

The Arthur Ransome Society

Minutes of the 29th Meeting of the Literary & Resources Committee

Zoom meeting on Tuesday, 14th September 2021

Present: Krysia Clack [KC, Chair], Chris Birt [CB], Paul Crisp [PC], Ann Farr [AF], Julian Lovelock [JL], John Pearson [JP], Elizabeth Williams [EW], Paul Wilson [PDW, Minutes], Winifred Wilson [WW], Diana Wright [DW], Peter Wright [PHW]

KC welcomed EW as a new member of the committee.

1. Apologies: Christine Rae [CR]

2. Minutes of last meeting: 20.2.21

Approved.

3. Matters arising

Last meeting item **3: 4. Archives:** AF said she was still trying to contact the extant 'Encountering the Ransomes' interviewees. She will send a note to CR asking her to dispatch DVDs to those who were contactable

AF

CR

4. 2021 Literary Weekend (PHW) [see report]

The next weekend, postponed from September 2021, had now been rearranged for 1st-3rd April 2022 at St Edmund Hall, Oxford. Sixty rooms had been reserved; these are not en suite, with three rooms sharing a bathroom. Single and double rooms are available. There is a good lecture hall for the presentations with an adequate adjacent room for TARS Library, TARS Stall and Nancy Blackett Trust; Ted Alexander is also hoping to bring a display. The price is slightly lower than the previous weekend: approximately £275 per person. There is no parking at the venue but good local public transport and to and from Oxford.

PHW

The proposed programme will include: Margaret Ratcliffe [MR] and Mary Pritchard – cameos on the Friday evening; Penny Bradshaw – Children’s literature inspired by the Lake District; Sally Bushell – Maps; Philip Pullman – no response to date but Christina Hardyment will assist with contact; Danny Rurlander – *Spylark*; David Wood – script writer for the 1974 S&A film; Mike Bender – *Sunlight and Shadows*; Ivan Cutting – *WDMTGTS* adaptation. The draft programme will be confirmed by PHW, and published in the December 2021 *Signals* with the booking form; David Middleton will handle administration again.

KC pointed out that parking was available at the local Park & Ride for 72 hours at £12. There was no problem unloading vans at the venue for the stalls. PC asked if there was a staff car park for disabled parking: PHW to enquire. Clearly, it is not known how many members will attend the Weekend at this point.

5. Library Report (WW) [see report]

WW reported that Moat Brae had reopened on 14 September following a short closure due to Covid infection of a staff member. She was having problems sourcing additional IKEA shelving and hoped this would be resolved soon. She also mentioned that TARS should begin to consider a long-term replacement for the Librarian post. It was agreed that an understudy should be sought informally for WW; there were advantages of TARS Library remaining at Moat Brae in Dumfries for the foreseeable future. It may be possible for WW’s eventual successor to work remotely. WW will discuss with Flora Burns, Chair of Trustees at Moat Brae, the involvement of Moat Brae staff in administering TARS Library after her retirement.

As regards the previous enquiry from Rene Samek in the Czech Republic for information on Prince Alemayehu and Cyril Ransome, KC asked what progress had been made. WW said that she had sent Arthur Ransome Trust edition of Ransome’s *Autobiography* to Rene and he had sent Czech translations of three of the AR 12 for TARS Library. WW is also to ask the Czech members if they need further assistance in

WW

WW

PHW

PDW

this area and make a proposal on which basic books they might need for a small library. KC said that it would be possible to send some books from the recently acquired Lupton collection to supplement the Czech TARS library.

As regards the up-to-date list of members required by WW to administer TARS Library, DW had now sent WW an Excel spreadsheet list of current members and PHW would also send her an updated (to July 2021) list in the old format.

6. Indexing update (PDW) [see report]

PDW asked PHW if publication of the transcripts from the 2019 Literary Weekend was imminent. PHW hoped these would appear by the end of the year. The material from this Weekend was included in skeleton form in the indexes PDW was preparing, based on the programme, and would be updated when publication occurred. PDW hoped to circulate draft Literary Weekend indexes soon for comment.

As regards *Mixed Moss* indexing, the 2021 issue was now included in the website indexes. Any queries about the overlap with the indexes on the All Things Ransome website should be addressed to PHW, not PDW.

7. Book Club (EW) [see report]

EW reported that not a great deal of progress had been made on this. It was hard to get people involved and, although several members had read the books, there was no discussion on the website. A face-to-face approach might be better when feasible. A Facebook page for the Book Club was being set up by EW. A Zoom meeting, advertised in *Signals*, was scheduled for 23 October, which it was hoped would increase participation. EW suggested three new books for consideration: *The Explorers* by Katherine Rundell, *Twitch* by M. G. Leonard and *Where the Wilderness Lives* by Jess Butterworth. EW

Should only books related to the AR canon be considered? To date, only adults and no children had been involved in the Club. There was evidence that some children PHW

only listen to Audible books. It was agreed that EW should enlist the help of the Blue family, as editors of *The Outlaw*, to promote the Club, with book reviews in both *Signals* and *The Outlaw*. EW had some possibilities for adult books which might be discussed by the group.

As regards the suggestion of TARS Awards for newly published books, PHW said there was no progress on this yet.

8. TARS website (DW) [see report]

DW gave an update on her written report. She was helping another TARS member to prepare TARS rules for GDPR and interpreting the rule that data could be held for 6 years unless it was not needed. DW was now responsible for distributing TARS membership lists: these are now sent to the secretary (but not the chair) of each region, in addition to TARS Library, TARS Stall and Amazon Publications. The membership committee would review these arrangements, which would also be discussed further by the Board. Monthly membership lists will be produced; eventually, Susan Gouldbourne will be responsible for this. KC asked about personal information on the website; DW said she was devolving responsibility for the pages on the website. WW said that written instructions would be helpful for updating the pages for which she was responsible. As regards more support for regional editors, Ted Evans had previously prepared instructions, and DW would update and send these out. DW said that links can be difficult to insert, as the button tool can disappear from the editing screen. PHW pointed out several new members had been recruited through the website.

