



SIGNALS FROM T•A•R•S•U•S

December 2004

This is the Autumn 2004 issue of *Signals from TARSUS*, (even though it's December!) and it accompanies *Signals* and *The Outlaw*. In this issue we have the fourth installment of the Kenya series from Des Kelsall, plus the second installment of the new column, "Exploring in *Elbereth*," by Claire Barnett; [Ransome Readers Recommend](#); and the return of the TARS Canada Quiz. Mary Wessel Walker, who is studying in Edinburgh, Scotland, this term, was rather too swamped with essays to write an additional essay for *SfT* but will return with our next issue. as I hope will Molly McGinnis' "namesake animals" articles.

Welcome

A warm welcome to Joseph Gilden (MA) who has joined TARS and TARSUS since our last newsletter.

Exchange Rate

Unfortunately the value of the US Dollar has continued to drop against other currencies, especially the British Pound. We have adjusted our rate twice this year, and now have set a new rate of **\$1.95 = £1.00** as of 1 December 2004. It was important to do this prior to membership renewals, as otherwise TARS would have lost a large amount of money at our old exchange rates. The membership amounts shown below and on the renewal form reflect this new exchange rate.

Membership Renewal

Speaking of the renewal form, membership renewals are due as of 1 January 2005. If your membership is due for renewal you will find a Membership Renewal Form in this packet. If you joined after 1 October 2004, have already renewed, or renew by Direct Banker's Order, you don't have to do anything (unless you want to change your mailing address or membership type).

The new amounts are:

Junior:	\$9.75	Adult:	\$39.00
Student:	\$19.50	Family:	\$48.75
Pensioner:	\$29.25	Corporate:	\$78.00

Résumé

Les Jenkins, a new TARSUS member, has sent his résumé which is included with this newsletter. As always I encourage all TARSUS members who have not yet sent one in to do so.

Change of e-mail address

As a co-webmaster for the AR site, I have maintained an e-mail address of dthewlis@arthur-ransome.org for some time. Unfortunately, that e-mail address has been picked up by spammers and I have had to eliminate it. If you were using that e-mail address to contact me, please change your address book to Dave@arthur-ransome.org. My non-AR e-mail address, dthewlis@dcta.com, continues to work as well.

TARSUS Membership List

The 2004 Membership List for U.S. TARS is included with this mailing. If there is anything wrong or missing with your entry please let me know. If you would like some information, or the entire entry, removed from the list, also please let me know.

Remember, this list is for the use of TARSUS members **only** and is not to be copied or distributed to non-TARSUS or used for any commercial purpose!



Amazon Publications

The 2004 Amazon Publication, *The Best of Childhood*, was received by subscribers in the U.S. around the beginning of October. This book covers the period in Arthur and Evgenia's lives of the writing of the twelve S&A books, and also pretty much everything that can be learned about the actual writing of the books, from primary sources such as letters, diaries, drafts and working notebooks. This is a wonderful and significant book, and is recommended to everybody. Copies are still available from the TARS Stall.

The 2005 Amazon Publication will be *Ransome Broadside—A Miscellany* and subscribers will also receive a bonus *Swallows and Amazons Colouring Book* (which will also be available from the TAR Stall). *Ransome Broadside* will be available in paperback and in a limited edition hardback. U.S. TARS may subscribe through the TARSUS Coordinator at \$30 (for the paperback) or \$45 (for the hardback).

Feature Column: Ransome Readers Recommend

An unusual report on the Treasure Island books

by Tom Grimes

I have four (maybe **the** four) *Treasure Island* books. (If that statement doesn't sound somewhat cockeyed, it should!) I do, though. One is the copy that I have had for years by Stevenson. Another is *Back to Treasure Island*, by H.A. Calahan. The third is *The Curse of Treasure Island* by "Francis Bryan," supposedly a pseudonym for "a prominent British broadcast journalist." Published in 2002, it tells of Jim Hawkins making another trip back to Treasure Island at the age of 21.

