



# SIGNALS

THE MAGAZINE OF THE ARTHUR RANSOME SOCIETY

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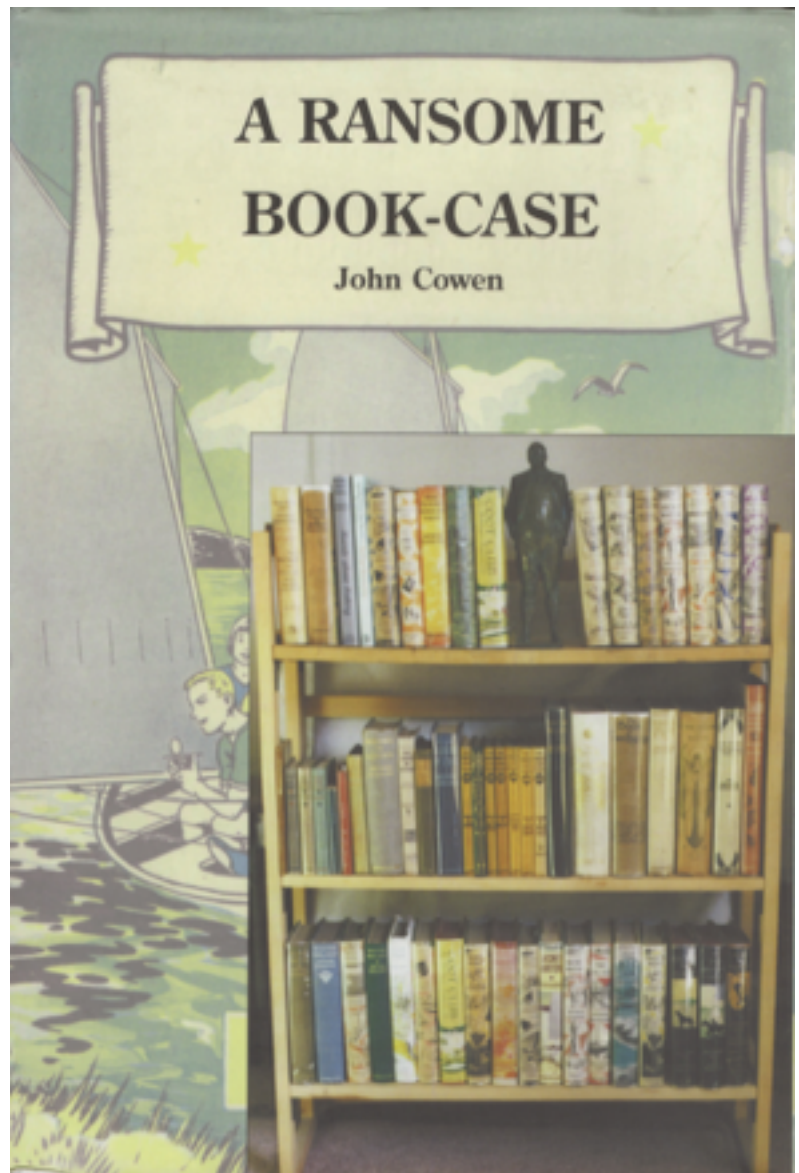
*Swallow and  
Amazon*  
join the TARS fleet

The 'Mobile'  
Library

Up Kanchenjunga  
from Down Under

'The 99 ports' – Where  
had *Wild Cat* been?

Seasonal opposites -  
WH and PP



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**MAY-AUGUST 2023 with OVERSEAS SUPPLEMENT**

# The Arthur Ransome Society

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# SIGNALS



## THE MAGAZINE OF THE ARTHUR RANSOME SOCIETY MAY-AUGUST 2023

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### From the Editor

## Of boats and books

“What TARS fleet?” those members who bothered to scan the straplines on this issue’s cover might be asking. Also perhaps, “Which *Swallow* and *Amazon*?”

Fleet first. If a fleet can be defined as a collection of more than one boat, then TARS certainly has one, though it’s not as extensive as some might imagine. *Nancy Blackett* sails under different flag; so, at least part of the time, does *Peggy Blackett* (no relation), so maybe we should count her as a half. TARS does own *Coch-y-bonddhu* (now in the Windermere Jetty collection). A second *Swallow*, a 10ft clinker dinghy built as a tender to *Selina King*, is also owned by TARS and is ashore somewhere on Dartmoor.

And then there’s the original *Amazon*, formerly *Mavis*. It was her restoration and renaming that created TARS in the first place, so she’s properly our flagship, though she still belongs to the Altounyan family and lives in the Ruskin Museum, Coniston.

The new recruits are the *Swallow* and *Amazon* from the 1974 film, both of which TARS has acquired within the last few weeks, and has every intention of making available for members to sail in due course. Read all about it on page 7.

The boats are significant, and so is the future of the TARS Library, and I’m glad to say it has been secured with a spacious new home, thanks to Christine Rae. Details and photos on page 9.

All of which is very exciting (I hope) if you happen to live in the British Isles. But what if you’re among the one-fifth or so of TARS members who live in the rest of the world? Our main 8-page feature in this issue focuses on the Overseas members and their own local groups, with contributions from their organisers and their own journals, and an appeal for suggestions on making them feel more connected – please join the debate! *Peter Willis*

**This issue’s cover:** With the Library, together with all its somewhat recalcitrant, self-disassembly book-cases, on the move, it seemed a good idea to mark the event with a revisit to this appropriately-titled Amazon Publications book from 2000. Arguably the handsomest of Amazon Publications’ productions, it’s celebrated, with copious illustrations on pages 14-15.

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## CHAIRMAN'S NOTES from Peter Wright

This is my last chairman's notes as TARS sensibly does not allow anyone to serve on the board for more than six years and my time is up. For five of those, I have had the privilege of being Chairman and a great deal of business and fun has been progressed in that time. The last four months, however, have seen some of the most significant changes – the library move, finding a home for the archives and committing to celebrating the 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the 1974 *Swallows and Amazons* film. Most excitingly of all, however, is the news that TARS is buying both the boats used in the film and arranging for them to be repaired and made available to sail.

This new venture for TARS is very much in keeping with our aim of keeping alive the spirit of outdoor fun and adventure and promoting *Swallows and Amazons* style adventures. I'm sure AR would approve – well he did write "Let's all go sailing". (Quiz question – which book?) To facilitate this, we are entering into a partnership with Hunter's Yard on the Norfolk Broads, home of *Titmouse*, *Teasel* and *Dreadnought* (see article in Sept. 2022 Signals). To repair, equip and maintain both *Swallow* and *Amazon* for sailing in future years will require significant funds. To achieve this without compromising our publications and regular activities, we are launching a separate *Swallow* and *Amazon* fund. It would be wonderful if you would consider contributing to this (details elsewhere).

### Gems for the archives

Recently I was sent some material for the archives by someone clearing an old gentleman's house. He had been a keen fisherman and a Ransome fan all his life. He had written an article, offered to *The Dalesman*, in which he wrote that one of Ransome's earliest experiences was being taken by his father to the River Wharfe. Whilst his father caught trout Arthur, "never content to watch and learn... occupied his time by paddling in the water, turning stones to catch loaches by himself." This brought back memories for me, as I too as a child

often paddled in the River Wharfe, turning stones to try catch Loaches, Bullheads and Crayfish and being fascinated by Caddisfly larvae.

Amongst the other yellowing press cuttings sent, one from the *Sunday Times*, 21<sup>st</sup> December 1958, features Arthur in a column headed *Portrait Gallery*. Alongside a lovely photo of him, which I had not seen before, the article describes him thus. "Ruby-faced, with snow-white hair, a luxuriant snowy moustache and merry eyes, Arthur Ransome looks for all the world, like Father Christmas – which seems just right for a story-teller who has created 'characters who are accepted as friends by children everywhere'." Arthur described this as "the nicest thing I've ever read about myself –

which I'd like to believe true". I love this description of Arthur looking like Father Christmas and he loving this description of himself.

### "Children. He hates them!"

In contrast, however, another clipping mentions a group of children AR took on buccaneering sailing adventures, where "he introduced them to the joys of beer and darts. After one session, crew member Thomas Wadsworth wobbled home drunk. He was eight years old." In a third article about *Lottie Blossom* being built, Evgenia would often say to the boatyard staff, "Children. He hates them!" What a complex

character he was, perhaps Father Christmas is not the right image after all.

That article also reveals how the boatyard staff viewed Evgenia, "They had the most fun out of this fierce but apparently endearing lady on the day *Lottie Blossom* was lowered into the River Arun, beside the yard. Without ballast she sat high in the water, as unstable as a cork, but the gallant and heavy Evgenia stepped straight aboard causing the boat to list savagely and catapulting a large and elaborate celebratory picnic, laid out on the stern by Arthur, straight into the river. Before the cheering shipwrights she cursed him roundly."

I'm sure we can look forward to finding many more gems about Arthur and Evgenia once the archive is available for members to visit and enjoy.

In signing off as Chairman, I'll save all my thank yous for my closing report for the IAGM. As well as being a privilege and honour it's also been a lot of fun; I'm glad I grabbed my chance. My best wishes go to my successor, I'm sure you'll be in capable hands with plenty of good times ahead.





# TARS Holly Howe Camp August 7-14<sup>th</sup> 2023

Hoathwaite has closed for camping but we have been fortunate to secure the lakeside field at **Bank Ground Farm** (aka Holly Howe) for our exclusive use. It is cheaper than sharing with Hullabalooos at the alternative! This is a camp for TARS Members only. To join [www.arthur-ransome.org](http://www.arthur-ransome.org) choose membership or contact webmaster below.

## Where?

**Bank Ground Farm, East of the Lake, Coniston, Cumbria LA21 8AA**  
In this field by the waterside with launching for dinghies and canoes.

**When? The camp is a fixed duration, Monday (early) to Monday.**

**Facilities** – Hired showers and loos, beaching for your own boat (& maybe ‘grab a chance’ to be on someone else’s) and hire of paddleboards and canoes, and electric motor boats. Fire pits. There will be an event shelter for covered communal chat and cooking.



The Farm [bankground.com](http://bankground.com) offers café and B&B and self-catering accommodation, but won’t count towards our camping costs. **No dogs permitted** as this is a working farm.



## Adult - £130 for the week

First child (6-18yrs) £55 for the week Subsequent children £40 for the week

We are being charged £2800 for the week for up to 35 people. On expected bookings we are basing our charges on achieving this. If more people come we can reduce the prices for everyone.

Initially, priority is given to people who can come for the whole week; there will be a reserve list for others.

**Non-returnable deposit: Single Adult £50, Couple £75, Junior £25 on booking**  
**Final payment 1/6/2023**

*(There may be additional last minute spaces made available 2 weeks before the camp but these depend on a good weather forecast and harvesting completed)*

### Apply to

[webmaster@arthur-ransome.org](mailto:webmaster@arthur-ransome.org) or Diana Wright, 9 Doveys Terrace, Kington Langley, CHIPPENHAM, SN15 5NX

**Names of all participants with ages of Juniors .....**

.....

**No of cars ..... no of trailers.....**

Amount of your deposit ..... BACS/Cheque? Email .....

Camp (mobile) phone number..... Boats being brought?..... Pay by  
Cheque to ‘The Arthur Ransome Society’ or BACS Sort Code 40-26-02, A/c 61245775 with **HHC, (TARS membership number)** and **surname** as the reference.

## News from the Board

**91<sup>st</sup> meeting held on Saturday 25<sup>th</sup> February via Zoom**

### Chairman's introductory remarks:

The chairman noted it would be the last board meeting that Susan Gouldbourne and Linda Hendry would be attending as members, as they had to stand down under the 6-year rule (as does Peter Wright). They were both thanked; Susan particularly for her work as Treasurer and Linda for leading on much of TARS social media links. Susan, as treasurer, will be invited back to future board meetings as an adviser.

A new publicity leaflet is required, as the Library reference needs to be changed. Calls were made for high quality photographs that might suitably illustrate the leaflet.

A generous bequest of £5,000 has been received following the death of Malcolm Porteous. His executors had been thanked.

### Future of *Swallow* and *Amazon* from the 1974 S&A film:

A report on the structural condition of the two boats had been received from Hunter's Yard as both boats had been taken there by their current owners.

The report outlined that only modest repairs would be required to *Amazon* to make her available for rowing or light sailing this year.

But more substantial repairs were required for *Swallow*. It was recommended that these be undertaken in a phased programme but with the prospect of her being on the water in 2024.

It was also noted that once available for hire, there would be annual ongoing costs associated with promotion, insurance, winter storage, ongoing repair and maintenance etc, and at this stage there is no knowing whether the income from sailing would meet these

costs. Nevertheless it was agreed that owning these boats would give a major new impetus and focus for TARS and was wholly in line with our aims and objectives, particularly offering the opportunity for outdoor adventure and fun.

Accordingly, the Board agreed the following:

1) That TARS buys *Amazon* and *Swallow* immediately, for their asking prices of £400 and £1 respectively,

2) That we instruct Hunter's Yard to undertake repairs to *Amazon*, as recommended, to enable her to be available for limited use in 2023,

3) That the programme of works recommended for *Swallow* over a phased period be undertaken,

4) That the Board set aside a separate budget to cover the above and ongoing costs, initially using the Malcolm Porteous bequest.

5) A small sub-committee was established to take the lead from the TARS side on overseeing links with Hunter's Yard,

6) That TARS will set up a fundraising initiative to both ensure a longer-term funding base and enthuse our members,

7) A written agreement covering the above which also sets out further details of our partnership arrangement with Hunter's Yard and how we may promote the project will be put in place.

**TARS Presidency:** Libby Purves has confirmed that she will be stepping down in May. The Chairman has written to the board's first choice for our new President and is awaiting a reply. Should this prove negative two further choices were confirmed.

### TARS Board membership:

David Butters (Northern) and Rachel Chalmers (Midlands) have indicated willingness to stand for the Board. They were both proposed and seconded and their names will now go forward for election at the IAGM.

### Report of the Literary & Resources Committee:

The Library has successfully been moved from Dumfries to Hampshire. Winifred Wilson was thanked for all her work as past Librarian and for arranging the move and Christine Rae for taking on the role and housing the library at her home.

A renewable annual lease for a room in Birmingham in which to house and process the archives has been signed. The archives will shortly be transferred there. Volunteers have come forward to help with setting the archives up.

### Report of the Publications and Publicity Committee:

All is progressing to timetable with the three magazines. IAGM papers will be circulated with the next *Signals*.

TARS has had major publicity through the recent *Winter Holiday* production in Shrewsbury (Bowness to follow). The programme notes had been written by TARS and credited as such, and we had a full A4 advert for the society on the back page. This also promoted a children's writing and painting competition.

The play opens with a screening of part of the film about TARS taken from our website. Pull-up banners and leaflets were also present.

**IAGM 2023 in Dundee:** Kirstie Taylor gave a report that arrangements are all in hand. Pleasingly, several of the tourist attractions have confirmed they will be open despite the Coronation taking place. It was noted that the Zoom link for the AGM itself needs to be arranged.