9. TARS Stall and Merchandise (CR); and Donations (KC) [see report]

Unfortunately, there had been no report from CR for TARS Stall. PHW commented that the Stall was now represented much better in *Signals*.

As regards **Donations**, DW commented that members write in to the website with books to donate, and she passes these on to PHW. WW asked what the policy was on this. JP also handles queries about donations but each case is different. KC wondered if the solution was to handle donations within the regions. AF felt that a loose policy was required; from her previous experience, it was important to be sensitive to each situation, but to reserve the right to dispose of any unwanted material. PHW said that TARS was not a book depository and asked if the Stall should perhaps have a collection of out-of-date Amazon Publications. PHW and JP would take a proposed policy to the Board; KC thought that AF should also be involved in drafting this. AF thought it would be helpful to have some second-hand material for new members available through the Stall, assuming CR would be happy with this. She would try to formulate some proposals before the Board meeting on 9.10.21

PHW

JP

AF

AF

10. Amazon Publications (PC) [see report]

A revised edition of Claire Kendall-Price's book, *In the footsteps of the Swallows and Amazons*, had now been abandoned, due to the difficulty of updating the original in the present circumstances, and it also no longer being necessary. Instead, TARS should encourage Dalesman Publications to produce a TARS-related publication. Amazon Publications now needed to recruit another member to its team. MR was working on a Broads cruise/Evgenia's diaries publication and Robert Thompson was updating *Ransome's Foreign Legion*. There had been more than 60 orders for the proposed 2021 Publication, although only one of these was from a member who had not previously ordered an Amazon Publication. DW said that Catherine Lamont had suggested an arrangement to share postage for Australian members.

PHW

11. Publications update (PHW) [see report]

Catherine Lamont had produced an excellent issue of *Mixed Moss* for 2021, with some support from others. She was happy to produce the 2022 issue but was looking for a deputy for subsequent issues. PHW said that *Signals* was also doing well, with some

new features. The editors of *The Outlaw* were happy to continue. However, in a break with tradition, the next issue wouldn't be based on a particular one of the AR 12 but would take a more pick-and-mix and thematic approach. It had been agreed that *Mixed Moss* would continue to be printed by Titus Wilson. PDW pointed out that overseas postage for the journals was now both expensive and slow (the latter perhaps as a result of the current pandemic).

12. Archives (CB & AF) [see report]

CB reiterated that Lakeland Arts (LA), the umbrella body for Abbot Hall, had suggested that they may be able to make space available for the Archive in future, not necessarily at Abbot Hall but perhaps in one of their other properties. JP would post some archival material he had to CB. TARS member Paul Flynn had drawn attention to the excellent AR material held at the Windermere Jetty museum. Perhaps AR's medicine chest, at present held by AF, might be displayed at one of the LA museums. The need for archival conservation of the medicine chest was discussed. PHW said he assumed that the refurbished Abbot Hall museum would still house a representation of AR's study, which would be a good location for the chest. AF also held two other AR items which might be displayed there: a box and a medical guide. PHW would contact the Chief Executive of LA to progress this and also raise the matter at the next Board meeting.

PHW

13. Alliance of Literary Societies [ALS] (PHW)

PHW said there was little to report. He reminded the committee that Amanda Ardagh-Walter was now an ALS Board member. Unfortunately, the proposed 2021 AGM weekend had been cancelled. PHW had recently submitted a poem to the ALS *Newsletter* – a parody in the style of John Betjeman.

14. Red Slipper Fund [RSF] [see report] and Junior Adventure Fund [JAF]

RSF (PHW): Catherine Lamont's 'In the footsteps of Mary Walker' had been delayed by Catherine's concentration on editing *MM* this year.

EW continues carry out research on archive material in the David Wood archive at 7 Stories in Newcastle, but had been frustrated by delays to access of the material, as had Hazel Sheeky Bird, who was assisting her. David Wood had been invited to speak at the forthcoming Literary Weekend.

PHW mentioned that there was to be a staged production of *Winter Holiday* in Shrewsbury next year.

EW said that Karen Babayan's exhibition at Hexham, scheduled for 2.10.21 would very probably be delayed until later in October or in November 2021. Northern region committee would rearrange the proposed visit at their meeting on 16.9.21. She pointed out that there has been some difficulty contacting Eastern and Southern regions in this context.

JAF (PC): Catherine Lamont had been the last previous applicant, on behalf of her son, in December 2019. However, there had been a recent application for a Broads sailing trip in 2021.

15. AOB

PDW said that he had decided to step down from the committee after a lengthy term of office, so that other TARS members might make a contribution. However, this would mean that there was a requirement for a new Minutes secretary. EW graciously agreed to take this on; PDW would send her contact details for the committee.

WW mentioned that, following reading an entry in AR's diaries for 31.8.60, she had contacted Lois Aitkenhead, who lives locally in Galloway: Lois had received a card from AR after she wrote to him and was trying to locate it. AF said that it was possible that Lois' letter was in the Brotherton Archive; there was a letter there that Donald M. Haigh [DMH] had written to AR in 1943. PHW would contact MR on this, as he had

found a book, by Darby on 'Tall ships', with AR's signature, sent to DMH by AR in 1939.

16. Date and venue of next meeting

Tuesday 1st February 2022, provisionally at Oxenholme at 11.00am, weather permitting; otherwise on Zoom.

PDW 4.10.21

Reports: 10 documents for items 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, 10, 11, 12 & 14