

A BIT MORE ABOUT OUR CONTRIBUTORS

Contributors to *Mixed Moss 2021* were asked to provide a short biography (up to 500 words) which would then be summarised for the printed edition. I enjoyed reading them so much that I thought they should be reproduced in full here where longer biographies were provided. I hope you find them as informative, heart-warming and entertaining as I did – *Ed.*

Ted Alexander (The Arthur Ransome Statuettes)

Ted is a founder member of TARS and served over 8 years as a trustee. With Roger Wardale, he organised the 1995 AGM at Cobnor. He served 6 years on the Southern Region committee and has organised many walks and events. He started and operated the Society Stall for 15 years (with help from Margaret and Joe Ratcliffe in the north), often travelling all over the country to Regional Meetings with it. For about 12 of these years, he worked almost ‘full time’ for the Society.

Ted is not only active as an organiser, but writes about and collects Ransome artefacts, which he often displays at TARS events. He been researching Ransome and aspects of his life and the books he wrote for nearly 40 years. He has probably been to more places that Ransome visited, particularly in Eastern Europe or places related to his family (including Australia), than anyone else. He has given a variety of talks at literary weekends and published four books on Ransome, most of which are available through the TARS Stall: *Ransome at Home*, *Ransome in Russia*, *Ransome in the Baltic* and *Ransome in Estonia*.

Ted has also compiled a Ransome Index containing more than 100,000 words. He often brings large boxes of files to TARS events which members are welcome to peruse. They include information about Ransome, his families and families of those connected to him, homes, cars, boats, journeys and such as it has been possible to glean about those he knew. He is very happy to answer questions on Ransome; you can contact him through the membership – he has advised he is happy for his name and phone number to be given out when requested. (*He has also been enormously helpful to me, particularly on matters pertaining to Australia and Tabitha’s family* – Ed.)

Martin Beech (Facts, Truth and Signalling to Mars)

The Arthur Ransome books have been with me since earliest childhood. Indeed, as a pre- and young teenager the Swallows and Amazons novels accompanied me on many a family holiday either walking in the Lake District or sailing on the Norfolk Broads. And now, with retirement, and the beginning of my second childhood, I have been re-reading them through once more. Growing up, Dick Callum was one of my heroes, and he played some considerable part in determining my future career as an astronomer and academic (with research interests in Martian meteorites). The books, their marvellous adventures, the sailing, the camping, the exploring, and the fishing have all played some part in my life story. With a recent move from the prairies of Saskatchewan to Vancouver Island it is my intention to climb a Kanchenjunga or two, hunt for fossils, and explore some coastal bays by canoe.

Aurora, Esme and Martha Blue (Poetry)

The Blues family co-edits TARS’ junior magazine, *The Outlaw*. You’ll find their poems in the 2021 edition of *Mixed Moss*, and can follow their Ransome-like adventures in the magazine.

Kryisia Clack (AR at the British Library)

I must have been nearly 7 when my brother brought *Picts and Martyrs* home from the library for me to read in my sick bed. I was determined not to like it as he hadn't come back with what I had wanted. However, I was soon devouring it and slept with the book under my pillow. When I finished it, I went back to the first page and read it again. I felt like Ransome and I understood the same world and soon I was visiting the Public Library for the other stories. My love for Ransome never waned, and when I got a job in a bookshop as an adult the first thing I did was buy paperback copies of the same books – using my staff discount of course. After 7 happy years I moved on to the British Library where I stayed over 30 years until retirement. For a few years I worked in the Russian department but in my last years was in Customer Services where I acquired an overall knowledge of the Library and its services. I joined TARS as soon as I learnt it existed. I saw the society advertised in the back of a book at a newsagents in Coniston and was so excited I alarmed the shop assistant. I think it was in 1994. I have never regretted joining and it has been fun to meet so many like-minded people over the years.

Jeff Cooper and Brian Key (The Ghost Writer who Wasn't)

Brian Key, who has been on the National Committee for TARS Easter Region for many years, provided the introduction to Jeff Cooper, whose research into the sources Ransome may have used for his first book, became the article on AR's ghost writing that wasn't. 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.

As a longstanding member of the Friends of the Dymock Poets Society, Jeff has done significant research on Lascelles Abercrombie especially as well as other members of the Dymock poets, so called because of the time they lived in the Dymock area in Gloucestershire for a short time just before the First World War. Their published work contained a number of poems remembered even today which includes Rupert Brooke's 'The Soldier' and Robert Frost's 'The Road not Taken'.

