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# SIGNALS

THE MAGAZINE OF THE ARTHUR RANSOME SOCIETY



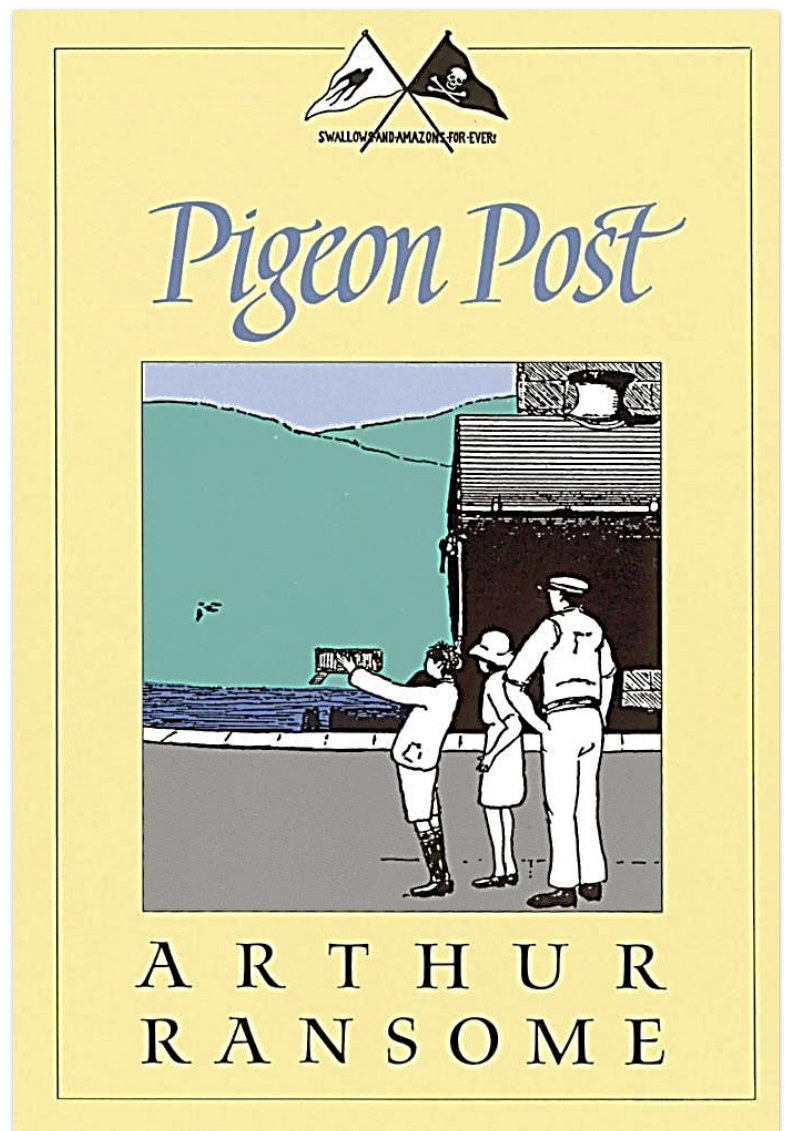
## LITERARY WEEKEND

Who's coming to Harrogate?

Twenty years of Signalling to TARS

Ransome's winter and summer pair

'Holly Howe' ... and a tall(ish) ship



JANUARY-APRIL 2024

WITH IAGM DESPATCHES

# The Arthur Ransome Society

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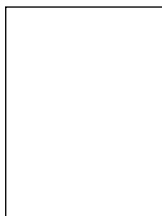
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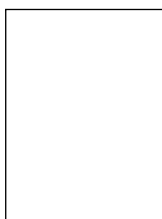
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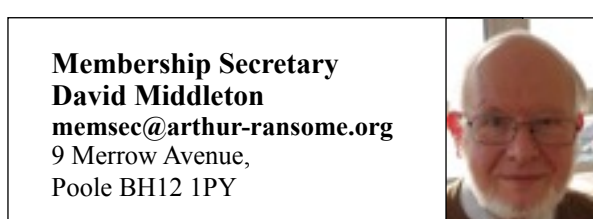
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# SIGNALS



## THE MAGAZINE OF THE ARTHUR RANSOME SOCIETY JANUARY-APRIL 2024

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### From the Editor

## ‘Events, dear boy, events!’

That was what Harold Macmillan is reputed to have replied to a journalist asking what sort of things knocked a government off course. By ‘events’ he wouldn’t have had pre-arranged things like flower shows or Christmas parties in mind, but the other sort of events, that come from nowhere and lead to all sorts of trouble.

For TARS recently, at an event of the first sort, an event of the second sort blew up when an unguarded remark was repeated and amplified. And, rightly enough, challenged. Things got a bit fraught for a while. I’m happy to say that it’s all settled down and sorted out now, though traces of it may be found in this issue and on Facebook.

As for events of the nicer, organised kind, this year is fair bursting with them, and so, therefore, is this issue of Signals. Despatches, as ever at this time of year, dominates with details of the IAGM. This year it’s the turn of Midland – always the liveliest of the regions – to organise it, so the bill of fare runs to 10 pages.

Before that, though, there’s the Literary Weekend, this time in Harrogate - Great Aunt territory. Plenty of intriguing speakers, including our new President John Sergeant, introducing himself in the after-dinner slot. Find the booking form,

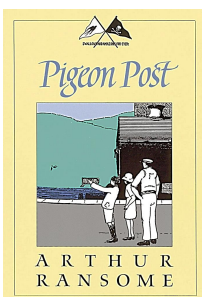
And at the end of June, Windermere Jetty will come alive with two days of varied events to celebrate the 50th anniversary of the original *Swallows and Amazons* film: alongside the film itself (of course) there will be chances to meet the cast, a new production of the 2010 musical, and much, much more.

Stay-at-homes are not forgotten: several Zoom events in the lists, and of course lots to read, here and in Mixed Moss. Enjoy! |

*Peter Willis*

### CONTENTS

<b>News from the Board</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>Events calendar</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>‘Holly Howe’ camp</b>	<b>4-5</b>
<b>News + Book Group</b>	<b>6</b>
<b>Swallow and Amazon</b>	<b>7</b>
<b>Susie and Di Bequest</b>	<b>9</b>
<b>LITERARY WEEKEND</b>	<b>10-11</b>
<b>50th ANNIVERSARY</b>	<b>12</b>
<b>David Wood profile</b>	<b>13</b>
<b>‘Red Skies’ from Amazon</b>	<b>14</b>
<b>IAGM DESPATCHES</b>	<b>15-24</b>
<b>High Topps in the Peaks</b>	
<b>20 Years Ago</b>	<b>25</b>
<b>WH and PP a pair?</b>	<b>26</b>
<b>Lesley Wareing profile</b>	<b>28</b>
<b>REGIONAL GATEWAY</b>	<b>29</b>
<b>Southern 30 Midland 32</b>	
<b>East 35 North 37</b>	
<b>South-West 39 Scotland 42</b>	
<b>A Tall Ship tale</b>	<b>43-44</b>
<b>Jack Blake</b>	<b>45</b>
<b>TARS Stall</b>	<b>46-47</b>
<b>Reference</b>	<b>48-49</b>



**This issue’s cover:** Our first selection from the Godine series of paperbacks – to my mind the most elegant and enjoyable series of cover designs. Here to celebrate this year’s IAGM, but also to highlight Lesley Wareing’s insightful investigation of the similarities between this ‘summer’ book and *Winter Holiday*, along with a profile of this prolific contributor herself.

## News from the Board

**93rd meeting held on Saturday 14 October 2023 at Cambridge Road Methodist Church, King's Heath, Birmingham**

### Chairman's Comments

The chairman advised members of the Board of John Pearson's recent accident. The Board wished John a speedy recovery. In John's absence Krysia Clack had been asked to take the minutes.

### Arthur Ransome Trust

Unfortunately, a slanderous rumour about ART (the Arthur Ransome Trust) had been circulated recently at a TARS event. Formal letters had been sent from ART to the Board about this matter requesting an apology and a confirmation from the Board that it did not support this rumour. The Board confirmed that it did not support this rumour, had taken pains to counter it and would undertake not to have it spread in the future. Subsequently it was agreed to publish a statement from ART.

### Archives

These had been collected from various locations and were now stored in Birmingham. They still needed to be collated and catalogued and a volunteer archiver was needed. Anyone requiring access or wishing to help with the archiving should contact Peter Wright.

### Library

This had been unpacked at its new location and items were again available to be borrowed.

### Website

Ben Hambleton was the new Webmaster. He should be contacted directly with any queries/problems.

### 2024 Budget

The Board accepted the projected budget for 2024. It noted that there could be a shortfall for the coming 2 years and contingencies needed to be in place.

### 2024 Literary Weekend

All speakers had now been booked and the application form would be included in the next copy of 'Signals'.

## 1974 'Swallows and Amazons' film anniversary commemoration event

Members of the cast and the production team were to be invited to attend. Windermere Jetty was fully supportive of this event but the detail of what could be planned for the weekend still need to be finalised. It was hoped that a production of 'Swallows and Amazons' could be staged, together with boat trips and possibly a shanty band. Haverthwaite Steam Railway was also included in the arrangements. The Board agreed an additional grant of £7,500 (£2,500 had been agreed in a previous meeting) to cover initial costs for the event while sponsors were being approached to cover some of the outlay. This sum was to come out of the legacy.

## Alliance of Literary Societies AGM 2024

The weekend programme for the forthcoming AGM, being organised by TARS, was now ready. The last ALS Journal had contained articles by Winifred Wilson (TARS) and Peter Willis (Nancy Blackett Trust).

## Statement by the Arthur Ransome Trust (ART)

"We have recently become aware of rumours circulating at some TARS events, to the effect that two ART trustees have been taking personal income from funds donated to ART. These rumours are completely untrue. The most recent are supposedly based on ART's 2021 accounts. These are published on both the Charities Commission and ART websites and were subject to independent examination by an accountant. It is a mystery how anyone reading the examiner's report or the accounts objectively could reach the erroneous conclusions claimed.

No ART trustee has ever taken such income. On the contrary the two falsely accused are historic and current donors to ART. Promoting or repeating such rumours, without any evidence to support them, is at best thoughtless, reckless and unkind, and at worst might constitute a slander against ART's trustees and the Trust. We hope that those involved will stop spreading false rumours, have the maturity to reflect on the damage they have done, and perhaps have the decency to apologise.

If anyone has any questions related to our accounts or the Trust generally, then please do contact us directly to discuss them."



**Sail Swallow and Amazon**

*Amazon* was now in the water and the first bookings had been received. She had also been taken to the Southampton International Boat Show, which had aroused a lot of interest. Work had started on *Swallow*. A request was made for an additional £20,000 for the work required and the contracted costs on both boats while the boats were berthed at Hunter's Yard. TARS own finances were insufficient to cover this amount and this request was to be discussed alongside other considerations on how the Stockwell/Cattley legacy should be allocated.

**Stockwell/Cattley Legacy**

TARS has received a generous bequest of £60,702.61 No agreement on its use could be reached. A consensus of members' opinions/ideas was required and the membership were to be invited to submit their comments. An invitation was to appear in 'Signals' (p8).

**Safeguarding** Jules Blue is now Safeguarding Officer.

**Membership Secretary**

A volunteer is needed to replace David Middleton, due to retire as Membership Secretary.

**Overseas and Regional Reports** were also received.

**Any Other Business:** None

**Board vacancies** Subsequent to the meeting resignations from the Board were received from two elected trustees, Marc Grimston and Diana Wright, and North Regional Representative, Elizabeth Williams; **Elizabeth Haworth** has now taken over that role. Members interested in being nominated as Trustees should contact the Secretary.

DATE	CALENDAR OF EVENTS	REGION
20 January Saturday	AR Birthday Lunch + AGM Butt & Oyster Pin Mill	East
20 January Saturday	AGM, Junior Parley, Geology Museum Birmingham	Midland
20 January Saturday	AR Birthday Lunch Slanj A Va, Stirling	Scotland
20 January Saturday	AR Birthday Lunch + AGM The Barn, Tunbridge Wells	South
20 January Saturday	AGM (Zoom)	South-West
27 January Saturday	Birthday Party Scout Hall Weaverham	Midland
10 February	Alan Kennedy Zoom talk	South-West
24 February	Cotswold Motoring Museum Bourton-on-the Water	Midland
16 March	Archery, Aston on Trent	Midland
16 March	AGM (Zoom)	North
23 March	Trek, Catle Carey	South-West
13 April	Roald Dahl Museum	Midland
19-20 April	TARS Literary Weekend Harrogate	TARS
3-6 May	Spring Camp	South
18-19 May	Alliance of Literary Societies AGM Hosted by TARS	TARS/ALS
29-30 June	'Swallows and Amazons' 50th anniversary Windermere Jetty	TARS
15-18 August	<b>TARS IAGM Weekend</b> Peak District	TARS/Midland

# Memories of 'Holly Howe'

## Eight days of camping, climbing, sailing and swimming alongside, on and in Coniston Water in August

### Coe family afloat and aloft

The paint was still drying on *Gibber* as we filled her to the gunwales with beddings, empty water tanks and protective blankets. Sebastian drove the Stalwart Saab, Theo (16) navigated and Chloe (11) drew pictures in a nest on the backseat.

We arrived before the sun sank below Kangchenjunga, and pitched our tent not 10 yards from the Lake. By the time camp was made, it was pitch black and the crew fell fast asleep within a moment of their heads touching their pillows.

A strong southerly wind blew on and off all week and the next morning we sped south to Wild Cat Island. *Gibber* rushed through the waves, water thrown from her forepeak and dashing down the decks to be deflected back by the crew's bottoms! *Gibber* (an early 12ft Signet, over 50 years old now) gave a good account of herself, keeping up with a pair of GP14s from the camp, all the way there and all the way back.

It was too windy for

Atop the 'Old Man' or Kangchenjunga: Sebastian, Chloe, Theo and Nick Ardagh-Walter



sailing on Friday, so we set off to climb Kangchenjunga for the first time. *Gibber's* former master, Nick, was our guide. We made it to the top, where we were proudly photographed flying the Tars flag.

The last day, the Gibbers, despite the rain, were standing on the foredeck of the steamer *Gondola* in shorts and sandals. After no more than ten chuffs into the voyage they were invited to the bridge to take the wheel – Chloe south to the Island, Tom returning north to Coniston. SC



### Swimming the Lake

*Swimming in the lake, in tarns and rivers ('wild swimming' in modern parlance) took place frequently for our fictional friends, yet very rarely seems to feature as a TARS activity. Several of us set out to put this right during the camp.*

*My first swim took place alone before breakfast on the second morning. I entered Coniston Water down the slipway and swam south down the length of the campsite waving to many of my fellow campers as I went past. Another morning when the rain was hammering down I decided that swimming was a far more sensible option than putting on clothes that would only get wet, so again swam the length of the site, but climbed out close to my tent to avoid getting cold by being stopped for conversations on my return.*

*Rachel joined me on some occasions, including a Captain-John-style swim round Wild Cat Island which was most enjoyable. Afterwards we even had a hot shower thanks to her solar-powered shower.*

*Nick and Amanda also swam from time to time, but for distance we were all outswum by Sue who is a regular long-distance swimmer. It was a mere snip for her to swim across the lake to get a coffee in the café! **Jane Wilson***

Photo by Rachel Chalmers



## The crash in the night

Early bed on Tuesday night was a good move – there was a lot of very stormy weather, *reports Lindy Castell*. About 4.15 a noise like a pistol shot woke me. It was followed 10 minutes later by a similar noise, and about half an hour later there was a huge crash as a very large branch fell off the big oak tree just by our tents. Fortunately, it fell into the field where we hadn't been allowed to camp. Still snug in my tent I called out to next door "Are you OK?" but then realised they might not have answered anyway if the branch had hit them!



