

# SIGNALS

**THE MAGAZINE OF THE ARTHUR RANSOME SOCIETY**

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## Literary Weekend

who, where, when

## 'PETER DUCK' at 90

Jon Tucker on  
The Realism of PD

Hoathwaite  
- were you there?  
Photos and reports

Junior Log Book



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**JAN-APRIL 2022 BOOK FOR LITERARY WEEKEND**

# The Arthur Ransome Society

Limited Company, No 03386251

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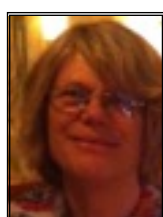


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# SIGNALS



## THE MAGAZINE OF THE ARTHUR RANSOME SOCIETY JANUARY-APRIL 2022

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### From the Editor

## Still live and kicking

My friend and colleague Catherine Lamont, Editor of *Mixed Moss*, posted this question on the Arthur Ransome Group's facebook page recently: "I'm curious. Do people in the UK find that Swallows and Amazons is well known?" Catherine lives in Australia and only discovered Ransome recently – four years ago – so she could be said to be posing as the proverbial interested Martian.

A consensus of answers – over 60 of them at the last count – comes out as somewhere between "not as much as we'd like" and "more than you might think."

The 1974 film is often on TV; the phrase itself is still a shorthand for a kind of carefree sailing experience, though less widely recognised than it used to be. Literate children find the books engaging, but there are fewer of them, and much competition from video games and from "easier" contemporary writers. ("Easier" generally means shorter – Ransome's style is accessible and a delight, but the length of the books might be off-putting.)

Disappointingly though I've yet to find any mainstream reviews of Alan Kennedy's new book on Ransome, *A Thoroughly Mischievous Person*. (Honourable exceptions being Julia Jones on [yachtingmonthly.com](http://yachtingmonthly.com) and Eileen Jones at Northwest News and Features online – though the book's main themes are not especially yachty or Lakesy; more metropolitan intellectual.)

On the other hand, there's a new play based on *Winter Holiday* coming to Shrewsbury in February (see p11), and a revival of the S&A musical in Jersey ([www.artscentre.je](http://www.artscentre.je)). And *Red Skies*, the new play about the Ransomes and George Orwell was well received, and is due to be streamed soon.

Within TARS itself, last summer's Hoathwaite camp was a riot of multi-generational enthusiasm if the reports in this issue are anything to go by, and the wide-ranging lineup for next April's Literary Weekend demonstrates continuing lively interest in 'our' author and his works.

*Peter Willis*

**This issue's cover:** *Peter Duck* was published 90 years ago. It's a fantasy, but for Jon Tucker – see page 14 – it's real life as he and his family know it. And thanks to Robert Thompson for this cover from his 'Foreign Legion' collection.

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**Literary Weekend  
booking form: insert**



## CHAIRMAN'S NOTES

from

# Peter Wright

It would be wonderful to be able to give “three million cheers” and say we are back to normal following Covid, but that really isn't the case. Although many restrictions have been eased in the UK and we have enjoyed being able to meet again, I am deeply aware that strict lockdowns have remained in place in other countries, and many of you have been confined to home. Although Covid is going to be with us for a long time, I do hope it won't be long before all people, wherever they live, can, with sensible precautions, safely return to the old freedoms and activities we used to enjoy.

Given the UK relaxations, I have been making up for lost time by enjoying a monthly diet of TARS activities. In July I enjoyed a swelteringly hot walk along Alderley Edge with Midlands TARS. In addition to the sensational views, I learnt all about the historic mining activity in the area and that this was the setting for Alan Garner's first book, *The Weirdstone of Brisingamen*.

In August I enjoyed several days under canvas at the TARS camp at Hoathwaite on the shore of Coniston Water. In addition to meeting some new members and getting on the water in various sailing boats and canoes, highlights included swimming around Wild Cat Island and climbing Kanchenjunga. September again saw me swimming, this time at Sophie Neville's old family home deep in Gloucestershire. Sophie and her mum Daphne shared their memories of filming the 1974 *Swallows and Amazons*, and Barbara Altounyan shared memories of her father, (Ship's Boy) Roger. Either side of the talks much fun was also had on the water in coracles, canoes, dinghies and folding boats.

In October I was able to join about 20 members in Scotland celebrating a literary day at Moat Brae, where the impressive TARS library is housed. I was able to enjoy the delights of both the house and garden which operate as a museum dedicated to J.M.Barrie as this is where he played as a child and found the

inspiration for *Peter Pan*. There was also an excellent talk. I still have a trip to the Seven Stories archive in Newcastle with the Northern region and two Midlands events to look forward to (a knot activity day and a Christmas extravaganza) before the year is out.

In April, the 16th Literary Weekend will take place in Oxford - a wonderful line-up of speakers at a beautiful, historic venue. I do encourage anyone who has not been before to come along; they are always such good fun - please find the booking form enclosed.

I'm also heartened to know that the IAGM weekend in East Anglia will take place with a range of activities for all. The date, however, has had to be moved from the usual May bank holiday until the August one. It will be interesting to see if this later date suits more members and families. To fill the vacated May date, a week's camping and sailing is being planned on the Norfolk Broads. Details of all these events can be found elsewhere in this edition of *Signals*.

Thanks to all of you for responding so positively to the request to hold your membership information on-line; it's already making a big difference to how TARS operates.

Can I also express my thanks to all those who

contribute to our magazines and publications, and of course to the hard-working editors. All our publications – *Signals*, *Mixed Moss* and *The Outlaw* – are a joy to read and are full of interesting articles and information. And to those of you who have not yet discovered *Furthest South* or *Signals from TARSUS and North Pole News*, our respective newsletters in Australia and New Zealand, and the US and Canada, can I suggest you seek them out. They are full of fascinating articles and activities and can be found in the members' area of the web site, along with all our publications – I heartily recommend them to you all.

**Stop Press:** I've just heard of the wonderful news that both the Arthur Ransome and Nancy Blackett Trusts have received substantial bequests, left to them by longstanding TARS member Tony Parslow. (Details elsewhere in this edition of *Signals*). It's a marvellous gesture from Tony which will hopefully set them in good stead to more readily progress their work and aims. We wish them well.



*“I've been making up time with a monthly diet of TARS activities”*



## News from the Board

**The 87<sup>th</sup> meeting of the Board of Trustees was held, in person, in Birmingham on Saturday 9<sup>th</sup> October 2021. The following key business was transacted.**

### Literary & Resources Committee:

The Board noted the good work being done across a number of matters. Of particular note were:

- The successful booking of St Edmund Hall in Oxford for the next **Literary Weekend**, to be held on 1st-3<sup>rd</sup> April 2022. An impressive line-up of speakers has been/is being assembled.
- An agreement to approach Lakeland Arts to see if they would be interested in taking on loan **Arthur Ransome's medicine chest**, which the society owns. It was felt that it might be usefully displayed in the refurbished Abbot Hall when it reopens. This would allow TARS members and others the opportunity to see it and ensure it is kept in appropriate conditions for its long-term preservation.
- It was noted that Paul Wilson and Julian Lovelock have stepped down from the Committee after many years' service, and Elizabeth Williams has joined. Winifred Wilson intimated that she will seek to step down from her role as Librarian, possibly in the next couple of years, and was thus giving advance notice of this.

### Publications Committee:

- After many years valuable service, Barry Gouldbourne has stepped down as Chairman. Marc Grimston volunteered to take over as the new Chairman.
- The Board noted the successful production of all three publications during the summer and that the on-line printing and single clearance

house arrangements were both working well and producing cost efficiencies for the society.

- It was agreed that the Publications Committee should have its brief expanded to cover publicity and promotions.

### Financial Matters:

- The treasurer noted that expenditure is on target this year and we may make a modest surplus. The use of Zoom meetings to transact business has significantly helped to reduce costs.
- The Board agreed to maintain the current practice under which the UK TARS regions should not normally receive an annual stipend if their reserves exceed £2,000.

### 2022 IAGM:

- As we will be within the legal time limit for holding an AGM, it was agreed that the formal IAGM business meeting should be held as part of the proposed full activity weekend of 26-29 August 2022, with provision of a Zoom link to allow absent members to take part in the IAGM and Members' Forum.

### 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary of 1974 Swallows & Amazons film:

- The Board is in favour of celebrating this anniversary event in 2024 and will write to Lakeland Arts to see if they would wish to participate in an organised event, possibly at Windermere Jetty.

### Junior members' log book scheme:

- Amanda Ardagh-Walter now coordinates this scheme and new juniors will be sent a welcome letter along with their log book and badge as soon as they join. Regions are encouraged to help promote the scheme at their events.

### Eastern European Trip:

- Following discussion with Chris Birt and given ongoing concerns about Covid, it was agreed that the proposed trip to

Russia and the Baltic should again be postponed, until 2023. It is hoped a relaunch of the trip will also offer the opportunity for a greater take-up of places.

### Coch-y-Bonddhu:

- The Board agreed that it will seek to renew the current loan agreement between Lakeland Arts and TARS regarding the display and care of *Cochy* at Windermere Jetty, which expires at the end of next year. Several trustees had recently visited the museum and were impressed with how she is displayed, along with other Ransome artefacts.

- We are also interested in helping promote the restoration of the houseboat *Esperance*, at Windermere Jetty, which needs major refurbishment.

### Regions:

- Oral reports were received from each region on their recent and future programmes.

## Future Board and Committee Meetings:

### 2022

- L & R Cttee Tues. 1 Feb.
- Pub. Cttee Sat. 12 Feb.
- Board Sat. 26 Feb.
- Board (IAGM) Sun. 28 Aug.
- L & R Cttee Tues. 13 Sept.
- Pub. Cttee Sat. 24 Sept.
- Board Sat. 8 Oct.

### 2023

- L & R Cttee Tues. 31 Jan.
- Pub. Cttee Sat. 11 Feb.

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## 2022 TARS IAGM 26-29 August

**Royal Hospital School  
Holbrook, Suffolk**

## 16<sup>th</sup> TARS Literary Weekend

### St. Edmund Hall, Oxford: 1<sup>st</sup> - 3<sup>rd</sup> April 2022



The 2022 TARS Literary Weekend will have been well worth the wait, as we have assembled an impressive line-up of speakers with a prestigious venue to match. St. Edmund Hall is one of the oldest educational establishments in the world, dating from 1236, but with all the modern comforts and features we need. It is situated in the heart of Oxford, which with its accessible location and with excellent public transport links, makes it reachable for all.

On Friday evening three much loved and well-known Tars will give cameo talks. **Margaret Ratcliffe** will tell us about Cyril Ransome's time in Oxford, **Andrew Jones** has been researching money and finance in the "12" whilst **Mary Pritchard** asks the question, "Did Gibber go to Oxford?" It's surely worth coming to the weekend to hear the answer to that question alone!

On Saturday, **Dr. Mike Bender**, author of the Amazon publication *Sunlight and Shadows*, will expand upon his re-interpretation of Ransome and the hidden themes in his novels. Following this, **Dr Penny Bradshaw** from the University of Cumbria will talk on children's literature inspired by the Lake District; which will lead nicely into **Danny Rurlander**, author of *Spylark* (chosen as the first TARS Book Group read), which is set on Lake Windermere. In part inspired by *Swallow and Amazons*, Danny will talk about the book and his love for Ransome.

Saturday afternoon is, as usual, left for you to explore the many and varied delights of Oxford. Detailed options will be forwarded to you in advance. There will be the usual Saturday evening Gala Dinner, followed by an after-dinner speaker (speaker invited but still awaiting confirmation).

On Sunday we have an equally Ransome-inspired programme. We start with **Professor Sally Bushell**, from Lancaster University. Her recent book *Reading and Mapping Fiction* explores spatialising literary texts and includes references to Ransome's work and the iconic Stephen Spurrier map, which she will expand upon.

**David Wood OBE** - is an actor, author, director and producer best known to TARS as the script writer of the 1974 *Swallows and Amazons* film. He will talk about this and several further scripts he wrote for other Ransome books, along with his experience meeting Ransome's wife, Evgenia!

We conclude with **Ivan Cutting** – the Artistic Director of the East Angles Theatre Company whose recent play *Red Skies* imagines a meeting between the Ransomes, Arthur and Evgenia, and an inquisitive George Orwell. He will talk about this and his experience of staging and touring East Anglia with *We Didn't Mean to go to Sea*.

**Accommodation** is in comfortable single and twin rooms. They are not en-suite but have shared bathrooms immediately opposite the bedrooms (about 3 rooms per bathroom). The talks will be held in a modern large flat lecture room with an interlocking ancillary room in which the Stalls, Library and exhibition material can be housed. Coffee will be taken just outside these. There is a large dining hall and a separate bar. Everything is very accessible and close together on this small, characterful campus.

**The weekend represents incredible value for money as remarkably all this is offered to you at a lower price than the last literary weekend!**

Please note that, as the college is very central in Oxford, there is no parking on site, but full details of the excellent park and ride schemes and other long stay parking options will be sent to you well before the event. There are excellent public transport links, which we would encourage. The main coach service from London (called The Tube - 3 per hour) drops visitors off only 40 yards from the college's front door, whilst the railway station is a walking distance or short taxi ride away.

Finally, **we will be fully adhering to whatever Covid regulations are in place either in the College or nationally at the time and we will give you advice beforehand.** Don't delay, book now as places will be in high demand!

## 2022 Literary Weekend Speakers



**Mike Bender** - After a career as a clinical psychologist Mike Bender returned to university to study, part-time, for an M.A. and a Ph.D. in English Literature. His thesis on 'Yachting Literature 1888 (Knight's *The Falcon in the Baltic to Swallows and Amazons*)' led to him being commissioned to write *A New History of Yachting*, and then to return

to Ransome in *Sunlight and Shadows*. He is currently working on a study of the canon of great British novels.



**David Wood OBE** is best known to Tars as author of the screenplay of the 1974 *Swallows and Amazons* film. He's also written screenplays for a number of other proposed Ransome adaptations. A theatre director and playwright (the 'national children's dramatist' - *The Times*), his plays include *The Gingerbread Man*, *The See-Saw Tree* and

*Save the Human*. He is also a children's author (*Mole's Bedtime Story*, *Funny Bunny's Magic Show*), magician and children's entertainer (BBC tv *Play Away*, *Jackanory*, *Tricky Business*). As actor he has appeared in *A Voyage Round my Father*, *The Vamp*, *If*, *Goodnight Mister Tom*, and *The Tiger Who Came to Tea*. His award-winning musical adaptation of LP Hartley's *The Go-Between* starred Michael Crawford in the West End. He is President of Action for Children's Arts and received the J M Barrie Award 2017. He is a Trustee of The Story Museum, Oxford.



**Prof. Sally Bushell**, Professor of Romantic and Victorian Literature in the Department of English Literature & Creative Writing at Lancaster University, has a long interest in the relationship between place, space and text and in mapping literature in a range of ways. She was lead researcher on the digital literary mapping project: *Chronotopic*

*Cartographies* (2017-21) and is co-creator of an educational project (*Litcraft*) that uses Minecraft to map literary worlds and re-engage children with reading through play. She has also published a major study, *Reading and Mapping Fiction: Spatialising the Text*. She camps in the Lake District every year with her son, wild swimming, canoeing and living the *Swallows and Amazons* experience.



**Dr. Penny Bradshaw** is an Associate Professor of English Literature at the University of Cumbria and thematic lead for Cultural Landscapes within the University's Centre for National Parks and Protected Areas. Penny is also Programme Leader for the *MA in Literature, Romanticism and the English Lake District*, which includes a module on

Children's Literature and the Lake District. Penny is the author of several books and essays relating to place-writing, with a particular focus on literary representations of Cumbria and the Lake District from the Romantic era to the present.