### 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the 1974 S&A film:

A recent zoom meeting had been held with Lakeland Arts and initial plans for a jointly organised celebratory weekend discussed. A range of potential activities

had been identified for which further exploration is now required. The location has been agreed as Windermere Jetty and we were offered three options for dates. The Board agreed that 29<sup>th</sup>/30<sup>th</sup> June would be our preferred weekend. A small group has been set up to lead on this and it was agreed that a budget to help facilitate the event would be required.

#### **Alliance of Literary Societies:**

TARS is to host the ALS 2024 AGM weekend, at Windermere Jetty on 18<sup>th</sup> May 2024. A number of speakers are being lined up. A social day on Sunday could include a trip on *Gondola* and visits to Brantwood, the Ruskin Museum and Bank Ground Farm. Amanda Ardagh-Walter, who is leading on this, was thanked.

To coincide with TARS hosting the AGM, next year's ALS journal is inviting all societies to write real or imaginary adventure stories in the style of their author under the banner of "Better drowned than Duffers". Winifred Wilson has agreed to write the TARS submission.

**2024 Literary Weekend:** It was noted with disappointment that the Carlisle campus of Cumbria University could no longer host the weekend. Alternative venues are being explored and details will appear in the summer Signals and on the website.

**AUSTARS Cup:** A name was unanimously agreed as the 2023 winner and this will be announced at the IAGM.

**Overseas and regional reports:** were also received.

**AOB:** The treasurer reported that a surplus of £1400 had been made in 2022.

The Vice-Chair thanked Peter for his six years on the Board and particularly for his chairmanship for the last five.

DATE	CALENDAR OF EVENTS	REGION
15 April	Killhope Mine Museum	North
22 April	Rugby School Tour	Midland
<b>5-8 May</b>	<b>TARS IAGM Dundee</b>	Scotland
20 May	Dromedary Adventures	Midland
20 May	Fossils at Charmouth	South-West
24 May	Garrick Club London	East
3 June	<i>Gondola</i> and Rusland	North
11 June	Book Group	Zoom
16-18 June	Camping and Sailing	Midland
23 June	River trip and Kelmscott Manor	South-West
24-25 June	Marathon reading of Swallowdale, Windermere	Ifnotduffers see p9
9 July	Broads Sailing Day	East
15 July	Sparkinson dialogues	South-West Zoom
21 July	Swallowdale' camp in Derbyshire	Midland
4-6 August	Cobnor Camp	Southern
7-14 August	Holly Howe' Summer camp Bank Ground Farm see p3	Midland/North
13 August	Bawdsey Radar Museum	East



## **‘Enormous fun – an age-blind romp!’**

Our just-in-time reviewer **Rachel Chalmers’** verdict on the long-awaited (and packed-out) **Winter Holiday** at the Theatre Severn Shrewesbury

*Grab a chance and you won't be sorry for a might-have-been. Well, I took the chance of a spare ticket when Marc Grimston had to drop out of the TARS group booking; but it also meant taking a chance on the vagaries of public transport to deliver me to Shrewsbury by 14:15 for the pre-show event from Heathrow Airport, scheduled arrival 09:20. Would BA, passport control, the Paddington Express, London Underground, two trains and Shank's pony get me there on time? Jibbooms and bobstays, they did! .... by a generous 4 minutes! And thanks to Paul Green for standing by with my ticket in hand.*

### **Lockdown Challenge**

At the pre-show talk we learnt from writer-director Chris Eldon Lee that he was a long-time AR fan, and had adapted *Winter Holiday* for the stage following a re-read during lockdown in 2020. I think many of us can relate to the comfort that much-loved authors gave us during those bleak times. He set himself the challenge of making the adaptation as authentic as possible, while including AR as a character in the play, plenty of music and songs, and a pie-related theme to enrich Mrs Dixon's repertoire.

### **Skating triumph**

The play was enormous fun: a romp through the experiences of the D's as the main characters. The projected "scenery", colour versions of AR's illustrations, worked superbly, the skating scene was a triumph and Mrs Dixon stole the show. Mr Dixon and the sheep came a close second. There was improvisation galore. This was an age-blind production, a familiar format for AR stories adapted for the stage, and again it worked well, especially the D's, Titty and Roger. If there was a touch of jolly hockey sticks about some characters, this could be overlooked as overall it was simply great entertainment. A final adjustment to the story provided an appropriate and atmospheric ending. The after-show was just as enjoyable; the actors stayed in character and mingled with the crowd for photo opportunities before melting away to prepare for the evening performance.

*See page 27 for another review*



From top: The D's; Susan, on banjo, and Mrs Dixon for the Pie Song; in the Doctor's car. Photos by Judy Mainwaring - lots more on the TARS website

After the show, 'Titty' (Ruth Tipton) with super-fan 7-year-old Lily Mashiter. What was her favourite part of the play? "Everything!" (and is that our reviewer in the background?)





# TOGETHER AT LAST!

*Both the boats from the classic 1974 film are now owned by TARS – and soon to sail again*

Just as the 50th anniversary of our favourite film adaptation of *Swallows and Amazons* appears on the horizon a combination of circumstances has led to TARS being able to take over ownership and preservation of both the boats used in the production.

*Amazon* has been in private ownership for the last 35 years, but last year the families that owned her contacted us to say they wanted to let her go, and would we be interested in buying her?

At around the same time SailRansome, the group set up to manage *Swallow* after her 2010 auction purchase, and hit by health problems, was looking for a way to hand the baton on.

## Grabbing a chance

In a grab-a-chance move, TARS has bought both the boats in the last few weeks: *Amazon* from the White and Budge families for £1,000, and *Swallow* for a nominal £1 from SailRansome.

The idea is to make them available for sailing by Tars and others; however maintenance and operation in the Lake District has proved not to be an option.

The solution turned out to be another boatyard – not in the Lakes, but with Ransome connections: Hunter's yard on the Norfolk Broads. They provided the *Teasel* for the BBC's *Coot Club* and *The Big Six* – also the *Titmouse*, which they've recently restored. They're a heritage yard themselves, preserved from the 1930s, and run by trustees, led by the Rev Neville Khambatta., a longstanding TARS member.

Both boats were delivered to Hunter's over January and February, and Neville and his team made a preliminary assessment of the likely cost and

time required to bring them back to usable condition. Neither of the boats had been in the water for a good while, so not surprisingly, both have turned out to be in need of some repair and restoration. *Amazon* is not too bad, and could be made ready to sail this summer ("in light winds") for around £500.

*Swallow*, however, comes with a long jobs list: eight or nine cracked or broken ribs; cracked knees, some rot and woodworm, new bottom boards, a revarnish. Total cost is estimated at about £13,000. However, she floats, which is an encouraging sign.

Enough of the work to see her properly afloat again could be done in time for her to take part in the film's 50th anniversary celebrations next summer.

## Visit the boats

The first opportunity to see the boats and talk to people at Hunter's will be on Sunday 9 July at TARS East's sailing day (see p39 for more details). Hunter's has requested that members don't drop in or ask to visit at other times - this is a busy working boatyard.

Members interested in skippering the boats, when ready, or organising it, are asked to contact Diana Wright at [webmaster@arthur-ransome.org](mailto:webmaster@arthur-ransome.org).

Donations towards the costs have already started coming in, and TARS is launching an appeal for funds to cover the repairs. If you want to be among the first contributors, go to the website, choose Payments, then Donations; or use Bank Transfer: account name: The Arthur Ransome Society Ltd sort code 40-26-02, account number 61245775, and please put 'Swallow and Amazon' as the reference.





**24-25 JUNE 2023**

## Two-day marathon for *Swallowdale*

It's one of Ransome's longest S&A books, so the latest in the series of marathon reading is to be spread over two days - 24-25 June this year.

It'll be at Windermere Jetty, and once again is being organised by the team that delivered *Swallows and Amazons* on the shores of Coniston, *Pigeon Post* at the Coppermines YHA, *The Picts and the Martyrs* online during lockdown, and *Winter Holiday* last year at the Windermere Jetty Museum.

The exact location will be in and around the museum's Old Fire Station, next to the Model Boating Pond where, the organisers hope "we might be able to mock-up a shipwreck or two". There's also the cafe and ample parking. For further updates, and an online booking form if you want to read a chapter, keep an eye on <http://ifnotduffers.org/2023/02/01/marathon-reading-of-swallowdale/>

### **NEXT YEAR**

## Looks like a busy 2024!

Best to invest in a 2024 diary now – already Ransome-related events are being lined up, in addition to our own IAGM.

First off, is the **TARS Literary Weekend, in Harrogate 19- 21 April, at the Crown Hotel**. As a traditional Spa town, Harrogate has much to offer and was, of course, home to the Great Aunt. It's sure to be a wonderful weekend. If you would like to speak at the weekend, please get in touch with Peter Wright (details on inside cover).

Then the **AGM of the Alliance of Literary Societies, 18-19 May** at Windermere Jetty. It's TARS' turn to host this and we plan to put on a good show with two talks on the Saturday, a look-round Bowness in the afternoon (possibly by boat), a dinner in the evening and a visit to Coniston, including a trip on *Gondola* on the Sunday. Mainly aimed at officers of all the other literary societies, it's also open to their (and of course our) members. Contact Amanda Ardagh-Walter ([nickandamanda1558@gmail.com](mailto:nickandamanda1558@gmail.com)) if you're interested. Or for more on the ALS, see [allianceofliterarysocieties.wordpress.com](http://allianceofliterarysocieties.wordpress.com)

Plans to celebrate the **50th anniversary of the 1974 *Swallows and Amazons* film** are also in hand – again centred on Windermere Jetty. Provisional date is **29-30 June** and we intend that *Swallow* and *Amazon* from the film will be there!

And **TARS' 2024 IAGM** will be on 15-18 August, in Derbyshire's Peak District. More details in the next *Signals*.



The 'Old Fire Station' at Windermere Jetty will be coming alive for the *Swallowdale* marathon reading in June

## Photos wanted!

**TARS needs to update its publicity leaflet and we are looking for some high-quality photos of TARS events, activities or locations that will help showcase the society. If you have any photos that might fit the bill and you'd be happy to see them in print, please send them electronically (email) to Peter Wright at [peterwright180@btinternet.com](mailto:peterwright180@btinternet.com).**

**If they show people who could easily be recognised, please ensure you have their permission to use them, and parental permission is essential if they show children.**



## Moat Brae to The Manor House

### TARS Library on the move

As reported in the last *Signals*, the TARS Library has had to move out of its narrow-but-adequate room in Moat Brae, the (Scottish) National Centre for Children's Literature and Storytelling. The rent was to double and there were other issues.

Luckily Christine Rae, who runs the TARS Stall, came to the rescue with the offer of ample space at her home in Hampshire – and rent free.

So the move took place in January. It involved approx 1,200 books, plus journals and maps - and the bookcases themselves. As TARS Librarian Winifred Wilson reports, "The tall bookcases had to be carried down two flights of stairs as they wouldn't fit in the lift. Three men started packing the books at 8.30 a.m., one left after an hour and the others finished loading the van at 11.40, when I signed the paperwork to confirm that they did a good job."

She didn't actually watch the packing itself – "I was lurking in the corridor most of the time, it being a small room with three large men inside, busy about their work. They had said that there would be one box to one shelf, but I doubt if that actually happened. I don't know how many boxes they used – a lot!"

In fact two smaller vans rather than a single large one had to be used, to cope with overhanging trees at the other end. Paul Wilson had carefully labelled the shelves with post-it notes and to judge from the photos of the re-erected shelves at The Manor House, Christine's home in Stockbridge, Hampshire, the system survived the move!

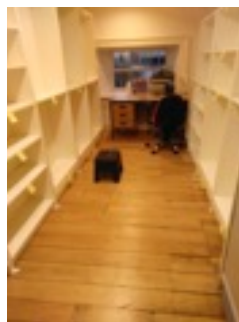
So the Library is back in business - you can browse the Library Catalogue on the TARS Website, request books from Christine by email - [tarslib@arthur-ransome.org](mailto:tarslib@arthur-ransome.org), and return them to: Christine Rae, TARS Library, TARS Library, The Manor House, Stockbridge, Hants SO20 6LJ

#### Library books update list p22

### *Meanwhile at Moat Brae*

If you look at the enlargement of the attic window - which is the one to the ex-Library room - you can just make out the silhouettes of five swallows on the panes. Winifred writes: "Kirstie Taylor gave me these one Christmas, and we have left them there for future generations to wonder about! When one climbs the stairs to the attic floor, one can read the following quotation from *Peter Pan* on the wall, and hear it spoken by Joanna Lumley, patron of Moat Brae: 'Do you know,' Peter asked, 'why swallows build in the eaves of houses? It is to listen to the stories.' She adds: "Let's all hope that Moat Brae continues to thrive as a centre for storytelling. It has had a very challenging beginning, with the first lockdown coming less than a year after the opening in June 2019."

**Moat Brae aims to give every child who visits a pre-loved story book to take away. If you'd like to donate a book, or a few, have a look at [moatbrae.org/adopt-a-book](http://moatbrae.org/adopt-a-book).**



From here... the empty Library room at Moat Brae, and some of the books ready to go... to here... its new home at The Manor House



## THE SIGNALS PROFILE

# Christine Rae: all about books

First the TARS Stall, then Amazon, and now the library too, as she tells Peter Willis

Christine Rae is best known to Tars – the ones who attend events like the IAGMs and the Literary Weekends at any rate – as the manager of the TARS Stall. Warm, friendly, slight of build, and with an infectious giggle, she’s nevertheless quite a private person. But she’s likely to become a bit better-known in the near future as she’s just taken on two more roles within TARS.

Following Alan Hakim’s retirement from Amazon Publications she’s joined the production team, as administrator, handling subscriptions and, she expects, writing flyers about upcoming books. She feels a little less certain about taking over the role of editor.

She also stepped in to ‘rescue’ the TARS Library when its tenure at Moat Brae became untenable. Christine offered space in unused rooms at her home in Hampshire – and rent-free unlike at Moat Brae. When I phoned her to discuss this profile, she’d just received the delivery and was knee-deep in boxes of books and flat-pack bookcases attempting to revert to their original state.

Mercifully, all the books were carefully packed, by Winifred Wilson, so if one is ordered, Christine is confident she’ll be able to find it easily enough and put it in the post. But as for proper librarianship – selecting which books to add in – she’s hoping someone else will step in – perhaps Winifred can be persuaded to stay on in an advisory role. “I’m sure she reads more books than I do.”

She does like books, though, and to complement her professional work as a pathologist she did an Open University English Literature course, with a



*Christine’s varied interests: Her dog, the TARS Stall (here with Krysia Clack at last year’s Literary Weekend) and with her fellow Amazon Publications team – Paul Crisp Alan Hakim and Margaret Ratcliffe – at the IAGM (Library photos on page 9)*

module in Children’s Literature. She’s currently studying Ancient Greek, though, she admits, “That’s not going terribly well.”

She’s also into yoga – you can tell, she’s got that healthy yoga look about her. “I started doing it at school – it went by the way at university, but I’ve come back to it and I love it.”

About 14 years ago, Christine went to a book auction at Bonhams, which included the library of the then recently-deceased John Cowen. (John was a bookseller and bibliophile with a great collection of Ransome first editions; his 2000 book, *A Ransome Book-case*, is probably the handsomest volume produced by Amazon Publications.)