## Secret Harbour – at last!

I first read *Swallows and Amazons*, aged 7 and no longer the youngest of the family, in 1970. This summer, and under my own power, I sailed to and circumnavigated Peel Island (known to us by another name), tacking south to the west of the island, and running north up the narrow east channel, following the advice in *Swallowdale's* race, in order to check for decent marks and a good way in.

I took a gamble and turned north after the last rocks on the Southwestern edge.

Checking it was knee-deep, I hopped overboard, and met a man called Justin who offered to move his boat, in order to provide additional access. I thanked him for that, and then said to him that it had taken me just fifty-three years to get here. He laughed, whipped out an old (and very familiar) paperback of S&A, and told me it "had only taken forty" for him. His wife and kids were busy exploring. I joined the expedition, and - with a tear in my eye - spent a good hour on "home turf". *Andy Goddard*



## Music in the tunnel

Paul and Diana had created a large communal tunnel tent where most of us gathered at night-times for enjoyable discussions, suitably lubricated! On Thursday we all came back from a day messing about in boats on the lake, visiting and shopping to an evening of sea shanties and toasting of marshmallows. Helen played guitar and Nick played flute – they both sounded really professional. Our one 7-year-old started proceedings with his rendition of his favourite "Spanish Ladies". Everyone then sang it and there was lots of applause. Very impressively Helen performed a special sea shanty (apparently from the *Winter Holiday Musical*), for which we were able to sing the chorus.

*Lindy Castell*

Photos: Top: The Branch by Kryisia Clack; middle: Boats in Secret Harbour by Jane Wilson; right: Andy Goddard  
Opposite: Steam yacht *Gondola* by Sebastian Coe. More on the camp in Northern Despatches, page 38





## OBITUARY

### Sheila Campbell 1934-2023

Sheila Campbell, who died in June, was an enthusiastic and active Arthur Ransome fan as member of both TARS and the Nancy Blackett Trust. I recall meeting her in 1998 at the Custom House Quay in Falmouth, where she was about to join *Nancy* for the return leg of her maiden voyage in the Trust's ownership.

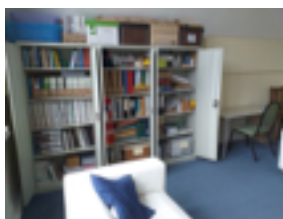
Typical of Sheila, she arrived with a cold roast chicken to feed the crew. Her husband John recalls she was 'radiant' when she arrived at Teignmouth, and she wrote up the voyage for *Mixed Moss* (Winter 1998): "A magical week... the experience of a lifetime."

Sheila spent 16 years as the NBT's Membership Secretary. Within TARS, she and John were regulars at IAGMs and Literary Weekends. She served with me on the 2003 President's Working



Party on publications which established Signals in its present form. She hosted its meetings at their house in the Malvern Hills and went on to act as Editor of some issues.

Other interests were choral music – she met John, her second husband, in the Worcester Festival Choral Society and went on to lead the Malvern U3A's Music Appreciation Society. *Peter Willis*



### TARS Archives:

## Together at last!

After many years of searching, a home for the TARS archives was recently secured, and the Archives have now been moved into their new home, rented from a church in Birmingham. Three metal filing cabinets have been acquired and a total of 23 boxes and containers delivered.

Unpacking the boxes revealed a treasure trove of TARS past history which has been carefully placed on the shelves and now awaits cataloguing. This will take a considerable time as each folder, file or box contains dozens and dozens of papers or photographs and there are several thousand items to record. A fourth cabinet is likely to be needed.

As the photographs show, the archive is housed in an attractive, carpeted and heated room, with a work table and formal and easy seating. The room is securely locked.

Thanks to Elizabeth Haworth, Chris Birt, Ann Farr and Veronica Priestly for their work and custodianship of the archives along with all those who have contributed material, For more information please contact Peter Wright: by email [peterwright180@btinternet.com](mailto:peterwright180@btinternet.com) or phone on 0121 443 2910.

## TARS BOOK GROUP

The next Book Group will be on  
Sunday February 11 at 8pm  
on Zoom:

Join Zoom Meeting

[https://us02web.zoom.us/j/86340168263?  
pwd=YlpHdG1LZWtYaHNPQkVtSzgvd3M3Zz09](https://us02web.zoom.us/j/86340168263?pwd=YlpHdG1LZWtYaHNPQkVtSzgvd3M3Zz09)

Meeting ID: 863 4016 8263 Passcode: 136492

Our next books:

### Escape to the River Sea

by Emma Carroll

This is a new 'follow on' from Eva Ibbotson's *Journey to the River Sea* - adventure in the Amazon after the second world war

### Red Lead by Roland Perry

Recommended by Catherine Lamont about a Ship's Cat during the second world war. This looks really good - adult non fiction, hard to get hold of in the UK.. Catherine has offered to bring copies from Australia if anybody wants one - she is coming to the UK in January.

### One Summer's Grace by Libby Purves

An older book but well recommended.

### Co-ordinator Elizabeth Williams

[elizabeth.williams10@aol.co.uk](mailto:elizabeth.williams10@aol.co.uk)





## SWALLOW and AMAZON

### Amazon at Southampton show Swallow's restoration starts

At the Southampton Boat Show, from left, Diana, Marc, Amazon, Dermot and Sophie/Titty



The second half of the summer found *Amazon* already at work – afloat at her home in Hunter's Yard, and taking bookings for sailing.

That's when she wasn't posing for selfies at the Southampton Boat Show. This annual 10-day event attracts 90,000-plus visitors and *Amazon* was given a free space near the entrance (with transport costs covered) where her many loving fans patted, hugged and even kissed her.

Sophie Neville, who, as Titty in the 1974 film, captured *Amazon*, was on hand to give talks and sign copies of her book. She'd also lined-up a timely article about it in *Practical Boat Owner* magazine. (Shouldn't that be *Piratical Boat Owner?* – ed.)

Southern and other Tars, including Jenny Wedick and her partner Tony Binns, David Middleton, Corin Nelson-Smith and Saskia, Marc Grimston, Andrew Silk and Dermot Stanley, turned out to help Diana Wright and Sophie with the collection buckets. Between them they raised £500, and several new TARS memberships were initiated.

#### A start on Swallow

*Swallow* meanwhile was receiving a thorough examination by Hunter's Yard shipwright Andy, who reported to some of the S&A management team in September. Some items were obvious — rot around the stem at the waterline, a poorly-repaired plank and so on — and six ribs are known to need replacing.

By the end of the afternoon *Swallow* was upside-down on trestles in another part of the shed and the initial scraping had begun.

The latest update from Hunters is that the estimated £11,800 (inc VAT) will cover the work needed; the

money, all but around £600, is in place. Work on *Swallow* (which can only be scheduled for the summer season when Hunters are not carrying out winter maintenance on their hire-craft fleet) should be finished this summer, and in any case she will be fit to take some part alongside *Amazon* (and *Titmouse*) in the TARS Windermere celebrations for the film's 50th anniversary.

#### The finances

On finances, a correction to the last *Signals* report: half of Malcolm Porteous' £10,000 legacy was voted to the project at the February Board Meeting, and a further £5,000 guarantee was underwritten by the Board at its May post-IAGM meeting. With the c£5,000 from members (and another £5,000 from the NBT), funds for immediate costs are in place; additional costs — including a proper restoration of *Amazon* (around £10,000) and further equipment — will need to be met in due course. At the Board meeting in October (see p3) no decision on funding was made; the issue was rolled over into the discussion on uses for the Susie and Di legacy where a general consultation with members was decided on (see page 9).

#### Sail Amazon soon

*Amazon* will be available to sail from late March, at £100 for a day (half-day £50, full week as tender to a Hunters fleet yacht, £400).

For bookings, email [info@huntersyard.com](mailto:info@huntersyard.com) or phone 01692 678263.





## *A Ransome Cruise in Company on The Norfolk Broads 3-10th. August 2024*

*Sail the waters of Coot Club & The Big Six*

*Visit Horning, Ranworth, Potter  
Heigham and Kendal Dyke where Dick  
fell in ! (Sorry, but there isn't time to go  
through Yarmouth to Beccles and  
back.)*

*Come for the whole week or for part of a  
week : Saturday-Monday  
or Tuesday-Friday.*



*Hunter's Yard have 2, 3, and 4-berth yachts for you to hire.  
Lullaby (the Teasel from the BBC film) is reserved for us; Amazon and  
Titmouse will also be available to be hired for the week.*



*We shall be accompanied by an  
experienced Broads sailor to help us at  
the bridges where we have to lower  
masts, to arrange moorings and even  
to book evening meals when required !  
You do need to be at least a competent  
dingy sailor or have a member of the  
party who is happy to skipper the yacht  
as the Cruise is NOT a learn-to-sail  
holiday although we could provide an  
instructor if you wished at extra cost.*

*Book online or for further information contact Hunter's Yard:  
www.huntersyard.co.uk Email: info@huntersyard.com Tel: 01692 678263*

*Sample one-week boat hire prices: Lullaby 4-berth £1,294  
Wood class 3-berth £1,045 Hustler 2-berth £994  
(check website for half-week rates)*

*Book before 31st December and pay this year's prices for next year's holiday!*





## Susie and Di's bequest - How should we use it?

The final figure of the sum bequeathed to TARS by our beloved members Susie Cattley and Di Stockwell is £60,702.61. At the last Board Meeting various suggestions were made about how to use it, but the task of comparing and evaluating them was felt too great for the meeting and that the membership as a whole should be invited to get involved; I was instructed to create a page in Signals to do so. Here, summarised, are suggestions, from the meeting and elsewhere, received so far. Your comments on them, and your own suggestions, will be very welcome. *Peter Willis, Editor*

A donation to each Regional Group

Publicity about Arthur Ransome and TARS

Increased funding for Books for Schools and to Libraries

A Ransome Pack for Secondary Schools, covering Arthur's early time in Russia and elsewhere

Subsidise Junior members at events, also carers if an adult needs to be accompanied

Offer financial assistance to overseas groups

Bigger grants to regions, library, Red Slipper Fund, Junior Adventure Fund?

A 'Senior Adventure Fund' to subsidise first-aid, mountain leadership, water safety etc courses to encourage people to take the lead

*Swallow and Amazon:* So far £15,000 has been allocated for their initial purchase and restoration, including £5,000 from 50 individual TARS members; it's anticipated an additional £15-20,000 will be needed to complete the restorations and bring them both into service.

'Opportunity fund': Something may come up for sale in auction, ebay etc which may be appropriate for TARS to purchase – eg letters, heirlooms – where we would have to act quickly.

Leave some in a contingency fund. We will probably make a £2,000 loss each of the next two years in the general running of TARS as the number of members has dropped. This is despite more meetings being on Zoom, with fewer travel costs.

Promoting TARS and Ransome – more events such as the 50th Anniversary of the film.

**To join in the debate, comment on these suggestions or add others of your own, you can use the website: The page can be found on the TARS Member Site ([members.arthur-ransome.org](http://members.arthur-ransome.org)) under "Publications & Events" on the main menu, as "Susie and Di Fund". This can also be accessed through the link "[members.arthur-ransome.org/susie-and-di-fund](http://members.arthur-ransome.org/susie-and-di-fund)".**

**If you prefer to email, my address is: [peterwillis1144@gmail.com](mailto:peterwillis1144@gmail.com)**

**All contributions and suggestions will be acknowledged, collated and considered.**

**Please respond before 14th February**

## The 17<sup>th</sup> TARS Literary Weekend 19<sup>th</sup>-21<sup>st</sup> April 2024

### The Crown Hotel, Harrogate

Unlike in *The Picts* and *The Martyrs*, a Harrogate postmark does not mean doom and gloom, quite the reverse, as this is our location for the 17<sup>th</sup> TARS Literary Weekend. Far from being *not welcome at all*, all are welcome for what promises to be a first-rate weekend.



It's a mystery to many how each weekend's programme seems to outdo previous years, but the 2024 weekend could just be our best yet for three key reasons:

**Firstly**, in a break with tradition we're staying in a 3-star hotel with all the luxuries of ensuite bedrooms (with TVs and tea and coffee making facilities), and all the facilities you would expect. **Secondly**, we've put together an amazing line-up of speakers talking on a variety of AR and Swallows and Amazons themes; and **thirdly**, we've been able, with an allowance for inflation, to keep the cost similar to those in 2020 and 2022.

**The Crown Hotel** has a history dating back over 300 years and has an enviable central location just moments away from many of Harrogate's most popular attractions and just a 5-minute walk from the railway station with its links to Leeds and York. **Harrogate** itself has an amazing variety of attractions for your free Saturday afternoon, including the famous Betty's tea rooms, the Royal Pump Room Museum, the impressive Turkish baths, the Royal Horticultural Society's Harlow Carr Garden, the Stray, the Valley Gardens, a five-star shopping experience or even a trip into the nearby Yorkshire Dales.

### The stars of the weekend, however, will be our speakers.

As the page opposite shows we have a fabulous line-up comprising both TARS members and invited guests. We are honoured to have **Michelle Magorian**, author of the classic *Goodnight Mr Tom* coming to speak to us. She is a lifelong Ransome fan and one of her books, *Impossible!* has several references to AR and the books. She will tell us how Ransome has inspired not just her writing but also her early life and then expand on her experiences in literature and the theatre. **Jim Ring** is a journalist, film maker and sailor who has written about his love for Ransome. He will give his personal view on Ransome as a writer and Ransome's aesthetic. **Jon Sparks** is a writer and photographer and author of *Arthur Ransome's Lake District*. He will talk on how Ransome influenced him and the adventures he had in tracking down and photographing the actual locations Ransome used in his books. **Robert Twigger**, author and travel writer, will talk about his recent book, *36 Islands*, inspired by the S&A books and his experiences in visiting the hidden wonders of the 36 islands found amongst the Lake District's lakes, waters and meres, including Wild Cat Island.

As ever, TARS members have put themselves forward. **Rachel Chalmers**, microbiologist and public health specialist, will talk on health, hygiene and happiness in the 12 books including revealing a new role for Sinbad! **Kirsty Nichol Findlay** has been researching modernism and will talk on Ransome and the avant-garde and the weekend opens with **Paul Crisp** talking about Aunts and Great Aunts in literature – well, we couldn't come to Harrogate and not mention our own GA! And our President **John Sergeant** has agreed to give the after-dinner talk at our Gala meal. He will talk about his favourite character, Captain Flint, and muse upon the similarities between Ransome's career and his own as a journalist and war correspondent.

**Please note, the hotel requires guest details and payment well in advance, it would be really helpful if you could register for the weekend and preferably make full payment by the end of February.**

**The booking form is in the mailing with this *Signals* or on the TARS website.**



## Meet Our Speakers

**Michelle Magorian** - Arthur Ransome's books propelled Michelle (Mikki) Magorian into learning outdoor survival skills and led her to read novels, plays and poetry. As well as writing nine novels and the book and lyrics for four musicals, these survival skills helped her during the seventeen years she was living in rural areas and cities, performing in musicals, comedies and dramas. In the children's novel *Impossible!* (set in 1959), Arthur Ransome's world also comes to the aid of the main character.



**John Sergeant** - John's background has much in common with AR's. As a BBC news and political correspondent, he reported on a total of four wars, beginning with Vietnam. Whereas Ransome interviewed Trotsky and Lenin, John locked horns with senior politicians of the late 80's and 90's winning a British Press Guild Award for his famous interview with Margaret Thatcher at the start of her leadership demise. Like AR he was relieved to be able to give up that kind of journalism, writing books, and making TV programmes, including one on *Swallows and Amazons*. There was also his memorable stint on *Strictly Come Dancing*. He and his wife enjoyed family holidays with their boys in the Lake District and Norfolk, with John doing his best to play an amateur version of Captain Flint.