**Danny Rurlander** is a UK based children's author whose novel, *Spylark*, was shortlisted for the Times/Chicken House Children's Fiction Prize 2017, won the Cumbria School Library Service Spellbinding Award 2020 and the 2020 Brilliant Book Award. After studying

English Literature at the University of East Anglia, Danny worked in the finance sector for several years, and now serves on the staff team of a multi-cultural, city-centre church. He has lived in Austria, Kenya and Australia, but always longed to return to his native Lake District where he grew up exploring the fells and camping on islands, and where his first novel, *Spylark*, is set. Married to Emma, they have four children.



**Ivan Cutting** is the Artistic Director and Chief Executive of Eastern Angles, the Ipswich-based regional touring theatre company. Born not far from Pin Mill, he took a drama degree course at Bristol University and not long afterwards set up Eastern Angles in 1982, to supply a perceived need for contemporary drama, frequently with a local twist. In 2008 he commissioned a dramatisation

of *We Didn't Mean to Go to Sea*, which was revived in 2016. He wrote *Red Skies* between his day-job of directing new productions and managing the company. His work-life balance is described as 'terrible', but he seems to thrive on it.



**Margaret Ratcliffe** has been an active Tar for many years. Alongside organising member events and presenting talks, she contributes regularly to *Mixed Moss*. She founded the TARS Library in 2000 and is now primarily occupied with Amazon Publications as an author, editor and researcher.



**Andrew Jones** has been a TARS member for almost two decades. He is a previous member of the Board, Membership Secretary, and both Treasurer and Chair of TARS Scotland (at different times). He has a particular interest in history and has written and presented material on

Ransome and the railways, and the Post Office as depicted in the *Swallows and Amazons* books.



**Mary Pritchard** has been an active member of TARS since the month it was founded. After research, she led the first walk of Arthur Ransome's Bohemian Chelsea and has given presentations in the Southern and Scottish regions. She

organised several TARS literary days in Pitlochry and is lucky enough to have attended every literary weekend. At the 2017 Weekend in Edinburgh she spoke on *Fairy stories which, in the time of Armageddon, nobody will read*. She climbed the Matterhorn on August 2nd 2002 and hopes to make it to the summit of Kanchenjunga on August 11th 2031.



## AMAZON'S NEW BOOK

# Later, but better and still at the pre-publication price

We announced *Ransome Centre Stage* in the last issue (Sep-Dec 2021) with a planned publication date of early October. That date has slipped, but for the best of reasons: we have at last tracked down the version of *Winter Holiday* that was advertised for performance (but never done) at Otley in December 2012 (but not to be confused with the new production coming to Shrewsbury – see page 11).

## BBC 'improvements'

In addition we now can offer you Evgenia and Arthur's improvements to the 1963 BBC S&A serial, reprinted from *Twilight Years*, as well as the plays already promised – Brian Hopton's *Inspirations*, *The GA Returns and Leaves* and the Sparkinson Interviews, as well as items from Scotland, Australia and *Bohemia in Durham*.

So we are no longer restricted to a 'slim volume' but have a good-sized book, and it should be out about the time you receive this *Signals*.

That means it is too late now to get your name in the printed list of subscribers, but if you would still like to subscribe at the pre-publication rate (£10 UK, £16 overseas) we will take orders up till the end of this year. After that, any remaining stock will be available from the TARS Stall at a price that reflects actual production costs.

## Future publications

We have a number of AP projects in mind, notably the long-delayed reissue of *In the Footsteps of AR*. Margaret Ratcliffe is working on



Evgenia's diaries and further out, there is a thought of an S&A bird book.

## New blood needed

Now we need to secure the future for Amazon Publications itself. Without wishing to sound like Eeyore, *Alan Hakim writes*, I have reached the advanced age when it is unwise to make detailed plans for next year, and AP needs new blood.

We are offering the very exciting opportunity for a new person to take over the role of Editor/Administrator for Amazon Publications...

IT COULD BE YOU....!  
This chance is available NOW so don't be shy about getting in touch. All you frustrated editors and publishers, brimming with ideas, will surely relish the chance to produce unique books that are much appreciated.

Please contact us urgently for a no-obligation chat about what would be involved, and let us sell the role to you. Contact Alan on 023 92471681 or [awhakim@btinternet.com](mailto:awhakim@btinternet.com)

## TARS BOOK GROUP

The first meeting of the TARS Book Group was on Saturday 23rd October, on Zoom.

The reading list was *Spylark* by Danny Rurlander, *The Voyage of the Sparrowhawk* by Natasha Farrant and *Lark* by Anthony McGowan.

All were recently published, award-winning children's books with a Ransome flavour.

The discussion was wide-ranging: whether we thought modern stories contain children with more issues and why, how authors 'get rid' of the parents, technology - its uses and the problems, the time settings of the books. Of course there was plenty of comparison with the Swallows and Amazons series.

Our selection of children's fiction books for the next meeting is *Twitch* by MG Leonard *Where the Wildness Lives* by Jess Butterworth *The Explorer* by Katherine Rundell  
Plus one non-age-specific collection of essays: *Vesper Flights* by Helen Macdonald

If you would like to join in, there is plenty of time to read them as the next meeting will be on

**Saturday 5 February at 6pm**

### The zoom link is

[https://us02web.zoom.us/j/83210387630?](https://us02web.zoom.us/j/83210387630?pwd=UC9MYkNH50NxRGtxdWtFTG5pbzRDZz09)

[pwd=UC9MYkNH50NxRGtxdWtFTG5pbzRDZz09](https://us02web.zoom.us/j/83210387630?pwd=UC9MYkNH50NxRGtxdWtFTG5pbzRDZz09)

**Meeting ID: 832 1038 7630**

**Passcode: 507190**

More details, including copy-and-paste address and international contacts details for the Zoom meeting, are on our TARS website page:

Members Area> Society information> Book Group

## Broads camp for May

For Tars whose diaries for the Spring Bank Holiday are empty now that the IAGM has moved to the end of August, Marc Grimston has found a campsite by the Norfolk Broads for 28 May-4 June.

It's Canal Camping, at Dilham on the River Ant near Stalham, NR28 9PL. Cost is set at £16 per night per adult and £8 per night for children. The site is basic, with no electric hook ups but toilets and showers are available. Canoes or paddle boards can be launched from the site. Other boats can be launched locally. If you do not wish to bring your own tent then they have Glamping available at extra cost.

Hunters Yard will host us on Wednesday 1st June when they will give us talk on the history of the yard. They are holding two half-deckers back for us in case we want to hire them at the time. Also the *Titmouse* will be in the water for us to 'play' with her.

Please book in your own name at [canalcamping.co.uk](http://canalcamping.co.uk) and please put "Part of the Arthur Ransome Society booking" into the note section of the booking form so we will all be camping together. Also it would be helpful if everyone who books in lets Marc know, so he knows who to expect on site - 07961 454896,

## ART and NBT share windfall legacy

The Arthur Ransome Trust and the Nancy Blackett Trust have both recently benefited from the generosity of late Southern TARS member Tony Parslow, who died in December 2019.

His will stipulated that after various small bequests the remainder, which included the proceeds of his house sale, be divided equally between these two charities. Each of them has, within the last few weeks, received £150,000.

For ART, this represents a major step towards its 'Ransome Home' objectives.

The NBT's plans focus on securing *Nancy Blackett's* future maintenance and developing its support for young sailors.

Both organisations sprang originally from TARS. The cost of *Nancy Blackett* in 1997 was contributed by TARS members, while Geraint Lewis, ART trustee, is a former TARS Chairman. An obituary to Tony Parslow appeared in *Signals*, May 2020.

## Arnside on TV

Arnside, home of the boat-building Crossfield family, is featured in the new BBC-TV series of *Villages by the Sea*.

The Crossfields are best-known to Tars as builders of Arthur Ransome's *Swallow* and *Coch-y-bonddhu*. The business is closed but its workshop survives, and Eric Crossfield, a recently-joined TARS member, appears in the programme. It was broadcast on 6 December but is still available on BBC iPlayer.

Eric is also speaker at TARS East's Birthday Lunch on 22nd January.

## TARS Eastern European Trip postponed until 2023

Due to the ongoing high rates of Covid cases in Russia and the ongoing need to exercise care and caution, it has been decided to abandon plans to visit in 2022.

It is hoped the situation will be much better by 2023 and a new trip can be organised for then.

Anyone interested in joining the group or with other enquiries should contact Chris Birt, [christopher.birt7@gmail.com](mailto:christopher.birt7@gmail.com) 01997 420013.

## Jim and Judy 'retire' with a £1,000 farewell donation

Jim and Judy Andrews, long-standing mainstays of the Northern Region and things Tarry in general, have decided to terminate their TARS membership, on the grounds of 'old age'. Typically, they are marking their departure with a farewell donation of £1,000 to the society.

We can't let them go without some sort of adieu, so an appreciation is being prepared for the next *Signals*.

## OBITUARY

### Albert Hicken

Albert Hicken, a former South-West Regional Chairman, has died, aged 91.

Albert will probably be best known among Tars as the organiser of the Bristol IAGM in 1996, during the Festival of the Sea.

Albert, in daily life a pharmacist with several chemist shops who became a science teacher in his 40s, was a natural enthusiast for many things including sailing, canoeing, walking and of course the works of Arthur Ransome. Peter Willis recalls long phone conversations with him, discussing how they might get the *Nancy Blackett* down the Kennet and Avon Canal for the Festival and the IAGM (they solved several of the problems, theoretically at least, but were thwarted by a section of the canal still being under restoration). Albert died in hospital; his wife Pat recalls that *Swallows and Amazons* was the last book he properly read.

## THEATRE

# ‘Red Skies’ filmed and nearly ready to stream

*Red Skies*, Ivan Cutting’s play about George Orwell and the Ransomes, which enjoyed a live tour during the summer, was also filmed for online streaming later in the year. No release date had been available as we went to press, but keep an eye on [easternangles.co.uk](http://easternangles.co.uk), or the TARS website.

Meanwhile here is a review by our President **Libby Purves** from her [theatrecat.com](http://theatrecat.com) website



### IF RANSOME MET ORWELL

It’s 1939 in Southwold harbour (nicely resonant for me to see this in Southwold itself, on its second night). Arthur Ransome, famed already for his children’s books, is sailing up the coast from Pin Mill to lay up his boat for the war years. His wife Evgenia finds a visitor fallen asleep in the cabin: it’s Eric Blair, who under his pen-name George Orwell has published four novels (mixed reception) and non-fiction accounts of being down and out, fighting in Spain and observing the poor of Northern England. He’s been burying his father in the town, and found out who was in the harbour. Soon he will write *Animal Farm* and become more famous himself.

Orwell wants to meet Ransome, not because of wanting to write ‘as if for children’ nor about fishing (on which they find common ground, with a very English social wariness). It is almost certainly because the older man lived through the Russian revolution in 1917 as a reporter (and maybe a spy, that runs through the whole play).

Better still, his wife Evgenia was Trotsky’s trusted secretary. Orwell, with the pigs of *Animal Farm* not yet formed in his mind, is thinking of the Russian revolution and of the new ally Stalin, and is already full of doubt at the outcome of the state socialism which seemed so natural and necessary to his generation. In a nice moment Ransome teaches him fly-tying with bits of bread as bait: our author is canny enough not to quote, but to leave it to us to remember Orwell’s great line – “Every intelligent boy of sixteen is a socialist. At that age one does not see the hook sticking out of the rather stodgy bait”. Nice idea that he got the metaphor off old Arthur Ransome...

The meeting is entirely fictional, an invention of the author, Ivan Cutting of Eastern Angles; so are two further meetings in the play, one in the

Lake District and one in Orwell’s last illness. All might have taken place, none did: fair enough. Laurie Coldwell, dark and intense, is a perfect Orwell not only in looks but in catching a very credible manner: a nervy intense troubled intelligence, his physical restlessness in contrast to Philip Gill’s relaxed, worldly Ransome. Orwell sees the cataclysm of war and totalitarianism coming (his *Coming up for Air* is the book he has with him) but Ransome growls “Keep Adolf quiet and stay out of his way”.

What Evgenia thinks we only discover slowly: at first I was doubtful about Sally Ann Burnett’s portrayal, as she seemed plain silly, but as the play goes on her layers of experience and understanding of the Bolshevism she lived through, and the question marks hanging over how she and Ransome got out so smoothly.

There are moments of real credible connection, though as the years go on – we are long post-war by the second half – there are far too many

words and not enough real clashes or understandings. Evgenia becomes ever more central, Burnett gradually evoking the long, half-buried emotional reality and political half-belief of her years working for Leon Trotsky (“It was where I was sent”). The most dramatic moment comes when Orwell, having once again crashed in on their peaceful elderly lives, is the one to tell her of Trotsky’s assassination in Mexico.

It’s a great idea, much of it well performed and imagined, but if ever a play needed cutting, especially in the second half (unwisely, as long as the first or longer) this is it. Nor do we really need the appearance of various dream-women (all Bronte Tadman) representing Orwell’s agonized love life in contrast to the uxorious Ransome’s.

Though Tadman’s last incarnation, as Sonia Orwell, is beautifully done: crisply ruthless, socially assured.

Other imagined meetings – Frayn’s Copenhagen, Bennett’s spy plays – benefit from brevity: at a tight 90-minutes this would have had twice the power. It may yet have. It was worth seeing, though.

***Moments of real credible connection... Evgenia becomes ever more central***



# Winter Holiday on stage

**A new stage adaptation of ‘Winter Holiday’ is to be premiered in Shrewsbury, 16-19 February.**

**Writer/director Chris Eldon Lee talked to Signals during rehearsals**



Chris declares his intention is to be completely loyal to the book... but also as innovative as possible. So – “for the first time”, says Chris, we will see Arthur Ransome himself portrayed on stage. “He’ll be explaining how he personally watched the lake freeze over when he was a boy, and how his own memories wove themselves into his story.”

Chris has also drawn upon Ransome’s letters, including one to his daughter Tabitha, where he likens her turning 18 to watching the first act of a new play. “And when Captain Flint finally turns up at the houseboat declaring himself to be ‘jiggered’, it’s ‘Ransome’ himself playing the part.”

This is to be an age-blind production (as was the Bristol Old Vic’s memorable *Swallows and Amazons*). “It gives the producer several advantages,” explains Chris. “We can use very experienced actors – it also means Roger has grey hair and a certain girth... and already the humour to be had of grown-ups playing children is emerging.

“They will have a new batch of ‘snow shanties’ to sing, and in a rather radical move, you may be pleased to learn that we’re calling Titty, Titty.”

Condensing the novel has proved quite a challenge. “The action inevitably speeds up. The scenes fly by. Projected scenery has helped, but the

question remains, what do you project?” Chris found inspiration in the cover of Gabriel Woolf’s audio book. “It features a colour-wash version of Ransome’s own landscape drawing of the frozen-in *Fram*. I love Arthur’s naïve illustrations, so the scenery we plan to use is Ransome’s own, and where we need extra scenes, a professional artist will faithfully fill the gaps in Ransome’s own style.

“This device also means we can project the map of the lake, the north/south cone code and Nancy’s dancing semaphore figures, allowing the audience to decode it all with the explorers.

“It’s part of TARS folklore that *Winter Holiday* is everybody’s favourite book, and it’s certainly

mine... My BBC Radio 4 career often meant being away at Christmas and I’d always pack a copy as cosy comfort reading. Last winter we all needed a little more comfort and I dug it out again. I had been

working on another play at the time but, rather like showing the parrot its feathers, it suddenly occurred to me that my favourite *Swallows and Amazons* book would make an excellent play.

“Like many, I’ve been a fan since the BBC’s black and white series in 1963. Ransome’s dialogue has run through my blood ever since and consequently runs, unadulterated, through this new stage version.”