The fourth book is *Treasure Island* by Justin Scott, published in 1994. To quote part of the book jacket, "The time is the 1950s. The place is New York's Long Island. And our hero, of course, is Jim Hawkins. Yes, after a series of skirmishes at his parent's Admiral Benbow Hotel, Jim does join Trelawney and Dr. Livesey (the sole woman) on the *Hispaniola's* voyage toward an island where a fortune in Nazi gold is hidden. And they will be joined by the cook-turned-ship's-captain, the man who lost a leg on Iwo Jima, the man with a parrot named Captain Flint—an ancient bird who in the midst of crying 'Pieces of Eight, Pieces of Eight' no doubt remembers the days of piracy..." Imitation, or maybe translation from the language of a century ago, is the most sincere form of flattery.

I have not read the two most recent books, but I would be very surprised if *The Curse...* is as good as *Back to Treasure Island*. None of them are that easy to find. (Tom didn't comment at all on the last of the four, which may be just as well. —Ed.)

Four Books by William Mayne

by Molly McGinnis

The World Upside Down

Anyone remember what a "Camera Obscura" is? This one's part of an underground wall and its part in the story is all tangled up with a lost treasure and a lost heir and a huge fish.

Underground Alley

When Patty's basement wall falls down in the middle of her Town Festival project she follow the opening behind it to something most amazing, and a little like the secret of Gone-Away Lake. Patty's an amazing character both in herself and literarily – a real girl, not just a formula writer's idea of what publishers are demanding these days, but one who takes it for granted that she can build with the best of them and make a pigeon pie for dinner as well. The Underground Alley is in Wales.

A Swarm in May

Mayne was a chorister and lived in a choir school and knows the insides of the cathedral and of the chorister's life well. The youngest chorister has to sing "The Beekeeper's Introit" to the Bishop, to get the wax blessed for the Cathedral Candles, and he's panicked about it – until he comes upon an intriguing artifact while investigating semi-forbidden parts of the Cathedral. Things turn out quite interestingly, with a scientific twist to the magical-seeming powers of The Artifact. *The Chorister's Cake* and *Cathedral Wednesday* are about the same school, but less mysterious.

Earthfasts

The Battlefield

Just a step beyond the Underground Alley and the Beekeeper's bauble to the supernatural. But the way bits of another world protrude into today's is not at all like fantasy as we've come to think of it and result in very real kinds of happenings with explanations half in one world, half in another; thought-provoking and rather frightening.

William Mayne is a master of the "numinous object" and very Ransomeish in his fascination with crafts and devices and in his acute literal and figurative ear. Many of the uncritically and vividly presented characters could have stepped right out of one of the S&A books. Many of Mayne's books are categorized as fantasy but in the good ones the supernatural is so rooted in everyday life and so carefully and logically investigated that even Dick would eagerly read them. Mayne is rather uneven – some books are nauseatingly whimsical or goody-goody, others downright grim – but at best he tells a great story with the invincible innocence and honesty of a Ransome. Mayne has been compared to Nesbit but you'll find no sudden uncles bringing fortunes and no condescending about anyone in his books. He was born in 1928 and I can't find anything that says he read any Ransome books, which would have been new when he was a child, but it's hard to believe he didn't.

Mayne is sadly under-represented in too many libraries, but ABE (Advanced Book Exchange), www.abebooks.com, has some 4000, many at very reasonable prices.



A Fisheries Officer on Lake Victoria (4)

Des. Kelsall

A few weeks after returning to Mwanza from Kisumu, my Boss called me into his office one morning.

"Do you know where Godziba Island is?" he asked. In fact I did know, This small island was shown on the Admiralty chart, roughly in the centre of Lake Victoria, 35 miles or so from the nearest part of the mainland. It was barely a mile long and half a mile wide. I gave George this rather sketchy information.

"I don't even know if it is inhabited," he said, "and I want to go and have a look at it. The Provincial Commissioner and the District Commissioner, Bukoba, in whose District it lies, would like to come too. They can both get away for a few days the week after next. Please arrange a trip on that basis."