In 1932 Lascelles Abercrombie recalled these times when Dymock had been a short interlude in the history of English poetry when he wrote:

I have lived in Gloucestershire, and I have known what it is to have Wilfred Gibson and Robert Frost as my neighbours: and John Drinkwater, Rupert Brooke, Edward Thomas, Will Davies, Bob Trevelyan, Arthur Ransome have drunk my cider and talked in my garden. I make no cider now, and I have no garden. But once I lived in Gloucestershire.

Maida Barton Follini (The Thirties and Forties to a Ransome Reader)

I was born in Greenwich, Connecticut on 1930, the daughter of a lawyer and a landscape artist. Our family lived in the country, on the outskirts of town. Here my two brothers and I had trees to climb, ponds to wade in, and room for our pets – dogs, a pony, rabbits and chickens. There were frequent visits to our grandparents, who lived on the shore in Rye, New York, we learned to row boats and sail with our grandfather. The three of us were always outdoors, hiking, boating, camping and enjoying nature.

With the outbreak of war, the boys served in the army, and our parents did war work in the community. After the war I completed an AB at Harvard, a Masters in Education at Boston University and then a PhD in psychology at Clark University, where I met my husband, Paul Follini. We both settled into careers as psychologists, while raising a daughter and a son.

I bought my first sailboat in the year 2000, purchased from a family friend. It was a 21-foot Drascombe Longboat, built in Totnes, Devon. Named *The Delight*, it was yawl-rigged with a mainsail, jib,

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and mizzen and had a standard rudder, as well as a centreboard, and a well for the outboard supplementary motor. The best part of the boat is that although it has a gaff, it has no boom to swing across and bump your head!

Living in Amherst, Nova Scotia, while working at the Atlantic Provinces Resource Centre for the Hearing Impaired, I sailed Northumberland Strait, off the Nova Scotia Coast. When I retired, I moved to Halifax to be near my son and his family. I sailed the boat in the Bedford Basin – where the convoys used to gather before running the gauntlet of U-boats to reach England.

I became aware of TARS when my daughter, who lives in East Dulwich, London, England, sent me a clipping about the founding of TARS for lovers of the Ransome books. I wrote to the address and soon became a member and have enjoyed reading *Mixed Moss*, *Signals*, and *TARSUS-North Pole News* ever since.

To my sorrow, as I got into the 80s, with severe arthritis, I could no longer manage to leap around in the boat and do all the active chores associated with sailing. So I found a good buyer for my dear *Delight* – a retired physician who keeps her in excellent repair and sails her in St. Margaret's Bay on Nova Scotia's South Shore.

I miss my boat and being on the water. But at 91, now a widow, I can 'relive' many experiences through writing. I find writing is a fulfilling outlet for thoughts and expression. Just as in reading, through writing one makes one's own world.

Kirsty Nichol Findlay (Reading Ransome Overseas)

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.

John Fletcher (Swallows and Amazons – What Happened Next?)

John is a retired maintenance engineer who originally trained and worked as a marine engineer. His introduction to Arthur Ransome was his mother's wartime paper-rationed copy of *Pigeon Post*. It took two attempts. He knew Rio was in South America, but the characters didn't seem remotely Latino. It was too confusing, and he gave up. Happily he gave it a second chance, and was well and truly hooked.

His ensuing Ransomania led John to explore and enjoy sailing (he knew pretty well what to do as soon as he had access to a dinghy), mountain walking, photography (including home-processing), archery and nature conservation. The *Bix Six* also matured a desire to confront injustice. He reckons Ransome has been the third most influential person in his life. (Number two – his wife of 43 years and counting; number one is the Carpenter from Nazareth.) As a teenager he wanted to be John Walker, but knew that in truth he was Dick Callum with a touch of Roger thrown in.

He lives – dangerously for a Lancastrian – in Yorkshire.

Paul Flint (Swinging the Lamp)

Born in London, but with parents from Cumbria, one early memory, apart from learning to read using Ransome's books, was peeping through the entrance to Hilltop. Fortunately, Arthur Ransome wasn't aware of my presence with my mother and brother, and instead we put the tops on milk bottles that were delivered to him from my Uncle's farm at Haverthwaite. My love of the S&A books influenced

some of my choices: learning to sail at school, walking the Lakeland fells from an early age, studying geography to post-graduate level, joining the Royal Navy and taking part in an expedition to the Antarctic: my own *Winter Holiday*.