But Chris confesses to having changed the ending. “Well, yes, marginally. The book does tend to dribble away, and a play requires a firm ‘closing’. But you won’t find any Russian Spies or Flying Boats here; just one of Dick’s dreams coming true.”

**Tickets for ‘Winter Holiday’ at Shrewsbury’s Theatre Severn are available on 01743 281281 or on-line at [www.theatresevern.co.uk](http://www.theatresevern.co.uk) The production is being supported by The Prince Rupert Hotel which is handy for the theatre. For accommodation, please ring 01743 499955.**



*“Ransome’s dialogue has run through my blood”*

Chris Eldon Lee



## OTHER AR ENTITIES 4: THE ARTHUR RANSOME TRUST

# ART's vision of the future

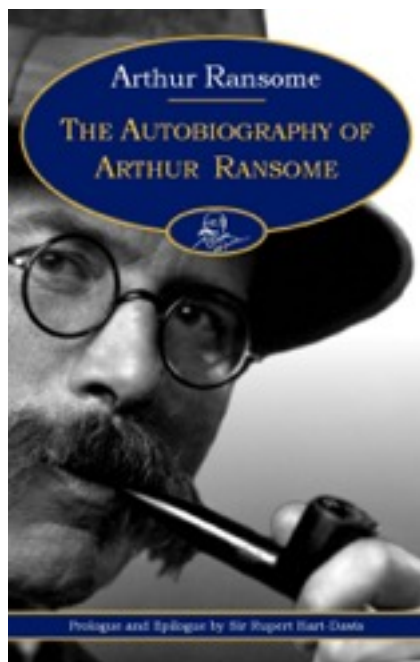
ART's ultimate aim is a 'Ransome home' but there's work to do now  
Peter Willis talks to its co-founder Geraint Lewis



From top:  
An outdoor lakeside pop-up show

'Russian' exhibition with pull-up banners

Uniform edition Autobiography



What, actually, is the point of ART, the Arthur Ransome Trust? And does it pose some sort of competition to TARS? Emphatically not: its purpose is entirely complementary.

ART's primary objective is to create a permanent Arthur Ransome Centre in the Lake District. It's something that its small group of founders believes is essential, and will become more so in the future.

"As time goes on, the generation who grew up reading Ransome is beginning to die out," says its co-founder and trustee Geraint Lewis. "Through to the 1970s he was a go-to children's author, but began fading in the 80s. If you want a lot of people to know about him, to find out about his life and works, you probably need an 'attraction' for them to visit." Beatrix Potter, William Wordsworth and John Ruskin all have 'homes' in the Lake District. Ruskin is hardly a household name, yet his home, Brantwood, is now a museum which prior to Covid was attracting 35,000 people a year.

### Planting a flag

The act of setting up ART back in 2010 was akin to planting a flag in the ground around which people could rally. "We had a clear idea of what we were starting with (virtually nothing); a good idea of what we felt the Ransome and wider world could benefit from (a permanent, dedicated Ransome Centre in the Lake District), and a general appreciation of the magnitude of the challenge in getting from one to the other - a course that would undoubtedly be beset by obstacles, some unidentifiable and unquantifiable in advance.

"Our belief was, and is, that doing so would make fulfilment of our vision possible, whereas sitting back would achieve nothing." Geraint is fond of quoting explorer Sir Ranulph Fiennes: "Don't be put off by all the apparent obstacles. The very act of starting the ball rolling will shift quite a few of them."

A decade further on, and this is becoming increasingly apparent. ART has certainly not been sitting in camp waiting for donations or for an ideal, and somehow affordable, property to drop into its lap.

### Publishing Ransome

Instead, it has got on with fulfilling its charitable objective of educating the public in Ransome's life and works. It now publishes some of Ransome's books that do not currently attract mainstream commercial publishers. Surprisingly, these include Ransome's own *Autobiography* and *Old Peter's Russian Tales*, but there are also a couple of curios from Ransome's earlier output: *The Elixir of Life*, an early attempt at a Gothic novel, and, in the last few months *A History of Storytelling*, which comes with an introduction by Philip Pullman. All in an attractive uniform edition.

As Geraint, who is a former TARS chairman and also an executor of the Arthur Ransome Literary Estate, explains: "What the Literary Estate and ART hope to see, in time, is a cumulative benefit from publishing a number of works under one banner. Together they may achieve more visibility than if scattered individually across multiple publishers. ART, as a not-for-profit charity, can apply a different

business model to a commercial publisher. We can emphasise quality, including commissioning new introductions for each book. Our primary aim is to keep Ransome's books in print, rather than to profit from them. We are aiming to make the project self-sustaining, in time, by designating the income raised from sales for new publications and reprints."

ART has also mounted a couple of significant exhibitions: *The Art of Arthur Ransome* at Brantwood, and one on his Russian period at the Ruskin Museum in Coniston, plus frequent pop-up displays at local and Ransome-related events. A further exhibition is planned for next summer.

## Technology-based way

There is also the promise of "a novel, technology-based way to help the public explore and understand Ransome's life and works," on which ART is currently working. "We intend to make this available for everyone, free-of-charge," says Geraint. "Doing so will be an ongoing cost for ART, but one entirely in line with the Trust's charitable, public benefit remit. All being well, we expect to launch this in the spring."

These key activities can be found, along with a lot of other information, on ART's very nice website. With its low-key graphics and pleasant, slightly self-deprecating literary style, it's a good place to spend some browse-time. There's a consistent design theme, based on the brown/green logo of *Swallow* sailing towards Wild Cat Island, and it picks this up in the series of pop-up banners which sometimes decorate TARS AGMs.

## Complementary

The two organisations – ART and TARS - are in fact entirely complementary. "ART is doing something TARS isn't set up to do," says Geraint who – as mentioned – has held office in both organisations (Helen Lewis, his wife and a fellow trustee, is also Secretary of TARS Northern Region). TARS is essentially a member-benefit club that can probably never qualify as a charity, while ART is all about conveying to the public the benefit of discovering and enjoying Arthur Ransome's fascinating life and works. It has supporters, rather than members, who so far gain little beyond an occasional email newsletter and the satisfaction of having helped ART, plus the future prospect of a Ransome Centre.

The other side of ART's work, behind the scenes, involves in-depth research into the many requirements of what they refer to as "a Ransome Home". "We're looking at innovative ways to



establish a dedicated Ransome Home," Geraint explains. "We've considered a dozen or so properties in the Coniston and Windermere areas, including Lanehead. None of these proved feasible at the time they became available, but looking at them has not been wasted effort. Our experiences have helped us identify at least some of those hidden obstacles. Consequently we've been able to develop and refine our ideas, both on how to

get from our start point to the end vision, and on what that vision might look like."

Five years ago ART received a £25,000 legacy from the estate of Roger Wardale, founder member and former chairman of TARS, and a prolific writer on Ransome.

Some of this money has already been invested in hiring specialists to assist with a feasibility study. "Once this is completed we'll be in a position to approach organisations and individuals with whom we'll need to work in order to make our 'Ransome Home' a reality. These include local authorities and partner organisations capable of providing the space, facilities and resources we'll need. Based on our current progress - and on the assumption that our plans are supported - we expect to make our project public and to seek additional support within the next couple of years."

## A game-changing legacy

More recently – within last few weeks in fact, and after the interviews for this article were largely completed – an even larger legacy has reached ART. The estate of the late Tony Parslow, a keen TARS member who died at the end of 2019, which involved the sale of a house, has finally been sorted out. Apart from some small bequests to friends and relations, his will directed that the residue be divided equally between ART and the Nancy Blackett Trust. This has resulted in £150,000 for each organisation. (ART also received Tony's collection of Ransome and other children's books.)

It is, says Geraint, a potential game changer. "It will mean we can approach organisations and potential donors with not only a vision and detailed plan, but also with a significant proportion of the funds required already in hand. This is another example of ART's proactive strategy in action: take a step; build momentum, credibility and public visibility; attract support; apply that support to a new, larger step."

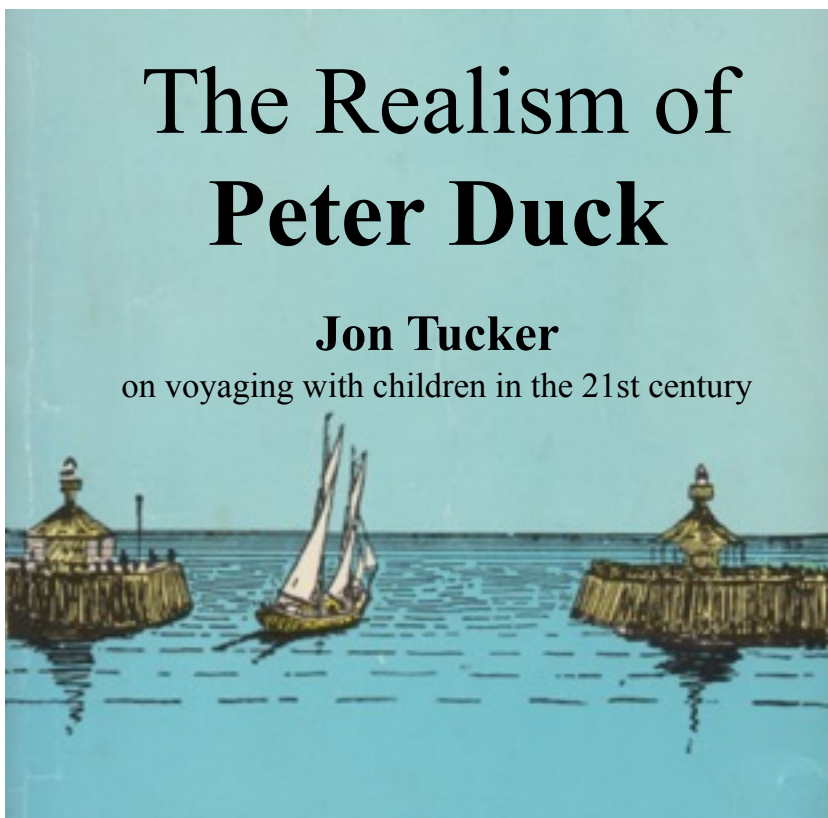
To keep in touch with ART, visit its website [arthur-ransome-trust.org.uk](http://arthur-ransome-trust.org.uk) and sign up for Artefacts, its occasional e-newsletter



# The Realism of Peter Duck

Jon Tucker

on voyaging with children in the 21st century



Many readers have disregarded *Peter Duck* as sheer fantasy, unworthy of linking with the ten credible adventures of the S&A series. However ever since my childhood I have been drawn by the sheer realism of much of this novel. Embedded in a framework which unashamedly avoids the complications of missed schoolwork, parental anxiety and international red tape, lies a glimpse into Ransome's passage-making experience and his ability to encapsulate the subtleties in such evocative detail.

For those of us who have stood many a dawn watch under sail, it is hard to beat Captain John's first trick at the wheel: "*And then, at last, a faint light began to lift in the eastern sky. Looking north, John could see once more where the sea ended and the land began. The water was no longer black but a dull grey. White tops of waves showed in the dark, moving splashes of white long before the shapes of the waves that carried them could be seen.*"

## Inspired by *Wild Cat*

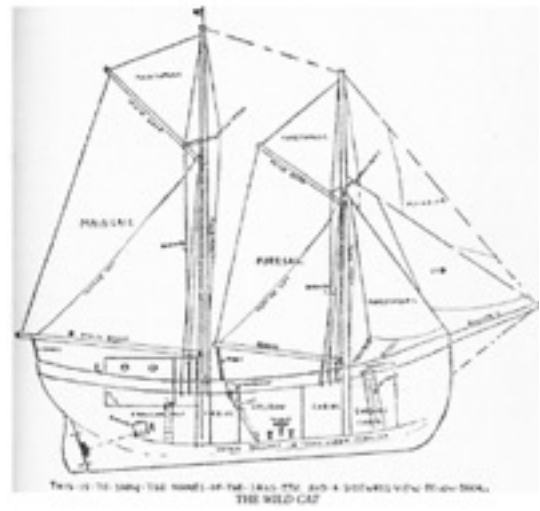
I began my own seagoing life as a youngster in the days of lead-lines, compass steering, paper charts and sextants. We made overnight passages without radios or life-rafts, and harnesses were simply a bowline about our waists. Inspired by *Wild Cat*, I spent endless hours designing a 65-foot gaff-rigged schooner of my own, and when financial reality set in, as I ended my teens, compromised by building a 46-foot gaff ketch instead (*New Zealand Maid*), with my redhaired teenage wife Barbara.

I suspect that many Ransome devotees are unaware of the sheer numbers of children who have crossed oceans during recent decades. Here in New Zealand's northernmost customs port (Opua), where our ketch is currently moored, each summer has seen literally hundreds of foreign sailing vessels converging to sit out the Pacific hurricane season in comparative safety. The sound of children's laughter fills the bay as the dozens of international sailing families re-unite for summer fun in a friendly foreign setting.

Our own five boys grew up with such a lifestyle, sharing watch-keeping duties much as Captains John and Nancy, and mates Susan and Peggy carried out, along with the other vital duties of a voyaging lifestyle.

For two adults, split watch-keeping without self-steering is a punishing schedule. Aboard a 65ft schooner with ongoing sail-management it would not be possible without an eager crew. I have fond memories of a three-day ocean race aboard our ketch to the Chatham Islands in the 1990s, with our crew of keen boys standing watches and taking it upon themselves to set eleven sails simultaneously! From the age of ten our kids were expected to stand helming watches at least once each day.

As I currently re-immense myself in *Peter Duck*, I'm enjoying the finer details of sail-handling and navigation, many of which mirror those of *New Zealand Maid*. Admittedly *Wild Cat*'s main mast is positioned more or less where our mizzen mast stands, however raising sail also entails hauling on throat and peak halyards,



Above, left: The Tuckers' self-built 46ft gaff ketch *New Zealand Maid* off Crab Island; right, Rig of the *Wild Cat*, thought to be based on a 65ft Baltic Trader. Below: Practice with the halyards on *Wild Cat*

staysail and jibs, and topsails as well. Coastal passages when our boys were the S&A ages required them to count flashes and plot transits on paper charts just as Captain Flint and Nancy were doing as they passed the light-ships during chapter VIII. One can almost imagine Ransome with his stopwatch on a down-channel passage aboard *Nancy Blackett*, timing the East Goodwin and South Foreland beacons as the red or green sidelights of shipping passed close by.

Ransome avoided the messy business of using the ship's head, however he made sure his young crew maintained cleanliness, just as we expected of our own boys.

Ransome certainly did his homework well. The voyage of *Wild Cat* followed the accepted track of most west-bound Atlantic voyagers, making their 1,500 nautical-mile southings across the Bay of Biscay to the vicinity of the Canaries, then running their 2,600 mile westings to the Caribbean via the trade winds. Three of my grandsons covered this



route just before the Covid era struck, in our son Josh's 50ft production sloop. It is an impressive voyage for *Wild Cat* to have covered without stopping. Ransome deliberately avoids many references to the daily run distances, but the outwards passage is likely to have taken close to four weeks. Aboard *New Zealand Maid*, our longest time out of sight of land was five weeks, and as for most current sailing children, schoolwork was part of the equation.

### 'The tyranny of the helm'

The majority of contemporary voyaging families, like our sons and grandsons, utilise a 'distance education' programme, made easier by the widespread use of auto-pilots (which release parents and children from the tyranny of the helm) and even satellite internet. However home schooling is still widespread, along the lines of *Wild Cat's* casual programme which related to immediately applicable problem-solving and observation. John and Nancy were busy with celestial navigation mathematics while Susan and Peggy calculated the dwindling food and water rations. All the young crew will have benefited from the rope-handling and seamanship lessons from their mentors – old Peter and young Bill – and there was so much of nature also to be observed – fish, weather and birdlife.