**Jim Ring** - Jim learned to sail on the Norfolk Broads under the spell of Arthur Ransome. After reading English at Oxford, he spent a decade in advertising before becoming Erskine Childers' biographer. He has written a number of other works of award-winning non-fiction, and published two novels, one satire and one alternative history. He is a director of the literary quarterly **Slightly Foxed**, in which several of his articles on Ransome have appeared. His documentary films include a study of the 2011 nuclear accident at Fukushima Daiichi, and two on the D-Day landings.



**Jon Sparks** - Jon made his living for 30 years as an award-winning outdoor writer and photographer, specialising in landscape, travel and outdoor pursuits, particularly walking, climbing and cycling. He cites Arthur Ransome as a lifelong influence and has written on the real places behind Ransome's 'lake country'. He spoke on Swallows, Amazons and Adventure at Kendal Mountain festival and this will be the basis of his talk this weekend. He's now writing fiction and again the Ransome influence is not far away. He lives in Garstang, Lancashire, with his partner Bernie and several bikes.



**Robert Twigger** - Robert has written 15 books translated into 16 languages. He has made several journeys following the routes of 19th century explorers and has edited the Thames and Hudson book *The Modern Explorers*. He has been a fan of Arthur Ransome since he was eight, which inspired him to write his 2022 book *36 Islands*.



**Paul Crisp** - Apart from AR, Paul has always read with great pleasure the works of P. G. Wodehouse, and, like Bertie Wooster, has both enjoyed and suffered the company of Aunts Great and Small. He will tread the streets of Harrogate with caution, ever aware of who might lurk around the next corner. Join him in this study of As & GAs in literature and reality, and discover how the plot of a certain book might have been...

**Kirsty Nichol Findlay** - Arthur Ransome's places and people were Kirsty's companions in her New Zealand childhood. Inspired by Titty and Dorothea she studied literature in Wellington and Cambridge and taught at universities in New Zealand and the UK before freelance consultancy took her to work in 29 countries. With Brian, she developed The Bull Pen, a cottage on a tributary of the Duddon in Cumbria, where Ransome fished. She lives there and in the Wairarapa.

**Rachel Chalmers** - Rachel has worked in clinical microbiology and public health for more years than she cares to remember, publishing over 150 scientific papers and contributing to guidance on prevention of infection. However, as a mum of two boys she has sometimes failed spectacularly to follow her own advice, leading them into many misadventures in the countryside around their home in West Wales and beyond.

*1974-2024: fifty years of  
Swallows and Amazons on film*

**A weekend of  
fun and celebration at  
Windermere Jetty**

**29-30 JUNE**

**WATCH** the film  
**MEET** members of the cast and crew  
**DISCOVER** secrets of making the film  
**SEE** *Swallow* and *SAIL Amazon*

**ENTERTAINMENT**

from

**The Boat Band** - shanties and folk music  
*Swallows and Amazons* live on stage

**ENJOY**

**Trips on lake cruise ship *Tern*  
and the  
Lakeside and Haverthwaite Railway  
plus  
the sight of classic steam and other boats  
on the water, and all the attractions of  
Windermere Jetty, including  
*Ransome's Coch-y-Bonddhu*  
and other memorabilia**

**More still at the planning stage – we're hoping the Altounyan family may bring *Mavis* (the original *Amazon*) to the event and if possible, get her in the water, and Hunter's Yard, restorers of *Swallow* and *Amazon* hope to join the event, with *Titmouse* from the *Coot Club* and *The Big Six* BBC films**

*Come and join the celebrations – book the date now!*

## 1974-2024: fifty years of *Swallows and Amazons* on film

# From the book to the film

David Wood talks to Signals about how he adapted *Swallows and Amazons* for the big screen

David Wood cheerfully admits he never read any of the *Swallows and Amazons* series as a child. His cousin had all the books, but David, being a year younger permanently felt they were “too old for me”. So when Neville Thompson of Theatre Productions and Richard Pilbrow, the film’s eventual producer, sat him down in a pub in Drury Lane in 1972 and asked if he’d ever read *Swallows and Amazons* he had to reply “No.” Despite this, they asked him to read it and let them know if he’d be interested in writing a screenplay. (He’d never done one of those either. Or been sailing.)

The upshot of this was that David found himself alone in a holiday cottage in Minorca for two weeks “gutting” the book – analysing it chapter by chapter to see how it works, how incidents link to each other, and contribute to the big moment, how the characters contribute and so on. This resulted in a synopsis. “Everyone was very pleased, and started trying to raise the money. And then I wrote it.”

### Faithful to the original

His main aims, he says, were “to always be very faithful to the original, and to show it from the children’s point of view.” And to bring out the real menace in many of the situations. “I realised early on that Titty was going to be the most important character. She was the imaginative one. The whole thing of her being in the boat and on the island alone, she was going to be frightened and cold. There’s a gritty quality that’s often overlooked – the danger with the lake steamer is for real, and there is genuine mystery and fear when they first meet the Amazons. And John’s reaction to the unfairness of Captain Flint’s unjust accusation is very real.”

David was also determined to make the return of Captain Flint’s trunk very moving. “It was more me than Ransome there – he deals with it rather off-stage. I wanted you to empathise with Titty and what she’d done”

Of the others, he comments, “Roger to me is a lot of the humour, but the danger is of getting grown-up laughs at his expense.”



Casting the grown-ups had not been easy. “We were lucky to have Virginia McKenna, and Claude (Whatham, the director) had a kind of repertory company which he worked with, but the main search was for Uncle Jim. Films for children were considered slightly second-division, he explains, and that meant actors tended to avoid appearing in them.

“We eventually got Ronald Fraser – I remember being a bit disappointed, he was known as a comedy actor, but in the end I thought he did rather well and entered into the spirit of it. There are moments of humility – when he

apologises to John – that he handles well.” (As an aside, David mentions the abandoned *Great Northern* project, where they’d been hoping to cast Peter Sellers as Jemmerling.)

One area where the film does deviate from the book is the opening. Instead of Roger tacking up the field at Holly Howe, we discover the Walker family in a railway-carriage, heading north. “I wanted the audience to get to know the children, and I thought, ‘How did they come to be there – the Lake District, Father in the Navy, Mother from Australia?’ It was the perfect way of introducing their different characters and creating a sense of infectious excitement at the beginning of the holiday.”

### Evgenia’s blessing

One of David’s potentially fiercest critics was Mrs Ransome herself - Arthur’s widow Evgenia, by then living in a retirement village near Banbury. Her approval was essential, and Richard Pilbrow had the idea of inviting her to the Lake District and taking her out in a boat to Peel Island. “Although rather frail, she leapt eagerly into the boat, and took us round, pointing out things quite like a little girl – it was rather moving.”

Back at the hotel, though, it was time to discuss the script. “She pointed to a line – ‘This line you have given to Susan. Susan would never say a line like this.’ I picked up the book, found the line, which was Susan’s, in it and showed it to her. Realising I’d done my homework, she relaxed. ‘I think it will be alright,’ she said.”

## Spies everywhere!



Loose with this edition of *Signals* is the Subscription Form for the forthcoming Amazon Publication, *Red Skies*, the script of the play by Ivan Cutting. Recent editions of *Signals* have outlined the basics in detail.

Peter Willis described the essence of the 4-Act plot in *Signals*, June-April, 2023:

“...In the second act, Orwell is staying overnight with the Ransomes when there’s an air raid; Arthur sleeps through it but George and Evgenia, awake and anxious, begin to open up to each other. His verdict on their escape from Russia though is damning. ‘Each of you thinks the other left for love. Yet each of you knows there is a distinct possibility the other had an ulterior motive.’”

And it is this which is the crux of the play; we know well the allegations of AR being a spy – but now we have to face the possibility that Evgenia has been spying on AR all along.

Certainly it seems that, in reality, the British establishment never trusted Evgenia and there is a general feeling that both were ‘watched’. Increasingly, we are coming to think suspicion of both AR and Evgenia may well have been a reason why AR was never publicly fêted as his work deserved. For their part, the Ransomes seem always to have had the spectre of Trotsky and Stalin hanging over them. Orwell has much to say about the ‘relationship’ of Evgenia and Trotsky... just his secretary?



As Peter says: “The guesses and revelations continue via sharply controlled dialogue like a three-way tennis match until the very end.”

There is much to enjoy here. The clever dialogue which is so believable; Arthur’s cheerful focus on fishing, almost oblivious of the crackling tension around him – which was often his way in real life!

The playwright’s attention to detail – weaving in some characters we know to be biographically true – is masterly.

Nancy Blackett Trust members are being invited to join us for this title; their form will be in *Jibbooms and Bobstays*.

Don’t be left out! Don’t be sorry for a night have read!

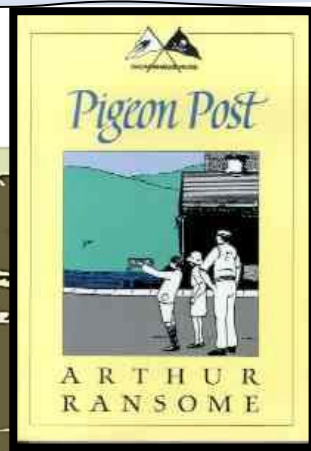
**Subscriptions to be received before the end of February, 2024. Publication launch at the Literary Weekend in Harrogate in April, 2024.**



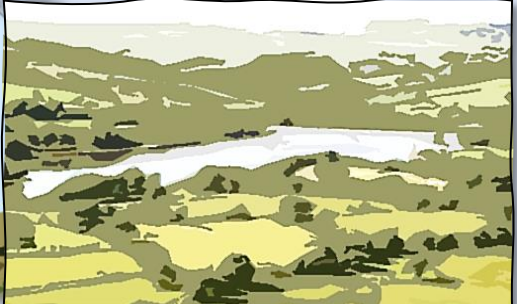
MIDLAND TARS IAGM  
 HIGH TOPPS IN THE  
 DERBYSHIRE PEAKS  
 AUGUST 15<sup>TH</sup>-18<sup>TH</sup> 2024



Full Board and Lodgings available at  
*The Nightingale Centre, Great Hucklow*

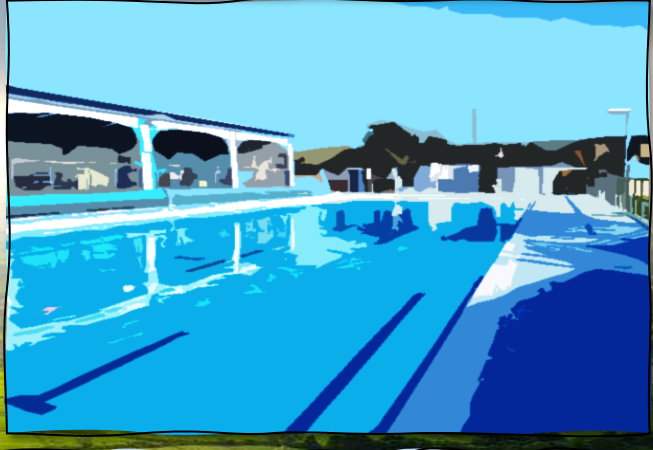


A watery day at Combs Reservoir



'Camp Might Be' - possible adjacent camping field ...

Stroll or hike hills, dales, and ridge edges around the *Dark Peak*. Sail, swim, catch a train. See 1,000 shades of green, take a tour of a stately home. Tour caverns. Go 'prehistoric' prospecting for edible gold. Hear fascinating, illustrated talks. Join in with quizzes and feasts of fun!



Take a cooling dip in Hathersage Outdoor Pool.

# SOMETHING FOR ALL OF US ...



## Breathing Life into History ...

### Three Illustrated Talks

#### Literary Derbyshire, Martha Blue



Thinking of following the Jane Eyre Trail? Know your Jane Austen from your Agatha Christie? What have Just William, Bruce Bogtrotter, Robinson Crusoe, Little Grey Rabbit, Celia Fiennes, Charles Cotton, George Eliot, D.H. Lawrence, Samuel Johnson, John Ruskin, Edith Sitwell et al have in common? An eclectic literary presentation!

#### A Girl Afloat – from water baby to narrow-boat, Jenny Wedick

Jenny Wedick will take us on a meandering whistle-stop journey, charting her childhood watery experiences through to her interest in the Nancy Blackett, the Jubilee Sailing Trust and up-to-date narrow-boating adventures!

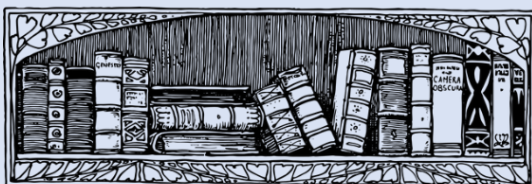
#### Yes, I met Ransome once, Peter Wright

Arthur as seen and described by those who met him, from being 'a very ugly child' to 'a furiously bad-tempered old man'. Discover who described him as 'a Don Quixote with a walrus moustache, a sentimentalist, visionary and incorrigible romanticist', or 'amateurish, literary, opinionated, conceited and eccentric', but also an 'amusing and good-natured companion'!

Music Group. Join a shanty band - entertain us with your instrumentals. Sign up on the Booking form!



Susan Cup! Bring along a pre-made, Pigeon Post-themed bake creation to be judged by Jenny Wedick.



TARS Stalls & Library



Chess Tournament

Scouts at Dusk – local woodlands scavenger hunt

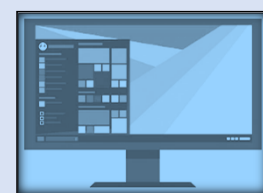
Ted Alexander's AR display



Sunday Worship Service kindly led by the Hambleton family.

Dick Callum Cup & Juniors' Swallows and Amazons Cup! Get quizzing!

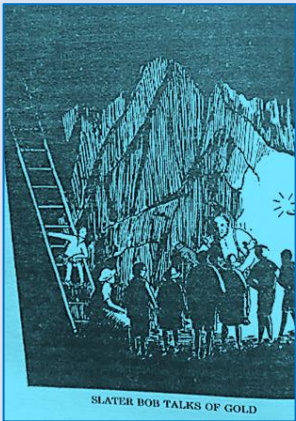
News From the Wilderness – A Juniors Challenge to create a scrapbook/diary/journal over the weekend. Prize of a Carnegie Medal-winning book for the most illustrative and detailed. Judged by Jules Blue



Pioneers & Stay-at-Homes - AGM and Members' Forum (Also hoped to be Zoom-fed)



*Being Swallows, Amazons & Ds*



At the Nightingale Centre, seek out *The Gulch* where Slater Bob will oversee some super fun activities and challenges which our Committee have designed.

Participate or spectate!

Juniors must bring along at least one AP. Unattached APs may bring themselves.

**Rattletrap Racing!**

Build a junk model *Rattletrap* and win a prize for the closest replica of AR's vintage version.

Race your *Rattletrap* down a slick ramp to win a further prize for the furthest travelling vehicle.

Spectate or support your favourite engineer!

**Finding Timothy!**

A weekend-long *Cluedo*-style game to discover the real Timothy in time to stop him from jumping the TARS gold claim! Follow the clues and question suspects ...



**Crushing & Panning - & archery!**

Using bows & arrows, send messages to your team members. Follow this with panning & sorting raw ores to discover grains of gold. All ages welcome!

**Pigeon Post!**

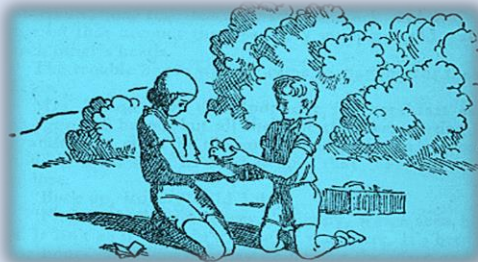
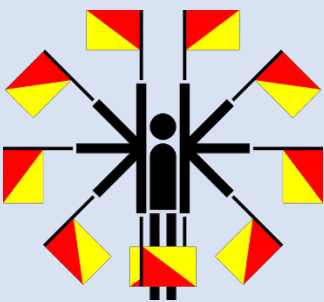
Using a vortex-ball-based design, send and receive semaphore messages within your team. Will your letters fly faster than anyone else's?