Christine, her interest in Ransome rekindled, bought several volumes. “The non-boating ones – I can’t get my head around all that sailing.” Her favourites are *Winter Holiday* and *Pigeon Post*.

Other fondnesses are or were for the Chalet School series (“My mother got me into them when I was at school,”), the Narnia books, Virginia Woolf, detective books in general and more recently Philip Pullman’s *Dark Materials*

series. She also treasures a first paperback edition of the first Harry Potter book, which her daughter found in a bookshop when she was about eight.

She’s also a keen gardener, and enjoys long walks with her “demanding” springer spaniel. However, what with the stall (which she took over from Paul Wilson in 2016), the Library and Amazon Publications, to say nothing of the Ancient Greek, should it survive, there seems to be a real risk that they may find themselves more unweeded and unwalked than she would wish.

# MORE ISLAND LIFE

## Peter Willis reviews *36 Islands* by Robert Twigger

It would be hard not to warm to a book that on its very first page draws a favourable comparison between Arthur Ransome and Enid Blyton. When its author was seven, and familiar with Blyton, his father read *Swallows and Amazons* to him and his sisters. “This book was different and more realistic though ostensibly of the same genre... the children had skills and they knew things I didn’t, things like sailing and rowing and lighting fires... (it) opened up an entire world of competence I had only dimly perceived before.”

And of course, islands. “Who doesn’t have a thing about islands?” he asks. And luckily (perhaps) the Lake District can boast an ample supply of them – 36, including of course *The Island* (or its two components). For a travel writer in search of a project, it proved irresistible, particularly in the season of covid. The whole point of islands is that they’re often deserted, and looking for a bolthole to sit out the next calamity seemed a sensible thing to do.

Thirty-six, though, is a lot of islands, and the number of lakes they’re spread over – thirteen – is also large, so whether they’re big or small, deserted or inhabited (even over-developed in some cases), remote or close to the shore, they do tend to merge into one experience, particularly if rain is involved.

### Wild Cat Island

Even Wild Cat Island – Peel Island – gets a fairly cursory treatment once he reaches it. He’s easily distracted by Donald Campbell’s tragic death nearby – in fact one of the interesting themes of the book is how the pre-war record-breakers were tearing up and down the lakes, and flying-boats were taking off and landing on Windermere when Ransome was writing the placid, bucolic tales of dinghy-sailing. His theory is that the Lakes books are really set in the 1900s rather than the time of their writing.

Travelling between the islands is as much of the adventure, if that’s the word, as exploring them when we get there. More so, generally. Twigger mostly uses a packraft – a sort of cross between an overgrown inflatable kayak and an undersized

rubber dinghy – to cross any water, but he also has to carry or somehow hump it between these events and it’s in these treks that its relationship with its owner is established.

### Ruminations

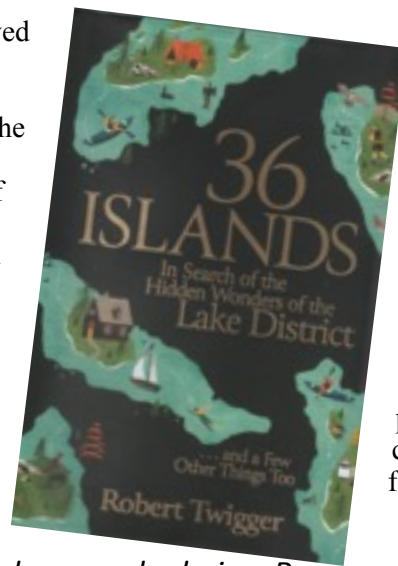
His other great companion proves to be Arthur Ransome himself, or perhaps Ransome’s two chief biographers, the benign Hugh Brogan and the ‘ungenerous’ Roland Chambers of *The Last Englishman* who treats Ransome ‘as a bit of a fool’. His muddy odyssey is accompanied by ruminations on Ransome’s life and character, and the influence of the one on the other. He falls to wondering for instance whether Ransome ‘lacked courage’ – or whether, given the early loss of a father-figure he could ever be expected to be otherwise. Twigger loves and admires Ransome, or some parts of him, but is always ready to confront and examine his faults and failings. Even Freud gets a fleeting walk-on part.

He’s also rather good at introducing snippets of Ransome lore as we travel together – much of it we know already of

course, but there are the occasional surprises: more about Oscar Gnosspelius than I recall reading elsewhere for instance. But then there’s the curious assertion that journalism was ‘a profession that Ransome detested’. Really? He was one himself for goodness’ sake. As was one of his best friends, Ted Scott. It’s probably true that he disliked being pestered by the door-stepping type of reporter, but that’s different. Source?

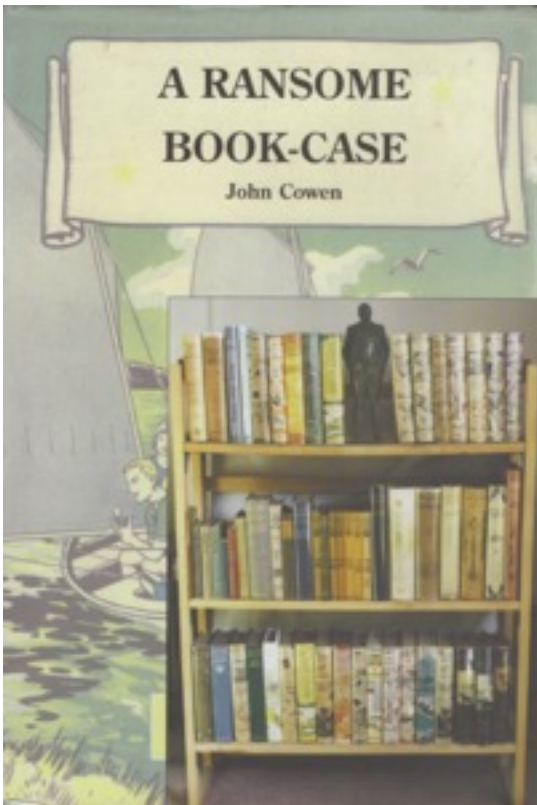
One of the tests of this sort of book is that however much it might irritate on first reading, if, when you start looking things up to write the review, you find yourself wanting to read on all the time, it can’t be too bad. Another test is whether he would be worth inviting as a speaker at the next Literary Weekend. On the whole I’d say yes. He can be funny, quirky, provocative and thoughtful. Whether he’d want to come I’ve no idea.

**281pp, illustrated, pub Weidenfeld & Nicolson 2022 £20. In TARS Library**



*“Twigger loves and admires Ransome, or some parts of him, but is always ready to confront and examine his faults and failings.”*



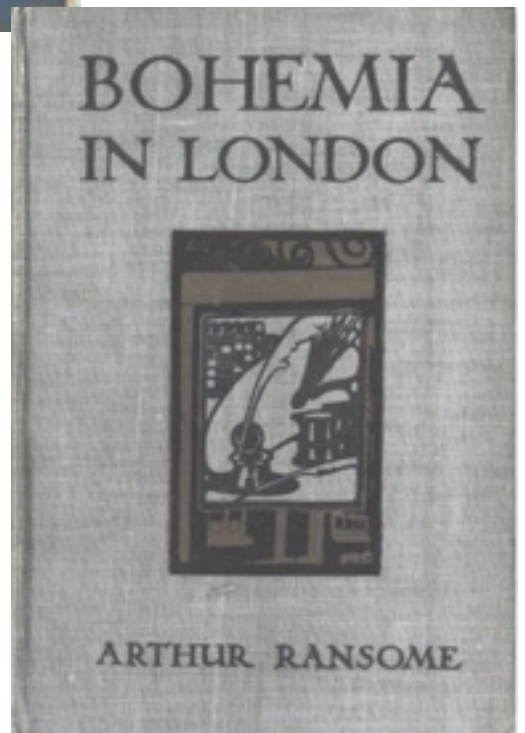
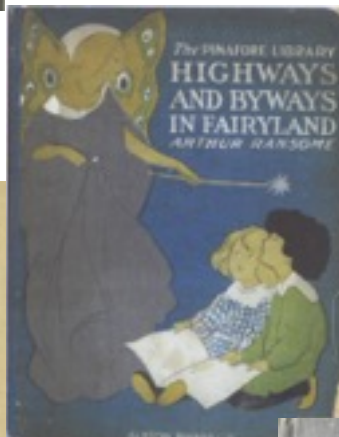


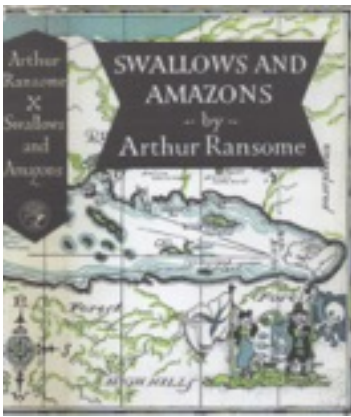
*A Ransome Book-case* is undoubtedly the handsomest book Amazon Publications has produce so far, writes Peter Willis.

In 2000, or a little before, bookseller and bibliophile John Cowen proposed a book displaying the covers, dustwappers or title pages of historic Ransome books based on his own and other people's collections, with introductory notes by himself. Dave Sewart and Christina Hardymont were roped in to respectively work on the production, and the result is a rich selection of covers including many that most of us are unlikely to see or much less own in real life.

They appear in chronological order, from AR's first published book, *The ABC of Physical Culture* (1904), through the more elegant *Pond and Stream*, (1906) and the 1907 'Fairyland' book, perhaps an early manifestation of his fascination with folk-tales. Interestingly, the same year saw *Bohemia in London*, "Ransome's first major work" as Cowen puts it.

The next few years saw a growing reputation as a literary intellectual, with more established publishers (mostly) with Art Deco embossed cloth-board covers. *The Book of Love* dates from 1911, and the ill-fated Oscar Wilde book came out in 1912, eventually precipitating AR's escape to Russia.

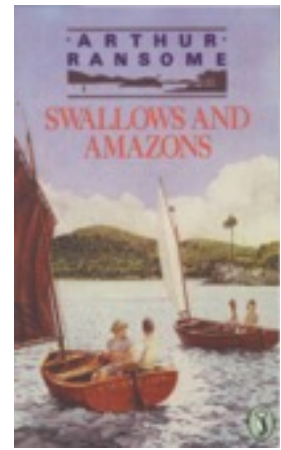




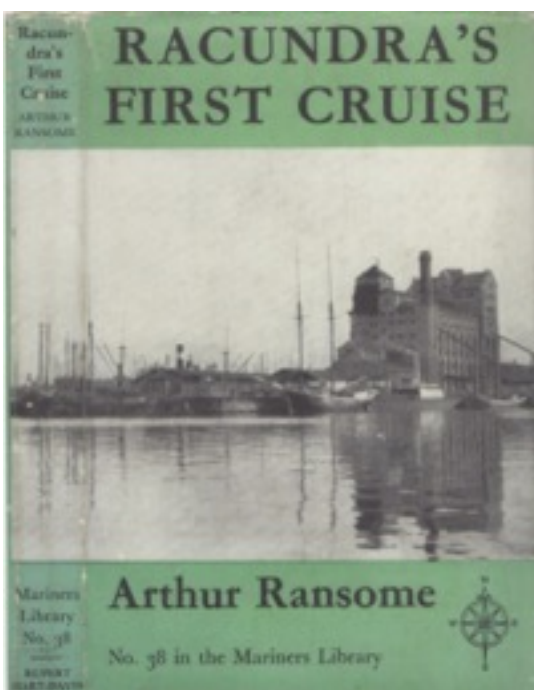
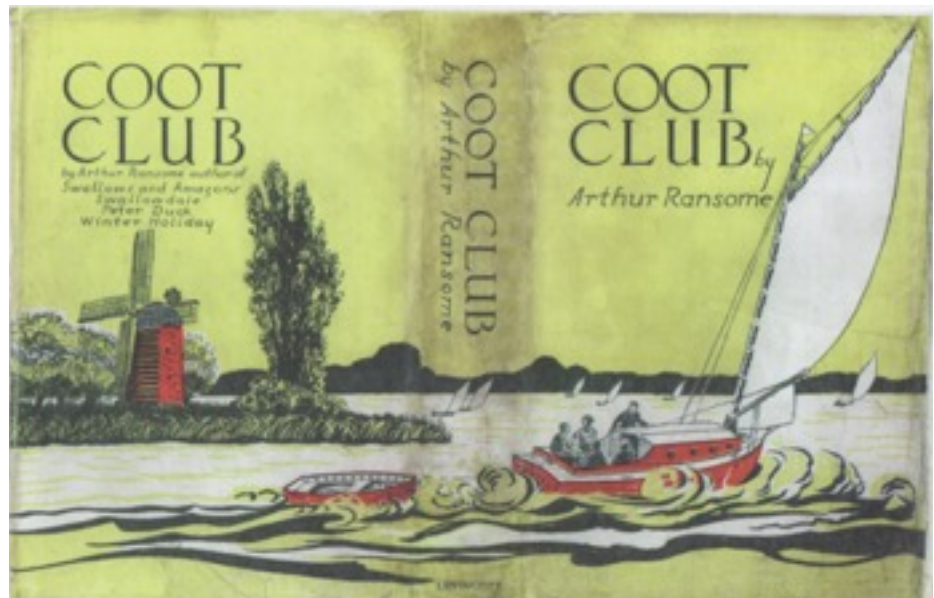
'The Twelve' are, inevitably treated to generous coverage - there are seven reproductions of various editions of *Swallows and Amazons* alone.

Here, left, is the dust-jacket of 'the first and only cheap edition' from 1953. It's one of a number of included covers using the Stephen Spurrier map, first seen (to much greater advantage!) on the very first edition in 1930.

Right is an attractive treatment by Anthony Kerins, commissioned as part of a Puffin Books re-issue of the series that replaced the more familiar 'collectables' using coloured versions of Ransome's own illustrations.



Some of the American editions feature these wrap-around dust-jacket illustrations, by local artists. This one, published by Lippincott, contains illustrations by Helene Carter, but the cover artist is unknown and uncredited.



'*Racundra*' was Ransome's break-through post-Russia title in 1923 and John treats us to six covers, only one fewer than *S&A*.

The book also featured in the Mariner's Library, co-founded by Arthur. 'Book-case' also features covers of all the titles to which he contributed introductions.

*A Ransome Book-case* contains over 130 illustrations and reproductions; it's a volume that would enhance any Ransome lover's own book-case. Luckily the TARS Stall still has some copies in stock, priced at only £10. Why wait?





## Special Supplement

# TARS OVERSEAS

## The extra 21 per cent

TARS is an international organisation. Not in all honesty quite ‘worldwide’ – we have no members in three continents: mainland Asia, South America and Antarctica. But elsewhere we have a total of 147 ‘Overseas Members’, which is just over 21 per cent of our total membership, or slightly more than our largest UK region (and actually also slightly more than our three smallest regions put together).

Unsurprisingly the majority of these members are grouped together in two main anglophone areas: North America and Australasia, and these groups are oddly similar – each consists of a large country with a small one (in membership numbers, at any rate) attached.