When my wife and I had a young family, we were active members of TARS and co-organised camps for juniors at Bank Ground Farm and on the Norfolk Broads. By then Bursar of a school in Teesside, followed by another in Windermere, I promoted Ransome-related activities in educational environments and my wife, Cecilia, staged the first junior production of the *Swallows and Amazons* musical. Together with Geraint and Helen Lewis and Peter Hyland, I helped found the Arthur Ransome Trust, a charity intended to promote public awareness of Ransome and to create a permanent centre in the Lake District to celebrate his life and works. In 2015, to my surprise and delight, I was invited to become one of the three executors who manage the Arthur Ransome Literary Estate. Royalties and related income from his books are paid to the Royal Literary Fund.

Whilst my bookshelves groan under the weight of Ransome's writing and I have wider interests, from maritime and local history to travel and sailing my old yacht from Whitehaven (no ... that too has its roots in Ransome!).

Wayne Hammond (Submarine Ships and Submarine Cities)

Wayne G. Hammond somehow overlooked Ransome's books until he was around 34, when he saw the American trade paperback of *Swallows and Amazons* in a shop and bought it on the strength of a dim memory, from some history of children's literature, that Ransome was important. Polishing off the first of the 'twelve' and liking it very much, Wayne quickly picked up *Swallowdale* and *Peter Duck*, but had to write to a helpful bookseller in London for the rest of the series, in the re-covered Puffin editions. A very helpful bookseller indeed: it was she who told Wayne that there was an Arthur Ransome Society, which he soon joined.

Born in Ohio, Wayne trained as a librarian at the University of Michigan and in 1976 joined the Chapin Library of rare books at Williams College in western Massachusetts. He became its director in 2015 and is now nearing the end of that career. In his spare time he wrote the standard bibliography of J.R.R. Tolkien, and when that was published in 1993 he was asked which author he wanted to tackle next. 'Arthur Ransome', he replied, not knowing then how remarkably prolific AR had been beyond 'Swallows and Amazons'. *Arthur Ransome: A Bibliography* (2000) has been called a model of its kind.

Tolkien, however, has remained the major focus of the work Wayne and his English wife, Christina Scull, have carried out for many years. They have written numerous books, including *J.R.R. Tolkien: Artist and Illustrator* (1995), *The Lord of the Rings: A Reader's Companion* (3rd ed. 2014), and *The J.R.R. Tolkien Companion and Guide* (2nd ed. 2017), and have edited works by Tolkien such as *Roverandom* (1998) and *The Lord of the Rings* (2004, 2005). They are currently finishing a book about the Tolkien and 'Narnia' illustrator Pauline Baynes.

Peter Hyland (Bookshelf – A History of Storytelling)

As a child, Peter Hyland was given a copy of *The Picts and the Martyrs* when it was the latest Ransome book to be published. He begged to be given the earlier ones, which he found to be a heavenly refuge from school bullying. Like so many others, he revisited the 'Twelve' in later adulthood. At that time he was a senior editor at Butterworths Publishers in London, and became fascinated by AR's writing craft and ability to invent a story. He joined TARS soon after it was founded and has written numerous pieces for *Mixed Moss*.

Julia Jones (Bookshelf – *Battle in the Baltic*)

Julia Jones's life has been shaped by her relationship with Arthur Ransome's yacht *Peter Duck*, who she met in 1957 when she was not quite 3 years old. PD remains a much-loved family boat, currently owned by Julia and her husband, Francis Wheen. Julia writes book reviews for *Yachting Monthly* magazine and adventure stories for her own delight. (The *Strong Winds* series books are available through the TARS Stall – ed.). She edits *The Deben Magazine* and the *RDA Journal* for the River Deben Association. For the past two years she's been researching and writing *Uncommon Courage: the Yachtsmen Volunteers of World War Two* which will be published by Adlard Coles in March 2022.