*We've Got to do it all Ourselves.* Garden games – Badminton/Quoits/ Pick-a-stick/Kubb/Connect Four/Boules ...

**Pigeon Post Tapestry**

Help to illustrate *Pigeon Post*. A wall-mounted, DIY illustration, fleshing out the book chapters.



**Shifting Camp** by way of vintage 'dromedaries'.

Set up a make-shift camp then pack it up again and move it swiftly to another site using a vintage 'dromedary' bicycle. Play alone or join a team or just come along to watch this hilarious race. All ages welcome!



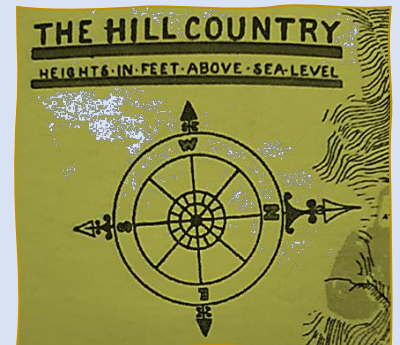
**Charcoal Pudding** food challenge!

Create something visibly-delicious and edible out of something very dark!

Prize given for most original, judged by Mike Glover



**TAKE IN A FEW PEAKS, OR TAKE A FRIDAY PEEK ...**



**THORNBRIDGE HALL: TARS HOUSE TOUR @2pm (50 minutes)**

'Nice & handy to the house'... Wander through a thousand shades of green at quirky and quintessentially English Thornbridge Hall. Graceful gardens manipulate the landscape in a series of themed 'garden rooms.' Temples, urns, statues, grottos. Juniors may wish to *meet the animals* or meander around willow tunnels or net a duck in the high fountain.

House tour: £12 pp or House tour and afternoon cream tea £15pp

(Garden tickets available, payable on day: £3 under 17/£7 17+)

\*Tours suitable for age 12+ \*\* Tour – many stairs, therefore unsuited for you with limited mobility

Nightingale Centre to Thornbridge Hall 6 miles/12 mins

Thornbridge Hall to Castleton 12 miles/25 mins

**'Combing the Topps'**

***DARK PEAK 'EDGES-AND-RIDGES' CIRCULAR SIX COUNTRY-MILE STROLL***

Guided circular ramble along rugged gritstone tors and escarpments of Curbar & Frogatt Edges with striking rock formations amid panoptic views over rolling Derbyshire Dales moorland countryside. (862-958 feet above sea level)

Gather 10:15. Walk 11-3:00

Parking 6.7 miles/15 mins from Nightingale Centre

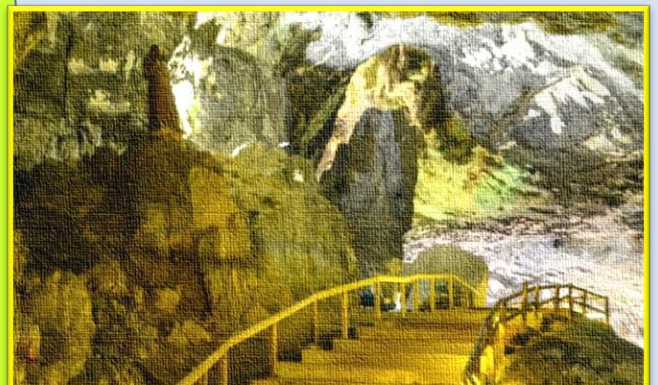


**'Squashy Hat comes out of the hill ...'**

**PEAK CAVERN, CASTLETON, 4PM**

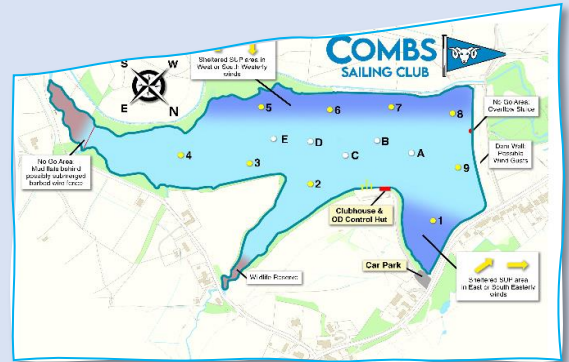
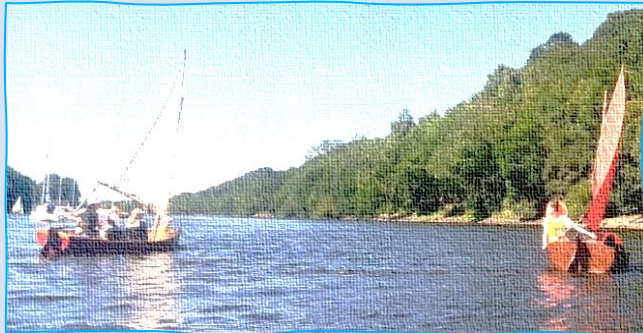
Rope-making demonstration in largest natural cave entrance in Britain, followed by show caverns tour. (A little stooping required for the loftiest. Ball of string not required!) Deep in the gorge below Peveril Castle, Derbyshire lead miners once toiled. Do you know your stalagmites from your stalactites?

Adults: £16/Juniors: £9/under 5s free





**SAILING, STROLLING OR SWIMMING – GRAB YOUR SATURDAY CHANCE!**



**Catch a six-minute train from Hope Valley Station to Hathersage! Hourly trains. Adult ticket £4.20/age 5-16 £2.10/Parking £3.00**



**SATURDAY ALL-DAY SAILING: 10-4pm**

The picturesque Combs Reservoir (11 miles/25 minutes' drive from Great Hucklow), near to Whaley Bridge, beneath the crag-fringed slopes of Combs Moss, has its own sailing club but we have secured permission to make good use of the reservoir, including parking for boats and trailers beforehand and overnight. Club house facilities, including separate male/female changing rooms, are accessible. Sail or paddle (SUPs may be made available for a donation). Play the '*White Spots*' game or '*Fend off the Enemy*'

Sailing rules will be sent out to prospective sailors and helm crew before the event.



**SATURDAY AFTERNOON STROLL: 3pm.**  
**Prospecting** for edible Gold at *Carl Wark*, the Chatsworth-gritstone, flat-topped prehistoric, promontory on Hathersage Moor. Explore ramparts and defensive walls and expect wild encounters around every corner. Professor Callums and all may seek here its secret treasures and consider when it was built and who built it - & why!  
 Parking 8.4 miles/20 mins from Nightingale Centre



**SATURDAY SWIM: 5-6pm**  
**Hathersage Outdoor Pool.** Period features, modern changing facilities & showers. Heated to 27°  
 Grandstand seating.  
**'They've Gone In'** – exclusive use. Swim or spectate. Expect *Swallows*' watery challenges! Perhaps some music from the bandstand?  
 Nightingale Centre to Hathersage 5.8 miles/16 mins



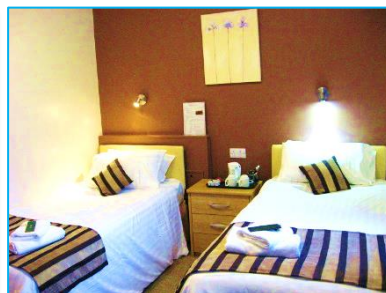
## ACCOMMODATING YOU IS ...



Honesty Bar available - selection of local beers, bottles of wine, etc.

The Nightingale Centre and its Unitarian links go back to the early 1930s when a convalescent home for ex-servicemen was built on the site in Great Hucklow. It replaced a more primitive building at Windmill village a mile along the road. Also in existence was a similar establishment for women, a large property called Barleycrofts. This has now been converted into three residences and is situated opposite the village chapel. It is these buildings along with an area of ancient woodland that makes up the present-day Nightingale complex.

See website for further information:  
[www.thenightingalecentre.org.uk](http://www.thenightingalecentre.org.uk)



30 bedrooms, 18 en-suite, large (10 berth) dormitory, 78 staying guests, full-board only. Rooms 26-29 ground floor. Room 30, mobility needs-adapted.

\*Day guest: Tea and Coffee and meal £45 p/p/d

Great Hucklow sits high between Bakewell, Buxton and Sheffield.

Northern Railway's Hope Valley Line runs between Sheffield and Manchester and gives direct access (spectacular scenery), with local stations at Grindleford, Hathersage, Bamford, Hope and Edale.

The Manchester to Glossop Line puts you at the foot of the Dark Peak moorlands with the grandeur of Bleaklow and Kinder Scout as backdrop.

To the west, the Manchester to Buxton Line links local buses taking you to villages and dales in the *White Peak*.

There are electric vehicle charging points in nearby Edale, Miller's Dale and Parsley Hay.

*'Camp Might Be'* - adjacent basic camping field with portaloos & water. Local B&B accommodation also available.

\* Please indicate interest in camping on booking form.

Showers available for sailors and swimmers at Combs Reservoir or Hathersage Pool on Saturday.

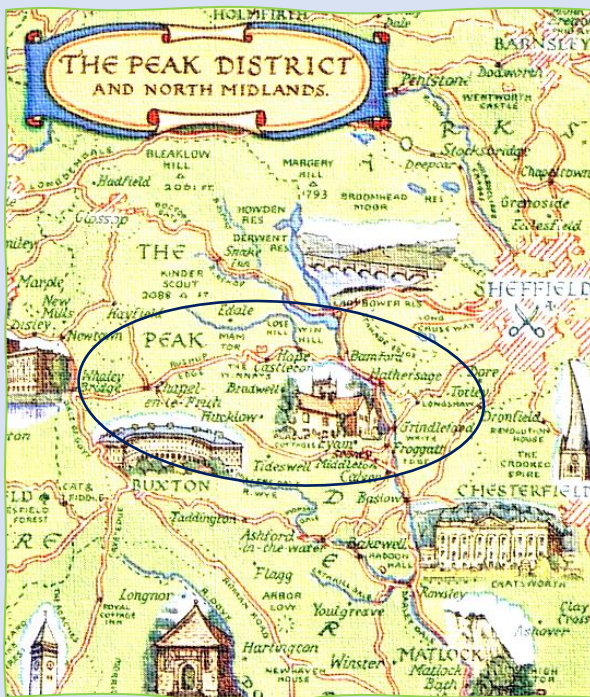
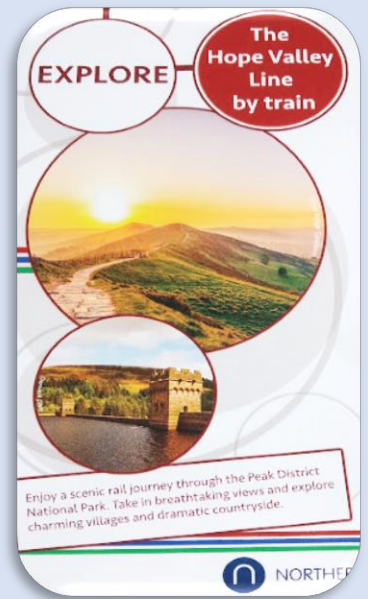
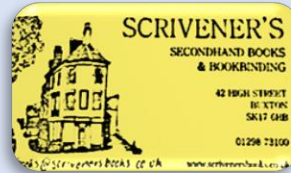


*'Camp Might Have Been ...'*

"To be camped within hearing of the house and its natives, no matter how friendly ... To draw water from the farm pump instead of dipping it from lake or beck ..."



**TAKE A LOCAL LOOK AROUND!** Visit the spa town of Buxton, England's highest market town, at some 1,000 feet above sea level. Here, Vera Brittain grew up. Take in the Royal Crescent Experience and see how the Georgians lived. There's the Devonshire Dome, with the world's largest unsupported dome. Or visit Scrivener's (five storey) bookshop and bookbinders, or even the Opera House!



Peakshole Water flows through Hope, where it enters the lower reaches of the River Noe, which flows from Edale; it then flows into the River Derwent. Follow the water, follow the Peak District.

Discover Britain's *first* National Park!

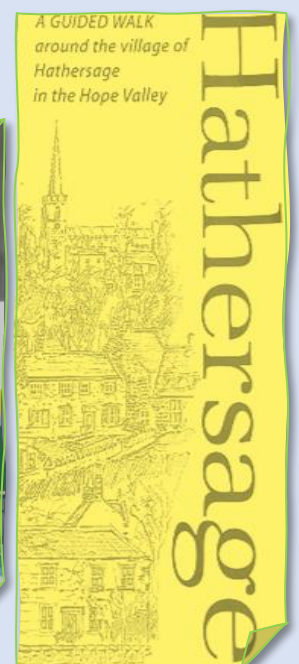
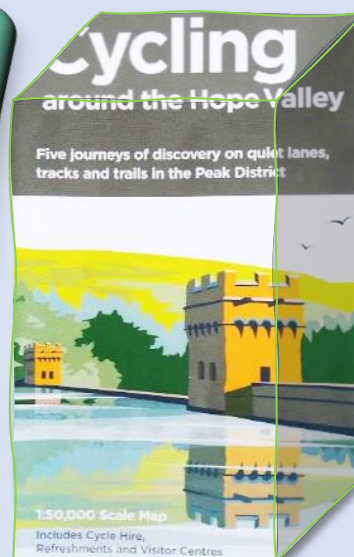


Eyam is famous for the bravery of its villagers when plague devastated the country during 1665-1666.

The museum tells the tale but offers alternative analyses too.

See also the Riley Graves, Mompesson's Well, The Boundary Stone and Eyam Church.

Local, self-guided, circular village walks available. Cafés, free parking.



**THE**

**ON-SITE  
ACTIVITIES  
AT THE  
NIGHTINGALE  
CENTRE**

**THURS AUG 15th**

Stallholders arrive >4pm

Guests arrive > 5pm

Registration/keys/  
Unpack/orientation/  
Welcome Booklet

**'Pot of Paint'** -  
Crafts available/Tars  
Stalls/Lib (5-6/7.30-9)

**Eve meal (6-7)**

**Martha's Illustrated Talk**  
**'Literary Derbyshire'**  
(7.30-8.30)

**Susan Cup Presentation**  
(8:30)

**FRI AUG 16th**

**Breakfast (7-8.30)**

**Music Group –  
Rehearsal (9-9:45)**

**'We've Got to do  
it all Ourselves'**  
**Garden Games**  
(ongoing)

**CHESS contest**  
(9:45-10:15)

**'Pot of Paint'** -  
Crafts  
available/Tars  
Stalls/Lib (10-4)

**'Being Ss/As &  
Ds'**-  
(AR activities)  
(10:30-12)

**Packed lunch**  
(12-1)

**'Being Ss/As &  
Ds'**-  
(AR activities)  
(2-3:30)

**Eve Meal (6-7)**

**DC CUP  
S&A CUP**  
(7-8:30)

**Jenny Wedick:  
'Watery Tales'**  
(8:30-10)

**Juniors'  
Challenge**  
(8:30-9:30)

**SAT AUG 17th**

**Breakfast (7-8.30)**

**Music Group –  
Rehearsal (9-9:45)**

**'We've Got to do  
it all Ourselves'**-  
**Garden Games**  
(ongoing)

**CHESS contest**  
(9:45-10:15)

**'Pot of Paint'**-  
Crafts  
available/Tars  
Stalls/Lib (10-4)

**'Being Ss/As &  
Ds'**-  
(AR activities)  
(10:30-12)

**Packed Lunch**  
(12-1)

**'Being Ss/As &  
Ds'**-  
(AR activities)  
(2-3:30)

**Eve Meal (6-7)**

**Peter Wright:  
'Yes, I Met  
Ransome'**  
(7:30-8:30)

**'Campfire Songs'**  
**Music Group**  
Juniors'  
Challenge Prizes  
(8-9:30)

**SUN AUG 18th**

**Breakfast (7-8.30)**

(Stalls pack away)

**Sunday Worship -**  
(9-9:30)

Vacate rooms by  
10

**'Pioneers & Stay-  
at-Homes'**-  
AGM/  
Members' Forum  
(10:15-12)

**CHESS contest**  
(9:45-10:15)

Treasure Hunt  
(10:30-11:30)

Trustees' Meeting  
(12-12:30)

**Lunch**  
(12-1)

**Flag Handover**  
(1:30)

Depart Centre by  
2pm

\*  
(Meal-times given  
are serving times)







# BOOKING FORM

Send your completed form to Mr Paul Green, 34 Felindre Pennal, Machynlleth. SY10 9DZ.