There were only two bunks in *Heron's* cabin, so two of us would have to sleep on mattresses on the cabin top, no great hardship in that climate. This was not a trip on which my wife Joan could accompany me, and she concentrated on ensuring that we would have ample stores aboard.

The day of departure came and we sailed soon after 10 a.m. I intended to proceed to the westernmost tip of Ukerewe Island, which projects from the eastern shore of the Lake. From there it would be about 4½ hours steaming to reach the island.

Once we had left the tip of Ukerewe Island astern, we were in the open waters of the Lake where a moderate swell was rolling down from the north-west. *Heron* pitched steadily as we steamed into this, white spray flying from her bows and glittering in the sunshine. Soon Ukerewe Island sank below the horizon and we were all gazing ahead, waiting for the first

sight of land . It was Sadiki the Cox'n who spotted it first and gave a shout. A tiny, blue pimple peeped above the horizon, gradually growing into a small, low-lying island as we drew nearer. I headed for a small bay on the north-west side which appeared to have the most shelter from the swells. Shabani, one of the crew, was swinging the lead up in the bows but it was not until we were quite close to the shore that he got bottom at 20 feet. He said that it felt rocky. I finally anchored in 12 feet of water and we waited to see what local reaction would be to our arrival.

After a quarter of an hour we saw a canoe putting out from a small beach at the head of the bay. We could see that the paddlers were making no effort to paddle in a concerted fashion; it was every man for himself! The canoe came alongside us and George leaned over and greeted them. He got a reply of some sort, but it was immediately clear that all the men in the canoe were pickled to the eyebrows. George told them: "This is a great occasion for you. Your District Commissioner from Bukoba has come to visit you." This information was greeted with loud , drunken laughter and unintelligible remarks. Jock, the DC shrugged and turned to the Provincial Commissioner. "I don't seem to cut much ice with them," he said. "You have a go and see if you can get anywhere."

The PC, who was a big man, well over six feet, stood up and introduced himself in fluent Ki-Swahili, only to be greeted with even more uproarious merriment and comments. "It's no good," he remarked , "We'll just have to leave them to sober up before we can get anywhere with them." George, however, did manage to get across to them the information that we should be coming ashore the next morning to hold a baraza (meeting) at the Headman's house.

The PC was a keen ornithologist and was interested to see cormorants and white egrets nesting together in the scrubby trees, apparently quite amicably. The crew launched our dinghy and went off to set some nets with a view to discovering what kinds of fish – if any – were to be found in these waters.

We passed a rather uneasy night. From time to time I could hear the unpleasant, grating sound of the anchor dragging on the rocky bottom and around 3 a.m. I had to call the crew out, start the engine and take the boat out to a safe distance offshore before anchoring again.

In the morning we went ashore. We ascertained from a fisherman the whereabouts of the Headman's house and made our way there. The Headman met us on the way and apologised for not having come down to the landing to meet us, saying that he had only just received the message advising him of our coming. His house turned out to be one of a group of huts towards the north end of the island, with a swept area of earth in the middle. Stools were produced for us and the PC opened the meeting.

It was explained by the Headman that the island's population was seasonally increased by the influx of fishermen from the Bukoba area on the west shore of the Lake. Mention was made of the kind of fish caught, mainly various species of Catfish. There were complaints about the infrequency of visits by the District Officer and a score of other problems all the usual things that always come up at such meetings. Fortunately, having both the PC and the DC present, it was possible to deal with most of them to the satisfaction of the fifteen or twenty men present.

Towards the end of the meeting, it emerged that the PC would be going to UK shortly on home leave. The Headman's wife excused herself and went into her hut, to return shortly and to curtsy to the PC and press into his hands a bright one-shilling coin, explaining that this was "to enable him to have a good time on his home leave." To her, a shilling was quite a lot of money and we all thought that her gesture was a delightful and generous one and rather touching.