Alan Kennedy (*Missee Lee and the Long Journey into Night*)

Alan Kennedy has held academic posts at universities in Melbourne, St Andrews, Aix-en-Provence and Paris. He is currently Emeritus Professor of Psychology in the University of Dundee. The author of several books and over a hundred journal articles, he played a leading role in establishing the discipline of Psycholinguistics. Since 2009 he has lived in France with his wife, Elizabeth, and their Weimaraner, Caesar. He is the author of six novels and two works of biography. His first book for children (in which Caesar gets a walk-on part), was *The Boat in the Bay*, an 'autobiographical tribute' to a childhood hero, Arthur Ransome (also available through the TARS Stall). His other fiction, for children and adults, is mostly set in France. Alan is a Fellow of The Royal Society of Edinburgh, an Honorary Member of The Experimental Psychology Society and a member of The Society of Authors. His most recent book, *A Thoroughly Mischievous Person: The Other Arthur Ransome*, has just been published by The Lutterworth Press. An extended version of the *Mixed Moss* article can be found on his website: www.lasserradepress.com.

Catherine Lamont (Deep Democracy, Ransome and 'The Twelve'; Editorial Material)

Catherine Lamont lives in Australia's New England, just 60km from the sheep station which AR's grandfather owned for more than half his life. She recalls reading *We Didn't Mean to Go to Sea* at about the age of ten, when her father brought it and *Swallows and Amazons* home from the library. Her sister grabbed the first book, and Catherine didn't see the point in going back to the beginning after reading *We Didn't Mean to Go to Sea*; she believes she only read *Missee Lee* and *Great Northern?* as a child. After various adventures as a governess on a sheep station, working in the tax office, teaching in the Army, running a résumé-writing business and studying English literature, education, and psychology, she became a parent at the age of 43. She then broadened her studies to include Steiner education and holistic psychotherapy. She fell in love with the Twelve properly when she began reading *Swallows and Amazons* for the first time to her then 11-year-old in 2017, eventually joining The Arthur Ransome Society in 2019, writing an article or two for *Furthest South* and *Mixed Moss* before agreeing to try her hand at editing the latter 'at least for a year or two'.

Julian Lovelock (Bookshelf – *A Thoroughly Mischievous Person*)

Julian Lovelock has spent his working life in education, as a teacher, headmaster, lecturer and pro vice-chancellor. He is now an honorary Senior Research Fellow in the English Department of the University of Buckingham. Away from work he has spent much of his time messing about in boats – mainly on the English canals and the Norfolk Broads. His most recent publications include *Swallows, Amazons and Coots: a Reading of Arthur Ransome* and *From Morality to Mayhem: the Fall and Rise of the English School Story*. *The Business of Reading: a Hundred Years of the English Novel* will be published in 2022. He has

served on TARS' Literary and Resources Committee, spoken at three TARS Literary Weekends, and was Editor of Mixed Moss from 2016 to 2020.

Julian Onderdonk (Our Family's *Swallows and Amazons* Story)

Julian Onderdonk is a professor of music history in the Wells School of Music faculty at West Chester University in Pennsylvania and is currently co-editing a book on Ralph Vaughan Williams. He received his PhD in music history from New York University in 1998 and has taught there, and at a number of universities on the East coast of America, subsequently. From 1992-1993, however, he studied in London as a Fulbright scholar, and then in 2008, he was co-teaching an 'Oxford Abroad' Music course in Oxford, where the *Swallows and Amazons* story he shares in the Online Supplement starts. He lives with his wife, Mary, and they have two children, Jack and Lucy.

Charlotte Seyler (Poetry)

Hi! My name is Charlotte Seyler. I am 12 years old, and I live in Ontario, Canada. A little bit about me: I have 2 cats and 2 kittens, 1 dog, and a really big family! I have 6 brothers and 1 sister. I also have 2 dads and a mom. I like to draw and play ukulele in my free time. Poetry is not my strong point, but I have a way with words. I hope you enjoyed my poems! I was introduced to TARS by my step-dad's family. My parents, my grandparents, and my great-grandparents all love the *Swallows and Amazons* book series. I'm proud to be French-Canadian! I don't like cheese, but I do like chocolate, a lot.

Cheryl Paget (Bookshelf (Supplement) – *How Did Long John Silver Lose His Leg?*)

Currently living in Wellington New Zealand, Cheryl was born in Scotland and brought up in Suffolk, England, immigrating in 2009 to New Zealand as a single Mum with two boys.

Cheryl cites Anne of Green Gables as the biggest influence on her life, deciding at a very early age that she would go to University to study English Literature just like Anne Shirley. Cheryl completed her studies at Warwick University with an MA in Literature for Children in 1994.

