

The Arthur Ransome Society

Note of the Board of Trustees' 94th meeting, held in King's Heath, Birmingham on 6 April 2024

Present: Mike Glover, in the Chair
David Butters
Rachel Chalmers
Krysia Clack
Susan Gouldbourne, invited as Adviser
Iain Khan-Gilchrist
John Pearson
Peter Willis

1. Apologies for absence

Apologies had been received from Sandy Allan, Barbara Flower, Elizabeth Haworth, Kirstie Taylor and Robert Welham. Some of these absences were the result of rail strikes.

2. Chairman's introduction

Mike announced the resignation of Jules Blue from the Board as the Midlands regional representative. Jules had proposed, and the Board agreed, that Jules should continue with his several other tasks for TARS. Midland region should nominate a replacement Midland member as soon as possible. Action: Midland region

Mike proposed, and the Board agreed, to increase the reimbursable overnight expenses limit from £50 to £75 with immediate effect (applying also to the present meeting). It was confirmed also that two nights rather than one could be covered in appropriate cases.

3. Minutes of Board meeting of 14 October 2023

The Board approved these minutes as a true record, subject to the deletion in item 7 of the statement about minutes of the Publications Committee's previous meetings. Krysia would make this amendment and forward the final version to John for posting on the website. Action: Krysia, John

4. Report from the Literary and Resources Committee

Krysia presented her written report following the committee's Zoom meeting of 10 February. She drew special attention to the excellent work of Ben Hambleton as the new webmaster. If issues to do with the site were reported to Board members by other TARS members, these should be asked to raise them with Ben. The Board accepted the proposals for website improvement, of both content and operation, made by Ben in his report 'Summer Website Revamp' and agreed to the remuneration which he had suggested for implementing these. To the extent that some of these improvements would require substantial redrafting of content, Ben would require help and advice. Rachel agreed to offer this; she would contact him. Action: Rachel. Rachel also suggested, and the Board agreed, that photos should be posted on the public section of the site of some of TARS' 'hardware' (AR's medicine chest...).

The Board was aware that the social media could probably be better used in the interests of TARS; it expressed an aspiration to achieve this. More comments and information could be posted on Facebook, and action in relation to other social media might be considered.

5. Report from the Publications Committee

Susan reported on the Committee's Zoom meeting of 28 March. She explained, and the Board discussed, the complex organisational implications of David Middleton's imminent retirement as Membership Secretary. A warning insert would be included in the next issue of 'Signals' in the case of members whose subscriptions were not in order; this should include a reminder of the payment procedure. The membership system needed to be simplified where possible and clearly explained in 'Signals'. A specific account could be opened for currencies other than sterling. Regional secretaries should inform the membership team of deaths of TARS members in their region. The Board decided that there should normally be no additions in the future to the existing list of TARS honorary members.

Action: Susan, Peter, regional secretaries...

Krysia was prepared to help on membership matters and would talk with David Middleton at the forthcoming Literary Weekend.

6. Forthcoming TARS events

Literary Weekend, 19 – 21 April in Harrogate: the Board took note of Peter Wright's written report, noting with satisfaction that preparations were complete.

Alliance of Literary Societies AGM, organised by TARS at Bowness-on-Windermere from 17 to 19 May: Amanda Ardagh-Walter had informed the Board that all necessary preparations were in hand and bookings were coming in well.

Event (29 – 30 June in Windermere) celebrating the 50th anniversary of the 1974 Swallows and Amazons film: the Board thanked Peter Wright for his three reports. It noted in particular, and approved, Peter's proposal for TARS to pursue discussions with the Langdale Chase hotel of a possible formal agreement beneficial to TARS. Action: Peter Wr.

7. TARS IAGMs

2024: the Board reviewed progress of Midland region's preparations. In this context Rachel suggested adding 'and Wales' to the name of the region. John would look at whether this could be done without encouraging discussion of the formal geographical coverage of the other regions.

Action: John

2025: Iain confirmed that Southern region would organise this; it would probably be a relatively 'stripped-down' event, whose venue and dates should be finalised in time for the 2024 IAGM. Any available help from adjoining regions would be welcome.

Action: Southern region

8. AusTARS Cup 2024

The Board ratified AusTARS' proposal for the 2024 winner of the cup. John would confirm this to AusTARS.

Action: John

9. Employment of Stockwell/Cattley legacy

At its previous meeting the Board had decided to consult TARS members on this subject. Numerous comments and proposals had been received, by email or via the website, by the 14 February deadline, both from individual members and from certain regions and one of the committees. This input had been collected and analysed by a small group (Peter Wi., Susan and John), whose report suggesting what response the Board should give to the proposals had been forwarded to the Board together with all the proposals themselves.

The report was broadly approved by the Board, which adopted the following decisions and made the following observations:

- £30,000 should not be committed to specific actions at present but should be placed in a contingency fund;
- £15,000 should be reserved at this stage for properly assessed and agreed further expenditure on preparing the dinghies 'Swallow' and 'Amazon' for commercial service;
- up to £2,000 should be earmarked for the examination, organisation and cataloguing of the TARS archives;
- the TARS regions should be invited to suggest possible further sites for a 'blue plaque' or other memorial to Arthur Ransome. In this context Leeds and London might deserve attention, and it was noted that there was no memorial on 'Darien' or Wild Cat Island, and that another possible site might be the restored Shotley pier;
- further examination could be justified of the proposals for a Senior Adventure Fund aimed for example at equipping adult TARS members with specific skills in relation to hill safety, sailing...;
- Mike would invite Midland region to examine and develop further the proposals for helping young people to learn to sail;
- the proposals to make more use of the 'books for schools and libraries' arrangement could be financed from existing resources without use of the legacy.

The Board decided that it would not be justified at present to implement or further examine the members' proposals for: allocation of a TARS PC to each region (though requests could continue to be considered on a one-off basis and financed from existing resources); a Ransome 'home'; a duplicate 'Swallow'; a new biography or film of Ransome's life; a senior schools pack; an annual rather than biennial literary event; subsidising members' attendance at TARS events; and the proposal from Karen Babayan to facilitate obtaining an Arts Council grant to support the costs of a tour of her 'Swallows and Armenians' stage production and exhibition.

10. Personalia

Mike reminded the meeting that at the next IAGM he would be stepping down from the TARS chairmanship after well over twenty years' service on the Board and in various offices. The Board thanked him warmly for all he had done for the society. A new Chair would need to be appointed at the short Board meeting immediately following the IAGM and members' forum. The Board took note with approval of one possible candidacy for the post.

Of the elected members of the Board, Kirstie Taylor would be standing down at the next IAGM under the six year rule. The Board decided that at the IAGM Susan should be proposed for re-election to the Board, and that Dermot Stanley, currently a member of the S&A group, should also be proposed for election. Rachel would approach another potential candidate for election.

11. Regional reports

The Board took note with thanks of written reports received from Eastern, Northern, Scotland, Southern and South-Western regions.

12. Date and place of next Board meeting

Sunday 18 August 2024, immediately after the IAGM and Members' Forum.

John Pearson
Secretary

25 April 2024