These experiences were much the same as the ones of voyaging children in more recent decades, although our own boys had the benefit of a substantial library aboard to help pass the time.

Exotic destinations like Crab Island are not as fanciful as some readers might believe. Our kids and grandkids have delighted in the fun of husking coconuts and hunting for Caribbean crabs just like Ransome's fictional kids.

Certainly to me and my family, *Peter Duck* is more fact than fiction.

## Juniors! Join the Log Book scheme, and make it to Captain!

**The TARS Junior Log Book scheme, devised and designed by Bobbie Wilson, was introduced several years ago to provide added interest for juniors and as a way of encouraging them to attend events. It was pioneered in the Midlands region where it has been very successful, before being rolled out to all regions.**

As a Junior TAR, you are issued with a log book and badge and start out as a Ship's Boy. You then have to complete five challenges (mainly through attending events) to attain the rank of Able-Seaman. You are then issued with a new log book and work towards becoming a Mate, and the process is repeated to finally reach Captain.

The five challenges are:

- An Adventure Event,
- A Nautical Event,
- A Discovery Event,
- A Free Choice Event,
- Titty's Challenge (an art or craft event).

To achieve Mate or Captain status there are additional challenges: Susan's and John's.

Most regional events fall within one of these categories and as Juniors attend and complete an activity, their books are signed off by the event organiser. All Midlands events are already flagged with their Event type (have a look at The Gulch) and hopefully all future regional and other activities will be flagged in *Signals* with the appropriate challenge logo.



Congratulations to Martha (left) and Aurora (right) Blue who have successfully completed all the challenges in the Junior Log Book scheme. They were duly presented with their Captains' badges at a Midlands walk on Alderley Edge in July by Jane Wilson and Peter Wright.

The new-look web site has been very successful in attracting new juniors and families and interest in the Log Books has had a boost. We even have a junior in Germany keen to take part in the scheme even though he cannot attend events in this country.

Until recently Juniors had their badges and log books presented as they attended their first event. Now, though, as new juniors join the society, they are sent their own welcome letter along with their first log book and Ship's Boy badge.

These are posted out by Amanda Ardagh-Walter who has recently taken over co-ordinating the scheme. So, we encourage all Juniors to take up the Log Book challenge, look at the regional programmes and join in – it's a great way to make friends too!

Contact Amanda at  
nickandamanda1558  
@gmail.com

or 01453 791056





# What we did for (some of) our Challenges

## by Aurora and Martha Blue

### Aurora reports:

My older sister Martha and I have now completed the Junior log book challenge! It has taken us between 4-6 years and all over the country, from the Norfolk Broads to the English Lake District, Wales and beyond. I forget how many. We've trekked, sailed, rowed, swum, sung, outdoor-cooked, made art, made friends, shot arrows, tobogganed, toured and talked ... and talked! And we've met a lot of interesting and lovely people along the way. From 'Ship's Boy' all the way to Captain-badge we have enjoyed the challenges and will treasure the log books as mementoes. These are some of the challenges I completed:

**For Titty's Challenge:** I drew a sketch of winter trees using charcoal, which I sent to *The Outlaw* magazine. It was very messy, but pleasant!

**For a Nautical Event:** I went to a Rudyard sail-camp, and there I rowed, sailed, kayaked and canoed! Which was great fun! I learned a lot that day - it was the first time I had rowed or sailed and so it was a challenge at first, particularly getting in and out, but I soon got the hang of it!

**For Susan's Challenge:** I cooked baked potatoes on a campfire at Coniston. It was very difficult at first to know when to take them out of the fire but we all got the hang of knowing when to take them off, through trial-and-error, and how to not burn our fingers when doing so!

**For an Adventure Event:** I went to the Archery day, which is now my favourite TARS event! I really enjoy seeing if I can hit the targets, trying again and again to hit the bulls eye. It was also very fun sneaking around the woods and having a go at shooting at different-themed targets.

### Martha's Favourite Challenges:

**For The Nautical Event:** I journeyed to Wales and on to Bala Lake with my father and sister, and despite the fairly cool, wet weather and



breezy wind we had a great time, tackling the stormy lake on various craft including a sailing dinghy and kayak. We also perfected our skills at making camp in the rain and explored the shoreline.

### For The Discovery Event:

I visited the M.A.D. Museum in Stratford Upon Avon, Warwickshire, which is the country's only permanent venue for mechanical art, apparently. Inside was filled with mad and marvellous creations made of metal, plastic, glass, sand, and wood, from mechanical drawing automatons to marble runways and absurd clocks of enormous size. There was even a chance to create your own marble run with specially-crafted

pieces of wood that could be fitted to a magnetic wall!

This was followed by a trail-and-quiz guided by Peter Wright.

**For The Discovery Event:** We travelled to Birmingham for the Russian Day, a fun-filled day with everything Russian-themed. We made potato-print bags, discussed Old Peter's Russian Tales, learnt the Russian alphabet and ate Russian food including Russian black bread and Russian honey cake, soups and various other wonderful and exotic foods.

**For The Free Choice:** I remember the Winter Holiday-themed TARS IAGM 2017, Hemel Hempstead, where we camped for a number of (hot) nights. I enjoyed a variety of activities from Ice Skating to tobogganing, decoding messages and stargazing; we cooked and sang songs around the campfire and completed a cake-baking challenge for the Susan Cooking Cup, presented by Sophie Neville – which we won! Of course, neither the fun nor the cake were to last! It was a busy whirl of a long weekend and there was quite a crowd. We just about managed to succeed in land-sailing on Paul Green's land-yachts – although I recall my dad rolling off into a tree when we sort of lost control!

**Thanks to Bobbie and Jane for designing the Log Book Challenge!**

# TARS Library Winifred Wilson

## Swallows and Armenians exhibition



Soon after the Scottish Literary Day in October, Paul and I had a week's break in a cottage near Hexham, Northumberland, well timed to attend the postponed talk and exhibition in Hexham's newly refurbished Queen's Hall. We were greeted by Karen Babayan, whose book of the same title is of course in TARS Library, and met one other Tar, Liz Haworth, among a good 20 or so visitors.

The special exhibition space is on the ground floor at the front of the building, and there were even more pictures to see upstairs. The welcoming atmosphere was enhanced by soft music playing, accompanying a video on a small screen, showing the kind of dance we were to be introduced to later in the afternoon. Refreshments were also served while we had an initial look round at the pictures and other items, including a small model of a sailing dinghy such as the Swallows – and the Altounyan children – sailed. The video also portrayed some of the paintings on show in the room.

Karen introduced us to her subject – the relationship between Arthur Ransome and the family he befriended at Lanehead, the Collingwoods and Altounyans, *alias* the 'Walker' family – the Swallows of the books. If any newer members of TARS are unaware of this relationship, do get in touch, and we can point you in the direction of many books and articles on these important connections. Karen herself is Anglo-Armenian, as were the real children, and there were others present with similar backgrounds, including the son of the real Titty, Asadour Guzelian.



After the talk, Karen introduced us to her friend Shakeh Major Tchilingirian, who told us about the Armenian tradition of circle-dancing. During the centenary year of the Armenian massacre in 1915, Shakeh created her own circle dance in memory of those who died, and she has introduced it to many groups since then. Shakeh demonstrated the

simple steps to us although, because of Covid-19, she said that we would not be holding hands, as is the tradition. It was all so gentle and simple that even my non-dancing husband was quite willing to participate!



Titty's palette

Afterwards, we met a lady called Zena, an Anglo-Indian woman, who was brought up in Ambleside, and was an extra in the 1974 film of Swallows & Amazons. She was one of the inspirations for Karen's book, when Zena told her that, as a child, she had overheard the film crew discussing how they could disguise Zena's dark skin – even though the original children known to Ransome had very similar colouring, coming as they did from the same part of the world. The Swallows and the Amazons were, of course, quintessential British children for the purposes of the story.



It was a privilege to see the many paintings by members of the Collingwood and Altounyan families, lent for the occasion by Asadour and his sister Rahel, who sadly was unable to be present. Some of them were familiar as reproductions in books, but seeing them in reality was quite different. Upstairs, a whole end wall was taken up by paintings of Titty Altounyan, some of them self-portraits in her later years. There was also one of Arthur Ransome, done by Dora

Collingwood when they were both young. But the stars of the show were W. G. Collingwood's small painting of a swallow – the bird! – and Dora's portrait of the young Titty. It was quite difficult to photograph them because of the lighting in the rooms – unless one was a professional photographer like Asadour Guzelian, last seen setting up a portrait of Shakeh,



asking her to pose as though she were leading the dance. Karen also showed some of her own interpretations of those paintings, and of original photographs of Lanehead in the Collingwoods' time there, as well as the little model boat, with its picture of the Altounyan children on the sail.

While I was talking with Zena, Paul discovered the public library in another part of the building, and came to tell me I must have a look at it. What a splendid building for a library! It made us quite envious, not just for our own local libraries, but even for TARS Library!



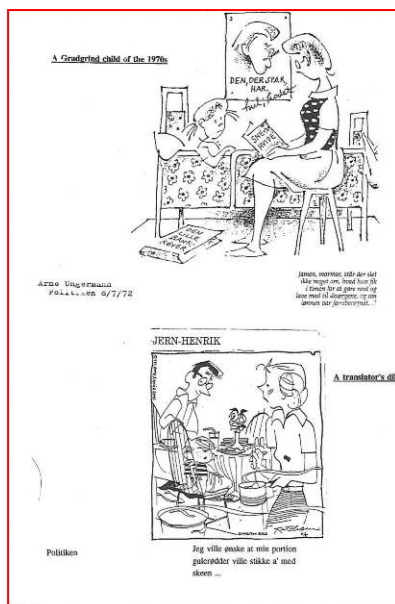


### Among the items which were given to TARS

by the Lupton family after Helen's death earlier this year (see pp. 36-37 of the September–December 2021 issue of *Signals* for Krysia Clack's article, 'Relics of a Ransome family'), the Library acquired two books and a journal with interesting connections to Arthur Ransome.

The books are Ernest Raymond's *The nameless places*, which Krysia refers to in her article, and *Eugénie*, by Hester W. Chapman, which bears on the cover a small post-it note saying 'review copy for Arthur Ransome'. I very much enjoyed reading the latter book, which is a fictionalised account of the life of the Empress Eugénie of France, about whom I knew nothing beforehand.

The journal *Angles on the English speaking world*, no. 6, 1992, published by The English Department of Copenhagen University contains some articles written in Danish and some in English. One of the latter has two cartoons about the difficulties of translation but, as it has speech bubbles in Danish, they are lost on me, although I enjoyed reading the article itself, 'Childhood reading as a shaping force,' by Ingeborg Nixon. By coincidence, this was the main thrust of Carol Hogarth's talk at the Scottish Literary Day on 16 October, reported on by Sandy Allan in this issue.



The journal was given to Arthur and Helen Lupton by Lis Christensen in November 1997, as it contains an article by her – 'Notes on Arthur Ransome and the Danish translation of *Swallows and Amazons*'. In 10 pages of text and 3 of bibliography and notes, as one would expect from the provenance of the journal, this is a scholarly article, and Lis makes it clear that she is not impressed by the work of the translator in the late 1950s. Her analysis reminds me of some of the comments made on the

Later in the week, we returned to the Queen's Hall for another look at the exhibition. As we approached the building, I saw two ladies examining the poster outside, and heard them wondering aloud what it was all about, so of course I told them, and they found time to go inside for a look round. The older of the two knew about Ransome, but had never read the books, but the younger one said she had loved them as a child. Later, as we looked round again, we saw a man taking detailed notes in a small notebook!

French translations of Ransome's books by Eva Hovorková Týlová in the 2021 Library Update:

... the translation does little to justify to Danish readers the esteem in which Ransome the story-teller is still held in England. There is no tampering with the plot, it is true ... but there are changes of style and diction throughout that are not far from turning Ransome's distinguished volumes into just any run-of-the-mill juvenile fiction.

After a brief outline of the twelve books, Lis remarks:

In the long run, however, it is perhaps above all the narrative voice of the author and his handling of dialogue that makes it a life-long delight to read his books, and makes him stand head and shoulders above his contemporaries among writers for children, as critics are fond of saying. There is no fine writing, and no flummery. Ransome's portrayal of character and event is sober and matter-of-factual, his humour tongue-in-cheek.

She gives the 'famous first paragraph of *Swallows and Amazons*', followed by her own rough back-translation from the Danish version. Here is a flavour of it:

Roger was a cheerful little fellow of seven. At the moment he was playing games. This took place on the steep field that sloped down towards the lake from the farm, Holly Howe, where his mother and brother and sisters were staying for the summer holidays. He was quite lost to the world. In big zig-zags he hared over the field, first to one of the walls surrounding it, then to the other, – as if he was embroidering with gigantic stitches ...

Need I say more? We know that Ransome could be vitriolic about some of the translations of his books, and I'm not sure if he saw, or could read, these Danish ones but, if he did, I hate to think of the consequences to his state of mind and health!

The Library does not currently have any Danish translations, but if you would like to know which ones we do have, please see the Catalogue on the website. A lockdown project was to list all of the translations separately from those in English, with headings for each language represented. Look for 'Ransome, Arthur' in the alphabetical list, and there at the end of a long list you will find them.





# Hoathwaite '21

was all about... camping, sailing, swimming, hiking, climbing – to the island, round the island (John style) and of course to the summit of Kanchenjunga (only a day late) And sheep, apparently. Here are five pages of memories....

... starting with Sebastian Parsons:

Obviously, all I can think of is the trip to The Island, but being an AP, I keep my counsel. We arrive, make camp, listen to rain, all evening and night. So the next day to distract from the frustration, the steam train. Excellent, but not The Island.

Wow, maybe I'm not the only one suffering, as the Day 2 campers, woken at around 6:30am by the Sea Dog greeting the Camp Sheep, quickly decide to waste no more time and visit Wild Cat Island that day and without delay.

Additionally, a distinctly discernible frisson of excitement ripples back and forth through the camp. *Swallow*, yes the actual *Swallow*, yes, from the film. No, the 1974 film. Not the actual *Swallow* then? Yes, well, anyway, *Swallow*, is coming to the Island too - would meet us there!

A planning hubbub on the beach shoots boats out at regular intervals loaded with eager crews. The first to go is *Little Bridgie*, fully laden with Brendan, Oliver and the Sea Dog (Sky). They row sweep and spend surprisingly little time spinning in circles.

Nick, boarding his former command *Gibber* (as Admiral now), and impressed by her



fresh paintwork – applied by its new command Capt. Theo (14) and Mate Chloe (9) – sets off next.

A new addition to the TARS camp, the intriguingly named *Windy Wendy*, an ancient Enterprise, soon follows, also loaded to the gunwales. The helm distracts his new crew from the sight of *Coniston* herself swooshing towards us by asking who has sailed to The Island before, whilst frantically tying the self-bailer closed with his left hand.

The weather is lovely, although the wind is against





us. Tacking up the lake the Bermudan rigged boats steadily pulled ahead of those with sails more traditionally rigged. But it didn't matter because before long we were all assembled on the Island, stomping here and there, munching our sandwiches and generally feeling very cheerful.

A complex operation had to be launched to fetch two particularly piratical brothers (well, to be strictly honest, just like N and P, one – OK, it was Marc Grimston – was rather more piratical than the other) from the shore. Brendan and Oliver, sat amidships and pulling hard, made rapid progress towards the nearest, but wrong, shore. However, Brendan being at heart an old fashioned sort of fellow, had refused to switch his phone on for the whole holiday! Eventually they found their passengers some distance to the North and whisked them back.