So North America is made up of the USA, 50 members, and Canada, 21 members, while in the Southern Hemisphere we have Australia, 36 members with New Zealand, 18 members.

Elsewhere, in Japan, whose ‘Arthur Ransome Club of Japan’ predated TARS, we have eleven. In Europe, there are no groups, but also eleven members spread around seven countries: Three in France, including our Secretary John Pearson; two each in Ireland and Switzerland, and the one each in the Czech Republic, Germany, Spain and Sweden.

## Their magazines

Each of the two main blocs has its own magazine or newsletter. In Australia/New Zealand it’s *Furthest South*, and USA/Canada have *Signals from TARSUS & North Pole News*. In both cases, they are online publications, coming out usually three times a year, and, not being burdened with print and postage cost, they can carry often quite long articles about matters of interest to Tars everywhere, beyond their territorial boundaries. They are available on the TARS Website, and well worth looking up. *Signals* occasionally reprints an article that we think would ‘travel well’. There are two in this issue.

TARS Trustee **Kryisia Clack** is the ‘Overseas Members Representative’ on the Board, and she asked co-ordinators and journal editors for their comments and these are presented here (with some slight editing to avoid redundant repetition of facts).

*Peter Willis, Signals Editor*

## International Overview

by **Kryisia Clack**,  
Overseas Members Representative

*The International AGM is so called for the reason that TARS has members globally and not just in the UK. In recent years we have been able to welcome attendees from Australia, Japan and USA. While we can meet in person more easily in the UK this is not so abroad.*

*I asked the overseas coordinators what it is like to organise anything in their countries.*

*The USA which has 50-plus members does not currently have a co-ordinator and an appeal was made in the last issue of Signals. Simon Horn, the editor of Signals from TARSUS & North Pole News has also put out an appeal in that journal and compiled a survey to ask what members would like in the future. They do not currently meet in person as the membership is too far spread out.*

*Technology may allow people to meet on Zoom but in North America the different time zones do not make it easy to organise. Hopefully, the results of the survey will show what the members want and a volunteer co-ordinator will come forward to pull things together.*



**Ian Sacré,**  
Canadian  
Co-ordinator  
writes:

As you may have heard from Simon Horn, he has developed a questionnaire survey to be sent out to North American members shortly in the hope some may take a moment to reply. This may give us some idea as to what members hope to get out of the Society which should help chart a way ahead.

What so many do not realise is that Canada is an enormous country, the second largest on the planet, consisting of approximately 3,900,000 square miles. We have 21 Canadian TARS members from coast to coast which works out at about 185,000 square miles per member. There are four and a half time zones from coast to coast. These facts make physical get togethers hard to achieve. I am hopeful that we may be able to set something up here in British Columbia where seven members are located, three of which are in my area. We shall see.

I have only physically met one other member and I doubt if there have been any other meetings between members. I very occasionally hear from a



member by phone or email, usually asking about subscription renewals. Never socialising.

One of the things I think would help is to turn *Signals* into a global publication rather than fundamentally a UK, six-region vehicle. I sense that for the most part UK members do not think globally when it comes to the Society. Many Canadian TARS members are in fact ex-pats and read the 12 stories as children. (Interestingly, my personal doctor, a British-born MD in his late fifties often chats to me about sailing on the Norfolk Broads and his favourite story, *We Didn't Mean to Go to Sea*. Sadly he is not a member.)

Finding members who are willing to take on small TARS tasks is very hard. I know this is also the case in the UK. Simon is always looking for material for our little publication *North Pole News* but it is hard to get people to contribute. We are going to see if we can do something with Zoom but we would like to find a member who would take on the job of hosting it. The time zones we have here will be a problem but perhaps finding a mid-time which works might be the solution. I do hope we have not become a Society of armchair adventurers and I hope we'll all get the lead out and 'stand to'.

*Thank you Ian for your honest account - KC*

## New Zealand: Neil Robertson writes:

There is not much we can tell you about TARSNZ activities at this time. We are still engaged in chivvying our members to renew their subscriptions, so that we can send our annual subs to TARSUK for your publications, *Signals* and *Mixed Moss*. So far we have twelve responses, from our sadly diminished membership of just seventeen names.

Three of our most active and valued members have died, prematurely, in 2022.

**Cheryl Paget**, our long-serving national coordinator, really brought TARSNZ members together with well-planned annual gatherings. Her dedication and contribution to TARS was outstanding in every way. AusTARS and TARSNZ were very pleased to establish an **Award in her memory**, available to members in both countries. **The inaugural winner is Garry Wood** of Auckland, NZ, who has researched and written original, fascinating and beautifully illustrated articles for *Furthest South* over a long period. (His 'Slater Bob's truck' is shown above, right.)

We have also lost **Bob Cuming** of Hamilton, who with his wife, Lyn, planned and arranged the Sixth Annual Arthur Ransome



Birthday Weekend in Waikato in January 2017, and **Dave Goodwin** of Dunedin, who, with his wife Dianne, made a major contribution to the the seventh gathering in Dunedin in 2018, including a remarkable presentation, at the Otago Museum's Planetarium, of the night sky as it appeared when Ransome was writing *Winter Holiday*.

Meetings are difficult at present. Our members are spread throughout the country, with 800 miles between our furthest north and furthest south members. Even in the Wellington area where we have six members, it is hard to get together – our members are almost all retired, and half of our local members have mobility and/or immuno-compromised problems (the latter a real concern while Covid is ever-present). And the sole member still in the active workforce is tied down to odd shifts! So we have not been able to get together in the past year, although we are still trying to focus on a possible meeting.

Zoom is not easy to organise either, for several reasons. So we depend on TARS publications such as *Signals*, *Furthest South* and *Mixed Moss*, to keep the bonds functioning.



Co-co-ordinators from an earlier time: Australia's Dawn Ciechomski and the late Cheryl Paget of New Zealand

## Australia: Jan Allen, retiring editor of Furthest South, writes:

Hello Krysia,

*Thank you very much for all you are doing to raise the awareness of the overseas members of TARS. Sometimes it seems that the TARS publications overlook all those keen TARS in countries beyond Britain who treasure their Ransome experiences, however limited socially, just as much as those living in the UK regions. It will be great if we can have more content in Signals, particularly, about*

*our members' involvement here. I have tried here to outline how TARS functions here.*

Unfortunately, our membership is no longer 60, as it was in much earlier years. It currently stands at around 38, as age, abilities and waning interest have resulted in steady attrition.

We no longer have any families with children keen to come to corroboree weekends, which we were able to do until about twelve years ago. But we do have a keen pair of young twin grand-daughters of Gill's who will be joining in again this year. Most of our members are seniors, and quite a few are in their eighth or ninth decade, though still avid readers of the books.

The books are not available in libraries or schools any more here, so younger folk only gain exposure to the delights of AR through an aware adult or, since the film remake, by accessing the books from good bookshops.

About half of our members take an active interest in our activities, while the others are content to enjoy receiving their publications and perhaps having personal online involvement in the various fora, but either live too distantly or are simply not interested in coming together with other members. Our newsletter, *Furthest South*, aims to provide a platform for all members to gain something from their membership here in this TARS outpost and members have supported it well over the twenty-odd years since it was first established by Lionel Hill and myself.

### **'A wonderful bond'**

We are fortunate to have a large group of members living in Victoria, one of our smaller and more accessible states, and so over the years we have been able to sustain a broad annual programme of activities and to develop a wonderful bond as a group of like-minded people having fun together. In New South Wales this was also possible for a good number of years but smaller member numbers and their current circumstances have prevented this in recent years. Since 1999 I have acted as AusTARS' Activities Coordinator and I still continue in this role, with the support of the committee, which was formed after AusTARS incorporated as a group in order to provide a sound legal footing for the Society's activities here.

The committee handles our administration and liaison with TARS UK, with its chairman, currently Dawn Ciechomski, acting as Australian Coordinator, with a Secretary to assist with administration. AusTARS also has a Vice-Chairman, Treasurer and two ordinary committee members. This structure has made it easier to share the administrative load and also brought new ideas forward. The committee usually meets four times a year, now via Zoom. The committee has set up working charters, the AusTARS library and developed programs.

Unfortunately, all our efforts at recruiting over the years have resulted in few new members. When I could I used to visit other states and arrange for members to meet, or members there set up gatherings, so this has been done at some time in all states where we have members and I have enjoyed getting to know members from outside Victoria and also in New Zealand.

When Covid limited our activities, we turned to Zoom to bring members from both Australia and New Zealand together and Cheryl Paget was a great support in implementing our plan for joint trans-Tasman sessions and for including New Zealand contributions as part of *Furthest South*.

The Zoom sessions were very helpful in engaging members in both countries, who now feel they know other members as TARS friends. Our Zoom program is continuing this year and in the past we have been delighted to welcome overseas guests from the UK and North America.

Members in Australia, particularly in Victoria, have enjoyed an annual program of around 10 or 12 activities each year. These have varied enormously, but all have been inspired by the books, except perhaps the Christmas party, though the traditional piñata made by Phoebe Palmieri for that is always something related to the books.

Occasionally, members from interstate have been able to join us as we camp, go on heritage train rides, birdwatch, explore mining areas, sail, row, climb (modest) peaks, skate, solve challenges, compete in quizzes or play games; everything related to that lengthy catalogue of pursuits, skills, knowledge and experiences to which AR has introduced us. Great fun!

### **Traditions**

Some of our activities have become traditions, such as the annual surprise birthday cake devised and produced by David and Elizabeth Stamp for the AR Birthday Party, or the Birthday Quiz and Chocolate Tasting contests, fought very competitively for the respective annual trophies. I find there is always something new and different found through the books that I can come up with for our enjoyment. We report on our activities in *Furthest South*, where we also include well-researched, interesting and searching articles on various aspects of Ransomiana and related topics. The activities we read of in *Signals* and *Outlaw* and articles in *Mixed Moss* are always an inspiration.

***Cheers from TARS Furthest South Outpost. Jan***

***Krysia adds:*** In Australia Dawn Ciechomski and Gill Metz have taken over from Jan Allen who did such a sterling job for many years. They work hard to keep in touch with the members and organise activities. There are over 60 individual members in the 38 memberships and enough live in close proximity for them to organise regular activities.

They also have regular Zoom meetings which I have had the privilege of being invited to attend from the UK either in the middle of the night or very early in the morning. Their most recent was to celebrate Arthur's birthday and we were all asked to think what we would give him as a gift, who we think Arthur would like to invite to his party etc. The activity is less important than the joy of being able to meet up, chat and share our love and enthusiasm for Arthur Ransome.

Australia have been able to organise plenty of events for 2023 which I share here:

#### Events calendar 2023

##### Trans-Tasman Zoom sessions

Sunday January 15th NZ 3.00 pm AEST 5.00 pm WA 8.00 pm  
Celebrate AR's Birthday!

May 20 or 21, August 19 or 20, late November - dates and guests to be announced

##### VicTARS activities

PROPOSED (dates and activities may alter.) Events are open to all AusTARS members.

**Sunday January 22nd** 11.30 am AR Birthday Party Emerald

Friday February 10th 7.30 pm (AEST) Annual General Meeting Zoom

**Saturday February 18th** 11.00 am - 3.30 pm Lake Wendouree Day Ballarat

**Sunday March 19th** 12 noon - 3.30 pm Rowing up the Amazon Fairfield

**Saturday April 29th** 11.00 am - 3.00 pm Kanchenjunga Picnic Day Mount Macedon

**Saturday June 3rd** 11.00 am - 3.00 pm Pirates and Plays Day Emerald

**Sunday July 16th** 1.00 pm - 4.00 pm Cosy Winter Mystery Afternoon Emerald

**Saturday August 12th** 11.00 am - 3.30 pm AR and the Romany Life Tecoma

**Saturday September 16th** 11.30 am - 3.00 pm Roses and Birds Day Werribee

**Sunday October 15th** 1.00 pm - 4.00 pm Dick's Butterfly Day Cranbourne Botanic Gardens

**Saturday November 25th** 11.30 am - 4.00 pm Mining and Missee Lee Day Bendigo

**Saturday December 9th** 11.00 am - 4.00 pm Christmas Party Ivanhoe East

So you can see that there is a common theme across the countries because of the problems of members living so far apart but in Australia, as so much of the population lives on the east coast, meeting up is a little more possible.



VicTARS 2022 Christmas Party with piñata and all the trimmings - see FS December 22 for details

## Publications

Despite the distances between members both North America and Australia/New Zealand produce incredible publications *TARSUS – North Pole News* and *Furthest South* which are accessible on the members page of the TARS website. They are packed with information, are very imaginative, entertaining as well as attaining a high academic level of research. I encourage you all to read them.



### Furthest South

Volume 24 Number 3, November 2022

Newsletter of the Arthur Ransome Society in Australia and New Zealand



*'Next year... we'll do something splendid... Either Furthest North or Furthest South would be good.'* (Captain Nancy, *Swallows and Amazons*, p323)

In the most recent issue of *Furthest South* I think many of us can identify with Linda Phillips' attempts and eventual success of ascending the Lake District Kanchenjunga. Well done Linda! (*reprinted overleaf - PW*) I have also learnt a lot about bitterns, buzzards and grebes.



Similarly, in the latest issue of *North Pole News* it is hard to pick out an article but one I learnt a lot from is Ian Sacré's one on a folding boat. There is also interesting speculation whether the S&A's could have ever visited Vancouver in their round-world trip. (*also reprinted, in part, overleaf - PW*) The recipes from 'Beckfoot Kitchen' are not to be missed. (*Agreed - PW - but no room this time!*)

There is something for everyone in these publications and I do encourage you all to read them from cover to cover just like *Signals* and *Mixed Moss*.

Similarly, I encourage all TARS members globally to submit articles to *Signals*, *Mixed Moss* and *Outlaw*. These are not exclusive publications to those in the UK.

Finally, I would like to thank all the co-ordinators and editors as well as those who have not been named, who work hard to contribute to TARS overseas.

*Krysia Clack*

*Overseas Members Representative,*  
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# The Ascent of Kanchenjunga ... again

AusTARS member **Linda Phillips** on her second (and successful) attempt

TARS members may dream of climbing Kanchenjunga, or as natives know it, Coniston Old Man, It's a serious climb, calling for fitness and preparation.

I visited UK in May 2019, and with my brother, attempted the climb. I got half-way, resting at Low Water (which is actually the highest water in the UK), with my aching feet dipped in the refreshingly cold water. I tried again in May 2022, this time thinner and fitter.

The Swallows and Amazons climbed Kanchenjunga in *Swallowdale*. It would be fun to follow the route they took, but AR is vague about the actual route. Plus, I note they took two days to do it, camping overnight, something I wish I had done! The account inexplicably misses out what must have been the toughest part of the climb, as suddenly, 'they were actually standing by the cairn that marked the highest point of Kanchenjunga...'

## One of two routes

Today, anyone climbing would choose one of two routes, both originating from the parking area above Coniston village.

