World's Story-Tellers*, would eventually be issued as one collection.

Ransome, as practical as ever, confesses that the proposition was as much for his own benefit as the readers’: ‘I had, I thought, an excuse for as much reading as I could persuade a publisher to pay for’. He got Jack to agree to pay advance royalties, and celebrated by going off to his beloved Paris, to work in the Bibliothèque Nationale. There, he met the artist Jessie Gavin, who agreed to contribute a woodcut portrait of each story-teller, and by 1909 they completed almost a dozen volumes. These were collated in *A*

History of Story-Telling, published in November 1909.

Although the book is called 'A History', it is much more than a list of authors, dates and facts. In the Preface, Ransome writes that his intention was 'to take here a book and there a book, and notice the development of technique, the conquests of new material, the gradual perfecting of form'. The story-teller studies appear in rough chronological order, but grouped under headings indicating evolving styles and techniques: 'The Rogue Novel', 'The Elizabethans', 'The Feminine Novel', 'Scott and Romanticism' etc. Ransome's approach is lively, with much deployment of similes and shrewd aphorisms: 'Chaucer followed the Court but he knew the populace'; John Bunyan's *Pilgrim's Progress* was a story that was to 'paint the English character in the eyes of the world'; Jane Austen's work 'is so intimate and particular ... that it would almost seem to be written in a letter to the reader'.

Ransome had done his research and provides telling anecdotes; for instance, the challenge by Gustave Flaubert to Guy de Maupassant to describe a horse in one sentence

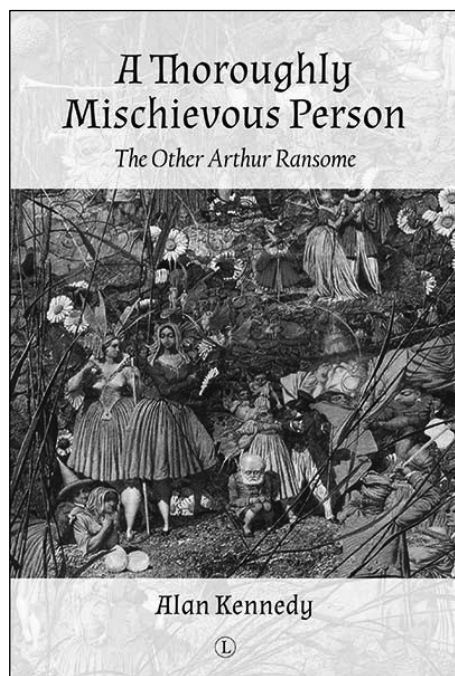
so as to distinguish it from every other horse in the world. In fact those authors are just two of the 11 French story-tellers whose work is examined, the rest being British apart from Boccaccio, Cervantes and Edgar Allan Poe. One or two writers of repute, e.g. Dickens and Thackeray, do not appear; Ransome is honest about this in the Preface, commenting that in his view others were writing stories 'of more vital interest to their fellow artists'.

As with so many of Ransome's early books there were no subsequent editions of *A History of Story-Telling*, until now. This new and welcome second edition is published by the Arthur Ransome Trust, in paperback and at an affordable price, as the latest in the ART series of Ransome reissues. There is now an enthusiastic Introduction by Philip Pullman in which, after acknowledging the omissions in the book, he claims that 'anyone who actually makes a practice of telling stories will recognize at once that Ransome knows what he's talking about'. Pullman ends with a comment which is perceptive and surely true: 'This is the sort of book that could never

be written today, and so much the more lucky we are in having it’.

Peter Hyland

Alan Kennedy, *A Thoroughly Mischievous Person: The Other Arthur Ransome* (Cambridge: Lutterworth Press, 2021). ISBN 978-0718895822.



Alan Kennedy's *A Thoroughly Mischievous Person* makes an important contribution to our understanding of the *Swallows and Amazons* novels. I am normally suspicious of criticism which attempts to link a fictional text to the real life of its author, but here the arguments – made by

an eminent psychologist rather than a literary critic – are convincing. It is not that Ransome fails in his attempt to transfigure fact into fiction but that, in the *Lake* novels in particular, he consciously creates a ‘form of hidden autobiography’ – almost as expiation – while doing his best to cover his tracks.