Payments should be made by BACS (sort code: 30-93-90 account: 00230479 ref: IAGM24 [your surname]). If needing to pay differently, please contact Paul first: [paul-midtdars@gmx.co.uk](mailto:paul-midtdars@gmx.co.uk)

## Personal Details

Please write your name and address here for contact purposes

Membership No.		First IAGM?	Yes/No
Telephone No.			
E-mail			
Vehicle Reg.			
Other Members of party (with DOB for Juniors)			

## Registration Fees

Payable on booking. Covers administrative costs and all events and activities except the visit to Peak Cavern and Thornbridge Hall.

	Price	No.	Total
Adult	£30		£
Junior (Under 18)	Free		N/A
Day visitor (Please state day)	£15	Fri/Sat/Sun	£

## Payable Activities

Sharing of lifts will arranged via the onsite information desk

	Price	Age(s)	No.	Total
Peak Cavern Ad/Jn/u5	£16/£9 /£0			£
Thornbridge Hall House Tour only	£12			£
Thornbridge Hall Tour & Cream tea	£15			£

**Totals** (half or full amount to be paid on booking, balance to be paid by 15 June)

Registration Total (payable on booking)	£
Accommodation Total	£
Activities Total	£
Late Booking Fee (after 15 June) £30	£
<b>Total due/enclosed (delete as appropriate)</b>	<b>£</b>

## Free Activities

## Number

Music Group (note instrument and approx. grade overleaf)	
Sailing (Bringing a boat as 'skipper' to take passengers/crew)	
Size of boat (inc. trailer)	Buoyancy Aids
Sailing as passenger/crew	am pm
Swimmer or spectator	
Susan Cup (Baking Competition)	
Dick Callum Cup (Quiz)	
Chess Tournament	
Prospecting for edible Gold (Treasure Hunt)	
Being Swallows & Amazons/on-site activities	
AGM & Members' Forum	
Talks: (Thurs) (Fri) (Sat)	
Guided Walk (6miles/10KM/3-4 hours)	

## Accommodation

Meals are included in Main House accommodation.

Further details of menu requirements and any special dietary requirements for your party, with names of those to which they apply, will be requested approximately 2 months prior to the event.

Full Board	PPN	Number	Total Nights	Total
Adult	£102			£
Junior (12-17y)	£50			£
Junior (6-11y)	£25			£
Junior (0-5y)	free			£

## Rooms

Rooms will be allocated on a first-come, first-served basis. Juniors, if in a separate room, will be in proximity to their adult/s. Full weekend bookings will be given priority. The ground floor rooms are intended for those with specific needs.

\*Sole occupancy of a twin room requires a surcharge of £5 pppn

\*Please note preferred room number/type/floor/colour zone \* See Rooms map

Preference 1	
Preference 2	
Camping interest?	Yes/No

# Twenty years of SIGNALLING to TARS

*Peter Willis* looks back

It was towards the end of the 2003 IAGM (at the Royal Hospital School, Suffolk as it happens) that I was borne down upon by TARS President Norman Willis (no relation) and Chairman Geraint Lewis.

They had a proposition for me. TARS publications were in need of ‘sorting out’; they wanted to set up a ‘President’s Working Party’: would I head it up?

I was not sure why they picked on me – a stint as editor of Southern Region’s ‘Outposts’ and a few articles in *Mixed Moss* seemed to be my only qualifications.

At that time something akin to civil war had broken out between the TARS Board and ‘Tarpaulin’, the literary, resources and publications committee, which was thought to have “too much power”. The fact that I had no connection with either body might explain why I’d been chosen.

Tarpaulin had also upset the Regions by effectively reducing the annual number of Regional newsletters from three to two, in order to double the yearly number of *Mixed Moss* editions.

Bit of history: *Mixed Moss* is TARS’ oldest publication, started within a year of the society’s formation as its ‘literary magazine’, very much as it is today, though with a few ‘housekeeping’ chores tucked in. As the society grew, other people had started other publications: *Despatches* as the prospectus for the IAGM, *Ship’s Log* reporting back on it. All Regions had their own newsletters, and in 1994 a decision had been taken to bind them all together for national sharing. This, with a minimal addition of material such as Board reports, was titled *Signals*, published three times a year, and it was this that Tarpaulin had proposed be reduced to two.

No-one else on the Working Party – Jim Andrews, Sheila Campbell and Heidi Elks – had any connection with any of the factions, hence its being answerable to the President. Email was just becoming a ‘thing’ about then and we used it to consult widely among the members.

We came up with two main recommendations: that Tarpaulin be dissolved, with its remit split between two newly-formed committees, ‘Literary and Resources’ and ‘Publications’. And that an enlarged *Signals*, thrice-yearly would become a

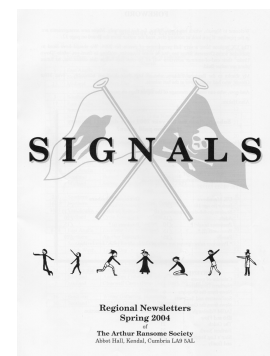
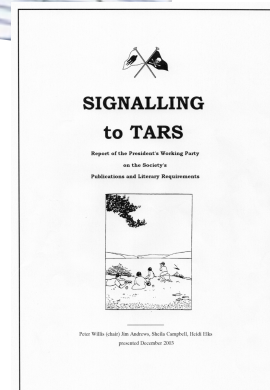
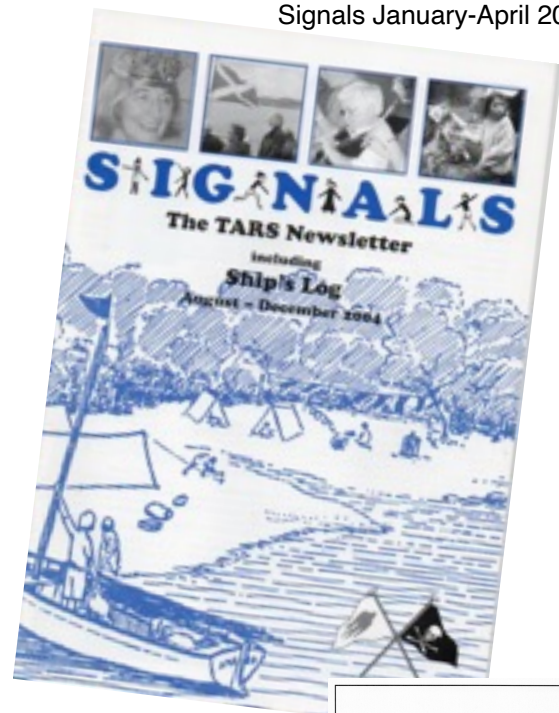
magazine in its own right, “reflecting the fullest possible range of TARS activities and experiences”. It would continue to carry the Regional Newsletters, and incorporate both *Despatches* and *Ship’s Log*, but in addition carry pretty well any material of interest to members.

At the time I had in mind particularly those members, probably the vast majority, who don’t see themselves as attached to a specific geographic region but might be interested at a general level in the Library, Amazon Publications, discussion of issues, book reviews, forthcoming national events, all on a more frequent and topical level than afforded by *Mixed Moss*, which would retain its status as the literary journal with “articles of substance”.

The Working Party’s report, which ran to over 20 pages, with 10 chapters and seven appendices, was presented to the Board at its meeting in Bristol in January 2004, and immediately accepted in full.

The first new-style *Signals*, with a new illustrated cover, its masthead featuring its name in the distinctive, blobby Cooper Black font, and 48 pages, came out in August 2004. It seems I co-edited it, along with Malcolm Morrison, to set the tone.

**In the next *Signals*, a regular feature, “20 Years Ago” starting with the August 2004 issue, will be giving a flavour of what we were up to then.**







# Ice and Fire

**Winter Holiday and Pigeon Post** with their opposite extremes of weather, have much more in common than might be expected, as *Lesley Wareing* discovers



I've come to think of *Winter Holiday* and *Pigeon Post* as a pair of bookends. Not identical but complementary. Made out of similar wood but carved with different patterns.

Both books feature extreme weather. They also both feature the Swallows, the Amazons and the Ds (the only other book to do so is *Great Northern*).

Mrs Blackett is the sole "responsible parent" in both books (Captain Flint makes a relatively late appearance in each) and she is greatly distracted in each: by Nancy's mumps in the first and by house renovations in the second. This gives the children even more freedom than in the earlier books.

Both books also feature local farmers: the kindly and supportive Dixons and Jacksons in WH and the much spikier Mrs Tyson in PP.

Sailing isn't significant in either book; there is none at all in WH (excluding Dick's ill-fated ice-yacht) and just a short sail across the lake at the start of PP.

On land, both books feature relatively ordinary forms of transport, of which the children make practical use but also manage to weave into their make-believe: sledges are pulled by human dog teams in the polar exploration of WH and bicycles are transformed into dromedaries by the gold prospectors in PP.

There are obvious differences. But several of these are almost mirror images. The prolonged cold with snow and ice in one case and the opposite extreme of intense heat and sustained drought in the other. Deep mid-winter in WH; high summer in PP.

Describing the weather also gives Ransome a chance to showcase his writing skills: the descriptions of snow in WH and of the wildfire in PP are superb examples of really beautiful prose which is almost poetic.

The biggest difference is that by the time we get to PP – by way of *Coot Club* – we are as familiar with the Ds as we are with the S&As. At the start of WH, the Ds are strangers. Each time I read the beginning of WH, I am impressed anew by the way Ransome boldly shifts the point of view away from the S&As - with whom we have become so familiar and invested – to these two entirely new children, the Ds, through whom we readers are reintroduced to

"our" familiar S&As. It is as though we are standing alongside Dick and Dot observing our beloved S&As through the eyes of these two newbies as though from a distance. This is a masterstroke.

However, the opening of PP also focuses on just two of the children, away from the rest of the gang, this time Titty and Roger. Arthur Ransome once wrote "great books are not written FOR anyone, they are overheard." When reading the opening chapters of WH and PP I feel I am standing there on the lake shore not far from Dick and Dot or sitting in the same railway

carriage as Titty and Roger – seeing and hearing what each pair is doing and saying. So we are led gently into each book before the other characters arrive (with a crash in the case of Nancy) and the pace of the action increases and intensifies.

## Dark at teatime

Ransome uses the (very different) extremes of weather in both books in a similar way – to both enable and restrict the children's activities. In WH we are introduced to the familiar Lake District in a completely new guise. January days in the far north of England are very short. As Nancy says: "Dark at teatime and sleeping indoors: nothing ever happens in winter." But of course it does! These children



don't sit at home saying "I'm soooo bored, mum!" They're versatile and imaginative enough to think up all sorts of different new adventures that demand new qualities and skills. Importantly, the weather conditions influence the way in which the two new characters, Dick and Dorothea, are assimilated. Their ice-skating prowess earns them respect and acceptance into the established group. Later on, Dick and Dot bravely but foolishly struggle up the frozen lake towards the North Pole and their success in being the first to reach it earns them – once the initial misunderstanding has been ironed out – great kudos.

### Courage - and rashness

We can admire their courage and determination but also lament their naivety and rashness. They could so easily have died of hypothermia in the blizzard and fearsome cold. (Yes, yes, I *know* they didn't but I still worry that they will at each fresh reading.) Dick can't see through his glasses as they are careering out of control on their improvised ice yacht; he loses his glove in the icy cold and risks frostbite, then he and Dot crash and tumble off the sledge into deep snow.

I am acutely anxious for their survival every time I read this passage. Dorothea is terrified (so am I!) but Dick's calm and logical use of the rope saves them. He displays similar qualities in PP when the roof of the tunnel into the mine collapses and everyone else panics.

In PP the dangers that come with the unusually tinder-dry countryside and the consequent lack of a good freshwater supply for camping seem sure to limit what the children can do and where they can go. However the difficult conditions cause them to develop endurance and resilience. They show initiative and ingenuity and also great courage.

Nancy realises that the homing pigeons can be used to send daily reports back to Beckfoot but it's Dick's ingenious mind and inventive technical skills that make it possible in practice. Everyone else has utter faith in him to come up with the goods. Which he does, of course, determinedly and methodically.

The success of the prospecting adventure on which they've all set their hearts depends on a supply of clean fresh water to allow them to camp in the right location. Titty is shaken and terrified by the water-divining experiment but she finds the courage to overcome her fears. Bravery, intuition and something almost other-worldly save the day. It adds

an extra depth and dimension to the story. I find it very moving each time I read it. These two vital contributions – from Dick and Titty – are well contrasted but complementary. A beautiful balance.

Through such incidents Ransome illustrates both individual characters and the relationships between them all. The water-divining episode shows how sympathetic and protective Susan and John are to their younger sibling; they are determined not to put her under any pressure or make her feel guilty.

Even Nancy understands this without having to be told and manages to restrain her normal gung-ho enthusiasm for bossing people about in pursuit of something dear to her heart. It's a lovely example of how these children have grown to understand, respect and support one another. This pair of books really develops the characters and relationships.

In both books the children make ingenious use of signals. Contemporary readers often like to speculate how differently events in the SA books would work out today when the children would all have mobile phones. I'm not so sure. For one thing, mobile phone signal coverage in the Lake District is still patchy

and cannot absolutely be relied upon. For another, those children weren't even very good at managing their torch batteries so I'm pretty sure their mobile phones would pretty soon be useless and unavailable for use just when a crisis occurred. Plus, the scope for miscommunication would be just as great with missed calls and texts. But of course even in the 1930s, when few houses had landline telephones and few families had cars, the children still found ways of communicating. Brilliant and ingenious ones. Semaphore, Morse code, and flags (and the long-suffering

doctor) in WH; carrier pigeons in PP. Nancy's cryptic semaphore diagrams were works of genius.



### Ending with a feast

As for all those misunderstandings, miscommunications and near disasters, well there is an opportunity at the end of each book for all confusion to be explained away and for all discord to be resolved back into harmony. Each book ends with a splendid feast of celebration. Tales are told, glories are lauded. Old friendships are reaffirmed and strengthened, new ones are cemented. Molly and Jim are present at both events, reunited with their errant charges as the return to "normal" life looms. All is well. Three million cheers!

## Who's Lesley Wareing?

*The Editor writes: Lesley Wareing first popped up in Signals with a modest little piece about marmalade, just in time for the 2022 Oxford Literary Weekend. Since then, she has contributed long, thoughtful articles on Dorothea, Great Northern, and, in this issue, the similarities between Winter Holiday and Pigeon Post. At the same time she has become an active contributor to the Arthur Ransome Group's Facebook site, posting similarly thoughtful essays which have engendered long threads of discussion with typically 50-90-plus contributions. I invited (or badgered) her to compose her own profile and here it is.*

Born and raised in Pinner, Middlesex until the age of 16, Lesley then lived in 11 different places over the next 15 years before (thankfully) coming to rest in north Lancashire where she still lives with her husband, about 18 miles south of Strickland Junction and just a 40 minute drive from Wild Cat Island. Until she retired about seven years ago, Lesley was Academic Registrar at Lancaster University where she worked for 30 years.