To the right, a long and arduous climb eventually reaches Low Water. Here, my 2019 self was exhausted, my feet in the water to cool off. But there's worse. Looking up, you can see the summit, but oh my! We thought the worst of the climb must surely be over, but no, the steep face to the summit presents itself as the sort of climb worthy of ropes and pickaxes, not so much as a walk but a climb.

I gave up at this point, though my brother carried



Linda, and the cairn, at the summit.  
Below: Goat Tarn

on and reached the summit. He is 15 years younger than me, and fit. I was 66, and overweight, so I counted it a win to even reach Low Water.

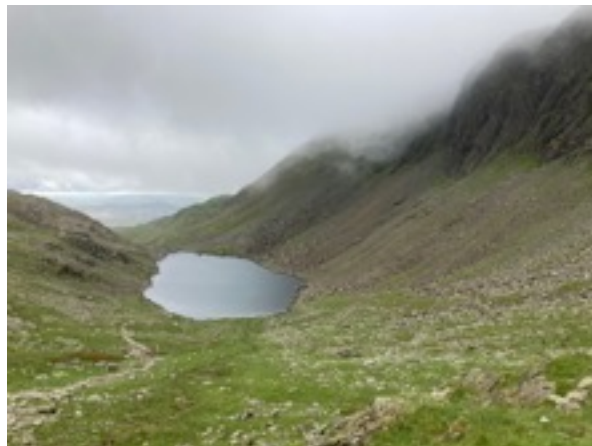
Returning in May, 2022, I knew what to expect. This time, I was determined to reach the summit and stand by the cairn where the Swallows and Amazons had been. Armed with a years' worth of preparation, exercise and weight loss, I felt ready, but even so, I almost never made it.

How to plan the ascent, the best way to go, these are common topics. Is there an easy way up? The answer to that one is easy... no.

We returned to the carpark above Coniston. This year, the weather was wetter and colder, the summit out of sight, enveloped in cloud.

This time, from the carpark we ventured to the left and followed the Goat Track. Apparently this is an easier track. Laugh if you wish, because I'm sure you can see what's coming.

Eventually reaching the top of this climb, another steep climb faced us, heading towards the peak and into the clouds. At

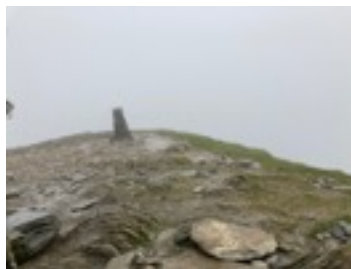






first it was easier, a gently rising track curling around the south of Old Man. Then it splits, and we took the track leading north to Torver Common. From here the gradient increases, though still a gentle climb compared to what is to come. Past Torver Common, we reached Goats Water, a chilly spot, etched deep into the surrounding peaks. A glance upward reveals that the real climb has yet to begin, with Old Man to our right, a long and merciless climb straight ahead.

As we climbed, we entered the clouds and I got the feeling of how it was for Titty and Roger, trying to find their way over the moors in thick fog. It was much colder, and the cloud showed itself as heavy rain. I was glad that, this time, I had used walking poles, as I staggered upwards, foot by grudging foot, while my fit brother looked impatient with my slow progress.



### Exhausted, I broke into tears

At one point, exhausted, I sat down, broke into tears, and told my brother to carry on without me, that I'd never reach the summit. Presumably deciding the ground was too tough to bury a body, he stayed with me until I recovered. "Keep going, you'll be ok, we're nearly at the top," he would cheerfully say to encourage me, while I thought of dark deeds.

But he was right. A few minutes later, a hazy sight through the clouds solidified into a cairn and with newfound energy I reached the summit! It was cold, wet and rainy. I stood by the old cairn (there's a new and bigger one adjacent). The fog was still thick. A couple of steps away you couldn't see any ground, just thick fog, but I knew that was the edge of a sheer cliff.

Other natives were there too, swapping climbing stories. We sheltered in the lee of the new cairn, for morning tea, then, "Shall we head down, then?" asked my cheerful brother, as though there was any choice. So we took the very steep slope down towards Low Water, carefully as the foggy cloud obscured the way. But, halfway down, we left the clouds, emerging into a panoramic view of the land below us. There, still some way away, was Low Water, to which we descended. I insisted on a halt at Low Water, where I sat with my feet in the water, again. Three years later I had completed the circle around Old Man. Comparing photos of me there, feet in the water, in 2019 and 2022, I could see the difference losing 12 kg

had made, and it hit me, I had successfully followed in the footsteps of the Swallows and Amazons! A wave of joy swept over me!

The descent is almost as treacherous as the ascent, but it passed and we returned to our car, driving down to Coniston for a welcome lunch! The only question left in my mind is, will I ever get the courage to do it again?

Top: Annotated ascent map  
 Above: The Cairn, again  
 Right: Delight at Low Tarn  
 This article is slightly abridged from *Furthest South*,





By Martin Beech (Courtenay, Vancouver Island)

Chapter 1 of *Missee Lee* opens with the explorers in ‘their 100th port of a world cruise’. So where, Martin Beech wondered in a recent issue of the TARS’ North American *Signals from TARSUS & North Pole News*, might the *Wild Cat* have called on the way? He titled his article with an eye to local interest, ‘Did The Swallows and Amazons visit Vancouver?’

Unlike other Ransome books, the endpapers of *Missee Lee* show no chart of the entire story, only a map of the three islands. The fact that Papeete had been a stop prior to their 100th port, and that after escaping from their captors the crew sail on to Singapore, suggests that the *Wild Cat* was crossing the Pacific Ocean from east to west. So how did they enter the Pacific?

I would suggest that they entered through the Panama Canal. This route would have enabled Captain Flint, no doubt with objections from Nancy, to have avoided sailing round Cape Horn, at the southernmost tip of South America.

The voyage started, therefore, in a similar manner to that in *Peter Duck*, with the *Wild Cat* crossing the Atlantic. After passing through the canal, the *Wild Cat* could move either north or south. Certainly, they could have cruised down the west coast of South America for a while, but I suspect that they travelled northward, heading up

the western coast of Mexico and on towards the United States.

Having moved up the west coast to San Francisco, the most logical next step would be to visit Canada, and that, of course, would bring them to Vancouver Island, and the Strait of Georgia. So it seems entirely reasonable to propose that the Swallows and Amazons, along with Captain Flint, did indeed visit Vancouver, or Victoria, and possibly both. Who knows, they may even have sailed on to Comox.

From Vancouver, the next long leg of the voyage would take them across the Pacific to the Hawaiian Islands, then due south to Papeete and Tahiti. From Tahiti, the *Wild Cat* could travel to any number of locations. Perhaps south and west to New Zealand, calling in at Auckland on the North Island, and then, perhaps, on to Sydney, Australia.

Travelling northward up the eastern coast of Australia, they could have (carefully) explored the Great Barrier Reef along with New Guinea and Borneo, with a final arrival at their 100th port in Manila.

From there, after looking-in at Shan-tou (and perhaps Hong Kong) the voyage could have continued on to Singapore and Malaysia. Captain Flint even admitted to, “fooling about in Java years ago”. The intention might have been to visit many more of the Indonesian islands. Indeed, at one stage after their capture, Captain Flint soothes a worrying Susan (that ‘mother’ would be missing them) by noting that, “there are those Dutch Islands [Aruba and associated islands – the old Dutch West Indies]



we might have gone to. There's Formosa [Taiwan]. They know we're not a liner and don't work to a time-table".

This all reinforces the notion that the cruise was only loosely planned out before the *Wild Cat* left home port. With the journey interrupted by the loss of the *Wild Cat*, and the eventual adoption of the *Shining Moon*, the explorers would eventually proceed from Singapore into the Indian Ocean. From there, since the time available does seem to have been more or less infinite, the cruise could have called in at multiple Indian ports, and perhaps the Maldives.

Once again assuming a now much more cautious Captain Flint, rather than trying to round the Cape of Good Hope in a junk, I suggest he steered the *Shining Moon* towards the Arabian coast, eventually travelling up the Red Sea to Suez. Traversing the Suez Canal, the *Shining Moon* would then proceed through the Mediterranean Sea, exploring the North African coast, out through the Straights of Gibraltar, rounding Portugal and Finisterre, crossing the Bay of Biscay, and on to St. Mawes.

There are, of course, many ways to sail around the world, and the one explored here is just a flight of fantasy. That, however, is the point – it is a flight of fantasy based upon a reading and indulging in a piece of metafiction; an oddly placed story, in both location and time, within the Swallows and Amazons series.

From a young age I have traced, followed and re-followed (in body and mind) the Walkers, Blacketts and Callums across lakes, rivers, fells, islands, the Norfolk Broads, and even deep oceans, but in *Missee Lee* one can follow them (in the mind's eye) across the globe. Just as we are told that the Swallows and Amazons composed *Peter Duck*, as a winter-time story and diversion, so *Missee Lee* allows us, the reader, to co-explore their world (a rapidly changing world at that) and imagine, during a rainy Vancouver Island winter's night, how the world might be circumnavigated, with helpings of marauding pirates, a salting of shipwrecks, and a seasoning of exploration being thrown-in, just to spice things along, where and when required.



# A Signals post-script

## WHAT NEXT?

Much food for thought here, especially for a *Signals* Editor. First though huge congratulations to Krysia and her global band of correspondents. This is the first time – at least for a long while, perhaps ever – that we've published such a comprehensive self-portrait of what I can't resist describing as the 'outposts'.

It has a rather downbeat feel to it, perhaps justified in North America which is clearly having difficulties, but also present in the Australia/ New Zealand groups which although suffering from falling numbers (aren't we all?) and the usual problems of distance, are actually remaining pretty lively and active.

Ian Sacré suggests turning *Signals* into "a global publication rather than fundamentally a UK, six-region vehicle". Jan Allen speaks for many in asking for "*more content in Signals, particularly, about our members' involvement here*".

And it's true that *Signals* was originally created to meet the needs of the regional organisation of a chiefly UK-based society formed to celebrate a British author who set most of his stories in Britain, and reflects that in its coverage.

It's also the case that the two overseas magazines are intended to correct this imbalance in their own areas. Getting *Signals* to cover these areas in the same way as the UK regions could – assuming somebody in them could be persuaded to provide the coverage – run the risk of undermining the two existing magazines.

That said, I have, during my tenure as editor, tried (but possibly not hard enough) to reflect the overseas groups by republishing articles from the two publications. Finding suitable material to share with the home audience is not always easy, and length can be a problem – freed from the shackles of print and postage budgets, the online titles tend to carry very long-form articles (which can sometimes be carefully cropped).

And a large part of *Signals* is open to general interest-articles from contributors from anywhere. Likewise, commissioned 'profiles' of interesting members – any suggestions, with offers to write?

One solution could be an annual 'special' a bit like this one. If anyone has any thoughts or further ideas, do email me, or Krysia, and we'll start a debate.

**Peter Willis, *Signals* Editor**



# TARS BOOK GROUP

## READ - ZOOM - CHAT

We're a small, friendly group who meet every few months to chat about books from a short list of titles suggested at the end of the previous get-together.

New members always welcome!

**Next meeting: Sunday 11 June 7pm**

**Zoom Meeting ID: 813 7605 8904**

**Passcode: 934802**

[https://us02web.zoom.us/j/89166596214?](https://us02web.zoom.us/j/89166596214?pwd=N01MV3JkTEFqQnRJQTlOei94TDNNUT09)  
[pwd=N01MV3JkTEFqQnRJQTlOei94TDNNUT09](https://us02web.zoom.us/j/89166596214?pwd=N01MV3JkTEFqQnRJQTlOei94TDNNUT09)



**Those Sugar-Barge Kids** Jon Tucker's breezy 'Those Kids' series cheerfully acknowledges its Ransome inspiration, with sailing-based adventures involving children from two southern-hemisphere yachting families. In this one, the fourth in the series, and to my mind the most entertaining, the kids meet up with a pair of distinctly Amazonian sisters leading an isolated home-schooling life on a barge in a mangrove swamp and get mixed up in an eco-conflict with an unscrupulous oyster farmer. Suggested by Peter Willis

**36 Islands:** Newly-published, a literary travelogue of the Lake District, described in the cover blurb thus: "Armed only with an inflatable canoe, and inspired by Arthur Ransome, Wainwright, Wordsworth... he journeys beyond the tourists and the busy roads, beneath the surface to islands both real and remembered. Here the low tide of the unconscious reveals itself through the strange flotsam that it leaves on the shore." And reviewed in this issue, page 11 – fairly favourably, on the whole.

**Those Kids from Fawn Creek:** The wild card, and on the face of it, not our type of book at all. An American school story, by a prolific American author. Suggested by Elizabeth Williams: "I mentioned it because I'd just read it – certainly didn't push it but others thought it might be interesting as about relationships between children, and American. Definitely not Ransomeish but well written by an award winning author."

**The Book Group is gradually enlarging, welcoming new members. It's OK to just listen, and it's OK to bring along a suggestion for next time – or not. Why not give it a try?**

## Additions to the Library since the 2022 Update

'BB' (comp) *The fisherman's bedside book*. Illus. by Denys Watkins-Pitchford, 1959 (1945)

Balen, Katya *October; October*, 2021 (2020) (Carnegie Medal winner 2022)

Bennett, Arnold *The grim smile of the five towns*, 1946 (1907)

Bennet, Arnold *A man from the north*, 1973 (1898)

Bude, John *The Lake District murder*. 2014 (1935)

Bushell, Sally *Reading and mapping fiction: spatialising the literary text*, 2020

Cooper, Suzanne Fagence *How we might live: at home with Jane and William Morris*, 2022

Green, Roger Lancelyn *Tales of the Greek heroes: retold from the ancient authors*, 1978 (1958)

Jones, Julia *Uncommon courage: the yachtsmen volunteers of World War Two*, 2022

Jones, Julia *Voyage north: volume seven of the Strong winds series*, 2022

Jubber, Nicholas *The fairy tellers: a journey into the secret history of fairy tales* 2022

Phillips, John and Phillips, Wendy *A bear's-eye view of Lakeland: Grasmere & Rydal*, 1998

Phillips, John and Phillips, Wendy *A bear's-eye view of Lakeland: Troutbeck to Ullswater*, 1999

Rae, Arlene Perly *Everybody's favourites: Canadians talk about books that changed their lives*, 1997

Ransome, Arthur *Schwalben und Amazonen*, translated by Einar Recknagel, 2022 (2015)

Ransome, Arthur *Winterferien*, translated by Einar Recknagel, 2022 (2017)

Ratcliffe, Margaret (ed.) *No holds barred: Evgenia Ransome's diaries 1927-1933*, 2022

Roussinova, Olga *Yan Neiman monumental sculpture St Petersburg* 2021 (in Russian with English summary)

Roussinova, Olga *Yan Neiman: unknown works* 2020 (In Russian with English summary)

TARS *TARBID: list of press articles and reviews*

Twigger, Robert *36 islands: in search of the hidden wonders of the Lake District*, 2022

Weekley, Montague *William Morris*, 1934  
White, Robb *The lion's paw*, 2008 (1946)

Wood, David *Elizabeth Taylor's kiss: and other brushes with Hollywood*, 2022

## **The Swallows and Amazons Poem**

**by the Horn Family**

(Mal and Clare, Katy and Adam  
from America)

The Swallows and Amazons met on a lake  
they all enjoyed eating cake.