Ransome's major biographers (Brogan and Chambers), says Kennedy, have regarded ‘the twelve’ as somehow separate from his earlier life, squeezing them as an afterthought into their final chapters and failing to see the direct link with his long literary apprenticeship, especially the influence of such symbolist writers as Remy de Gourmont and Yone Noguchi.

Ransome's published autobiography, which ends in 1932, is equally unhelpful: ‘This complicated, secretive man deliberately set out to baffle those who sought to make sense of his own life,’ says Kennedy; he was ‘Someone mischievously willing to lie if it suited him’ (Introduction). It is only in the novels, full of allusion and with their shared poetic narrative style, that Ransome both reaches back into

the disappointments of his childhood and attempts to resolve the conflicts that overshadowed his adult life. To read them is to experience ‘the sort of guilty pleasure you get from finding someone’s diary, the sort full of secrets ...’ (Ch. 1) and it is the ‘alternative, symbolic, narrative ... that accounts for the peculiar appeal to adults of a children’s story in which so little happens to so ordinary a cast of characters’ (Ch. 4).

One of the secrets (though today it is hardly a secret) revealed in the novels is Ransome’s sense of guilt and loss after he escaped to Russia from his unhappy marriage to Ivy, consequently abandoning Tabitha, their only child. For a time, he did his best to keep in touch with his daughter, but their letters became increasingly difficult and eventually petered out altogether. So, argues Kennedy, ‘the creation of a magical substitute daughter served as a potent source of consolation’, with Titty emerging ‘as an increasingly satisfying fictional substitute’ (Ch. 4) – and one who never grew up. He supports his thesis with perceptive analysis of such episodes as Titty

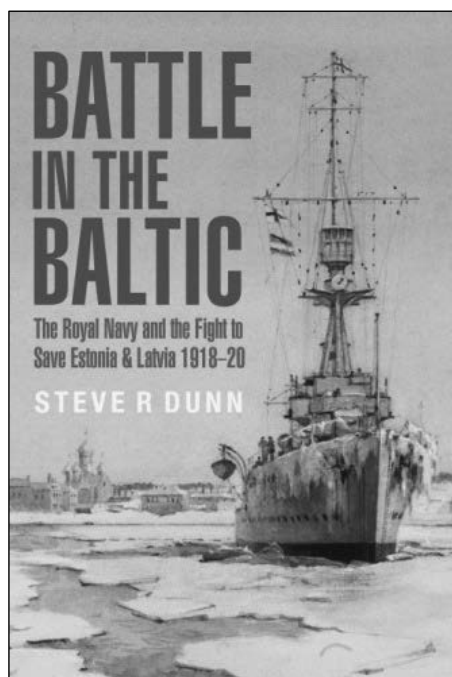
being left on the island in *Swallows and Amazons*, the candle-grease aunt in *Swallowdale* and the dowsing in *Pigeon Post*.

There is so much more to *A Thoroughly Mischievous Person* than can be covered in a short review. On the novels, for example, it gives depth to Ransome’s debt to myth and fairy tale and to the significance of so many perilous night-time journeys; it discovers the latent sexuality so often denied by critics; it finds the ideal father in Mr Dixon; and it asks intriguingly whether *Swallowdale*, with its minimal plot, is the first modernist children’s novel. On Ransome’s life, there are new reflections on his relationship with his father, his role as an agent in Russia, his friendship with the Collingwoods, and the way, in later life, he was unappreciated and snubbed by the establishment – a man who always believed he came second. My only regret is so much that is interesting is relegated to the extensive end notes, but at least this allows the main themes to develop at a healthy pace, holding our attention while leaving enticing signposts for those who wish to explore further.

This is a book that deserves a number of readings, each one sending us back to see the Lake novels through fresh eyes, giving clarity to things we have always sensed, but only half understood, and showing us things that have previously passed us by.