The meeting finally broke up and, accompanied by the Headman, we returned to the landing place and boarded *Heron* to leave on our next "ocean crossing", this time westward to Bukoba..

While we had been at the meeting, the crew had recovered the nets set the previous evening. They were delighted to find that they had made quite a heavy catch of, mainly, two species of catfish and a few large Barbel. These fish would be sun-dried and taken back to Mwanza.



Exploring in *Elbereth* The Lake of the Hills

Claire Barnett



The Wisconsin River curves around the ancient hills where I live, and then pauses in a large lake known to the Natives as Lake Wisconsin, and to me as the Lake of the Hills. The long and narrow southern half of the lake, the hills in the distance where I live, and the tall bluffs along the river valley always added to my feeling that Ransome's Lake in the north would look something like this. Imagine my pleasure when I visited Windermere and Coniston Water in the Lake District, that there was some similarity. I was also amazed at the coincidence of a

cable operated car ferry, crossing at a town in roughly the middle point of both Windermere and my Lake of the Hills. What a great lake for *Elbereth's* home water, and it is only about 15 miles away!

Luckily, the new car ferry is large enough for my truck and *Elbereth*, because the best launch site is on the other side of the lake at a beautiful bay called Sunset Cove. There is even an inviting looking island right there!

Because the lake is a flowage with stumps in the shallower end, I hadn't been in the upper half before. The ferry crossing and an intimidating railroad bridge reminiscent of the one pictured at Breydon Water, divide the lake. Beyond the bridge, the channel is marked with buoys, so in late September, I set out hoping to finally see the upper lake and then follow the river north until it met the smaller river that flows past my home. It was a beautiful day for exploring, with autumn colors on the distant hills and coolness in the air that meant I could use the stove in *Elbereth's* cabin. I had brought along lunch, and was ready for exploring.



But the volunteer group that maintains the buoys had already removed them for the year! Greatly disappointed, I ventured slowly under the bridge, and cruised for a short distance along the northeast shore. I saw a beautiful little cottage that I would love to live in, with a pier big enough for *Elbereth*. I had tempting views across the unknown waters to the north, and vowed to come back during the regular boating season next year. So sadly, this account becomes a preview of things to come.

I will leave you with some more pictures and a thought. Arthur Ransome got letters from children of different countries who were convinced that the lake in the books was in their part of the world. He liked that, and so do I. We can always find echoes of his books in our own familiar places, and know that we too can create our own adventures.

About the author. Claire Barnett is a semi retired pirate girl who likes to write and who has steadfastly refused to grow up in the way once expected of her. She lives in the Midwest United States.



From TARS Canada:

Here are the answers for the quiz on *Pigeon Post* from our May 2004 Newsletter, along with the questions for the next quiz on *We Didn't Mean To Go To Sea*. Another three million cheers for TARS Canada to allow us to crib off their newsletter (this makes 21 million cheers to TARS Canada so far!)

PIGEON POST - Answers to the Questions

ONE POINT

1.1 Dick; 1.2 A mincing machine; 1.3 Cook dropped a tray of crockery; 1.4 Dromedaries; 1.5 Blue glass beads; 1.6 A hedgehog; 1.7 A crowbar; 1.8 Roger; 1.9 Fried cannonballs; 1.10 A frying pan; 1.11 It was attacked by a hawk; 1.12 Diamonds; 1.13 Dick; 1.14 Blowpipes; 1.15 Titty; 1.16 Sappho.

TWO POINTS

2.1 Their father had to correct examination papers; 2.2 Bridget had whooping cough; 2.3 Colonel Jolys; 2.4 Nancy, John and Susan; 2.5 Robin: making fire brooms; 2.6 Roger; 2.7 Hobnailed; 2.8 Dick: because of the presence of a type of rush that he had been told signified water; 2.9 He had been tossing small stones over the parapet of the bridge at Tyson's farm, and had scored three splashes running; 2.10 "Beef!"; 2.11 Dick spotted a grass fire by the road, which John and Nancy put out; 2.12 Nancy and Roger; 2.13 Titty, Roger, Dick and Dorothea; 2.14 Puddingheads; 2.15 It broke up into a dark powder; 2.16 Peggy.