The other biggest literary influence was Arthur Ransome's *Swallows and Amazons series*. Resigning in 2020 after many years as the New Zealand Co-ordinator for the Arthur Ransome Society, Cheryl used to release her inner Nancy every year when organising the society's annual weekend get-togethers.

Stephen Sykes (The Curious Case of High Ealinghearth, Where Folk Tales Began)

Born near Leeds and brought up in Blackpool, Stephen read astrophysics at University College London. Arriving at UCL in September 1969, he was fortunate to be one of the first people outside of NASA to see samples of moon rock brought back a few weeks earlier by the Apollo 11 astronauts.

For most of his career, he was a financial investment analyst in The City, specialising in the analysis and computer modelling of commercial real estate, portfolios and developments. For many years he ran his own consultancy, with banks, insurance companies, property companies and The Crown Estate amongst his many clients.

Author of many articles, papers and books, his highly researched novel *The Last Witness* concerned the Manhattan Project and the testing of the first atomic bomb. Thanks to Arthur C. Clarke, who suggested it to his Japanese publisher, Hayakawa, it was published in Japanese translation to coincide with the 50th anniversary in 1995 of the dropping of the bomb on Hiroshima. It sold 20,000 copies. Promoting his book, Arthur C. Clarke wrote: 'The best alternative history I have ever read ... My god! Perhaps it's true!' At one time or another, it was seriously considered by HBO for a mini-series and even suggested by Clarke to his friend Stanley Kubrick with whom he co-wrote 2001: A Space Odyssey.

Stephen and his wife Janine (an optometrist) bought Hill Top in January 2012 knowing little about Arthur Ransome and having read none of his works! They simply saw Hill Top as a splendid house to which to retire in The Lake District, and with the bonus of a very interesting connection. Stephen soon began researching whatever material he could gather concerning the history of Hill Top and the Ransomes, even assisting Margaret Ratcliffe with her monumental and invaluable transcription of Ransome's diaries at Leeds University insofar as they covered his Hill Top years, resulting in a substantial archive of relevant material.

Perhaps coming to Ransome from a rather distant and late adult perspective, but with a sudden very personal connection, the present owners of Ransome's last home can judge and appreciate the man in a rather different way to those who grew up with his stories.

Stephen has a vivid memory from around 1961 or so of a family day out in The Lakes and driving by the 'Dolly Blue' works in Backbarrow, where the river was running blue and workers were outside smoking, blue from head to toe. Only in recent years did he realise he'd been within a mile or so of Hill Top – and may possibly have even driven by!

Paul Thicke (Personal Reflection – Literary Licence on Mars)

Paul Thicke is a retired engineer, who was introduced to the 'magical Twelve' in 1946, when he was 8 years old, when his Aunt Jackie gave him *Swallows and Amazons* books for Christmas. You can read more about his story and see a photograph of his collection of Swallows and Amazons books and other Ransome-related literature in the Personal Reflections he shared in *Mixed Moss* 2021.

Paul Wilson (Mixed Moss Indexes)

Paul Wilson trained as a biochemist and spent several years in medical research. A career change to library and information work in dairy research gave him editing experience, followed by abstracting work in the same subject area. On early retirement, he and Winifred spent over 12 years living on a canal narrowboat, before settling in Dumfries. After Winifred was appointed TARS Librarian, Paul became involved in TARS Stall, then took over editing *Signals* for 3 years. He is also a member of the Literary & Resources committee. Now with time to spare, he has turned his hand to indexing TARS publications.

Garry Wood (These People are Furious about Something)

I was born in September 1935, so now am 86 years old. I have a wife, but no children. Most of my life has been spent on the North Shore of Auckland City.

I first came across AR when I borrowed *Secret Water* from my school library in 1949. So entranced was I with the story, that by the time I had finished schooling at the end of 1952, I had read all 12 books of the canon!

I subsequently had a very long career as a science technician with the then New Zealand Department of Scientific and Industrial Research, working on plant virus diseases. During this time I had two scientific books published, and was author or part author of about 30 scientific papers. The writing technique of my science job helped when I started writing and submitting articles for *Furthest South* in 2001, and later to *Mixed Moss*.