She was an avid reader by the age of four (when her irritated older brother said "please stop reading out loud, Les, and read in your head!").

In a televisionless home, she spent her 1960s childhood gobbling up as much classic and pulp children's literature as she could get hold of. She loathed Noddy and also Janet and John but loved Alison Uttley's Little Grey Rabbit books (but not Beatrix Potter), the Rev W Awdry's railway series, E. Nesbit, John Masefield, Malcolm Saville, Enid Blyton, Arthur Ransome, Noel Streatfield, Frances Hodgson Burnett and Rosemary Sutcliffe.

She read Tolkien's *Lord of the Rings* whilst she should have been revising for O-levels and *War and Peace* whilst supposedly revising for A-levels.

She studied English Language and Literature at university and, contrary to current thinking, found the subject to be a most useful preparation for getting through life – personally and professionally. Whatever life throws at you, someone has written about it somewhere, sometime and there is an enormous reservoir of wisdom and comfort.

Although lucky enough to have enjoyed the affection and support of family, friends and work colleagues, Lesley has also greatly appreciated the companionship of the fictional characters whose acquaintance she has made over the years.

When younger and fitter she played competitive sport and did a lot of running, cross-country skiing and fell walking. She has climbed a lot of minor Lake District peaks and all the major ones

(including Kanchenjunga three times) and she played tennis to a good standard until four years ago. All this probably explains her recent need for hip replacement surgery. Whilst recovering from it this summer, Lesley has been working her way through a re-read of Forster, Conrad and Woolf, leavened by John Buchan's "penny dreadfuls", and all of Dorothy L Sayers' Lord Peter Wimsey stories.

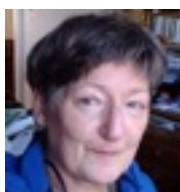
As the daughter of parents who grew up in the shadow of the First World War and whose young adult lives were shaped by the Second, Lesley has always been especially interested in the inter-war years and the fiction written during that time.

As an adult she has re-read nearly all the children's fiction she enjoyed as a child along with more recently published works such as those by Alan Garner, Susan Cooper and Ursula le Guin ("but NOT Harry Potter! No, no, no!").

She loves the way literature can entertain enthuse and inspire children, often influencing them for life. Arthur Ransome's books seem to do this particularly well. She returned to *Swallows*

and *Amazons* for comfort and encouragement during the first Covid-19 lockdown in 2020. With time and energy to read and think, she found an even greater appreciation for Ransome's skill and talent. He might have been writing about children and (probably) for children but his work has an appeal and a value that reaches far beyond the world of children – as demonstrated by the TARS membership and the varied and enthusiastic discussions which take place on the Arthur Ransome Group on Facebook.

Lesley greatly enjoys reading other people's comments and ideas about Arthur Ransome's work and loves trying to pull together her own thoughts in writing in order to share them with others who appreciate the great man's creations.



**AR: "An appeal and a value that reaches far beyond the world of children"**



# TARS Regional Gateway

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<i>Committee</i>	Diana Dicker, Norah Fawcett, Diana Wright		

# Southern Region



What has been happening in the Region?

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



Not even the threat of Storm Antoni can put off dedicated TARS campers and the summer camp went ahead as planned. Tucked in a sheltered corner of the field, with a communal shelter tent to cook and sit under, the weather was only a minor hindrance. Those who arrived in good time on Friday, managed some sailing on the quiet waters of the Bosham Channel. Saturday was a little more challenging with the wind alternating between squalls and calm, but still there were craft on the water, crewed by the more experienced sailors

Magnus Smith dropped in for a day visit!



Sunday dawned bright, sunny and breezy, perfect weather to get tents and wetsuits dry whilst enjoying a leisurely breakfast and chat before packing up to head home.

This quiet site is open to camper vans as well as tents and there are launch facilities, toilets and showers at the Activity Centre across the road. The 2024 camp is already in the diary at Cobnor (see below), so why not come along and join the fun. For non-sailors there are walks along the harbour and plenty of space for games. Why not build this into a longer trip and move on to visit some of the beaches along the coast, the cathedral city of Chichester or the Historic Dockyards in Portsmouth?

### Camping dates to put in the diary:

#### Spring camp: Etherley Farm, Ockley, Surrey Friday 3<sup>rd</sup> to Monday 6<sup>th</sup> May 2024

A new spring camp venue for Southern Region on the edge of the Surrey Hills. The site is inland, so, there will be no water-based activities, instead we will be concentrating on camping and bushcraft skills. If you've never tried them before, you can experiment with camp-cooking, weather reading skills, natural navigation, bird/nature observation, semaphore, water-dowsing and even star gazing, clear skies permitting. Learn from others and share your own skills and lore. There will also be an opportunity for an expedition to Leith Hill, the highest point in our region, which is only 2 miles away.

You can check out the campsite at [www.etherleyfarm.co.uk/camping](http://www.etherleyfarm.co.uk/camping). If you are interested and would like to book for 2 or 3 nights, please contact Iain or Rosemary.

#### Summer camp: Cobnor, Chichester Harbour 9<sup>th</sup> to 11<sup>th</sup> August 2024

## Birthday Lunch: Saturday January 20<sup>th</sup> at The Barn, in Tunbridge Wells

**Southern region members should have already received the menu and booking information, so this is a reminder that orders need to be sent to the Secretary by Friday 5<sup>th</sup> January at the latest. If you cannot locate the information, please email or phone the secretary [rjbealtars@gmail.com](mailto:rjbealtars@gmail.com) or 01243 605889)**

In the past, the lunches have tended to be on the west side of the region, or in London so we are hoping that members on the east of the region will support this foray into their local area and enjoy meeting up with fellow TARS.

### Autumn gathering at Guildford: Morse again

This event was also overshadowed by the threat of bad weather in the wet and windy build up to storm Ciarán but a good number gathered on Saturday 28<sup>th</sup> October at a very pleasant church hall in Guildford for an afternoon centred on communication.

Our speaker, Joe, told us something of his life growing up in Ireland and how he became interested in radio, so much so that the combination of this interest and a desire to travel, led to him joining the Royal Navy in the early 1960s.

He chose signals and specialised in electronic communication, which was a developing field, and from there volunteered for decoding work and was selected for an intensive course in Russian.

He told of trips to West Berlin, where it was easier to practise listening in to Russian being spoken, time spent in submarines sleeping on makeshift beds on torpedo racks and time on trawlers up towards the Arctic Circle. He was non-committal about what was actually being done by the supernumerary crew members on these trips, but one could hazard a guess.

Joe finished by talking about how Morse Code is being used again, especially by amateur radio enthusiasts, as it is easier to send a clear message with it than talking over poor connections. The fact that a laptop can be used to translate to and from Morse, makes it far more accessible.



The meeting then broke for refreshments and the promised cake. There were practical activities for those who wanted them, such as putting together a circuit for a simple Morse light and sending messages. Others engaged Joe in further conversation about the collection of Morse keys he had brought, and listened to Morse transmissions that he was able to tune into on his radio equipment. There was also a lot of verbal



communication as old friends caught up with news. It was an interesting and very sociable afternoon.





## IN OUR HAPPY VALLEY

Camping in 'Swallowdale' was, as it has been on previous occasions, a thoroughly enjoyable weekend, however this time felt a little different. For a start we pitched our tents in a different spot, amid the fruitery rather than on the edge of the vegetable plots. This was a very pleasant and quiet area.

The other reason for it being different was that, sadly, there were no Juniors there to join the fun, and we were only a rather small group. This meant that instead of enjoying a devious wide game on Saturday afternoon, we set out instead for a walk. The original plan to conquer the summit of Win Hill had to be abandoned due to somewhat inclement weather (you couldn't see the summit), but we enjoyed a stroll along a former railway line up to Ladybower Reservoir and across the dam. From there we walked up hill to a viewpoint from which we could look down on the valley and then took a steep path down to Bamford. From here we followed a path to the mill, crossed the river and rejoined the railway track to take us back to the car at the starting point.

Otherwise we followed a familiar routine, starting with building a fire and baking potatoes to enjoy with cheese and baked beans. After this we then baked bananas, split along the top and filled with chocolate chips. Delicious.

We had all brought our own breakfast for Saturday morning, but this was boosted by Vicky bringing up still-warm pain-au-chocolat from home which went down very well and gave us a nice warm start to our journey into Hathersage for a swim in the outdoor pool. We didn't worry about the rain as it is hard to get any wetter than in a swimming pool. After swimming we repaired to an excellent café above an outdoor shop to fill our tummies with a hot lunch before the walk.

On returning to Swallowdale we cooked our suppers individually, but then used the fire to bake apples in a tin, just as Susan did.

Many thanks to Huw and Vicky for a lovely weekend.

**Jane Wilson**



# EXPLORING OXFORD

A group of 18 Midland TARS members descended on Oxford on a beautiful September day. We started off with a punting adventure (except for poor Margaret whose train and bus journeys made her late) before exploring the Museum of Natural History. Here are a couple of accounts of the day:



We took a very long road trip (during which I finished both *Nightstorm and the Grand Slam* and *Victory and the All-stars Academy* by Stacy Gregg) followed by a short bus ride in the top of a double-decker bus, then by a short 15-minute walk to the River Cherwell which flowed a lot more gently than I thought it would! I (along with Rebekah) made miniature boats out of leaves (usually willow or maple leaves (they floated best)); the willows looked exactly like miniature punts or gondolas! Our punters seemed experts, others on other boats definitely did not!

On exploring the Museum of Natural History in Oxford, I discovered a strange-looking Japanese spider crab, bigger than me! The Hambleton museum-trail quiz I found enjoyable because it encouraged me to look around the museum more than I probably would have done, more closely. I scored 37/40 in my quiz, not bad especially considering how busy it was! (I also need to catch up on my AR reading!)

On reflection, a fun but long, tiring day out in Oxford with friends.

**Esme Blue**



After a picnic lunch, we made our way to the Museum of Natural History. First I was wowed by the building but we soon set off in pairs around the fascinating displays to answer a quiz identifying various Ransome related species and working out in which book each was mentioned (for example realising that the pig-tailed monkey is of course most associated with Missee Lee but could have been a reference to Dorothea, and getting a real sense that, like a young Peter Duck, I too, would have hidden up a tree from the crabs on the island!). Then part two was a quiz for explorers in the Pitt Rivers museum which seemed to have been tidied up a bit since the last time I visited but is no less crowded with objects from any part of the world anyone could care to mention. It was a fascinating treasure hunt around sledges, boats, bows and arrows, fishing rods, totems, dragons... A final totting up of the score over a well-earned cup of tea in the café saw Paul and I with the highest score except for a difference of opinion over one answer. I ended up winning and the prize Dodo now sits in a place of honour. Thank you to the whole Hambleton family for another wonderful visit to Oxford.

**Sarah Samuel**



## RAINED OFF

Sadly the message received from the Centaura Field Bowmen on the evening before our planned archery event in October was 'no go'. Flooding in the wake of Storm Babet meant that they could not even get to the site to check it. They have kindly agreed a date in March when hopefully the weather will be kinder. See the next page for details.



# FORTHCOMING EVENTS IN MIDLAND REGION

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



## AGM, JUNIOR PARLEY AND GEOLOGY

Saturday 20 January

The venue for the Midland Region AGM 2024 will be the Friends Meeting House, 930 Bristol Road, Selly Oak, Birmingham B29 6NB. Starting promptly at 11.30 there will be a brief formal meeting for adults while Juniors can have fun parleying about ideas for future Ransome-inspired activities while busy using biscuits and melted chocolate to create an edible igloo with which we can celebrate his birthday after lunch. There may also be time for them to plan an imaginary museum.

Please bring along some food for a 'bring and share' lunch following the meetings. After demolishing food and the 'cake' there will be the opportunity to brush up on your knowledge of geology, ready to assist Dick, at the Lapworth Museum of Geology which is a 10-minute drive or 25-minute walk away on the campus of the University of Birmingham.

While not essential, it is always helpful to know roughly how many people to expect, so if possible please indicate your intention of being there to Paul Green on 01654 791256 / 07563962496 or by e-mail at paul-midstars@gmx.co.uk



## RATTLETRAPS-ON-THE-WATER

Saturday 24 February

Pay a visit to Bourton-on-the-Water in the Cotswolds, meet at 11am for a walk and quiz around the village followed by lunch (bring a picnic or make use of one of the many cafés in the village), then on to The Cotswold Motoring Museum, The Old Mill, Sherborne Street, Bourton-on-the-Water GL54 2BY, voted one of the best motor museums in the country by the real motor enthusiasts. We don't know whether we will find a real 'Rattletrap', but you never can tell what might be hidden under the boxes in the corner! Prices for 2023 £7.50 adult and £5.25 for Juniors. Midland Region will pay £5 per Junior towards the cost of the museum. For further information or the register your intention of being there please get in touch with David Hambleton on 01865 390124 or by e-mail at david\_hambleton@hotmail.com

## AMAZON ARCHERY

Saturday 16 March

Arrive in Aston on Trent, Derbyshire (Map Ref SK413304) from 10.30 ready for an 11am start. Get your eye in with target practice in the butts in the morning. After lunch shoot the targets on a woodland trail - no animals or people hurt - under the careful supervision of the Centaura Field Bowmen. Bring a packed lunch, hot drinks will be available.

Cost: Adults £10.00, Under 16s £5. (Midland Juniors paid for by the Region). Numbers limited so get your booking in fast to Paul Green - e-mail paul-midstars@gmx.co.uk or telephone 01654 791256 / 07563962496.



## ANOTHER AUTHOR

Saturday 13 April

Roald Dahl's stories may be very different to those told by Ransome but they both had varied and exciting lives before they began to use those experiences to write books for children. Pay a visit to The Roald Dahl Museum and Story Centre in Great Missenden, Buckinghamshire to see the galleries 'Boy' about Dahl's childhood and 'Solo' about his RAF career and learn how these times inspired his writing. Then progress to the Story Centre for inspiration from Dahl and other authors for your own creative writing.

Cost will be approximately £9 a head (2024 prices not yet set) but Midland Region will pay £5 towards the entry of each Midland Junior. For more information please contact Jane Wilson on jane.pippinfort@googlemail.com or 01933 223672.

If you would be interested in adding a swim to the day (at a heated outdoor pool) please let Jane know and we can work out how to fit it in. She will certainly be happy to join you.



## BLACK COUNTRY MUSEUM

Saturday 11 May

Leave the 21st century behind and explore sights, sounds, scents and tastes of the past in the Black Country Museum, Discovery Way, Dudley DY1 4AL. The museum has 19th century ironworks, foundries and forges plus recreated shops, houses and industrial workshops. See 1850s mining, 1912 school rooms, 1920s cinema, 1930s traditional fish and chips, 1940s confectionery, traditional street games, ride a heritage vehicle, and more. Historical characters in period dress will welcome you.

Costs are adults £22.95, 3-15 years £11.45, 65+ £20.95 or family £68 but all tickets last for a whole year and Midland Region will pay £5 towards entry for Midland Juniors. If you would like to come please can you book yourself in online at <https://tickets.bclm.com> and let Jules Blue know so we can all meet up. E-mail julesbluerachel@btinternet.com



Please send copy for the next issue of *The Gulch* to [jane.pippinfort@googlemail.com](mailto:jane.pippinfort@googlemail.com) by 15 February

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



Adventure Event



Nautical Event



Discovery Event



Titty's Challenge  
(Able Seaman Log Book)



Susan's Challenge  
(Mate Log Book)



John's Challenge  
(Captain Log Book)



# EBB & FLOW

## *The Eastern Pages*



BAWDSEY RADAR STATION  
Bawdsey, Suffolk  
9<sup>th</sup> August 2023

Six Tars (The Big Six) arrived at the Bawdsey Radar Station's car park for a visit to the world's first Radar installation built, thankfully, just before the outbreak WW2, enabling the tracking of enemy aircraft far out over the English Channel.