In a story about Peter Duck  
some dirty old pirates ran out of luck.

John should have reefed the sail  
now out they all bail!

Along came the Ds as it starts to snow  
in the Arctic the storm does blow.

Tom casts off a hullabaloo  
what follows is a big 'to do'!

Up on the fells prospecting for gold  
can Sappho save the day before the  
fire takes hold?

Drifting out to sea when it is foggy  
the Swallows find a cat who is soggy

What is that with the eels?  
it can't be but some seals!

The Death and Glories have one wish  
to be left in peace just to fish

The Wild Cat on fire, they reach land too  
soon  
but manage to escape in the Shining Moon

Hiding from the GA in the wood  
this holiday is not starting as it should

Cruising around in the Sea Bear  
can Dick beat the Egg Collector  
fair and square?

## **TWO COMPETITIONS (just for fun)**

### **Competition One**

Thanks to the clever Horn family  
for making up this poem all  
about the 12 AR books -

**But can YOU make up one  
more, about  
*Coots in the North?***

**Use the same format - it's  
called a 'rhyming couplet',  
and make up as many as  
you like - about any of the  
books as well as  
*Coots in the North***

### **Competition Two**

**To mark the publication of  
'36 Islands'  
(see page 13)**

**Just tell us how many  
islands are mentioned in  
the 12 Ransome books -  
you'll need to name the  
islands and say which  
books.**

**Email your entries to  
[peterwillis1144@gmail.com](mailto:peterwillis1144@gmail.com)  
before the end of July**

**WIN a paperback copy of  
36 Islands!**

## OBITUARY



### Mike Rines

Mike Rines, TARS Member No 10, who died in February, will always be remembered for his single-handed restoration of Ransome's *Nancy Blackett*. He is pictured here aboard her following her relaunch in 1990 - her name boards were made for him by Roger Wardale. The dinner he gave at the Butt and Oyster dinner to mark the event was attended by three of the Atounyan sisters, the originals of the Swallows, as well as many Ransome authorities including Hugh Brogan, Christina Hardymont and Roger Wardale; it is credited with contributing to the successful foundation of TARS later the same year.

*See also Ebb and Flow, page 38*

### Members who have died

We now record the deaths of fellow-members annually in this issue of *Signals*, for the previous year, with any updates and those notified so far in the current year. Please notify David Middleton, Membership Secretary.

**2021**

**Carl Nord** 4848 USA (December)

**Ken Randall** 2298 N (12 December)

**2022**

**David Ablewhite** 3099 E (28 December)

**John Burgess** 5065 Mid (February)

**Rik Butcher** 318 E (21 March)

**Dr JC ('Chris') Craggs** 3988 E (1 September)

**Bob Cuming** 4707 NZ (12 May)

**Ian Fyles** 5325 N (not known)

**Jeremy Gibson** 279 S (October)

**The Hon Robin Godber** 1514 E

(15 November)

**David Goodwin** 5066 NZ (August)

**Dr Frank Halmshaw** 5002 N (December)

**Raymond Nash** 2651 S (21 July)

**Cheryl Paget** 3950 NZ (18 January)

**Donald Paine** 2450 S (October)

**Malcolm Porteous** 673 Sc (12 May)

**Mervyn Rolfe** 3292 (Mid May)

**Mike Shepherd** 789 E (May)

**Kathleen Taylor** 69 N (July)

**Graham Wadeson** 861 E (5 July)

**2023**

**Ann Osmond** 5084 SW (11 January)

**Michael Rines** 10 E (15 February)

**John Thompson** 4559 N (5 March)

### Pete Clay

Peter Clay, who died in January, aged 75, was not a TARS member, but he had a singular connection with Arthur Ransome.

The clue is in his middle name – Peter Henry Clay. His grandmother was the 'Mrs Henry Clay' to whom Ransome dedicated *We Didn't Mean to Go the Sea*.

It seems that part of the inspiration for the book may have arisen when AR observed Gladys Clay managing four children aboard their diminutive yacht – similar in size to *Nancy Blackett* – the 7-ton Albert Strange-designed *Firefly*, which is still in the family.

They lived in Woodbridge on the Deben, but Ransome had known Henry Clay in Manchester when he was on Manchester Guardian and Peter's grandfather taught at Manchester University. There's a log of *Firefly* from 1938 which describes her return from Holland when they put his grandfather on the train to



London and then sailed on up the Orwell to meet Arthur and see his new boat, *Selena King*.

Pete - as everyone called him - was passionate about wood; he owned and cared for two Albert Strange yachts – *Nirvana* as well as *Firefly*. On leaving school he trained as a violin maker – it became his career and every instrument in the string quartet had been made by him. (It's possible that he'd also made the violin owned by fellow Woodbridge resident Mike Rines).

I knew him mainly through co-serving on the management committee of the Maritime Woodbridge festival, which was all about the celebration of traditional wooden boats (including *Nancy Blackett*). In more recent years he had become a trustee of the Sutton Hoo Ship's Company which is building an authentic replica of the Anglo-Saxon burial ship in Woodbridge. *Peter Willis*



## TARS Regional Gateway

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<i>Editor</i>	Barbara Flower		
<i>Regional Rep. Trustee</i>	Barbara Flower		
<i>Committee</i>	Diana Dicker, Norah Fawcett, Diana Wright		



## THE TROUBLE WITH HUMANS

Sometimes humans have funny ideas about what makes for good walkies. One day in November we went for a really long drive (cars are so boring). We arrived at a lovely woodland and it was a beautiful autumn day. Hurray, perfect for a lovely long walk.

After the humans messed about putting on their boots and coats Bobbie and I went off with Sarah. Apparently some more humans were arriving and they needed a trail to follow. I didn't really understand, but since I had one thing on my mind I didn't stop to worry about it. Just as I was getting into my stride, Sarah stopped to pick up some sticks. Oh goody, Sarah's going to throw one and I can chase it and have a good chew on it. But no, Sarah used the sticks to make an arrow. Apparently we were using sticks, stones and other things we found along the way to tell the other humans where to go when they arrived. So I thought I would play my part and did lots of really good wees along the route. We had a lovely muddy walk and I tried really hard to be patient when we kept stopping so Sarah could make arrows and other symbols on the floor - it wasn't easy.

When we got back to the place where we had left the cars we had to wait a long time for the other humans to arrive. When they did I was excited to see lots of young humans - my favourite to be made a fuss of by. Apparently they followed the trail most of the time, but they didn't quite go the right way - I can't believe they missed all my wees!

After lunch we went inside and I had to sit in my pen and be a good girl. The humans were doing something about codes - I find most human words hard to follow at the best of times, so I found this all very confusing. Some of them drew funny pictures of stick people dancing about in the snow waving their arms about - apparently it was a secret message. Other people made more stick people out of pipe cleaners, Bobbie made me one which was sticking its right arm straight out to the side - I don't know why. They also made little badges of these special flags which sea humans can use to send messages to each other. They did a thing which made a lightbulb flash and seemed very interested in how many flashes it made and how long they were.

When they were finished with all their activities, finally the young humans came to make a fuss of me before it was time to go home.

I am not sure that my humans learnt their lesson about funny walks as the next week they took me to a field full of spikey trees which they kept stopping to look at and commenting on how pretty they were. Maybe when the weather gets warm again they will take me on a proper adventure.

**Bonnie, aged 2**

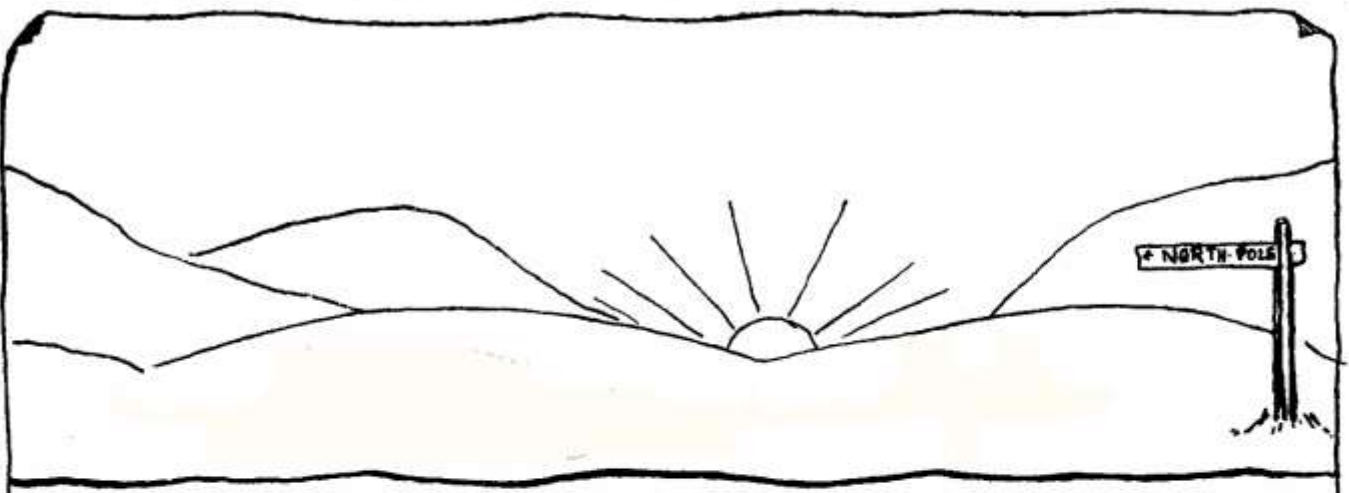


## WHERE THERE'S MUCK

A snowy Saturday 21 January saw Midland TARS at one of the great industrial highway intersections of the country - the junction of the Trent & Mersey and Cauldon Canal. We were there to explore Stoke's 'making beautiful things out of muck' for this was the hub of bone china for the masses in the 19th century. Etruria may invoke thoughts of sun soaked Italy but it's also the Stoke location where Shirley's Bone & Flint Mill once stood, I'll let you decide which you might prefer on a winter's afternoon when 'nothing ever happens and it's dark at tea-time'. We were introduced to the experiments and the sourcing of the correct flint and right species of and quantity of flint and bone. Although the main bone ingredient found to be effective was from cattle, rumour has it that the occasional human who recently died in the factory hospital may have found their way into the mix. Fortunately this is a museum now so older Tars didn't feel particularly sized up to see if they were ready for recycling. You can see one of our guides, Bernard Ruddock, in action by visiting the website <https://etruriamuseum.org.uk/jesse-shirleys-bone-and-flint-mill/>. We probably would have appreciated the mill in steam and beam engine running on a cold winter's day but it takes something like four days to get it up to steam level - you have to be a C P A G Windsor to get that treatment!

A bone and flint mill wouldn't usually be on top of a vegan's 'to do' list but it turned out an enjoyable visit at a lovely time of the year and with excellent company.

**Paul Green**



## WINTER HOLIDAY ON STAGE

Who could be better to tell the story of *Winter Holiday* than Arthur Ransome himself? And that is just what he, or at least an actor playing him, did during the stage production of the show at the Theatre Severn in February.

TARS members attending were treated to a short pre-show talk by the script writer Chris Eldon Lee and director Beverley Baker who explained that they felt that much of the beauty of the book lay in Ransome's descriptions of the Lakeland scenery, so the best way to mimic them on stage was to have Ransome there describing them. Ransome was also able to tell us that Windermere had frozen completely during his time at school there, so he had enjoyed skating on the lake and was able to relive that experience by writing *Winter Holiday*.

Although all played by adults, the cast of characters was very convincing. Titty and Dorothea were my personal favourites. Dick was also excellent, though just a little too timid at times I felt. His relationship with Mr Dixon seemed just like that in the book. (The actor playing Mr Dixon also took on the roles of the doctor, the postman and the pie seller!) Roger was, as always, great fun.

Skating was done very well, especially in the first skating scene on the tarn - you could really believe that the characters were skating and see how much better Dick and Dot were than the others, vital to their acceptance on the expedition. The sledge pulling also looked very good, despite the lack of snow.

Scenery was kept to a bare minimum which kept the play moving without interruption. Backdrops were created mostly by projections of lightly tinted versions of Ransome's own illustrations, with a few additional ones having been created, where needed, by an artist in the same style. This also enabled things like Nancy's semaphore message to be projected, allowing the audience to see what it was and how it was worked out. When it came to times that it was snowing during the script, again projection was used, this time all over the stage. It was especially dramatic during Dick and Dot's voyage to the pole during the blizzard. This, as the rest of the play, was helped along by a range of excellent sound effects.

There was some music in the performance, including the chance to sing along with words to familiar shanty tunes.

Just before the interval Ransome told us of how he had used elements of himself in many of the characters that he had created, but especially in Captain Flint. From that point onwards we saw no more of Ransome, the actor next appeared as the 'tall Dutchman' skating up to find Dick and Dot aboard his houseboat and them realising that he was Nancy and Peggy's Uncle Jim. There was a wonderful pantomime moment when they had offered him tea but had little to eat with it. He opened a cupboard saying 'There's plenty of food in here' and the audience spontaneously shouted out 'Oh no there isn't!'. From then on he was Captain Flint, busy at Nancy's commands organising the expedition and then searching for the missing Dick and Dot.

Was the play the same as the book? No, of course it wasn't, there just wasn't time to include everything. There was no action at the igloo at all, we didn't see Dick with Mr Dixon at the blacksmiths or the Swallows trying to sail their sledge among other things. However I think most Ransome enthusiasts would be happy with the way the script worked. Things might have been missing but the overall effect felt very faithful to the spirit of the book. There was a slight change to the end of the story. As Chris Eldon Lee said, 'I say Susan, you'd better let me deal with that chicken' would seem a rather strange and flat end to a play. The ending it was given felt quite appropriate however and was both emotionally and visually beautiful.

After the performance was over we also had the opportunity to meet the cast, who all came out in character and chatted to members, before going off to perform the whole play over again. It was a lovely experience that I hope may be repeated and many other TARS members will have the opportunity to enjoy.

**Jane Wilson**





# 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.



## RUGBY AS RANSOME SAW IT

**Saturday 22 April**

Join a special tour of Rugby School to learn about Ransome's time there. Meet outside the school just before 11am. The cost is £8 a head, but £3 for Midland Juniors. Places are limited so please book as soon as possible.

Afterwards we will eat our lunch (bring your own picnic or buy something in the town) in the park, then explore more about Ransome's time in the town and his feelings about school.

For further information and to book please contact Paul Green on paul-midstars@gmx.co.uk or 07563 962496.

## RETURN TO SWALLOWDALE

**Friday 21 - Sunday 23 July**



Come and camp at Swallowdale... in north Derbyshire, close to Sheffield. We will be following trails, walking, having adventures, swimming and cooking on the camp fire. There are very basic camping facilities (2 compost loos!) on a field owned by TARS members. (Sorry no dogs.) The weekend will cost approximately £15 per person. Swimming costs extra. Places are limited - please send a £5 deposit to book your place by 28 June. Or join us on the Saturday for a day in the Peak District (Hathersage area). For more information, please contact Vicky by e-mail vickyweave@yahoo.co.uk



## DROMEDARY ADVENTURES

**Saturday 20 May**

Meet at 11am in Llandrindod Wells to explore the super national museum of bicycles dating back to the early 1800s. There is much to learn about the development of cycling. £5 per adult. One child can enter free per paying adult or £1 each thereafter.