My parents gave me a small sail boat in 1951. Other young people of the time who had boats were only interested in racing, but AR-type activities interested me more. To this end I started mapping the coastline of an island in Auckland's Hauraki Gulf, where my parents had a holiday home. Sailing with one hand on both the tiller and mainsheet, and the other sketching the passing coastline on paper could be interesting in rough seas, to say the least! I also started mapping tidal estuaries, and as these got narrower, had to watch out for log snags in the water and avoid getting the mast caught in overhanging trees. Curious cows would come to the river bank to see what this strange object was in their little-used river. I made better copies of the rough maps I drew when I got home. Copies of several of these can be seen in *Furthest South* Vol.3, 2 May 2001 and vol. 4, 2 May 2002. I had become a member of TARS in 1994, after seeing paperback copies of the AR books in a bookshop, which gave details of the newly formed society in England.

I had always been interested in aircraft, and in 1967 learned to fly, got my pilot's licence, and for 20 years flew light aircraft. This came in handy when planning a boating trip up a river estuary, as I could first over fly it to check from the air as to how navigable it was for a small boat.

After re-reading the AR books a number of times, it became clear that AR was not only a remarkable author and storyteller, but was very observant of things around him which he could use in the background for his novels. It therefore became possible for me to research these backgrounds further and I have been able to produce a number of articles for FS and MM on subjects such as sailing ships, schooners, lightships, windmills, gold mines, swinging span bridges etc. I have been glad of the opportunity that both FS and MM have given me to publish these articles. I still have some more in mind, so hope to be able to continue to write and illustrate them in future.

All through my life I have done a lot of sketching and painting. This has been mainly of seascapes, and I have used both watercolours and oils.

Other recreational interests include surfboard riding on surf beaches, which I did for a number of years, and motorcycling, which I am still doing a bit of now.

Peter Wright (*Pigeon Post to Lark* (The Carnegie Medal))

Peter Wright, current Chair of TARS, first encountered SA books in the 1963 BBC serial, moving to the books when he was eight.

Although I've lived and worked in Birmingham for over 40 years, I was born and bred in Leeds and as such am a proud Yorkshiremen. I am a firm believer in one's youth and teen years influencing who you are and what you believe in, so although an adopted Brummie, I do have a perfect match with the

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famous saying, ‘You can take the man out of Yorkshire, but you can’t take the Yorkshire out of the man’. Whether I fit the typical description of a Yorkshireman - friendly but bloody-minded – I’ll leave others to judge. I hope I’m friendly to all, but there is an element of stubbornness about me as I don’t suffer fools gladly.

Methodism has played a large part in my life, and family history reveals I am an 8th or 9th generation Methodist with the strong likelihood my forebears heard John Wesley preach in Bingley. As stone masons, they built a very early Wesleyan chapel in the nearby village of East Morton. I went to Methodist Foundation school (Woodhouse Grove) where I spent more time playing rugby and cricket than studying, although I did manage to pass all my exams. At Aston University, I studied Town Planning in Birmingham, which ultimately led to my first job and a 39-year career with Birmingham City Council. I was privileged to work on a number of prestigious projects and meet some fascinating people from Government ministers, politicians and senior business leaders, down to community activists and interesting local residents. I was also lucky enough to have trips to Malta, Leipzig (Germany) and Sweden representing the City. Unlike some of my colleagues and the general public, I always viewed planning as being there to help make things happen rather than the more popular view of trying to stop them!

I met my wife Christine, a hospital Ophthalmologist, through the student Methodist group in Birmingham and we have been happily married since 1982. Our two children, Emma and Matthew, are grown adults now – the former a nurse, the latter flying helicopters in the RAF – we are proud of them both. We have two grandchildren, twins aged 7 years. They were born extremely prematurely and had rocky starts to their lives but are now doing well and enjoying school (and *Swallows and Amazons*).

I joined TARS in 1999 having discovered Christina Hardyment’s book, *Captain Flint’s Trunk* and have been an active and enthusiastic member ever since. I am one of the fortunate ones who enjoys both the activity and literary side of the society. I have enjoyed many camps, hikes and sailing adventures making many good friends but I have also helped organise several Literary Weekends and heard some wonderful speakers. Apart from TARS, my other hobbies are gardening, hiking, watching sport, family history, ornithology and reading. I still attend my local church, where I deal with the property and spent 25 years leading the teenage group. I have been known to write the odd pantomime (oh yes I have!), numerous sketches and skits and I have a love of jokes, the cornier the better. I retired nearly five years ago and now don’t find the time for half the things I’d like to do!