The Air Ministry had been concerned that, with the rapid development of aircraft during WW1 that attacks on Britain by air was possible. When around 1930 war with Germany seemed inevitable something had to be done. The Ministry at first envisaged a need for an 'ultimate defence weapon'. The Ministry even sponsored an experiment to kill a sheep at 100 yards by using a 'death ray', asking Robert Watson Watt, Superintendent of the Radio Research Station in Slough whether this was feasible (no sheep were actually harmed in the experiment as the answer was 'no it wasn't'). Watt's assistant Arnold 'Skip' Wilkins had heard from Post Office engineers dealing with short wave communications had noticed interference in their equipment when aircraft flew too close. Wilkins considered this might be used somehow for detecting approaching aircraft.

Research began early in 1935, and by late 1939 the system was ready and the Bawdsey Radar Transmitter Block was built with four huge transmitter towers constructed of bolted galvanised steel girders 358 feet high. A separate Receiver Block was built close by at Bawdsey Manor with an additional four receiver towers of equal size. Sadly, all have been demolished save one that has been replaced by a smaller radio tower (still impressibly tall) operated by the Marine and Coastal Agency.

The Radar Station building (now a museum) is smaller than I had expected and although the original equipment was of course removed, the original rooms and layout remain almost the same. The entrance was through an airlock consisting of two wooden rubber sealed doors against gas attack in the southern wall with an emergency exit (now the museum entrance at the eastern end) with the interior being divided into the main transmitter room, ventilation plant, private branch exchange and toilet.

There is a lot of historical information and hands-on things to do for grownups and youngsters alike plus the inevitable gift shop.

There is only a very tentative connection to Arthur Ransome, told to me by Peter Willis. On page 314 of *WDMTGTS*; *Very soon after the Cork lightship...the tall wireless masts at Bawdsey were showing, and a chimney behind Harwich, and then the cliff just north of Felixstowe*. On the right hand edge of the picture on page 328, hardly recognisable, are a few minute strokes of the pen that are the wireless masts of Bawdsey shortly to become the Radar Station. Arthur must have noticed the towers being erected during one of his voyages in the area. The book must have been written around 1936 as it was first published in November 1937, around the time the Radar towers were being erected and the Station came on line.

After our visit to the museum we ambled off to the nearby, Boathouse Cafe, close to the River Deben shoreline for a bite to eat. A very interesting and pleasant day out.



RW.

## THE HANSON COLLECTION 8<sup>th</sup> September 2023

A good turnout of ten Tars arrived at the Cambridge University Library to view some 20 old and fascinating books in the Hanson Collection. Herbert Hanson, Secretary and later President of the Cruising Association was mainly responsible for amassing the collection. When many of the books became too valuable to keep, the Cruising Association sold some 600 of the most valuable books to the Cambridge University Library. The Library paid £750,000 for the books in the 1980s - less than their market value, though enough money to allow the Cruising Association to build their present headquarters at Limehouse Basin but with the pledge that the collection would be kept together, and Cruising Association members and their friends could always have access to them. Herbert Hanson was a great friend of Arthur Ransome who was the Honorary Port Representative for Riga, when Arthur and Evgenia lived there



The books on display were published between the 17<sup>th</sup> to 19<sup>th</sup> Centuries, One of the oldest being Sir Walter Raleigh's, *History of the World*, published in 1697. Other later works included Sir John Ross' *North West Passage*, Charles Darwin's *The Voyage of the Beagle*, and seventeen other fascinating volumes on exploration, nature, or navigation, all written by the foremost people of their day.

After lunch in the library's canteen, we set off on an interesting tour of Cambridge's universities with a friend of Nicholas Hinde's, Tim Pearce Higgins, a retired Cambridge



Guide. We only had time to see the outside of the colleges, many of which seemed to be under repair. We did see the tree thought to be grafted from Isaac Newton's original famous apple tree. The event was hosted by Ted Evans. All in all, a very educational day, and well worth the event.

LITERARY HALF DAY  
Bury St Edmunds  
14<sup>th</sup> October 2023

Our last event of the year was our bi-annual Half Literary day, where Ted Alexander was warmly welcomed to give his illustrated talk on, 'Ransome in Russia'. A fascinating talk on when he visited St Petersburg in Arthur's footsteps with his friend, interpreter and co author of his book, Tatiana Verizhnikova who took him around the city and into various buildings including rooms where Trotsky and Evgenia worked and places where she and Arthur met. Ted brought along a huge amount of books, photos and maps of the area for us to browse.



After the talk and a break for lunch we sat around in a circle and listening to Ted's stories of Arthur's family, including those in Australia. Much of which was new to everyone. Yet another excellent day out.

RW.

## EASTERN REGION PROGRAMME

**JANUARY 20<sup>th</sup> 2024 (Saturday): AR's Birthday Lunch and AGM.** *Butt & Oyster*, Pin Mill, Gather 11.30 am for 12.15 pm Lunch followed by Speaker or Film Show.  
Book for lunch with Nicholas Hinde [sec.east@arthur-ransome.org](mailto:sec.east@arthur-ransome.org) 01371 820054.

**EVENTS in PLANNING 2024:** Train ride on North Norfolk Railway.  
Day at the Broads Museum with steam boat trip.  
Guided tour of Harwich. DTBA.



# Northern Despatches

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

## Northern Region Events for 2024

**Jan 27<sup>th</sup> 2024 Birthday Party** celebrating The Big Six. Detecting, Ducks, Dromedaries and Ducking out of Sight abilities welcome.

Trying out a new venue in the south of our region to allow some more members to attend – so we shall gather at **The Scout Hall, Church St, Weaverham, Cheshire CW8 3NJ from 10.30**. Bring and Share lunch, Birthday cake and fun.

**Northern Region AGM** will be on **Sat March 16<sup>th</sup> Via Zoom** as it enables members from the farthest part of the region to attend. Zoom link will be sent in due course

A visit to **Nent Head Mine and to Alston** is planned for **mid May** when we shall be able to go into the mine and visit the Heritage Railway. **Date to be confirmed**

## Books to School and a Library

*from Veronica Priest*

During the summer two Junior TARS, Adam and Katy (my grandchildren) enjoyed helping me to present a set of books to our local library. The Librarian thanked us very much and sent this email: *'Thank you once again for the donations of Arthur Ransome books on behalf of The Arthur Ransome Society. They are much appreciated by the Library.'*



On another occasion, Adam, Katy and I had a great time presenting another set to their local Primary School. All the children were gathered together and listened while 7-year-old Katy told them all about being a Junior member of TARS, explaining the symbols on the burgee and saying what fun she and Adam had going sailing on Coniston Water with Helen Lewis in *Peggy Blackett* and playing on their own Wild Cat Island (which is in the middle of a field on their farm!!) The school librarians accepted the books from us and have sent TARS a 'thank you' saying how they plan to use them in their 'star books' project during this school year



## Northern Despatches page 2

# Holly Howe at Bank Ground

## with a walk to Tilberthwaite by Elizabeth Williams

Very sadly, Hoathwaite, our last year's campsite, has been closed by the National Trust, but Midland Region, led by Paul Green, managed to secure TARS a week camping at the iconic spot of Bank Ground Farm (in the Northern Region on Coniston (Holly Howe in the books).

### On soggy ground

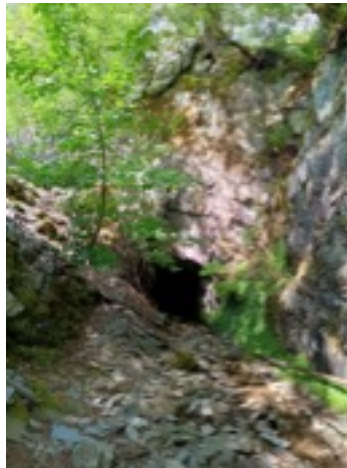
Due to the appalling weather the week before, and the soggy state of the ground, plans had to be changed at the very last minute and we adjusted to camping on a very narrow strip of land next to the lake. On the plus side, the views over Coniston were amazing and we still had the jetty to launch boats!

With the camp is in our region we had several members there, who we hope to see at regional events in future. Helen Lewis took campers out in *Peggy Blackett*, and we had a super evening with her, all singing shanties around the camp fire.

### Back problems (please note)

I had back problems, which I made sure that everyone knew about, but I was lucky, and managed really well. My tent made it obvious that this was its last camp and has now been honourably retired. It is in my shed awaiting disposal.

A highlight of my week was a walk with Krysia and Nina at Tilberthwaite. Krysia had not been well, so, fortunately for me, she decided to do a short walk which she had previously done in June.



### Slater Bob's?

We drove up the track towards Tilberthwaite and parked at the car park next to the mine. Surely this is Slater Bob's? We walked into the entrance of the adit (you can tell I know about mines). There were lots of flies, which aren't mentioned in the books. There were lots of information boards for natives. Continuing up the track past Low Tilberthwaite and High Tilberthwaite we passed several quarries, continuing through Sawrey's Wood to the amazing Cathedral Cave. It was most impressive when we were there, but not as spectacular as the photograph, which Krysia took in June.

We then crossed Slater Bridge to Little Langdale and a welcome drink and lunch at the Three Shires. We retraced our steps..I only needed one moaning back stop. I was quite proud of myself.

### Collingwood's grave

As we drove back Nina said that she would like to visit WG Collingwood's grave. I remained in the car as my back hurt ( did I mention that?). I thought they were gone rather a while, but they returned ecstatic about the fact that they had met a lady at the graveside who turned out to be a Guzelian relative visiting the area and they chatted to her for several minutes.

I had a great week. I met some lovely members and renewed friendships. Thank you to everyone who contributed.

Photos: top, the adit, middle Cathedral Cave, bottom, the lunch stop



# Sou'westers and Seaboats

## News from the South-West Region

### CRUISING ON THE THAMES

On a glorious day in June we gathered at the Trout Inn near Lechlade, pleased to be joined by two Midland Tars, and made our way to St John's Lock to board the boat *'Inglesham'*.



During lockdown she had been converted from a diesel engine to electric, which gave more room and made for a very quiet and peaceful trip, with only the sound of the boat going through the water. At the end of a soothing hour the volunteer crew took us through the lock to enable us to disembark in the pub garden. This was a blessing, as the road we had crossed and walked along on the way to the lock (no pavements) was much busier than usual, due to the main road into Lechlade having been closed following someone carelessly driving through the bridge wall and into the river.

Lunch was taken by all but one of us at the pub, very nice it was too, and we then reconvened at Kelmscott Manor, once the home of William Morris and his family and descendants. The house was sparsely furnished, which was how he wanted it, but had many examples of his designs in wallpaper and soft furnishings, artefacts and biographical notes. It also had an interesting set of stairs. The day ended as TARS events usually do with tea and cakes, or ice cream, as it was pretty hot by then, and I think we were all glad of a ride in the shuttle buggy back to the car park. **Barbara**



### SPARKINSON INTERVIEWS 15<sup>TH</sup> JULY 2023

The SW TARS were kindly given permission to read the "Sparkinson" interviews over zoom by Brian Hopton and his fellow authors, Jill Goulder and SW member Paul Crisp.

We decided we had time to read three of the interviews and decided on Missee Lee, Captain Flint and Mary Walker. After a brilliant introduction from Paul Crisp, we started with Captain Flint, read by Paul with Arthur Herbertson as the interviewer. We then had Lindy Castell as Mary Walker, with Susan interviewing and finally Barbara Flower as Missee Lee.

The readings were excellent and enjoyed by all and we agreed to carry on with the other three interviews at a later date. **Susan**

Apologies to those who asked to have a recording of the interviews, a combination of technical issues, the vagaries of the postal system and car troubles (don't ask!), have meant that I haven't been able to put it on the website yet. With a bit of luck it may be there by the time you get this. **Barbara**

## Bring and Scoff Literary Day

Creech St. Michael Village Hall; Saturday, September 30<sup>th</sup>.

*“Outside there, on deck, nobody, not even Captain Flint, could take his eyes from Peter Duck’s kitbag. It was an ordinary canvas kitbag, but it had a large coat of arms painted on it. There was a shield divided into four quarters. In one were three ducks swimming on curly waves. In another was a Norfolk wherry under full sail. In the third were three flying fish, and in the fourth were three dolphins” Peter Duck.*

Heads were bowed and the table was sprinkled with pencils, crayons, tracing paper and template shields while the Sou’westers poured over heraldry books. From a simple *Ladybird* book to great tome of European royal heraldic symbols, kindly supplied by Liz and Paul Crisp, everyone sought inspiration to design their own shield to be transferred to a kitbag (actually cotton tote bags) in the manner of Peter Duck.

Some took inspiration from their own name, others stuck to TARS images, and the shield with over 900 images from English aristocracy suggested designs for everyone. Fresh from showing the newly renovated *Amazon* at the Southampton Boat Show, Diana Wright worked on a heraldic signature for the trusty little classic vessel.

There is something wonderful and meditative as people craft away at artwork interspersed with chatter: hot news from TARS; very interesting facts about heraldry; and general gossip, maritime and other. In the neighbouring room the DJ at a children’s birthday party kept a joyful atmosphere.



### .... and the ‘SCOFF’ bit

When I look back on my many years of TARSing, doing stuff is always important. But truly, at the heart of a TARS meeting is the “scoff” bit. Food. And the extensive range of foodstuffs brought to share from salad to strawberries, quiche to potato salad, and falafel to Scotch eggs provided a veritable feast complete with cake. Lots of cake.

Paul brought some of his immaculate needlework with impeccable cross-stitch of his drawings of boats and all things TARS to show us.

It was jolly good fun to hook up and catch up in the flesh as we are about to dive into the winter diary ahead of Zoom events. Check out our pages in *Signals* for information how to join our Zoom meetings. See you all there. **Diana D**



## 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) or look at the South West pages on the website for details.

**Saturday 20<sup>th</sup> January @ 4 pm** – SW AGM via Zoom + chat. The AGM doesn't take very long and you won't be roped into anything you don't want to be roped into! Zoom link below, and this and others will also be on the SW pages of the website.

Topic: TARS SW AGM Zoom Meeting

Time: Jan 20, 2024 03:45 PM London

Join Zoom Meeting

[https://us02web.zoom.us/j/87602406664?  
pwd=TnZlMTNvYWRYRkZycWorY1hFRUtZZz09](https://us02web.zoom.us/j/87602406664?pwd=TnZlMTNvYWRYRkZycWorY1hFRUtZZz09)

Meeting ID: 876 0240 6664

Passcode: 148871

**Sunday 28<sup>th</sup> January from noon** – Liz and Paul Crisp have kindly invited us to lunch to celebrate **AR's birthday** at their home near Okehampton. (If there is bad weather this can be more easily cancelled). Numbers are limited and as I write there are only 2 places left.

**Saturday 10<sup>th</sup> February @ 7 pm** – Alan Kennedy has kindly agreed to do another Zoom talk for us. I will put a synopsis on the website in due course.

Topic: Alan Kennedy Zoom Meeting

Time: Feb 10, 2024 06:45 PM London

Join Zoom Meeting

<https://us02web.zoom.us/j/82841162735?pwd=K0lHY0FJMEpzZ2F6TU9lQzBjaFU0UT09>

Meeting ID: 828 4116 2735

Passcode: 893329

**Saturday 23<sup>rd</sup> March meeting at 10.45 am** – we'll hope for good weather for a shortish **TARS trek, calling in at a small wetland reserve, just outside Castle Cary**. It will be on the flat apart from going over the bridge over the railway line. Castle Cary is mainline station on both the Paddington to Penzance route (east to west) and also the Bristol to Weymouth line (north to south) so you can be picked up from the station if necessary, (if the times work out and they are not on strike again!)