Then hire bikes nearby in the Elan valley, near Rhayader, 13 miles (half-an-hour drive) away. Here, as well as cycle hire, there is a Victorian dam, reservoirs, walks, café, etc. Parking £3. Cycle hire: children £15; adults £20; electric bikes £35; tandems £35 (adults only) - all 3 hours. Last hire is 1:30.

## CAMP AT HOLLY HOWE

**Monday 7 - Monday 14 August**



Camp on the water's edge at the real Holly Howe (Bank Ground Farm). Bring a your own dinghy or canoe, or grab a chance in someone else's. Kangenjunga beckons on 11 August. Bring a dinghy or canoe if you have one, or grab a chance aboard someone else's. The cost will be £130 for adults or £55 for under 18s (short bookings may also be possible).

For further information please contact Paul Green on 01654 791256 / 07563 962496 or paul-midstars@gmx.co.uk



## CAMPING AND SAILING

**Friday 16 - Sunday 18 June**

Come to Pant yr Onnen, LL23 7BT. Two-thirds of the way down the southern side of Llyn Tegid on the B4403 from Y Bala to Llangywer. There are no electrical hook-ups in the western field, but widely available on the main field. There are also shepherds' huts which may be available if that appeals to any Great Aunt Marias. Please book yourselves, saying you are part of The Arthur Ransome Society or TARS group. Visit the website: www.pantyrnencampsite.co.uk for prices and to find a booking form. Alternatively you can contact them on info@pantyrnencampsite.co.uk or by telephone (08.00-18.00): 07946 374173.

If Pant yr Onnen fills up please try Glanllyn on the other side of the lake - <https://glanllyn.com>

Camping, sailing, kayaking, open water swimming, nearby steam train, hills, walking etc are all possibilities during the weekend.

## PUNTING WITH DODOS!

**Saturday 16 September**



Well not quite. Spend the morning punting in Oxford on the River Cherwell (£10 per person), picnic by the river and then in the afternoon visit the Oxford Natural History Museum (free entry) where you will be able to hunt down, among other things, a stuffed dodo.

Contact David Hambleton on 01865 390124 or by e-mail at david\_hambleton@hotmail.com for further information.

## AMAZON ARCHERY

**Saturday 21 October**



Another chance to hone your skills with the Centaura Field Bowmen. Details are available from Paul Green by e-mail on paul-midstars@gmx.co.uk or phone 07563 962496.

Please send copy for the next issue of *The Gulch* to jane.pippinfort@googlemail.com by 1 July

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)



# 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.

## Welcome to 2023 from the Northern Region Committee

We started the year with an in-person Birthday Party at Goosnargh near Preston on Sat 18<sup>th</sup> January, courtesy of new Committee member David Butters.

It was truly wonderful to see old friends return to meet up enjoy AR have a few activities and share hospitality together. See below.

Later in the year we have a decent programme of events and visits, details are listed later in these pages so do keep in the loop and watch the Facebook page and the website as well.



Using the theme of *Picts and Martyrs* we caught up with each other in the cosy village hall at Goosnargh, had boat races, did puzzles, one of Elizabeth's killer Quizzes and mowed imaginary words in the wooden floor with an imaginary mowing machine making appropriate mowing machine noises. Some were push-pull, some were fully ride-on but all were Ransomes of Ipswich PLC machines. One could tell! The tea was generous in the extreme and the cake was very amusing with its little figure of a scowling Great Aunt. Tasty too! No scowls in the company though and the bookstall got some well-deserved attention.



## Books for Schools: Northern Region to Kenya – Special report

We have collected for sets of books since the region was formed in 1991 and have given away over 50 sets to Schools, Hospices and deserving cases.

This was a special one – sent to Kenya for a literacy project in Nairobi entitled ‘Future Stars’ where Sarah Woods, a good friend of our own Krysia Clack, was able to distribute them to the pupils at her school in Kibera (bottom right)

Krysia sourced the books and sent them off from York in early September. We had a couple of months of anxiety before they eventually turned up in Nairobi at the end of October.

Sarah has sent these photos; you can draw your own conclusions as to what the children thought of their gifts.





## Books for Schools Northern Region – a set to Goosnargh Primary by David Butters

Tuesday, 22<sup>nd</sup> November had dawned, the day I was taking a set of Arthur Ransome books to my local primary school as a donation from the TARS Northern Region. The school in question was Goosnargh (Oliverson's) CE Primary School and at 9.30am I was greeted by the head teacher, Mrs. Helen Sant. She soon introduced me to a reception committee of four eager students from Years 4/5.

On talking to them I was very pleased to discover that most of them had already read at least one book of the series; indeed, one young lady had not only read *Swallows and Amazons* but seen and enjoyed the (2016) film.

After a few, hopefully appropriate, words I handed over the set of twelve books and the TARS Northern Region Committee was warmly thanked by the students and Mrs. Sant, all of whom were very grateful for such a significant addition to the School Library.



## Northern Events for 2023

### April 15<sup>th</sup> Killhope Mine and Museum

Join us at Killhope Lead Mine, Upper Weardale on Saturday April 15<sup>th</sup>. This event is **free** and will include an exciting exploration of an underground mine, with a visit to the Weardale Museum in the afternoon. Killhope is a fantastic place for children to visit.

**May 5<sup>th</sup> to 8<sup>th</sup> IAGM in Dundee.** See January Signals for details.

### Saturday June 3<sup>rd</sup> Ransome at Rusland and Gondola cruise

A full day event including the traditional visit to AR's grave at Rusland. A trip on the *Gondola* (11.30 sailing), walks and teashop stops are all possible. Finish the day at Rusland Church and Reading room at 6pm.

### Mon 7<sup>th</sup> to Mon 14<sup>th</sup> August: *Holly Howe* Camp

Midland Region and Diana Wright organising. Details see Page 3 in this Signals  
A deposit on booking is required.

# Southern Region



## Birthday Lunch Saturday 21<sup>st</sup> January



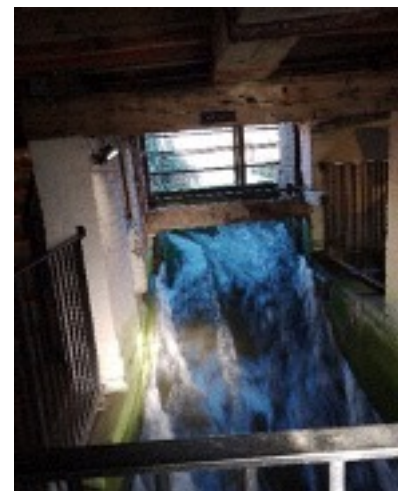
Southern region celebrated AR's 139<sup>th</sup> birthday in Winchester, where 20 members and friends gathered for a convivial lunch. The participants ranged from founder members to one 'new this year' member and included several who had never managed to get to a birthday celebration before. There was continuous and wide-ranging conversation for the best part of 3 hours, whilst enjoying a good lunch.



The venue was The Bishop on the Bridge pub which, in its latest reincarnation, is named after St Swithin. Swithin was Bishop of Winchester from 852 to his death in 863 and was the instigator of building the first bridge over the river Itchen. The river runs alongside the pub and, after the heavy January rain, it was quite high under the bridge.

Across the road from the pub is the Winchester City mill, a free to enter National Trust property. A mill has been recorded on the site since 932 and the current building was built in 1744. After a period as a Youth Hostel until 2005, the mill workings have been restored and it is now

milling again - but not when the millrace is running as fast as it was on the lunch day. Otters regularly pass through under the Mill and are recorded on the 'otter cam'



**Coming events MAY 24th (Wednesday), 10.15 am :Visit to Garrick Club: Eastern Region event, but in Southern Area: Booking required, for details please see Ebb And Flow**

## Spring Challenge: Southern Kanchenjunga

There is no spring camp in May this year, so how about a Spring Challenge, especially for those who like a bit of outdoor activity? Southern Region cannot boast anything as high as ‘Kanchenjunga’, but each county has its high point. How many can our members visit between reading this and the end of June? If you send your photos to the Secretary ([rjbealtars@gmail.com](mailto:rjbealtars@gmail.com)), her challenge will be to put them on the Region website!

Please say when and where the picture was taken and whether you would be happy for it to appear in print at some point. In case you are not sure where to head for:

Channel Islands (J)	Les Platons	136m
Middlesex	Bushey Heath	155m
East Sussex	Ditchling Beacon	248m
Kent	Betsom’s Hill	251m ( private land, so as near as possible)
West Sussex	Blackdown	280m
33Hampshire	Pilot Hill	286m
Surrey	Leith Hill	294m
Berkshire	Walbury Hill	297m

## Summer camp at Cobnor, West Sussex August 4<sup>th</sup> to 6<sup>th</sup> 2023

This is the region’s regular summer camp beside Cobnor Activity Centre on Chichester harbour (PO18 8TE). There are launching facilities for small boats and kayaks and good water both up the Bosham Channel and out on the harbour itself. The campsite is pretty basic with water and portaloos but it is always an enjoyable adventure for those taking part.

Contact Iain Khan-Gilchrist for more information. Details will also be on the Region website.

## Autumn Gathering Saturday 28<sup>th</sup> October 2023

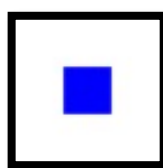
**2 to 4.30pm at St Nicholas Parish Rooms, Bury St, Guildford, GU2 4AW**

This is going to be an activity afternoon on the theme of ‘Communication’ suitable for all ages. So, if you would like to find out more about communicating like



or like

or —



.... ..

put the date in your diary and look out for more details in the next edition of Signals.





# Sou'westers and Seaboats

News from the South-West Region

## 'ARTHUR RANSOME AND THE DEBACLE AT DURHAM'

### ALAN KENNEDY'S ZOOM TALK – – 11<sup>th</sup> February

An audience of twenty enjoyed Alan's talk giving the background to why Arthur Ransome was awarded a mere Honorary MA Degree from Durham University in 1968 rather than the Honorary Doctorate that he richly deserved. The consequences of AR's years in Russia, where his role was and still is not fully understood or appreciated, and enemies he made in the British Establishment as a result played a large part in this.

Alan had done so much research for this talk and we thank him very much. An MP3 audio file recording of the talk will be available on the TARS website

Alan (right, with Caesar, his weimaraner) is the author of *A Thoroughly Mischievous Person: The Other Arthur Ransome* (The Lutterworth Press, 2021), a revealing biography and appraisal of Arthur Ransome, his childhood hero.



His academic career took him to the Psychology Department of Melbourne University, headed by Professor Oscar Oeser, before moving to St Andrews University in Scotland to take up the lectureship that Oeser had held earlier. On discovering Oeser's distinguished career as a WW2 spy, he wrote a biography of him. The book *Oscar & Lucy* describes Oeser's secret life heading "Hut 3" at Bletchley Park and leading a commando raid on Hitler's Berghof.

Alan was appointed Professor of Psychology in the University of Dundee at the age of 32, a post he finally relinquished 40 years later. Over his career Alan has divided his time between Dundee and Aix-en-Provence, where he held an honorary position in the CNRS Psycholinguistics Laboratory.

In 2011 he and his wife Elizabeth moved to live permanently in South West France. Since then he has published six novels. His latest, *The Things that are Lost*, a sequel to *A Time for Lying*, is set in London, Dundee and Paris in the years leading up to the liberation of Paris in August 1944. Alex and Justine come to terms with a world built on lies and deception in a love story exploring one of the most shocking secrets of life under German occupation. A secret so shocking that Paris decided it was best forgotten. A love story. More details of Alan and his books at <https://lasserradepress.weebly.com/>

## **SW TARS ZOOM AGM – Saturday 21<sup>ST</sup> January 2023**

Thirteen of us gathered for the AGM. Barry Gouldbourne stepped down from the committee and was thanked for all his work over a number of years as Treasurer, committee member and Regional Rep Trustee. The rest of the committee were re-elected en bloc with the addition of Liz Crisp as a committee member. Liz was thanked for agreeing to stand as Treasurer and was subsequently elected at the committee meeting following the AGM.

The downside of having a Zoom AGM is that we don't have a nice lunch together followed by birthday cake, but we did raise a glass in honour of AR's birthday and decided to have a lunch at some other event.

### **SW TARS Committee**

Chair: Susan Gouldbourne 01271 831520  
[susan@ttars.co.uk](mailto:susan@ttars.co.uk)

Secretary, Editor and Regional Rep Trustee: Barbara Flower 01963 350199  
[souwesters@gmail.com](mailto:souwesters@gmail.com)

Treasurer: Liz Crisp 01837 82420

Committee: Diana Wright, Diana Dicker, Nora Fawcett

### **HEATHER'S ENCOUNTERS WITH BIRDS**

On the 19th of November we logged on for a talk by Heather Woodland called "An Encounter With Birds" unfortunately Heather was having connection problems, we've all been there! Luckily Diana Wright had her Christmas quiz ready. This was enjoyed by all as there were questions for all abilities and some you could work out. There was laughing and groaning as we tried to get our brains in gear. Paul Crisp was the winner, so well-done Paul and thank you Diana.



We then had an enjoyable get together via Zoom in December hearing about Heather's lifelong interest in birds, starting at the age of four. When she was eleven she and a friend formed a bird protection society to prevent certain males from collecting and destroying eggs (sound familiar!).

After her children left home she was able to get more involved, spending time travelling around birdwatching, catching and ringing birds, and arranging protection for nests of Peregrine Falcons and other rare birds.

Heather answered a number of questions and we all chipped in with our own experiences.

Many thanks Heather.

Barbara

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

**Members from other regions are always welcome to join us – email Barbara on [souwesters@gmail.com](mailto:souwesters@gmail.com) for details.**



**Saturday 20<sup>th</sup> May – fossil hunting at Charmouth** where you are quite likely to find one of these -

We hope to have a guide to tell us what to look out for. We will meet in the car park at 11 am and bring a picnic or have lunch in the café. The beach is quite rocky and uneven so have some sturdy footwear to put on. It's always nice to have a day at the seaside, but let's hope for a sunny day

### **Friday 23<sup>rd</sup> June – boat trip and look round Kelmscott Manor**

Meet at 10.30 am at the Trout Inn, Faringdon Road, Lechlade on Thames, GL7 3HA, (NB there are 2 other Trout Inns in the vicinity, the one you want is very close to Inglesham, where the boat goes from). Details, cost etc will be on the SW part of TARS website, but do email me if you are interested as there are only 12 seats on the boat.