The ferry was in action again before the day was out, this time taking the Chairman back to shore for an important meeting with some natives. Not having to locate the passengers speeded the round-trip considerably, which was just as well, as the new team were nothing like as competent at rowing as the crew they relieved!

The return to camp was speedy with the wind behind us. The weather had held all day, the air was full of light, the mountains dramatic and the lake - well the lake was The Lake, the island was The Island, and I for one, was very happy indeed.



Opposite page: *Swallow* with Zachy Barnsdale as Roger: Above: left, *Swallow*, with Nick Ardagh-Walter helming; right, Brendan and Oliver rowing *Serendipity*

Centre: The Island!, and the not-so-secret harbour crammed with boats. Below: Back at Coniston: nearest, *Peggy Blackett* with Helen Lewis, then *Gibber*, a *Signet*, then *Swallow*  
Photos by Sebastian Parsons





## Hoathwaite '21

# The ascent of Kanchenjunga

**On 11th August 1931, the Swallows and the Amazons climbed Kanchenjunga. On 12th August 2021, nine hardy Tars did the same**



Inclement weather on Thursday 11<sup>th</sup> August meant postponement of the anniversary attack on the Old Man for 24 hours, writes *Peter Wright*. As Friday dawned fair and clear, this proved a wise move. Five brave souls

decided on the longest walk, and leaving from our Hoathwaite campsite soon picked up Kryisia at her B&B in Little Arrow.

A beautiful walk up Torver Beck, past old quarry workings, gave us a grand view of our chosen route, via the Walna Scar Road, then up to the Buck Pike ridge and Dow crags, dropping down to Goat's Hause before the final ascent to the summit of Kanchenjunga.

At Torver Bridge on the Walna Scar Road we picked up three more of the party who had parked at the top car park and the walk became decidedly more upwards. The ridge walk provided magnificent 360-degree views, including to the Scafell range, Morecambe bay and the Duddon estuary.

The hardy ones did a little scrambling to "bag" the Buck Pike and Dow Crag summits and then, dropping out of the wind, we found a sheltered spot for lunch. Being suitably refreshed helped our final assault on the summit and with each going at their own pace all nine of us successfully reached the top.

Needless to say, we were not alone and it was good be able to talk to other Ransome families who had approached from the more popular Coppermines route. One father and son were thrilled when we were able to point out Trout Tarn to them and tell them how to find it - something they said they would do the next day. The views were grand although not quite clear enough to see the Isle of Man!

Time-honoured photographic proof of our ascent was taken and then we signed a paper and along with a suitable coin this was hidden in a tin in the cairn at the summit. Alas we were unable to find the small brass box from Queen Victoria's Diamond Jubilee, but we suspected it was still there, well hidden.

The descent was via the ever-popular main route from Coniston via Low Water, the old copper mine workings and the final pleasant woodland walk into Coniston, where magically, the Sun Inn appeared. In good Ransome tradition we enjoyed a well-earned restorative drink. A few hardy souls even managed the walk via the lake back to the campsite – about 12 miles in total.





## Hoathwaite '21

### Swimming round the Island, just as John did

Three of us set ourselves the challenge to swim around Wild Cat (or Peel) Island as John does after his unsuccessful attempt to pass the message from the Billies on to Captain Flint. Peter, Krysia and I set off early by canoe.

Beaching it at the landing place, we quickly changed into swimming gear and set off on our circumnavigation. Following John's route we headed south using side stroke, rather unfamiliar these days, but that was his choice of stroke. When we reached the southerly tip of the island we switched, as John did, to breast stroke. From here we could look into the secret harbour – not so very secret these days and when we passed it was full of all sorts of small boats.

Continuing with breast stroke we swam up the western shore of the island and near the top we were hailed by Diana Wright, asking if we wanted to stop, much as John was by Susan. But no, it was an easy swim and we were enjoying ourselves, so we carried on. At the top of the island we rolled onto our backs to emulate John's choice of backstroke for this section of the swim.

One thing that is not mentioned in *Swallows and Amazons* is that there are many submerged rocks off the northern shore, so we found we were running ourselves aground from time to time and gave up the backstroke rather quickly.

Very soon we were turning south again and back at the landing place – our circumnavigation successfully completed, just like John's. *Jane Wilson*



### Hoathwaite Hike: Trout Tarn

On Wednesday afternoon, four of us set out to find Trout Tarn (Beacon Tarn on the OS map). Parking at Water Yeat, we made our way along a well-marked track, past Greenholme farm and up over the shoulder of Slatestone Fell. A short walk through the bracken and heather alongside Tarn Beck and suddenly a sheet of open water hove into view – Trout Tarn. It was just as described by Ransome and it wasn't hard to imagine John and Susan fly fishing up the tarn whilst Roger and Titty landed the grandfather trout before us. The Clifford Web illustration (left) really does justice to the landscape and setting.

Heading north along the Cumbria Way, we came to a Swallowdale contender (below, right). Certainly, there is a large flat valley bottom with a stream flanked by the Blawith fells, but the valley was far too wide, pretty much all marsh and didn't have the requisite waterfalls at either end. We did, however, spot two or three really good contenders for Watch Tower Rock. Brief rain showers did not deter us and we continued on, veering east towards Coniston Water.

There we picked up the lake side path and with its bracken, rock, pebble beaches and undulations this provided a wearying walk home but the last part through lovely woodland ensured we ended on a high. Two went off in a car to retrieve the other car whilst two, in true Susan fashion, put on the kettle to ensure tea was available for them on return. All in all, a satisfactory 7-mile hike. *Peter Wright*



## Hoathwaite '21

# The adventure unfolds...

*"There are perfectly good folding boats to be bought," said Captain Flint...*  
**Nick Ardagh-Walter** bought two - and took one of them to Hoathwaite, where it caused a lot of interest...

We needed a change from our much-loved old plywood dinghy. Partly its dimensions weren't quite right (Amanda and I are of very different heights). But keeping a wooden boat up to scratch without winter storage out of the weather was proving a slog... What about a *folding* sailing boat? Google quickly told us that there aren't many choices but that Seahoppers have been around for years.

It was difficult to try one out, so we plumped for the middle-of-the-range model, the 7ft 'Lighter' (previously the 'Nifty Fifty'). Its plywood panels fold lengthwise in a 'W' formation, with hinges hidden within a sturdy PVC membrane that keeps it watertight. Folded, it's a thick plank about 50cm wide which one person can put on a roofrack or even in the car.

The W first folds outwards and is then forced into curves by the thwart, which locks in place. A couple more plywood parts clip in, and within a couple of minutes it's a completely rigid and capable little rowing boat with a 'pram' front, side-seats and buoyancy bags. It rows well with folding oars and will take an outboard. Its handy 'skeg' wheel means that no trolley is needed.

## Breezy conditions on Coniston

But sail's the thing, and a standard, if rather simple, gunter rig fits on, together with extra side-seats and buoyancy bag. It's under- rather than over-powered, but in breezy conditions sailed solo on Coniston, it felt predictable as well as pointing into the wind quite well.

It needs a couple of minor tweaks such as moving the jib sheet cleats but behaves well. That was with both jib and mainsail: the mast can be stepped further forward and sailed with just the main, giving a bit more room in the boat. It's also made with a balanced lug rig.

It was a bit small for two, and we then acquired a larger model (the Kondor) which responded well to a major DIY overhaul. This is longer and heavier, and needs two to heave it on and off the car roofrack. But for two, it felt a more realistic size, similar to a Mirror although not quite as capable.

Returning to the construction, the dagger board slot goes *through* the thwart, taking up nearly all of its front-to-back width, and when the mast is in its aft position with both jib and main, and if the kicking strap is in use, the rather lanky crew couldn't move around adequately.

So next time I will have to swallow my go-faster reluctance to reduce sail area, accept the advice of the helpful Seahopper Owners' Facebook Group and put the mast in the forward position. I think it will go just fine.



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# Southern Region

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



15 January

## Birthday Lunch - in London!

For the Arthur's Birthday lunch, this January, I am taking a bit of a risk. Southern TARS don't generally show much interest in London based events, but that's what I'm going for this time. The venues we have used in the past are no longer able to accommodate our group, as I can't research any new ones outside London, I'm going for one I can find.

I am booking a table for lunch at the **Doggett's Coat and Badge, on Saturday 15th Jan. Meeting by 12.00.** There is no set menu, just order a la carte, as you wish, prices are around the £15 mark for a main course.

The pub is a modern building on the South Bank riverside walkway at the southern end of Blackfriars Bridge, so, beside Blackfriars Station, pretty close to Waterloo Station, not that far from London Bridge Station - 1 London, SE1 9UD.

I need to know how many people are coming by 1st January, for booking purposes.

**Contact me on iainkg@gmail.com or 07760 454767.**

24 March

## A Bohemian Walk in Chelsea

**on Saturday 24th March. Starting at 11.00 (am) and including a stop for lunch. Meeting at the bottom of Old Church Street on Cheyne Walk near the river.**

It should be noted that any Tars visiting London who wish to do the Bohemian walk at another time, or pay a visit to the Cutty Sark, Royal Observatory or the Maritime Museum, can contact me directly for an ad-hoc personal tour.

**Iain Khan-Gilchrist**

And thanks to Helena Nelson-Smith for providing the Cobnor photos opposite>>

# Camping - and sailing - at Cobnor

It felt good to meet again at our summer camp in August. We held our 'usual' camp at Cobnor for the first time in a year and a half. We had to make a few adjustments in the present circumstances in how we did things.

But, camping took place, eating took place, sailing took place, night walks in the pitch dark forest took place.

Distant lights were identified, navigation lights were worked out, stars and planets were observed.

There were not a huge number of people, but sufficient for a good time, and roughly an even number of juniors and veterans. Some of our 'juniors' are now old enough to be providing some of the leadership and setting the pace for us elders. It is nice that they are still coming to do this.



Clockwise from top: Mate Corin keeping the crew fed;  
Drascombe Longboat Cruiser "Wild Cat" leads the fleet to  
East Head, with Admiral Diana Wright in command;  
evening paddleboarding in Bosham Channel; general view  
of the camp; Mirror dinghy *Hurrah*, a Cobnor Camp  
veteran, sailed by Corin and Atty

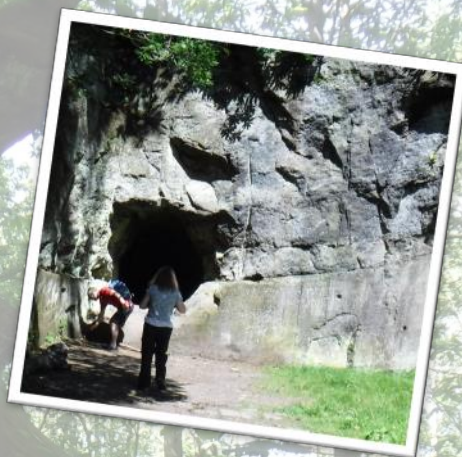






# THE GULCH

NEWS FROM MIDLAND REGION



## FOLKLORE, MINES AND WEIRD STONES!

On a sweltering hot day, 11 Tars gathered at Alderley Edge for a day of gentle walking and exploration. Three themes underpinned all we were to do and see: folklore, mining and Alan Garner's book, *The Weirdstone of Brisingamen*. The day started with Rachel reading us the legend of Alderley Edge in which a farmer unable to sell his white mare at market was waylaid by a stranger who led him to an underground cave in which 120 medieval knights and 119 white mares lay sleeping, awaiting a final white mare to complete their contingent. In return for the horse the farmer was told to take what he wanted from a huge pile of treasure. Tradition has it that the knights (thought to be King Arthur's) are still sleeping underground awaiting a call for when England is in peril and they are needed once more. En-route, we passed Merlin's Well, thought to be the entrance to the cave, with a carving in the stone of Merlin's head and an inscription, "Drink of this and take thy fill for the water falls by the wizard's will".

There has been mining at Alderley Edge for over 4,000 years and the area is riddled with old workings. Throughout our walk we came across and explored numerous quarries, mines (some with rail tracks) and mining debris; we even ventured 40 yards into one that Slater Bob would have been

proud of. Jules kept us informed of the history and names such as Old Alderley and Engine vein quarries, and the Hough Level, with occasional quiz questions linked to AR's books. At one point we were asked to do a spot of pearl diving! By that I mean foraging for small quartz pebbles.

Alderley Edge has magnificent views and many of the outcrops and features have names that were used in Alan Garner's children's book (Alan having been brought up here). As we approached each (Golden Stone, Castle Rock, Windmill Hill and Stormy Point) Esme, Aurora and Martha read the relevant extract from the book. At Beacon Hill (used to warn of the Armada) we practised our own signalling relay using our torches.

After lunch, at an amazing spot with stunning views over the Cheshire plain to Manchester, a highlight of the day was being able to present Martha and Aurora with their Captain badges for successfully completing the Junior Log Book scheme. As we completed what was an excellent walk, many of us succumbed to what is rapidly becoming a Midlands tradition – finishing with ice creams! A great day was had by all, our thanks go to Jules and the Blue family for organising it.

**Peter Wright**



## BASKING IN SEPTEMBER SUNSHINE

On a sunny Saturday in September a large crowd of Midland TARS gathered in Frampton Mansell near Stroud at the wonderful home of Daphne Neville, mother of Sophie Neville, our former president of TARS. We were greeted by Daphne and her otter, Rudi. Daphne, an actor and author, has had several otters over the years and has been hugely involved with otter conservation, even managing to get the government to change the law and bring in the Clean Rivers Act.

During the day we launched a wide variety of watercraft: kayaks, canoes, rowing boats, a sailing boat and a couple of coracles on her lake and even indulged in a spot of wild swimming. Later, back on dry land, Sophie regaled us with tales of the making of the 1974 *Swallows and Amazons* film. Her recollections were added to by Daphne who was a chaperone for the children during the filming, and therefore had an interesting perspective on the production.

We were also joined by Barbara Altounyan, daughter of Roger (the inspiration for Roger Walker). Barbara told us about her parents and their time in Aleppo and visiting her grandparents at Lanehead on the shore of Coniston. She also told us of her charity, The Hospice Biographers, which records audio biographies of people so that their stories are preserved.

The day ended with many taking to the water again. The Juniors organised themselves into races up and back down the lake. This was a thoroughly enjoyable day. Special thanks go to Daphne for hosting us, Sophie, Daphne and Barbara for interesting talks, Peter Wright for organising the event and of course to Rudi the otter who charmed us all!

**Amanda Ardagh-Walter**



## CHUFFING ALONG IN S&A STYLE



We all arrived at Toddington Station for our visit to the Gloucestershire Warwickshire Steam Railway at about 10.30 - a good mix of Juniors and adults and this elderly reviewer! We learnt a bit about the history of the line, including that it is run mainly by volunteers with only six paid employees.

Onto the 11.20 to Cheltenham Racecourse, where there was time for a few photos. We arrived at Winchcombe just before 1pm; some had picnics and a few walked down to the town, a very picturesque Cotswold stone town. From Winchcombe we travelled on to Broadway but that was just a brief stop and so back to Toddington. Some stayed on the train to go round again as they had open tickets.

The weather got better as the day progressed so the view from the train was of delightful Cotswold countryside and beautiful stone houses, both new and old.

My initial recollection of 'the books' was of *Pigeon Post* with the train stopping at Strickland Junction where the porter was calling for Roger Walker to let fly a pigeon from the basket. Also in *Swallowdale* where they came from the south on the train, having been organised by Susan who was very tired the next day.

My granddaughter (non-member) enjoyed herself so perhaps I need to upgrade to family membership!

**R A (Bill) Williams**

# FORTHCOMING EVENTS IN MIDLAND REGION

We hope that these events will be able to take place as programmed, but do keep an eye on the TARS website and contact the event organiser in case changes have had to be made.