THREE POINTS

3.1 Shaping pit props; 3.2 He went to the First World War and did not return; 3.3 (1) Dick must arrange for the pigeons to ring a bell nobody could help hearing; (2) They must be able to get milk from Atkinson's; (3) They must find a place to camp with good water; 3.4 A little chopped onion; 3.5 Peggy, Dorothea, Titty and Roger; 3.6 An enormous ball of string; 3.7 Phillips on Metals; 3.8 Because you never knew when you might be invited aboard someone's boat; 3.9 Grey Screes; 3.10 Dropped a white stone into the cup; 3.11 An excuse to spy on the prospectors; 3.12 "Yoho"; 3.13 The wording on it was not in English [Spanish]; 3.14 "It's not your mine"; 3.15 Aqua regia; 3.16 "Skin not thick enough".

WE DIDN'T MEAN TO GO TO SEA

ONE POINT

- 1.1 What knot did John use to tie *Goblin* to her mooring buoy, the first time they met?
- 1.2 What was the name of *Goblin's* dinghy?
- 1.3 Where was Jim Brading going at the end of the summer?
- 1.4 What had Roger bought in Ipswich before the voyage in *Goblin* that was not greeted with enthusiasm by his brother and sisters?
- 1.5 What colour were *Goblin's* sails?
- 1.6 Who was first to be sea-sick as they headed out to sea?
- 1.7 What did Susan make in the early dawn as *Goblin* was crossing the North Sea?
- 1.8 What did they see floating in the sea at dawn and manage to avoid ?
- 1.9 Who picked the kitten from its floating chicken coop?
- 1.10 What did they call the kitten they rescued from the North Sea?

- 1.11 Which was the Dutch port *Goblin* reached after crossing the North Sea?
- 1.12 What did Roger see through the porthole while approaching the harbour that convinced him they were in Holland?
- 1.13 How much did the Dutch pilot charge them for taking *Goblin* into harbour?
- 1.14 How did Roger go ashore the first time in Holland?
- 1.15 In whose bunk did the kitten sleep, on the way back to England?
- 1.16 What had happened to Jim Brading to delay his getting back to *Goblin*?

TWO POINTS

- 2.1 How was Jim Brading steering, the first time the Swallows saw *Goblin*?
- 2.2 What was the name of the lodging at Pinmill where the Walkers were staying?
- 2.3 Who was the landlady of the lodging at Pinmill where the Walkers were staying?
- 2.4 What did they see, swimming ahead of them, as they sailed down the Orwell the first day?
- 2.5 Which was the buoy at the mouth of Felixstowe harbour that had a bell in it?
- 2.6 Which was the lightship at the edge of the shoals, that they passed in the fog without even seeing?
- 2.7 How many reefs did John take down when *Goblin* was sailing in the storm?
- 2.8 What were those in *Goblin* called by the steamer that nearly ran them down in the dark?
- 2.9 What was the country of origin of the steamer that had been taking Captain Walker back to England?
- 2.10 What was the first thing Susan said to Captain Walker after he boarded *Goblin*?
- 2.11 What did Titty insist be added to the telegram being sent to Mrs Walker from Holland?
- 2.12 What did they do with the kitten when they went ashore in Holland?
- 2.13 What did they have to eat at the restaurant in Holland?
- 2.14 What souvenirs did they buy before leaving Holland?
- 2.15 What flag did they have to fly, coming back to England after their trip to Holland?
- 2.16 What were the first names of Captain and Mrs Walker?

THREE POINTS

- 3.1 Who was rowing, the first time the Walkers met *Goblin*?
- 3.2 Who was the last to board *Goblin* the first time the Walkers met her?
- 3.3 Where had Jim Brading sailed from, immediately before he met the Walkers?
- 3.4 What was the name of the inn at Pin Mill?
- 3.5 Who gave *Goblin* to Jim Brading?