Julian Lovelock

Steve Dunn, *Battle in the Baltic: The Royal Navy and the Fight to Save Estonia & Latvia 1918-20* (Barnsley: Seaforth Publishing, 2020). ISBN 978-1526742735.



WHEN I glanced at the index of this well-presented book, I was surprised to find no entry for Arthur Ransome. I persisted

however, as I've often felt intrigued by his travels through Estonia in 1919 and his time spent in Reval and Riga after leaving Russia. I wanted to know more about war depredation in Latvia, as glimpsed in *Racundra's Third Cruise*. I learned a great deal about the context in which AR was working, as well as enjoying a very worthwhile book.

Steve Dunn's narrative focuses on the period from 1918, when WW1 was by no means over in the Baltic. Trotsky and Lenin were being forced to negotiate their peace with Germany, as Germany, in its turn, was negotiating with the victorious Allies in the period between the Armistice and the Treaty of Versailles of June 28th 1919.

Estonia and Latvia, meanwhile, had achieved their first taste of independence and the right to run their own affairs. Or had they? In fact they were a key location for the continuing power struggles between Germany and Russia and then between 'Red' and 'White' Russians. In November 1918, Britain responded to Estonia's plea for arms, troops and ships by sending the 6th Light Cruiser Squadron with their war-weary

ships and crews who had longed to go home. The Baltic was mine-strewn, weather and harbour conditions difficult, politics incredibly complicated, money in short supply and instructions from the Admiralty unclear.

Nevertheless the Navy did well – if ensuring the survival of two fledgling republics is considered ‘doing well’. Rereading Ted Alexander's *Ransome in Russia*, I felt better able to understand why many ordinary people asked AR to get Britain to stop their fighting. And he did achieve some effective informal diplomacy himself, as Estonia would acknowledge.

Battle in the Baltic, however, is a naval history, and AR was entirely land-based. He had his special relationship with the Bolsheviks who, as far as the Navy was concerned, were the Enemy ... together with the marauding Germans and White Russians. The attacks on Kronstadt make for exciting reading, especially the stories of Augustus Agar and his

exploits in Coastal Motor Boats. Less well-known (to me, anyway) are episodes such as the naval bombardments at Libau and Riga (October–November 1919) which drove back attacking German forces.

Life was hard for the British sailors: their pay and conditions were poor, several ships were lost to mines, and it was difficult for them to see why they were there. At one point they were close to mutiny. Lack of recognition, once they were finally home, did nothing to compensate for their extended war.

Peace treaties were finally signed between Estonia, Latvia and Russia in 1920, and an Anglo-Soviet Trade Agreement was made in 1921. Dunn's last chapters offer a moving assertion of Estonia's gratitude to ‘the British Bluejacket ... who has not hesitated to risk his life on behalf of our country ... and will always be a welcome guest in our ports.’

Julia Jones

LETTERS

Letters to the editor are always welcome. The two submitted this year (by Martin Beech and Paul Thicke) were published as full articles.

‘Grab a chance’



and help with *Mixed Moss*

Have you ever thought you'd like to help with our publications but didn't want to take on the main responsibility? If so, this may be the moment you have been waiting for. We would welcome an additional enthusiastic member joining the production team for next year's *Mixed Moss*.

The current editor is offering the chance for someone to work with her, both collaboratively and on discrete tasks. Here's an opportunity to develop your skills and use your knowledge and enthusiasm for the benefit of the society. If you have an interest in all things Ransome, enjoy reading *Mixed Moss* and are keen to dip your toe into publishing, then this could be just the opening for you.

For anyone interested (and who is comfortable communicating by email and/or Zoom), please email the editor (mixedmoss@arthur-ransome.org).

Contributors to *Mixed Moss* for the 2022 edition

As always, your articles, reflections, letters, poems and illustrations are welcome – especially from the new generation of Tars who have not written for *Mixed Moss* before.

Contact the Editor no later than 28 February 2022 to get in the ‘queue’, share ideas and get guidelines for writing for *Mixed Moss*.

Please email ‘Word’ documents to:
mixedmoss@arthur-ransome.org

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