**Saturday 15<sup>th</sup> July at 4 pm – Zoom reading of a couple of the Sparkinson interviews from 'Ransome Centre Stage' by kind permission of Brian Hopton**

**Join Zoom Meeting (from 3.45pm):**

**<https://us02web.zoom.us/j/82456377421pwd=Zjc0Q0NMZUwrNzZ6ejNhZmhieUliQT09>**

**Meeting ID: 824 5637 7421 Passcode: 314989**



# EBB & FLOW

## *The Eastern Pages*



### ARTHUR RANSOME'S BIRTHDAY LUNCH & EASTERN REGION AGM Butt & Oyster, Pin Mill 21st January 2023

The Eastern Region always considers that Arthur looks down and gives us good weather on his Birthday and this year was no exception. Clear blue skies and bright sunshine and not too cold. The committee turned up at 10am, followed by 15 Tars and our guest speaker Sarah Curtis and her husband around noon for lunch at 1pm.

Lunch had its problems when two Tars arrived late after the starters had been served and although the lunch was to be served as the late comers were finishing their starters everything got muddled up and our meals somehow got put back. It took Secretary Nicholas Hinde and Chairman Brian Key three attempts to get things under way. The Butt & Oyster had already apologised that prices this year had to go up so they kindly added free coffee.

Jackie Snowman had made two extremely good cakes with a theme on *Secret Water*; the cakes made to represent two islands on a sea blue platter with a seal and her pup represented for good measure. Jackie will be allowed to come again next year.



The Eastern Region's AGM followed, with those committee members attending, agreeing to stand for another year. New committee members are always being sought. Events for the coming year were discussed, together with other business.

To round off the afternoon our guest speaker Sarah Curtis gave us a fascinating, illustrated talk,

Harry King and Sons, Building Boats in the 1930s. Although Sarah is not of course a son but a daughter, she is part of the present family business.



The boatyard was started by George Gerrard in 1850 and when he retired in 1898 the business was taken over by George's apprentice Harry King remaining a family business ever since. In those early days there was no electricity only oil lamps, which continued into the thirties and beyond. Conditions were cramped, cold in winter and hot in summer but so were most factory environments in those days. Ceilings were low making building large yachts awkward. There was no power driven machinery; only hand tools (many of which have their own nicknames and are still in

use today) with every vessel being hand built.

During WW2 all boats were ordered from the river and their keels removed with Harry King's production moving to building special war time dinghies. Documents found in Germany show that Adolf Hitler was interested in the area, especially the Royal Hospital School where our Region held its IAGM a few months ago. Despite Adolf's interest in the area it did not stop a flying bomb from

hitting the local church and damaging 168 houses.

With the war ending and Britain near bankrupt, only working boats were being built. Of two boats completed at the yard, one was Arthur's *Peter Duck*, built on the understanding that it was to be used for fishing. Well, Arthur *was* a fisherman.



### MIKE RINES 1934 - 2023

Donald Michael Rines, rescuer and restorer of Ransome's *Nancy Blackett*, passed away on 15th February aged 89.

Mike had seen *Nancy* sailing in and around Scarborough, considering her the most handsome little boat he had seen, long before he made a bid for her, and before he knew of her links with AR. He finally agreed a price and bought her in 1988. *Nancy* was in very poor condition and the cost of restoration was high. Despite the setbacks she was in good enough repair to be shown at the 1989 East Coast Boatshow and launched a year later.

On the 90th anniversary of *Nancy's* launch in 2021 Mike appeared on ITV Anglia's News Story stating "I'd love to have another sail in her." Three weeks later he did. He was very pleased with the way the Nancy Blackett Trust is looking after the old girl.

Mike would often attend the Eastern Region's Arthur Ransome Birthday Lunch at the *Butt & Oyster* each year.



Thanks to Mike Rines' original determination and perseverance and the continuing work of the Nancy Blackett Trust, *Nancy* at 92 still looks like a brand new boat.

*Robert Welham.*

## EASTERN REGION PROGRAMME 2023

**MAY 5th - 8th: IAGM Scotland** Dundee.

**MAY 24th (Wednesday): Visit to Garrick Club** 15 Garrick Street, London WC2E 9AY. Guided tour (Limited Numbers, 20 persons). Dress code applies: Formal smart casual, suit/jacket, collared shirt, tie, no jeans trainers or gym shoes **Meet 10am sharp** for coffee and biscuits. Cost £15. Cash no Cards. Contact Nicholas Hinde on 01371 820054 [nhinde@btinternet.com](mailto:nhinde@btinternet.com). before 14th May.

**JULY 9th (Sunday): Broads Sailing Day**, Hunters Yard, Horsefen Road, Ludlum, Norfolk NR29 5QG.

A chance to enjoy a sail in one of this classic boatyard's famous half-deckers, including *Buff Tip*, identical to the Farlands' *Flash* in *Coot Club*. You'll also be able to view *Swallow* and *Amazon*, the boats used in the 1974 *Swallows and Amazons* film and now under restoration at the yard, and *Titmouse*, from the BBC's *Coot Club*. **Arrive from 11am**, bring picnic lunch. Cost of sailing is adults £25, Juniors free: Please book in advance and notify Peter Willis [peterwillis1144@gmail.com](mailto:peterwillis1144@gmail.com), Payment by bank transfer: Sort Code: 30-94-55 Account number: 04700458. Or Cheques to Peter Willis. Or take pot luck on free spaces on the day, payment cash or cheque, no card. The day is free to non-sailers.



**AUGUST 13th (Sunday): Bawdsey Radar Museum**,

Bawdsey Transmitter Block, Woodbridge IP12 3BA. Find out about the development of Radar and how it helped save lives in World War Two, in this well-laid-out interactive display. (Dick would have been fascinated - in fact he'd probably have worked there). A vague link with AR as he mentions the Radar Masts in *WDMTGTS* which had not yet been built at the time the story was set in 1933.

The Transmitter Block is at Bawdsey. From Woodbridge, follow the B1083, one mile beyond Bawdsey village, the museum is on the left (it is not part of the Bawdsey Manor estate). **Meet in carpark at 12 noon**. Entry £8 for adults (less if large group) Juniors (under 18s) free. Teas and coffees at the museum, also cafe nearby: recommended bring a picnic lunch to enjoy on the sandy riverside beach - and swimming things if you want.



More details at <https://www.bawdseyradar.org.uk> or Peter Willis.

**SEPTEMBER 8th (Friday): Hanson Collection Cambridge University Library** CB3 9DR followed by an afternoon walk. **Meet 10.30am** in entrance hall of Library. Herbert Hanson was a founder member of the Cruising Association and friend of AR. He collected over 600 priceless books, documents and charts now in the CUL. Guided tour. Contact Ted and Diana Evans on 01394 388295.

**OCTOBER 7th (Saturday): Literary Half Day**. United Reformed Church meeting room, Whiting Street, Bury St Edmunds IP33 INR. **11am - 5.30pm**. Parking on site. **Illustrated talk by Ted Alexander on *Ransome in Russia***. (With slides, maps and display material). Bring packed lunch, tea and coffee provided. Cost £10 Juniors free. Optional meal afterwards at local restaurant. Contact Brian Key on 01245 263579.



NEWS  
FROM  
THE GAELS

TARS Scotland

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



## Happy Returns

TARS Scotland returns to the Hawes Inn, South Queensferry to commemorate Ransome's birthday and hold its AGM

After a three-year hiatus (for reasons so obvious there's no need for me to mention them here) members of TARS Scotland returned to *The Hawes Inn*, South Queensferry for their traditional lunch to commemorate Arthur Ransome's birthday. The *Hawes*, almost directly under the southern end of the Forth Railway Bridge, has been the favoured venue for these events for some years due to its Robert Louis Stevenson and, indirectly, Ransome links. (The Inn features in Stevenson's *Kidnapped*, being where David Balfour encounters Ransome the ill-fated cabin boy of Captain Hoseason's ship *Covenant*, and Arthur Ransome, of course, both enjoyed and wrote about Stevenson's works.)

We were accommodated in what we had previously known as the function room, which has been refurbished as an annex to the main dining room since we were last here. After some uncertainty over the number to be seated – nine had booked, but one had to cancel (recovering from a much-delayed hip-replacement op) making it eight; but the addition of one who hadn't been able to book in time brought us back to nine; then the arrival of another who **had** booked revealed a miscalculation somewhere, and so ten sat down for lunch – some swift shuffling of chairs and cutlery soon had everyone accommodated around the table. Conversation ranged far and wide during the meal and, whilst not strictly Ransome related for the most part, covered topics that the great man would have both recognised and, no doubt, had his own views on: vegetarianism, farming methods, the joys and horrors of public transport, and the extraordinary reports of politics and politicians, were amongst those featured. Fortunately, any divergence of views was conducted with suitable TARS civility.

After lunch Kirstie Taylor, as befits the TARS Scotland chairman, entertained the company with the necessary business of the AGM. After remembering absent friends there was some scratching of heads over the adoption of the minutes of the last meeting – could anyone honestly recall with certainty what had been said and decided three-years ago? Reviewing events since then proved all-too simple: a trip to the Falkirk Wheel, and two Literary Days with the TARS Library in Moat Brae, Dumfries being all that had been managed in the brief periods of eased health restrictions. (It seems strange to observe that, three-years ago the meeting recorded the TARS Library had moved into Moat Brae and, at this the next meeting,

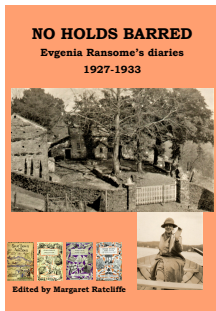
we're reporting having two events there and that the Library has moved out!) Looking forward, with the Scottish Committee being fully committed to planning, preparing and delivering the IAGM in Dundee this year, it was fully understood that no events would be planned, or even considered until after that.



Before concluding, the meeting noted with particular gratitude, Winifred and Paul Wilson's contribution to the work of the TARS Scotland Committee since the last AGM – Winifred as editor of TARS Scotland's *Signals* pages and Paul as Treasurer – both having stepped down some time before the meeting. With no one new coming forward to join the Committee the remaining, existing members were re-elected for a further year, with Sandy Allen taking on the role of Treasurer. However, an editor for the Scottish *Signals* pages (these ones) is urgently required: could **you** help? – it's not even essential to join the committee, just as long you're comfortable with word processing.

As all departed and said their good-byes the hope was that this time, it is just 'Until next year'. (Except we'll see you all in Dundee in May, won't we?)

*Andrew Jones*



## AMAZON PUBLICATIONS No Holds Barred

Evgenia's diaries 1927-1933,  
Ed Margaret Ratcliffe  
2022 £14 (+£3.50 p+p)

**Ransome Centre Stage** (2021) TARS amateur  
dramatics Brian Hopton £14 (+ £3.50)

**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,** Essays from TARS  
Library catalogues, 2000-2009 £15 (+ £3.50)

# The TARS Stall

## 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**

The TARS Journal since 1990  
Most previous issues available. £4 (+£1.50)

## BOOKS ABOUT ARTHUR RANSOME

### **A Thoroughly Mischievous Person**

#### *The other Arthur Ransome*

by Alan Kennedy £15 (+£2.50)

### **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*

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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**

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by **Roger Wardale** Beautifully illustrated and  
draws on diary entries from the Ransomes' Broads  
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### **Arthur Ransome, a Bibliography**

by **Wayne Hammond** A comprehensive guide to  
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### **Ransome in Russia, by Ted Alexander &**

**Tatiana Verizhnikova** £18 (+ £3.50)



# The TARS Stall

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)  
 Phone +44 (0)7881 505390, 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 to  
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## 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 £10 (+ £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 £10 (+ £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'

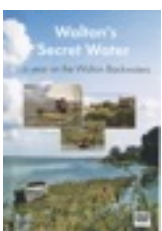
Read by Gabriel Woolf  
 All 12 titles available. £14 (+ £3.50) each.

### 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)



**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 mins  
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 £10 (+ £3.50)



## FICTION INSPIRED BY ARTHUR RANSOME

### Strong Winds series by Julia Jones

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

Now seven in series:

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### The Boat in the Bay by Alan Kennedy

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Polyester burgees, 50x30cm, including halyard and toggle.

Three designs:  
 TARS (Swallow+ Skull and Crossbones)  
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## TARS Publications etc



THE MAGAZINE OF THE ARTHUR RANSOME SOCIETY



SEPTEMBER-OCTOBER 2020 WITH IAGM UPDATE

**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.

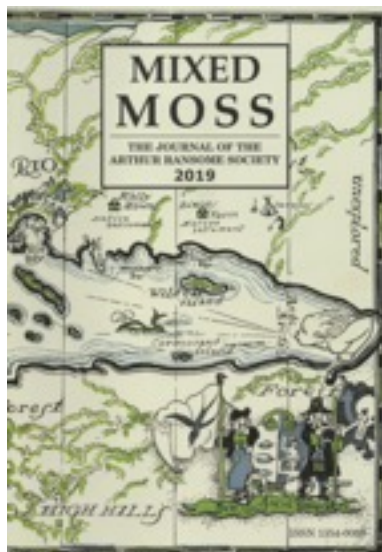
The January-April issue includes Despatches, with news and booking forms for the International AGM.

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 June, with distribution to members in the autumn.

**Mixed Moss 2023 issue Editor vacancy; Acting Editor Julian Lovelock**  
[julianlovelock@outlook.com](mailto:julianlovelock@outlook.com)  
**Back issues: most in stock at the TARS Stall, £4 + p+p**

**LITERARY WEEKENDS**  
Transcripts of Talks from events are available from the TARS Stall, £6.50 +p+p



**Amazon Publications** produces a Ransome-linked book yearly on a subscription basis. Next title (2024) *Red Skies*. Some back issues on TARS Stall. Enquires to Christine Rae:  
[tarsstall@arthur-ransome.org](mailto:tarsstall@arthur-ransome.org)



**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**  
(monitored TARS-only group)



## The TARS Library

contains over 1,000 books written by Ransome, read by him, written about him or connected with him. Browse the complete list on the TARS website, or request a paper copy for a small charge.

**The Manor House, Church Lane, Houghton, STOCKBRIDGE, Hants SO20 6LJ**

**Christine Rae is handling requests and returns**

**email [tarslib@arthur-ransome.org](mailto:tarslib@arthur-ransome.org)**

## TARS Subscriptions

### 2023 rates

(renewals due 1st January)

**Adult** (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 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**

## 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:

Peter Wright (Acting chair), Mike Glover (Secretary), The Blue Family, Julian Lovelock, 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 your own flyer £100. Contact David Middleton, [memsec@arthur-ransome.org](mailto:memsec@arthur-ransome.org)

## 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 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)**

## Book Donations Guide

If you have Ransome-related books to dispose of, or have been offered some, and would like advice from TARS, guidelines are now available on the Website, from all Regional Secretaries or the Chair of the Literary Resources Committee, Krysia Clack ([steve@ksclack](mailto:steve@ksclack))



*“Dundee is a jolly place to live I am told”*

Cyril Ransome to Edith Boulton, quoted in Margaret Ratcliffe's *Genetic Building Blocks*

**Our Arthur might have been a Dundonian!** (Thanks, Winifred)



DUNDEE HERITAGE TRUST

# DUNDEE

## Tars 2023

**TARS IAGM 5-8 May 2023**

Malmaison Hotel Dundee

**STILL TIME TO BOOK**

See details online or in the last Signals or  
contact David Middleton at [memsec@arthur-ransome.org](mailto:memsec@arthur-ransome.org)

*Discover Dundee in '23*