## AGM & MUCH MORE

Saturday 15 January

The Midland Region AGM and Junior Parley will be held at 13:00 at Hereford Waterworks Museum. Come and share your ideas for activities that we could enjoy together or join in via Zoom. Juniors will have the opportunity to create their own mini-Outlaw magazine. Arrive by 12.00 and bring a packed lunch.

This will be followed by an illustrated talk by Jenny Wedick about her adventures on tall ships and a tour of the original pumping station which has working steam engines from 1895. A riverside ramble will also be possible for those who would enjoy it. Contact Jules on [julesbluerachel@btinternet.com](mailto:julesbluerachel@btinternet.com) to get further details and directions or the Zoom link.



## TELL US A TALE IN OXFORD

Saturday 12 February

Come to Oxford to explore the Story Museum and enjoy a literary tour of Oxford. Meet at the museum at 10.45 (cost £8 per head, with the fee for Midland Juniors being refunded by the region). Please book your ticket(s) in advance through [storymuseum.org.uk](http://storymuseum.org.uk) - timed about 11.00 and let Sarah Samuel know you will be coming by phoning her on 07952 587273 or e-mailing [sarah@sarahsamuel.plus.com](mailto:sarah@sarahsamuel.plus.com). There is also a city of stories exhibit for an additional £5 each if anyone wants to book this, but you will need to pay for your own Juniors.

To join just for the walking tour, please meet by the museum at about 2pm.

## WINTER HOLIDAY ON STAGE

Saturday 19 February

TARS member Chris Eldon Lee has adapted a play based on AR's book. It runs from 16-19 February at the Severn Theatre in Shrewsbury ([www.theatresevern.co.uk](http://www.theatresevern.co.uk)). Some tickets have been booked for the matinee on Saturday 19 February - please contact Paul Green on [paulmidtars@gmx.co.uk](mailto:paulmidtars@gmx.co.uk) / 01654 791256 / 075639624961 as soon as possible to see if there are any left if you would like to attend, and for more information about the day. The prices are £15 for adults and £5 for children. Midland Juniors will be paid for by the region.

Meet up for lunch and a walk from 12 noon in Shrewsbury and for a pre-show gathering with Chris Eldon Lee at the theatre at 2.15pm before the matinee begins at 3pm.

## AMAZON ARCHERY

Saturday 26 March

Try a day with the Centaura Field Bowmen at Aston-on-Trent near Derby. During the morning they will train us at the butts, then after lunch there will be the opportunity to be escorted around their woodland trail to try our hands at a wide variety of 'animal' targets at different ranges and elevations.

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



## COOTS IN THE NORTH MIDLANDS

Saturday 30 April

Join fellow TARS members at Middleton Lakes RSPB reserve, nestled in the beautiful Tame valley, just south of Tamworth on the Staffordshire/Warwickshire border. We will explore this wildlife haven, with stunning nature trails through woodland, grassland and wetland. There will be lots of wetland birds to see, including heron, sedge warblers and lapwing. A coffee shop and toilets are available.

There will be a *Coot Club* themed quiz with eggy prizes to keep you on your toes.

For further information or to book please get in touch with Jules by e-mailing [julesbluerachel@btinternet.com](mailto:julesbluerachel@btinternet.com)



## GORGE ON RIVERSIDE CAVES

Saturday 21 May

Follow the River Dove, famous for *The Complete Angler* by Sir Isaak Walton and Charles Cotton. Ransome was an angler and wrote many articles on the subject. In keeping with this there will be a fishy quiz to entertain you along the way.

We will walk towards Milldale alongside limestone gorges, several accessible caves, and over stepping stones. The route is approximately 8 miles, but as it goes there and back there is the option for those who want a shorter walk to turn around when they feel ready. At the end of the walk those with energy remaining can climb Thorpe Cloud, 942 feet.

For further information or to register your intention of coming please e-mail [julesbluerachel@btinternet.com](mailto:julesbluerachel@btinternet.com)



Please send copy for the next issue of *The Gulch* to [jane.pippinfort@googlemail.com](mailto:jane.pippinfort@googlemail.com) by 1 February

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



Adventure Event



Nautical Event



Discovery Event



Titty's Challenge  
(Able Seaman Log Book)



Susan's Challenge  
(Mate Log Book)



John's Challenge  
(Captain Log Book)

# EBB & FLOW

## *The Eastern Pages*



### EASTERN REGION PROGRAMME 2022

**January 22nd Saturday: AR's BIRTHDAY LUNCH & AGM.** The Butt & Oyster, Pin Mill (IP9 1JW) Lunch 12.30pm AGM 2pm. 2.30pm Talk by recently-joined Eric Crossfield. Eric's forebears were the well known boatbuilders Crossfields of Arnside, who built the original *Swallow*, and later on *Coch-y-Bonddhu* or Arthur Ransome, who would visit the boatyard from time to time. Rattletraps 3.30pm. Book for lunch with Nicholas Hinde 01371 820054 [sec.east@arthur-ransome.org](mailto:sec.east@arthur-ransome.org).

**March 18th Friday: BRIAN HAMMETT MEMORIAL TALK.** Presented by TARS East and the Nancy Blackett Trust.

**JULIA JONES** on 'Gentlemen, interested in yachting'. The title comes from a call-out for volunteers to the newly-formed Royal Naval Volunteer Supplementary Reserve at the beginning of World War 11. Many amateur yachtsman — notably from the East Coast — responded, and Julia's new book "Uncommon Courage" chronicles their exploits and contributions to the war effort.

.This much postponed event will now take place at the Royal Harwich Yacht Club, IP9 1AT at 6 for 6.30pm, followed by supper 8.00pm.

Tickets: Talk only £12.00. Talk + Supper (Roast Marinated Chicken Breast, Roast Potatoes etc or Beef Lasagna or Vegetarian Lasagna + 'cakebite' and coffee) £29.50.

Tickets on sale via NBT website ([www.nancyblackett.org](http://www.nancyblackett.org)) from 1st January 2022. To request a reminder, please e-mail [peterwillis1144@gmail.com](mailto:peterwillis1144@gmail.com).

Please note that talk capacity is now limited to 60 places due to social distancing; meal capacity is 40. Members of Brian's other clubs, OGA, CA and RHYC are invited to join us.

**May 28th-June 4th: Camp on the Broads.** Dilham, Norfolk. A basic camp site, no electricity hook up but toilets and showers are available. Cost £16 per head per night, children £8 per child per night. If you wish not to bring your own tent they have facilities for Glamping available at a separate cost. Please book in your own name at [canalcamping.co.uk](http://canalcamping.co.uk). Please mention the Arthur Ransome Society when booking, and let Marc Grimston know that you are coming.

If you have a canoe or paddle board they can be launched from the site. Other boats can be launched locally. Hunter's Yard will host us on Wednesday 1st June when they will give us a talk on the history of the Yard and will be holding two half-deckers back for us if we wish to hire them at the time. *Titmouse* will also be in the water for us to "play" with.

There will be loads to do and see around Norfolk so please book in as soon as you can and come and join us. [marcgrimston@gmail.com](mailto:marcgrimston@gmail.com).

**June 25th: SUFFOLK and the SEA** — Part of the Felixstowe Book Festival, including a Ransome related item. Details [felixstowebookfestival.co.uk](http://felixstowebookfestival.co.uk).

**August 26th-29th: IAGM** at Royal Hospital School, Holbrook. Details to follow.





## LITERARY HALF DAY Bury St Edmunds 16th October 2021

Due to a number of Tars having previous engagements, Covid and trouble with acquiring petrol it was felt that it would not be possible to hold the Literary Half Day as planned. It is a shame as this is the second cancellation of the only two events that the Eastern Region had organised this year. The first, a railway trip on the North Norfolk railway had to be cancelled as the railway was closed due to Covid.

### TREASURE ISLANDS

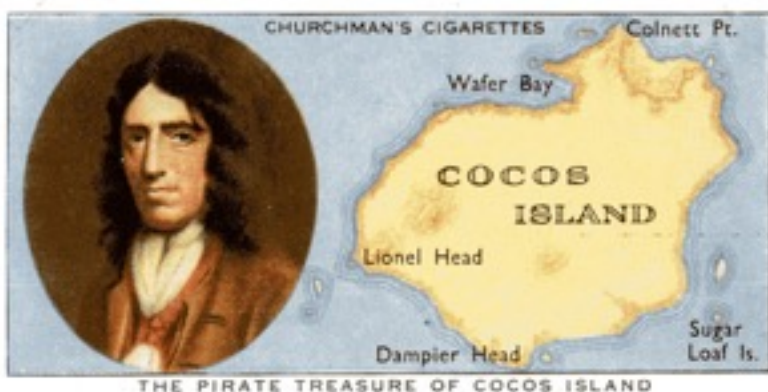
Whether the actress Moira Lister ever read *Peter Duck* I cannot say but Moira aged eleven did find an old treasure map in a secret drawer of her mother's bureau. It was a find she would never forget.

The map was dated 1836, close to the date that General Jose de San Martin's army was approaching Peru's capital Lima. The Church and the city's wealthy inhabitants gathered together their riches and place them on board a British merchantman, the *Mary Dear* under the command of Captain Thompson, bound for Panama. The sheer size of the treasure of gold statues, gold doubloons, pieces of eight, precious gems and three tons of silver was too much for Thomson and his crew to resist and in true Black Jake fashion they murdered the six Lima guards and the two priests accompanying the rich cargo and sailed off to bury the treasure on Cocos Island 300 miles off the Costa Rican coast. The very island on Moira's ancient map.

The villains were caught and hanged except for Captain Thompson and the first mate who proposed to show the authorities the whereabouts of the treasure. Once on the island they escaped into the interior and were never seen again.

Other earlier pirates had visited the island and some were reputed to have buried their ill gotten treasure there. Henry Morgan, after sacking Panama, the gentleman pirate Edward Davis with William Dampier, privateer, pirate, explorer, Royal Navy captain and naturalist (the only pirate to have his portrait painted), the Portuguese Benito Bonito and Captain Bennett Graham around 1818.

Over the years more than 500 adventurers have dug for the treasure including Sir Malcolm Campbell and Erroll Flynn.



Sylvester Stallone's Rambo character was based. She took to Gritz instantly. He asked for £3000 up front then a further £4000. A series of bizarre letters containing pseudo-military speak he finally asked for £64000 to fund some strange African venture that would fund the whole Cocos Island expedition.

With her husband in intensive care having suffered a stroke Moira was at a low ebb and handed over the money without thinking it through. She never saw Gritz or the money again.

Finally in 1986 Moira mustered a new crew and sailed for Cocos Island in the schooner *Victoria*.



Never losing sight of her dream, Moira left her native South Africa aged 18 and came to London to start a long career on the stage, radio ( she was in the first series of Hancock's Half Hour), films and television. In her career she played opposite Noel Coward, Bob Hope, Rex Harrison and Ray Milland and many more. One evening at a Hollywood party Moira was talking to Christopher Lee telling him about her quest and pirate treasure he suggested as an expedition leader, Bo Gritz, an ex US colonel and Vietnam veteran, on which

Landing on a treasure island sounds romantic but Cocos Island was real, not a dream. It was hot, with torrential rain, thick forest, towering cliffs and huge waves breaking on a black sandy shore. Under foot were scorpions and rats with wild boar in the forest. The island has since been cleaned up and is now a UNESCO World Heritage Site because of its divergent and unique habitat and has become a successful tourist attraction. Which rather spoils the island's historical allure.

Several individuals including Moire friend Victor Hervey, Marquess of Bristol whose widow loaned Moira her husband's copy of the map (strange there were so many copies) after Moire's map was destroyed, insisted they had found treasure there, including a recent claim by a party of Costa Rican park rangers while on patrol. Moire's expedition found nothing and her quest finally ended.

She did however fulfil part of her dream from childhood and remained convinced that there is treasure still to be found.



Arthur based Crab Island on Trindade Island in the Atlantic where other adventurers including one of Arthur's heroes E.F.Knight searched for treasure and where Arthur would have done but for the lack of finance.



## MEMORIAL SERVICE

A memorial service will be held for long time TARS member Rosemary Garfitt on the 5th March 2022 at St Andrew's Church, Soham and later at The Maltings, Ely, Cambridgeshire.

# NEWS FROM THE GAELS

## TARS Scotland



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

### The Falkirk Wheel – 4 September 2021

TARS Scotland *has* been to the Falkirk Wheel on a couple of occasions, but I had never actually been *on* it. Because of TARS Scotland's links with the Linlithgow Union Canal Society, we'd had talks from when the Millennium Link project was just wheel-in-the-sky, and had seen the various possibilities at the discussion stage. The see-saw fortunes of the canal system were on the up, and a replacement was needed for the dismantled 11 locks that, until the 1930s, originally connected the Forth & Clyde and the Union Canals (presumably good for the construction industry, but humans do seem to spend a lot of time and money demolishing things only later to re-instate them ... Edinburgh trams?) The final result is a unique piece of modern engineering built on classical principles – the world's *first* and *only* rotating boat lift. Now



nearly 20 years old, the Falkirk Wheel has proved an enduring attraction and is as popular as ever – certainly on the Saturday that TARS Scotland returned.

Two of us met photographing the Wheel in action, then decided that anyone joining us would certainly look in the café ... as indeed he did. It was just good to meet up again in person with cups of tea, catching up and wondering about the wire sculptures of wolves.

Disdaining just going round in a circle on the Wheel, we booked for a revolution, then a wee voyage. There was over an hour to wait, but plenty to fill the time, including walking in the surroundings. In the lock coming up from the Forth & Clyde Canal was a narrowboat we were destined to meet later; past the boat basin where a friendly canal dog wagged its tail at the gongoozlers and a Stornoway Pilot boat seemed a long way from *Great Northern?* waters. On to watch the children zipped into plastic balls, zorbing on the water (not *totally* in the *S&A* tradition that an attendant held said ball on a leash?). We ran out of time (and the hill was steep!) to mount a Pictish attack on the Antonine Wall.

Others had made it to the front of the queue ... and so the best view of where we were going; but as we boarded the *Antonine*, we happily settled beside a window amidships with a good clear view in the starboard direction ... or so we thought. Then that *real* canal boat we'd seen in the lock earlier entered our boat-tub ... and settled on our starboard side. So instead of the view towards Bonnybridge, we had a great close-up of the unmade bed of these travellers.

'Softly at first, as if it hardly meant it,' the wheel began to turn. No, I'm not going to explain *how* it happens – ask Dick Callum ... or Archimedes. At the top, our berth companions went off on their proper exploration. We crossed the link in the sky and plunged into Rough Castle Tunnel – not Stygian darkness but lit with rainbow colours. The *Antonine* emerged into the turning basin at the foot of the lock leading to the Union Canal proper, whereupon ... we turned round and came back.

But this time we had uninterrupted views downstream to the River Forth and Grangemouth, and ahead to the distant Ochils. As our low-energy revolution neared its end with the other boat-tub rising, you could read the notice on the Visitor Centre, informing you that the Falkirk Wheel has 14 868 bolts – all tightened by hand. I'll take their word for it! There was an open-air poke of chips to sustain our inner Rogers, and then to the bus back home. A shame that more Tars couldn't join us but you don't need an organised visit so, if you can, enjoy a trip up in the air in the wake of TARS Scotland.

*Kirstie Taylor*





## Kenneth MacKinnon

Professor Kenneth MacKinnon – 26 August 1933 – 21 May 2021

It is with sadness that we note the death of Ken MacKinnon, champion of the Gaelic language and member of TARS, at the age of 87.