We are also discussing a trip to **Morwellham Quay**, a **canal boat trip from Bradford on Avon** and more **Sparkinson interviews** via Zoom.

## TARS Scotland News from the Gaels



### Carlyle Country Itinerary

On Saturday 9<sup>th</sup> September we had a well attended minibus tour around the museums and other haunts connected with **Thomas Carlyle**, including his Birthplace Museum in Ecclefechan and the museums in Annan and Dumfries. The museum in Ecclefechan, a house built by his father and brothers, was where he was born on 4<sup>th</sup> December 1795 and has been a museum since the month after his death in 1881. We visited the graveyard where he is buried a short walk from his birthplace. It was Carlyle's own wish to be buried there along with his parents, despite an offer of a place in Westminster Abbey. In the afternoon we visited Dumfries and the Curator at Dumfries Museum took time to let us see a display of artefacts they hold belonging to Thomas Carlyle.

There are a number of connections between Carlyle and Arthur Ransome. Carlyle's father, a stonemason, built The Hitchell, "a superior house of its class", where the family of Mr Church, steward of the Queensberry estates lived; Mrs Church was a Great Aunt of Arthur's hero and Collingwood connection, John Ruskin. Also on the Estate is Glenstuart, a home Lady Florence Dixie, aunt of Lord Alfred Douglas, who sued AR for libel in 1912 and lost!

From a TARS Scotland perspective, there was the added bonus on the upper floor of Dumfries Museum of a whole wall display of paintings and other materials associated with the Henderson family – the well known Scottish artists Nan Henderson and Chris J Ferguson.

Ecclefechan was home to other well known people of the day including the doctor who attended Napoleon on St Helena, Archibald Arnott. A local resident who came over to talk to us whilst we were at the Museum related a story of Dr Arnott bringing back a cutting of a weeping willow tree from St Helena that grew locally until the motorway was being built. Various cuttings were taken and there are now a number of trees grown from the original.

Our thanks to Winifred and Paul Wilson for arranging the Carlyle Country Itinerary on our behalf.

### **TARS Scotland AGM Birthday Lunch 2024 : Saturday 20<sup>th</sup> January 2024**

The **Slanj A Va** restaurant in Stirling, formerly the Kilted Kangaroo, is our new venue. There we will be able to eat in the restaurant and retire after lunch to their meeting room for our AGM.

TARS Scotland members should receive an email or letter with more details of the AGM and Birthday Lunch before Christmas.

Anyone else interested in attending, please contact our Secretary, Elsie Miller, by email.

# *All she asked was a (fairly)tall ship* *(and some wind!)*

*Having enjoyed the sailing barge trip at the 2022 IAGM, Naomi Hemingway wanted more – so she suggested a group sail in the next Signals. In the end she was the only one to sign up – so she went anyway, aboard Trinovante*



Hello, Fellow TARS!

Having failed miserably to write up my first TARS AGM, I am determined to make good by telling you all about my voyage on the *Wild Cat*!

Well, it wasn't really the *Wild Cat* but it was as close as I could find: the *Trinovante*, a three-masted schooner, owned by John Shores and Su Fawkes and offering trips of various lengths. The one I chose was from Tower Bridge, London, joining the ship at 4pm and leaving on the morning tide, heading to Harwich where we would arrive three days later.

I thought if I unexpectedly found I was seasick, really hated the lack of privacy, showers, etc, then four nights would be bearable. I could drive to Harwich and train into London in good time to join the ship. All within reasonable range (as opposed to Scotland, where many other voyages were based).



## **Anticipation... and disappointment**

It's hard to describe my anticipation of this holiday, I had so long wanted to do something like this and now it was planned! Then bitter disappointment set in as I started to watch the weather forecast. We wouldn't be getting the winds for sailing, the summer we hadn't had was going to appear at just the wrong time.

I consoled myself a little with the knowledge that every other member of the 'crew' were in the same family, and played in folk bands and we could expect a lot of music, sing-songs, and shanties.

And so it was, four beautiful sunset evenings after all, with two violins, guitar, flute and squeeze box, with truly musical people who played by ear,

had a vast repertoire, and sang brilliantly making the trip very memorable.

And as for the sailing? I'd realised it was a long way down the Thames (37 miles, in fact) and we'd probably motor that anyway. I hadn't expected a pilot to be a requirement (due to having paying passengers aboard). You all know about pilots from *We Didn't Mean to go to Sea* and ours had actually taken a day of annual leave to pick up this job, so rarely do they get to go on a tall ship.



There was very little other shipping about, which was a surprise – we put that down to it being a Saturday and the Thames not being good for pleasure craft.

The pilot hopped off at Gravesend and we motored on. I was absolutely delighted to be invited to take the helm. Following my experience last year on the Thames barge, I had been trying to work things out in my head when using a wheel – every other boat I've ever sailed having had a tiller. At the moment, this didn't matter too much as we were motoring so I could try and get the feel of the ship without worrying about the wind and sails. I'd never steered a compass course either, and there was a bit of practise at this even with plenty of landmarks around to head for.

*Continued overleaf >>>*



(*Tall ship, Continued...*) We dropped anchor that night near Leigh-on-Sea, the fairground ashore making a stunning backdrop as we ate another delicious meal freshly cooked by Su, sang songs, and crawled into our bunks in such a calm night that there was no sensation of being afloat whatsoever – as for every other night too, alas.

The next morning, it was a flat calm again. To make up for this, we got the anchor up winding the windlass by hand instead of using power (lots of shanties) and motored off again.

### A welcome call to hoist sail!

There were promises of wind once we'd come out of the Thames Estuary. Sitting out on the (fortunately substantial) bowsprit, I was noting boats beating in the opposite direction to ours. At last, a welcome call to come and help hoist sails went up!

The winds being so light, *Trinovante's* fishikker was set. This is a huge quadrilateral sail, a cross between a fisherman's topsail and a spinnaker, set between the main and fore masts. It's 1,000 sq ft, compared to her fore and mainsails and topsails which are 350 sq ft each. We also set her jib and fisherman's topsail.

And so at last, the engines were turned off. For the musicians, it was their first experience of the peace and beauty of using only the force of Nature. For me, it was still frustrating, as we made only about 3 knots, the tide nearing the turn at the time.

We anchored that night in the River Colne above Brightlingsea, near an old barge with lee boards.

As we ate breakfast the next day, there was a *proper* breeze! John (bravely, I thought) decided we'd sail off the anchorage, another neighbour being fairly close to windward threatening a collision if we novices messed it up.

We were hoisting the main sail for the first time, with its two halliards (being quadrilateral), two topping lifts, downhaul and various other things to do that don't need doing on a Mirror dinghy or small yacht. The hydraulics for the windlass were

employed this time, and Su supervised with a flurry of orders. All went well, and we sailed off almost like experts. The musicians were beginning to understand what I'd longed for. John took us away from the mooring and then asked if I wanted to helm! At last, I was living the dream.

Whilst other sails were set, I was allowed to steer for long enough to be beginning to feel for it and stop having to work things out in reverse. (If I'm completely honest, I was starting to ache!)

And then the wind dropped again anyway. So it was back to sail changes and the light air sails were hoisted again. Su had pointed out that trying to get the most out of no wind and the sails was a challenge of its own, so I made myself ask for another go. This came to an abrupt end when I encountered a wasp that must have sneaked aboard days ago

and onto the wheel for a sunbath.

All too soon, the sails were having to come down, ready to motor back into Harwich. The only good thing about coming to the voyage's end was going to have a shower. We had all sorts of warnings about locking the door properly or risk being rather embarrassed; on one occasion when I phoned for rescue, I was reminded to read signs thoroughly as trying to push a door that needed pulling was never going to work!

### 'Leave her, Johnny...'

We spent some of that evening trying to persuade John and Su that they wanted to do one more year of chartering. The next morning as we left the ship for the final time, we sang *Leave her, Johnny, leave her*. I think this was a first for John and Su and it was certainly emotional.

So fellow TARS, if they decide to do some more trips\*, I cannot recommend highly

enough that we should get a crew up and go for it – it was amazing, something I'm so glad to have done.

(\*Yes they are – see [schoonersail.com](http://schoonersail.com) for details of *Trinovante's* 2024 itinerary.

And if you'd like to join Naomi, or other TARS, contact the Editor!)



*John and Su, owners, designers and builders of Trinovante. With one more year of chartering in them (we hope).*

# JACK BLAKE'S Lazarette

**Lazarette:** *A small locker near the stern of a boat, typically aft the cockpit, suitable for stowing useful odds and ends.*

Actually, it turns out that *Amazon*, the one in the film, has a lazarette, or something like one as you can see in the photo, a small, open storage area at the stern, ideal for stashing food, grog, bows and arrows, fireworks...



## Read along with Facebook

Lesley Wareing, who commands three pages of this issue with an article comparing *Winter Holiday* and *Pigeon Post*, (pages 26/27), as well as a profile, might well have invented a new Facebook format.

Already well-known for writing insightful posts that trigger long discussions (60, 70 or more comments) she recently began a running commentary on her reading of *Coot Club*, pausing and posting every few chapters with observations on Ransome's story-telling techniques – what he puts in, and leaves out, how he prepares us the readers, for what is to come, and makes sure we know, or don't know, what we need to, or don't.

Each post triggered a flurry of postings from fellow readers eager to continue the debate.

It all took me back to school, and English Literature lessons for O Levels. Homework would be to read a few chapters of the set book, and we'd then discuss it in the next lesson. My set texts were Hardy's *The Return of the Native*, which I came (slowly) to love, and Shakespeare's *Henry IV Part 1* which I adored from the start, and still do.

Lesley tells me she's just started re-reading *Swallows and Amazons*, and plans to continue onto *Swallowdale* and *Winter Holiday* in the next few months.

She also says she now thinks *Coot Club* is one of AR's most accomplished works, though I suspect that if you read any of them deeply enough you're likely to come to the same conclusion by the end.

## Listen to the Band

A month ago I'd never heard of The Boat Band, booked to appear at the S&A 50th Anniversary extravaganza. Now I'm a fan. They're a sort of guitar/accordion folk and shanty band, with an impressive fiddle-player (Kate Barfield) who sometimes doubles on trombone. Their version of *Corinna Corinna* from their 2009 Glastonbury gig will give you the general idea – on YouTube somewhere.

And there's a link with David Wood - it turns out the band's Greg Stephens and he were in a group at university.

## David... and Elizabeth

Oddly, or not, Greg doesn't feature in David's recent book *Elizabeth Taylor's Kiss*. It's a memoir about his involvement with the film world (apart from *Swallows and Amazons*), chiefly as an actor but also as a writer (Disney-approved no less). It's perceptive, unpretentious –

despite the amount of starry name-dropping – and a vividly-told insight into the world of movie-making, UK as well as US, in the latter third of the twentieth century, with walk-ons by Roger Moore, Hayley Mills David Hemmings, and others, and of course Richard Burton and his wife, who does bestow a kiss on our hero. Why? It would be unfair to give that away...

## The Teaser

The choice of Harrogate for the Literary Weekend gives it something in common with the last weekend's venue, Oxford.

"And what is that?" you hear me ask, as I introduce this issue's teaser. The answer of course is that they are both locations mentioned in the books, but without any of the action actually taking place there. If this is going to be a requirement for future Literary Weekends where else would qualify? Answers on a virtual postcard to the Editor please.

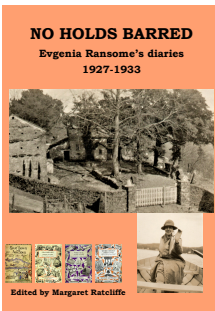
And the answer to last time's teaser, "Frequently at the bottom" and a location in The 12, was of course Lowest-oft.

## A catch-up with Alan

Good lunch with Alan Hakim in London. We're there to visit the Garrick Club and present it with a copy of *The Twilight Years, London* in which it features.

Over the years Alan seems to have done most jobs in TARS, including three at once back in 2003 when most of the Board had resigned and he was simultaneously Chairman, Treasurer and Secretary, as well as editor of *Signals* for the last edition of the old-style version.

Since getting freed from the shackles of high office he has been content to potter about in, and now on the fringes of, Amazon Publications.



## 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, ed Alan Hakim £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**  
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### 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)

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**Brogan £12 (+ £3)** The definitive biography.

### Good Little Ship: Arthur Ransome, Nancy

#### *Blackett and the Goblin,* by Peter Willis

The story of *Nancy Blackett*, inspiration for *Goblin*  
in *WDMTGTS*, her restoration by Mike Rines and  
the Nancy Blackett Trust. £14 (+ £3.50)

### Swallows, Amazons and Coots

#### a reading of Arthur Ransome by Julian

**Lovelock** A literary overview of all 'the 12' by the  
former editor of *Mixed Moss*. £17 (+ £1.80)

### Arthur Ransome on the Broads

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

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

### Arthur Ransome, a Bibliography

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

### Ransome in Russia, by Ted Alexander &

**Tatiana Verizhnikova** £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)

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 Film by David Webb of the Walton Backwaters, the setting of *Secret Water* country, and including the River Orwell and *Nancy Blackett*  
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Contemporary teenage thrillers set in East Anglia, with a strong sailing element.

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Polyester burgees, 50x30cm, including halyard and toggle.

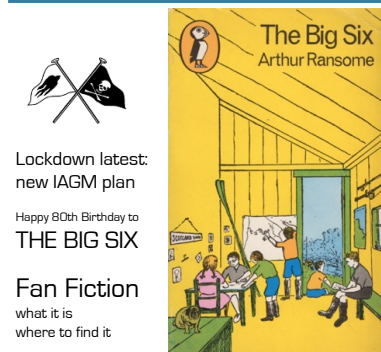
Three designs:  
 TARS (Swallow+ Skull and Crossbones)  
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## TARS Publications etc



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.

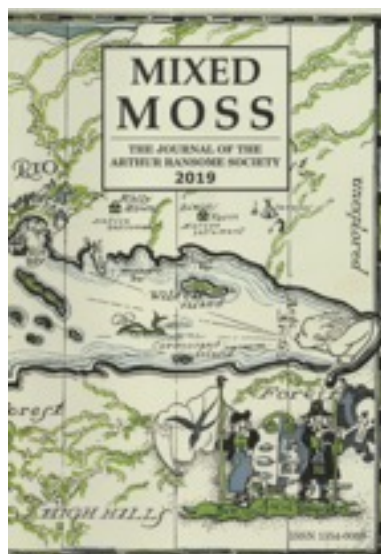
Some overseas material is included; overseas TARS groups also have their own newsletters – see below. **Signals Editor is Peter Willis** [signals@arthur-ransome.org](mailto:signals@arthur-ransome.org) 01394 387907

**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; 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 previous events are available from the TARS Stall, £6.50



### 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**



## 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

### 2024 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.

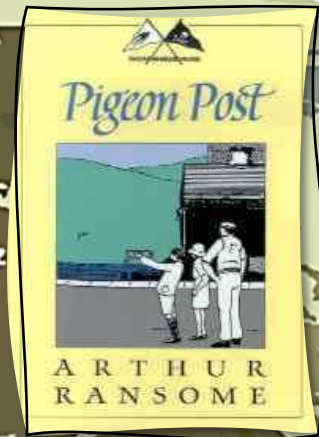
**Please see the TARS website for further details or contact Paul Crisp: [p.crisp048@btinternet.com](mailto:p.crisp048@btinternet.com)**

## 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))



MIDLAND TARS IAGM  
*HIGH TOPPS IN THE*  
DERBYSHIRE HIGH PEAKS  
AUGUST 15<sup>TH</sup>-18<sup>TH</sup> 2024



Full Board & Lodgings available at *The Nightingale Centre*, Great Hucklow

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