Various obituaries in the national press make much of his being a Londoner by birth who, thanks to night-school classes, became a fluent Gaelic speaker, and later a respected authority on Gaelic history and culture. He was an adviser to the Scottish Government in the lead up to the passing of the Gaelic Language (Scotland) Act and the creation of Bòrd na Gàidhlig (the body set up to promote the language), on which he served. However, I remember him for his challenge to me, as then compiler of these pages, over the absence of Gaelic material notwithstanding their being headed 'News from the Gaels'.

It is therefore thanks to Ken that a Gaelic transliteration is now included at the top of each issue – *Gòbhlanan-gaoithe 's Bana-gaisgich gu sìorraidh!* – which was not

achieved without problem: its first appearance was corrupted due to a mishap with 'cut and paste' and my lack of the Gaelic to spot the error. Ken's correction was, as ever, polite but firm. He also provided a short piece in Gaelic and English: a challenge for both editor and proofreader!

About that time Ken also gave a talk to TARS Scotland on Ransome's use of Gaelic and cultural references in *Great Northern?* that I never got to hear: health concerns meant that he was unable to travel from the north when it was first scheduled for a meeting in Linlithgow and, sadly, I was unable to attend when he later gave the talk in Pitlochry. But it was well received and his delivery much enjoyed by those lucky enough to be present when it did come to pass. Other TARS may recall his impassioned talk at the Ullapool IAGM where, I understand, he also made the ceilidh 'go with a swing'.

Andrew Jones

## Literary Day at Moat Brae – Saturday 16 October 2021

So, after 19 months of not going anywhere, here we were motoring down the A90/M73/M74/A701 to Dumfries and our first visit to Moat Brae, the National Centre for Children's Literature and Storytelling; the attraction, of course, being it was the long-postponed TARS Scotland Literary Day and an opportunity to see the much acclaimed TARS Library that is now housed there.

We arrived soon after the building was open at 11 am. After being welcomed and given our badges by Paul



Wilson and Mary Pritchard, we found our way to the Centre's café for a cup of tea to refuel ourselves

after our 3-hour car journey, encountering a shipload of TARS members from Scotland and Northern Region already there, plus the National Chair, Peter Wright. We next ventured outside to the Centre's wonderful garden which slopes all the way down to the River Nith. Wooden crocodiles, wire mesh figures dangling from trees, a wooden pirate ship, sounds of 'tick, tock, tick, tock' emanating from hidden loudspeakers ... distinct hints of

being in Neverland! This was, after all, a garden playground of the youthful J. M. Barrie while he attended Dumfries Academy next door (and where we parked our car for the day).



Returning to the main building, TARS having the use of the Garden Room for the day, we negotiated our way through the maze of rooms and up to the top floor to see TARS Library and spend a considerable time browsing the vast collection of AR-themed books.

Dragged away from the books at 12.30 pm to go back to the Garden Room where Moat Brae staff had laid on a delightful cold-buffet lunch – not totally 'cold', the





delicious sausage rolls were still slightly warm! Lunch was interrupted by a commotion outside on the street – throngs of people crowding into the area to see STORM – Scotland’s largest puppet – currently travelling Scotland’s coastlines to urge care and protection for our oceans and environment ahead of November’s COP26

climate-change conference being held in Glasgow. Made from entirely recycled and natural resources, STORM is 10 m tall and weighs around 500 kg. Her eyes are the colour of oyster shells, her hair thick strands of kelp, her voice the chorus of the waves. She is accompanied wherever she travels by a beautiful soundscape created by the pioneering Scottish folk singer Mairi Campbell. I think all the TARS attendees ventured outside at some point to see STORM.

After gorging ourselves on the sausage rolls, Scotch eggs, quiche, sandwiches, crisps and tray bakes we explored the remainder of the building where for some autumnal reason there was a distinct spooky theme .... along with wigwams, crocodiles, and the nursery bedroom of the children and Nana. Pan himself and Tinkerbell no doubt flitted in and out of our view as we wandered around.

What a wonderful resource! Books everywhere! We saw plans of the original house layout, photographs of it in a state of dereliction in the mid-2000s, and its rescue just days ahead of the bulldozers in 2009. The Trustees of Moat Brae have done a fantastic job restoring the property and its garden. How awful to think it was within days of being lost forever under a modern housing development. Although never Barrie’s home, the building and its gardens where he played with his friends and the quietly flowing Nith can easily be imagined as part of his inspiration for Peter Pan.



And hence to the highlight of the Literary Day, the talk by Carol Hogarth on her own childhood encounters with the Swallows and Amazons series of books, her introduction and fascination with sailing from childhood to the present day, and her various journalistic experiences locally and further afield.

A total of 20 TARS members attended Carol’s fascinating description of growing up on a farm near Dumfries, discovering Swallows & Amazons (she imagined herself as Nancy), pestering her parents to let her go sailing, them agreeing in the expectation going once would cure her obsession, only to have it become a life-long obsession instead! I certainly identified with her childhood description of using things around the farm to build imaginary boats, having had a similar upbringing. I still recall ‘tacking’ through a hayfield, arms outstretched, in a strong wind!

Carol is now a freelance journalist based in Dumfries & Galloway. Her write up about TARS Library coming to Moat Brae in the magazine *Dumfries & Galloway Life* had a world-wide readership, thanks to other articles in the same issue. She has sailed on local lochs and estuaries, the Lake District, Chichester Harbour and the Solent, in France, Turkey and Greece. More recently she has tried canal boating with her family and says they thoroughly enjoyed it. Having ascertained she was not already aware, Peter Wright told her about the Nancy Blackett Trust and the opportunity to sail in Ransome’s favourite yacht. Carol already has her master’s ticket and would be ideally placed to take *Nancy* for a sail!

After a lively question & answer session, Winifred Wilson presented Carol with a copy of the Amazon Publications book *Ransome on blue water sailing* as a thank you for coming along to give the Literary Day talk.

A final chance to mingle and then that was the day over. Thoroughly enjoyable, despite the continued need for mask wearing and social distancing.

*Sandy Allan*

Photos: Sandy Allan, Andrew Jones, Peter Wright



**Hawes Inn: Birthday Lunch & AGM**  
**Saturday 15 January 2022**

Further details of this event later: see website.





## Northern Despatches

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

Northern Region remains active online and on zoom but very much restricted by Covid when it comes to in-person meetings. Next year we have plans to return to as normal a pattern as possible. For details see below.

### A visit to Swallows and Armenians

Karen Babayan's *Swallows and Armenians* exhibition ran from 23<sup>rd</sup> October to 20<sup>th</sup> November at Queen's Hall Exhibition centre Hexham. **Elizabeth Haworth** was able to attend the opening event with a tour by Karen and a traditional circle dance

If you get the chance to see the *Swallows and Armenians* at Hexham (or elsewhere) I recommend it because as well as some interesting exhibits there are so many of Dora Collingwood's paintings on show in a separate room, providing portraits of so many of the family. Karen gave us yet another excellent talk mainly about the Armenian family and it was so nice that Titty's son was there too. He is a professional photographer and made the dancers pose for ages after our dance. We were a small audience including Paul and Winifred from Dumfries (see also the Library pages - Ed) and one of the Nancy Blackett Trustees who lived locally. I was also surprised to find one of my own colleagues and to find his wife had been one of the extras in the 1974 film.

### Northern plans for 2022

**Weds 29<sup>th</sup> December. Inn-formal** at the Red Lion (Contact Helen Lewis)

**Sat 22<sup>nd</sup> Jan 2022 – Birthday Party** at Barton Village Hall. Contact Veronica Priest. **Peter Duck theme with treasure island maps**; Design your own coat of arms. Pirates, Crabs, Quizzes and fun. Bring and share lunch. **CAKE!**

**Sat March 19<sup>th</sup> 2022 – AGM** by Zoom and Bring and Share a Book after the meeting. Contact Elizabeth Williams for Link nearer the time.

**Friday June 3<sup>rd</sup> Ransome at Rusland.** Late afternoon event with time for reflection. Mee 6.30 at St Paul's church.

**Sat 25<sup>th</sup> June.** Possible event in **York**; railway museum/walk on walls/chocolate museum.

**Sun 10<sup>th</sup> July Opera based on *Swallows and Armenians*** at the Lowther Estate, Cumbria. See local media.

**Sat July 30<sup>th</sup>** Sailing day at Bank Ground Farm with other attractions; the Dog's Home; Brantwood Art exhibition



## Across the Border to Neverland

### with Elizabeth Williams

I don't just attend events organised by Northern Region. I live in Durham so not only am I really handy for Hoathwaite Camps but I also check Scottish events. I was really pleased that TARS Scotland were happy for me and two other Northern Region members to attend their Literary Day at Moat Brae, the Scottish Centre for Children's Books. Moat Brae is a really interesting house, telling the visitor all about J.M. Barrie with superb adventurous role play activities for children. Outside is the garden that inspired Barrie to create Neverland. There is so much creativity in the way they have developed the grounds for imaginative play.

And of course it hosts the TARS library. I took away 3 rather rare Pamela Whitlocks to read.

After a wander around, a buffet lunch and a chat we listened to an excellent talk by Carol Hogarth, a journalist, on how the *Swallows and Amazons* series began her lifetime's involvement in sailing.

Thank you to TARS Scotland for welcoming us. It's always worth reading about what other Regions are doing and asking if you can join them.

## *Peggy Blackett*

Has found a way of regaling us with this account of her 2021 season...

I spent the winter in a really draughty barn at the end of the bumpiest road imaginable. I was glad to get out of there and return to my soft pontoon berth at *Holly Howe*.

But no sooner had I taken up a bit of water than I was rudely hauled out and off we went to the seaside. 'Arnside' they called it, where I remember being before and it was the same – sitting on the mud waiting for the water to arrive, which it does with a rush in those parts, and then Action Stations – with a cameraman and a sound man and my skipper and a big tall presenter chap who only just fitted under my boom even with a reef in, all crowded aboard.

Backwards and forwards we kept on going, trying to get the 'Shots' and the 'Pieces to Camera' right. But at the end it was all smiles from the crew and the presenter chap, Ben they called him, didn't want to get out!

Later in the season there were guests – lovely families who really wanted the real *Swallows and*

*Amazons* sailing experience. One chap, when asked, said he worked in Oxford in a medical lab where Knighthoods were regularly given out. Funny – I always thought labs were places where important medical research into diseases took place!





Then there was the New Zealand connection. They loved it!

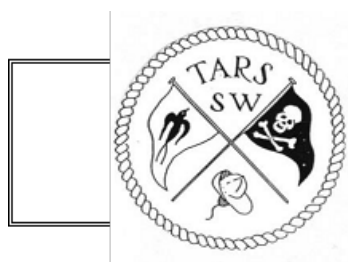
Then LOADS of people sailed over in my old friend *Swallow*. Never seen her as low in the water – good thing it was a southerly wind!

We sailed in company to the *Bluebird* (another old friend of mine, but that's another story); we beat it up to Hoathwaite and roared back under 2 reefs – never seen my lady skipper look so happy!

But I was a bit miffed when the chap who likes to dress in colourful clothes and is often seen carrying something called a 'Bradshaw's' came to Windermere Jetty and I was not invited! Apparently they used one of their own boats.

Still I can't complain – I often get tooted at by The Gondola and that chap who drives the Coniston motor boat always waves a greeting when he sees we are out flying the flag.





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

### **Somerset Rural Life Museum at Glastonbury – July 2021**

There should have been five of us meeting for our allotted time slot, but the best laid plans ...! Anyway, Diana and Barbara managed to rendezvous at the museum, which had once been the working Abbey Farm, with ancient tithe barn built in the 1340s to store produce for Glastonbury Abbey. We spent a while in there to cool off as this was during the heatwave. The farmhouse kitchen had been set up to look as it would have done in the 1940s, (you know you are getting old when you see things in a museum that you are still using at home! Diana – pottery mixing bowls, Barbara – carpet beater).

Farmyard and Farmhouse Galleries had themed displays of village and working life, including a beautiful baker's handcart and examples of many of the tools used by different rural trades.

In the farmyard we found our favourite object in the whole museum – a striking sculpture of a working horse made from rusty pieces of old tractors, tools and chains. From here there were lovely views of Glastonbury Tor, which we decided we would not climb.

After a picnic under a handy tree we decided that we ought to patronise the museum café, as we couldn't see how the museum would be able to cover costs with so few visitors because of the restrictions.

We finished by watching a demonstration of woodturning using a slightly Heath Robinson looking foot-treadle powered pole lathe, which was interesting. He was making a Scottish carved stick for stirring porridge – I think this may have had a proper name, but unfortunately we can't remember what it was – does anyone-else know? (Spirtle? – Ed)



### **Lundy Talk, 11<sup>th</sup> of September**

Simon Dell gave us a fascinating talk, via Zoom, on the history of Lundy Island and its puffins. In Norse, Lund means Puffin and ay means Isle. There are Soay Sheep, Sika Deer, ponies, puffins and rock pippets. One of the houses has a roof sloping to the middle to catch rain water. We learnt about the isles many owners including Martin Coles Harman who minted unofficial coins, called puffins, and Thomas Benson who shipped convicts bound for America to Lundy instead. Lundy Island is now owned by the National Trust and managed by the Landmark Trust. You can visit for the day or stay in one of the many properties to rent or camp. Puffins stay out at sea after leaving Lundy until returning the next year to breed.

### **Kennet & Avon Canal at Devizes**

A small group of Sou'westers met in September to enjoy the delights of the Kennet and Avon Canal Trust. After coffee in the Kingfisher Café, (now closed sadly, for the winter), the museum was explored and a light lunch consumed plus more coffee.

The museum exhibits covered the construction history, usage and restoration of the canal, and the people involved - from those who put money into the venture to the navvies who di



the hard work of building the canal and included the lives of the families who plied their tradewhilst living on the narrow boats in very cramped conditions. Canals are built along the contours of the land as much as possible, but there was an interesting model illustrating how locks were used to take the canal up and down hills.



The afternoon cruise set off westwards to turn round but was hindered by some hullabalooos, (actually, a gaggle of youngsters in canoes + instructor), so barely a few yards was travelled – a foretaste of things to come when an obstruction was met in the form of a stuck boat. We turned round and after passing the wharf again we proceeded to catch up a conglomeration of craft going very slowly, namely a small live-aboard boat towing a tender, to which was attached on the port side an interestingly camouflaged canoe. Having reached the farthest point of the trip we turned round again and then met a 'Marie Celeste'. Our skipper boarded this narrow boat that had broken away from her moorings, and was blocking the watery highway. We wondered if we could claim salvage rights, but apparently the Canal Trust does not encourage that sort of thing. (Hard luck on any Death and Glories.)

With all this disturbance it was not surprising that very little wildlife was to be seen. Nor was it surprising that we were late back and two members had to race to the car park to rescue their cars, which had outstayed their welcome. Thank you, Barbara, for organising us. Oh yes, more coffee etc was consumed on the Kenavon Venture and we all left with a copy of *The Butty*, the magazine of the Kennet and Avon Canal Trust.

Nora C Fawcett

## "Bring and Scoff 16.10.21"

Nine TARS were present. Many thanks are due to Diana Wright, Barbara Flower and Nora Fawcett for providing thin fishing line, string, thick ropes, kettles, baskets, cod liver oil, chocolate, and two dogs to play the part of William. Sufficient in fact to re-enact William's heroic moment on Breydon Water in *Coot Club*.

Fortunately the dogs were soft toys and behaved perfectly, keeping calm and showing no signs of panic, which is more than can be said for the two teams of TARS, racing to deliver the cod liver oil, chocolate etc. One element was missing - mud.



The crews of Teasel and Titmouse, in the book were strictly and safely confined to their vessels, but not so our teams, and much time was spent rescuing bodies from Breydon Water, with fishing line and string tangled round their legs.

Dick's plan sounds perfectly logical but unwise in haste. Survival rather than winning became the name of the game.

The feast that followed, however, was despatched with practiced efficiency.

Alan.

## **FORTHCOMING EVENTS IN THE SOUTH-WEST**

### **Celebration of AR's Birthday – Saturday 15th January 2022**

We have booked the Teignmouth Corinthian Yacht Club premises on the seafront, which has beautiful views, for a sit- down lunch and afternoon talk with film show, followed by the obligatory birthday cake.

Viv Wilson is a very popular speaker in the Teignmouth area and members of the yacht club were keen to hear her talk, so we have taken the decision to open the event to non-members of TARS and to have the **SWAGM at a later date, which will be via Zoom on Saturday 26th February 2022 at 4.00 pm**

Viv's title will be **Teignmouth Waterside Tales** – 'a film show embracing the significance of the resort's coastal location during the past century' and will include 1930s footage of Shaldon sailing regatta and J Class yachts at Babbacombe.

### **Saturday 26th March 2022 – Sidmouth Donkey Sanctuary**

– We originally planned to visit the donkeys in April 2020 – what a long time ago that seems now!

#### **Also in the pipeline are:**

A 'round robin' trip by train, boat and bus from Paignton in April;

A walk in May;

Hopefully archery in June;

A canoe/SUP camping weekend in September;

Bring and scoff literary day in October,

And if we can fit them in :

A visit during school holidays to Coldharbour Woollen Mill at Uffculme on a Thursday when they have the water-wheel powered machinery running,

And also a day constructing Derek's theatre

# GIFTS from The TARs Stall



## Adult T-Shirts

£12+ £3.50 p+p

### Unisex,

mid blue or white  
Medium W 21in L 28in  
Large W 22in L 30in  
X Large W 23in L 31in  
XX Large W 24in L 32in

### Ladies,

mint green or white  
Small W 16.5in L 24in  
Medium W 19in L 25in  
Large W 20.5in L 27in



## Polo Shirts

£20+ £3.50 p+p

Unisex, light blue or maroon  
Medium Width 21in Length 28in  
Large Width 22in Length 30in  
X Large Width 23in Length 32in  
XX Large Width 26in Length 33in

Ladies, light blue or pink  
Small Width 16.5in Length 22in  
Medium Width 18in Length 26.5in  
Large Width 19.5in Length 28in



## Sweatshirts

£22+ £3.50 p+p

Unisex, maroon  
Medium W 23in L 27in  
Large W 24.5in L 28.5in  
X Large W 26in L 29.5in



## Children's T-Shirt 'TARS AHOY!' logo

£10+ £3.50 p+p

Mid blue or lime green  
W 17.5in L 23in 7-8 yrs  
W 18.5in L 24in 9-11 yrs  
W 19.5in L 26in 11-13 yrs

UK postage and packing shown for individual items. To Order, or for multiple-item or overseas costs, or any queries please contact:

**Christine Rae**, e-mail: [tarsstall@arthur-ransome.org](mailto:tarsstall@arthur-ransome.org)

By telephone +44 (0)1794 388897, preferably 6-8pm

(but *not* to make card payments, can't be done);

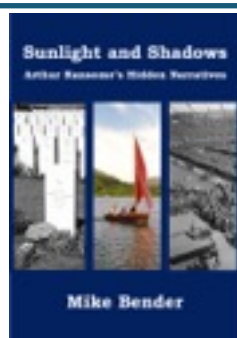
or SAE: The Manor House, Church Lane, Houghton,  
STOCKBRIDGE, Hampshire SO20 6LJ;

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

**More Stall selections on Pages 44-45**

**or [www.arthur-ransome.org](http://www.arthur-ransome.org)**





## AMAZON PUBLICATIONS

available titles

**NEW Sunlight  
and Shadows**  
(2020) Mike Bender  
£14 (+£3.50)

**The Twilight Years, Vol II - London**  
ed. Margaret Ratcliffe £20 (+ £3.50) Ransome's  
diary 1950-1963, introduction by Griff Rhys-Jones.

**The Twilight Years, Vol I - Hill Top,**  
ed. Margaret Ratcliffe £15 (+ £3.50)  
Ransome's diary entries at Hill Top, 1956 to 1964.

**Robert Louis Stevenson,** Arthur Ransome's  
study, ed Kirsty Nichol Findlay. £8.50 (+ £3.50)

**Ransome the Artist,** by Roger Wardale, Sketches  
paintings etc by Arthur Ransome. £5 (+ £3.50)

**Ransome on Blue Water Sailing,** ed Christina  
Hardyment. Writings about sailing. £5 (+ £3.50)

**A Ransome Book-case,** by John Cowen  
Illustrated guide to Ransome's books. £10 (+ £3)

**Bohemia in London,** Ransome's 'first real book'  
with the original 1907 illustrations. £7.50 (+ £3.50)

**From our Special Correspondent - the**  
Journalism of Arthur Ransome in Egypt, by Nancy  
M Endersby-Harshman. £25 (+ £3.50)

**Ransome in China, 1927,** special correspondent  
to the Manchester Guardian and the Baltimore Sun,  
by David Jones. £7.50 (+ £3.50)

**Arthur Ransome,** a Bodley Head Monograph,  
Hugh Shelley. £2 (+ £2.50)

**Before a Peak in Darien,** ed Paul Crisp. From  
Arthur Ransome's early writings. £7.50 (+ £3.50)

**Fair Cops and Glowworms,** ed Paul Crisp An  
anthology AR's fishing articles. £10 (+ £3)

**Genetic Building Blocks,** Arthur Ransome's  
forebears, by Margaret Ratcliffe. £10 (+ £3)

**Collecting our Thoughts,** ed. Margaret Ratcliffe  
Essays from TARS Library catalogues, 2000-2009,  
and new writing on related themes. £15 (+ £3.50)

# The TARS Stall

For full postage details, please see previous page

## PUBLICATIONS FROM TARS

### **Literary Weekend Transcripts**

Report and talks from **Edinburgh, 2017**  
**£6 (+ 2.50)** Previous events, 1995, 1999, 2001,  
2003, 2005, 2009, 2013, 2015, also available.

### **Encountering the Ransomes: DVD set**

**Personal memories of Arthur & Evgenia**  
Presented by Sophie Neville, recorded interviews  
filmed 1996-2010. **2-DVD set £20 (+ £1.50)**

### **Mixed Moss**

Most previous issues available. £4 (+£1.50)

## BOOKS ABOUT ARTHUR RANSOME

**The Life of Arthur Ransome,** by Hugh  
Brogan **£12 (+ £3)** The definitive biography.

**Good Little Ship: Arthur Ransome,**  
*Nancy Blackett and the Goblin,* by Peter Willis  
The story of *Nancy Blackett*, inspiration for *Goblin*  
in *WDMTGTS*, her restoration by Mike Rines and  
the Nancy Blackett Trust. £14 (+ £3.50)

**Swallows, Amazons and Coots**  
**a reading of Arthur Ransome by Julian**  
**Lovelock** A literary overview of all 'the 12' by the  
former editor of *Mixed Moss*. £17 (+ £1.80)

### **Arthur Ransome on the Broads**

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

**Arthur Ransome Afloat in Lakeland**  
**W. R. Mitchell** Attractively illustrated account of  
AR's haunts by a local author. £10 (+ £1.80)

**Arthur Ransome, a Bibliography** by  
**Wayne Hammond** A comprehensive guide to all  
Ransome's published writing. £20 (+ £3)

**Ransome in Russia,** by Ted Alexander &  
**Tatiana Verizhnikova** His adventures in Eastern  
Europe 1913-24, £18 (+ £3.50)

**Arthur Ransome's Family 1649-1975,**  
**by Judy Andrews;** with lots of previously unseen  
illustrations. £5 (+ £2.50)

# The TARS Stall

## BOOKS BY ARTHUR RANSOME



**Racundra's First Cruise**  
Arthur Ransome's first 'proper' boat, built and sail in Baltic in the 1920s re-edited by **Brian Hammett**, with additional material. Hardback £7 (+ £3.50)



**Racundra's Third Cruise**  
Previously unpublished account of Ransome's honeymoon cruise in Latvia in 1924, (includes his draft of *Racundra's* Second Cruise) edited by **Brian Hammett**. Hardback £5 (+£3.00)

## The 12 Swallows and Amazons books

Vintage Classics paperback edition. Set of 12 £75 (+ £17) Single copies £7 each (+ £3.50)

## Audio CDs of 'the 12'

Read by Gabriel Woolf  
All 12 titles available. £14 (+ £3.50) each.

## Old Peter's Russian Tales

Introduction by Christina Hardyment, with illustrations by Faith Jaques. £7 (+£3.50)

## Swallows and Amazons musical

The script and songs for the Bristol Old Vic stage musical production, £9 (+ £2)

## FICTION INSPIRED BY ARTHUR RANSOME

### Strong Winds series by Julia Jones

Contemporary teenage thrillers set in East Anglia, with a strong sailing element. Six in series::

1. The Salt-Stained Book
2. A Ravelled Flag
3. Ghosting Home
4. The Lion of Sole Bay
5. Black Waters

£6 each (+ £1.60) / Set: £25 (£3)

LATEST: Vol. 6: Pebble £9 (£1.80)

### Those Kids series by Jon Tucker

A new series of Tasmanian adventure stories for children by TARS member and live-aboard sailor Jon Tucker. Ask about available titles £10 (+ £1.80)

### The Boat in the Bay by Alan Kennedy

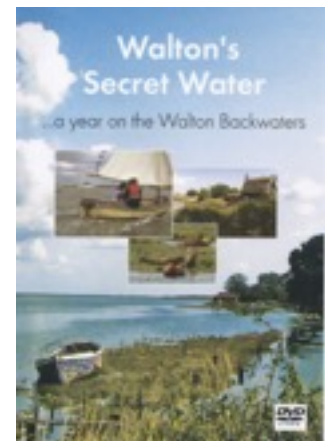
Ransome-referenced adventure story £10 (+ £2)



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

## Walton's Secret Water

Film by David Webb of the Walton Backwaters, the setting of *Secret Water* country, and including the River Orwell and *Nancy Blackett*  
Run time 75 Minutes  
DVD £15 (+ £2)



## Burgees

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

Polyester burgees, 50x30cm, including halyard and toggle.

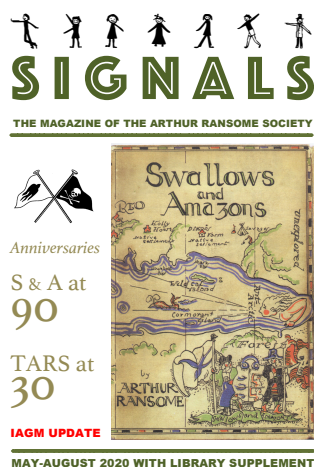
Three designs:

Swallow,  
Skull and crossbones,  
TARS (Swallow+ Skull and Crossbones), £18 (+ £2.50)

### TARS Enamel pin badge

(Swallow + Skull and Crossbones) approx 2x3cm  
£3 (+£1.50)

## TARS PUBLICATIONS etc



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

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

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

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

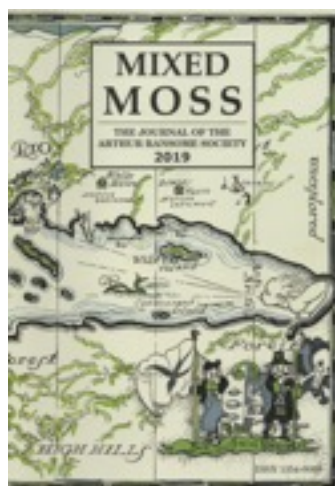
Some overseas material is included; overseas TARS groups also have their own newsletters – see below.

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

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

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

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



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

Copy deadline is 30 April, with distribution to members (not Youth class) in the autumn.

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

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

### LITERARY WEEKENDS

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



**Amazon Publications**  
produces a book with a  
Ransome connection roughly  
every year on a subscription  
basis. Next title (2021)  
*Ransome Centre Stage*. Some  
back issues on TARS Stall.  
Enquires to Alan Hakim:  
[awhakim@btinternet.com](mailto:awhakim@btinternet.com)



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

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

## RANSOME ONLINE

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

## OTHER WEBSITES

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

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

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

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

## FACEBOOK GROUPS

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

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





## The TARS Library

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

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

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

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

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

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## TARS Committees

### Literary & Resources:

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

### Publications:

Marc Grimston (Chair), Mike Glover (Secretary), The Blue Family, Paul Crisp (guest), Catherine Lamont, David Middleton, Peter Willis

### Contribute!

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

### Advertise!

We accept advertisements in Signals, included in the magazine or as loose inserts. Half-page £100, quarter page £50, eighth page £25. Insert flyer £100. Contact David Middleton, [memsec@arthur-ransome.org](mailto:memsec@arthur-ransome.org)

## TARS Subscriptions

### 2022 rates

(renewals due 1st January)

**Adult** (now including Seniors) £25

**Family/Group** £35

**Junior or Student** £15

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

**Corporate rate** £60

## RED SLIPPER FUND

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

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

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

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

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

## Junior Adventure Fund

### Calling all young TARS aged 13 to 19

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

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

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

Love Lee Premiere Productions present



# The Swallows and Amazons' WINTER HOLIDAY

adapted from the novel by

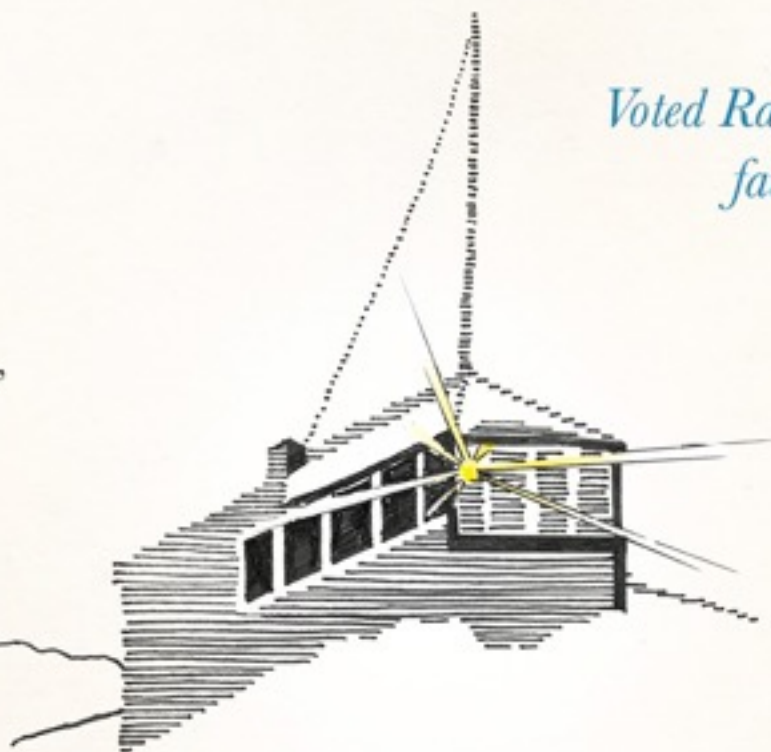
**Arthur Ransome**

and directed for the stage by **Chris Eldon Lee**

by kind permission of **the Arthur Ransome Literary Estate**

“You know how it is,”  
said Captain Nancy,  
“dark at tea-time and  
sleeping indoors:  
nothing ever happens  
in the winter holidays.”  
But then, the Lake  
begins to freeze ...

*Voted Ransome fans’  
favourite story*



*A family adventure story of the best possible kind!*

**Shrewsbury's Theatre Severn**

Wednesday 16th to Saturday 19th February 2022

at 7.30pm with a Saturday matinee at 3pm

Tickets £15 (children £5) 01743 281281 or

[www.theatresevern.co.uk](http://www.theatresevern.co.uk)

