



SIGNALS FROM T•A•R•S•U•S

February 2001

Chilly Winter Greetings from (Far Northern) California!

This newsletter accompanies *Despatches*, which contains particulars about the upcoming 2001 AGM (Annual General Meeting) in Southampton. If you are considering going please note that it is NOT happening on our Memorial Day weekend as it has previously, but at the end of June! Also please see the comments below about overseas TARS booking for events with limited space, in response to several queries about how to get reservations in before the space was gone.

Membership Renewal for 2001

TARS membership renewals were due on 1 January 2001. As of this writing, less than 60% of TARSUS members have renewed for 2001.

*If you find a Membership Renewal Sticker on your newsletter (which will have your name, membership type, and the cost for each membership type), and a big black or red spot on the outside of the envelope, **you have not yet renewed**. Members who have not renewed by the end of March will not receive any further mailings from TARS. So please renew now; don't risk missing the April mailing or losing your membership.*

(If you have sent your renewal in and still got a sticker and spot, please ignore them; this newsletter is being written in early February.)

Welcome

Welcome to Claire, Jane, Katie, Paul, Sam & Susan Finlay; Eric Gerretsen; Robert MacNeil; Don Meginley; Ben Pryden; and Shirley Poage.

And welcome back to Frank Kurt Cylke.

Resumés

A new Résumé is included for Susan Bruce, replacing pages 21 and 22. Please consider submitting your résumé if you haven't done so – they make wonderful reading and tell us a lot about how our fellow U.S. TARS have found Ransome (and TARS).

Arthur Ransome: A Bibliography by Wayne G. Hammond

Wayne Hammond's excellent bibliography of Arthur Ransome has been published by Oak Knoll Press; in fact the current issue of *Despatches* contains a review of the Bibliography by me (Dave Thewlis). The review has also been published on the Arthur Ransome web site on the TARS Literary Pages. Please note that you can obtain the book from the TARS Stall, at a cost about a third off the list price, even if ordering from the United States.

Booking Limited-Space Events

Several members have asked how they can book (reserve) for limited-space events such as the AGMs and Literary Weekends, since they receive their newsletters and booking forms much later than people in the U.K. receive theirs. Here is how this is handled. (This is taken from the Our British Account web page at <http://www.arthur-ransome.org/ar/tarsus/ourbritishaccount.html>).

Please be aware that for AGMs, Literary Weekends, and other TARS events which have limited availability, the booking period is generally not opened until a date a few weeks after the publication is mailed which contains the booking forms. This is done to help ensure that overseas TARS will have received the booking information and had a chance to send in their booking forms and money to be part of the initial "pot" of bookings. For example, the information for the next AGM will be published in *Despatches* in February. It will include the booking forms together with an announcement as to what date they will begin processing bookings. The same will be true for the Literary Weekend with the mailing of *Signals* in April.

1. As soon as possible after you receive it, fill out the booking form completely including final calculation of amount and determine the deposit (if only a deposit is required).
2. Convert the deposit (or total) amount to U.S. dollars using the conversion rate above.
3. Send the original completed booking form to the name and address indicated on or with the booking form directly to the U.K., so it's received prior to the opening of bookings.
4. Send a copy of the completed booking form with your check in U.S. dollars for the deposit, made out to The Arthur Ransome Society, to the TARS U.S. Coordinator (Dave Thewlis).
5. You will receive direct notice from the U.K. when your bookings are confirmed.
6. If there is a date by which you must submit the remainder of your payment that is prior to paying at the event itself, be sure to include a note with your check when you send it indicating what it's for.

Georgia TARSUS Event 2001

Jim Satterfield (alias Capt. G. Flint), who hosted a TARSUS weekend sailing and camping event last summer on Lake Alltoona, Georgia, is going to do it

again. The event will be Wednesday, June 20 through Saturday, June 23, and will include boating, camping, fishing, semaphore, and a variety of other events. You can find out more about this event on Jim's website at:

<http://www.gsu.edu/~biojdsx/tarsus/tarsus.htm>.

You can also e-mail him at jsatt@gsu.edu or write him at 258 Ridge Pine Drive, Canton, GA 30114. Also, I expect to have a formal event announcement and description from him in the next *Signals from TARSUS*, due out in April.

(New member information removed)

The TARS Library

Last issue, I ran a message to TARSUS members from Margaret Ratcliffe about the TARS Library. Unfortunately I got both her city and postcode wrong! So I'm repeating Margaret's letter to TARSUS.

(By the way, I joined, and the catalogue is indeed excellent and well worth having even if I never actually order any books from the Library.)

The TARS Library: A personal message to TARSUS members from Margaret Ratcliffe.

The newly launched TARS Library contains copies of books AR himself owned as well as many of his own pre-S&A works. To become a subscriber you must be a TARS member, pay a one-off lifetime subscription and pay postage (both ways) for each item borrowed. The TARS Library is very much open to all TARS world-wide. It is intended to augment and enhance our knowledge and appreciation of AR by making available copies of some of the books he himself owned and read.

For some of the titles we have copies of notes in AR's own hand which will be included when the book is borrowed. We also have some, now quite rare and consequently expensive, early AR's. I have personally written the Catalogue, which is not simply a dull, old list. Far from it. It is a full colour, illustrated production with three specially commissioned introductory essays (possibly almost worth the subscription fee in itself, though I shouldn't say that!) Ring bound with clear plastic covers, 49 pages.

I have found already that the Library introduces me, as a non-academic person, to authors and books I would never otherwise have considered. At a cost of £15 (\$22.50 US) for a lifetime subscription including the Catalogue and future supplements, you have available books which would cost you far more than that individually to buy. The possible limiting factor from a USA point of view may be the cost of airmail postage both ways from the UK which each subscriber must bear (as in the UK). For a slim volume, this is not really so bad and simply increases for a 'thick' book. The loan period for overseas subscribers will be two months.

You may have seen details of the initial concept in the colour insert in the Spring 2000 edition of *Signals* and there will be a feature on the Library in the forthcoming *Mixed Moss*. Fullerton, California is very important in the TARS Library story and I do hope some TARSUS members will decide to be involved as Subscribers. Hey, invest in the Catalogue even if you then borrow only selectively!

To become a subscriber, simply send your payment for \$22.50 US (the equivalent of £15) to the U.S. Coordinator, Dave Thewlis. He will then inform me of your payment and I will immediately mail a Catalogue to you and we can take it from there. When you do borrow a book from the TARS Library, upon sending it to you I'll tell you how much the postage to the US was and you will send the equivalent in \$US to Dave Thewlis. When you return the book you will send it airmail and you must purchase a Certificate of Mailing for \$0.60 (this proves that it mailed, so if it goes astray, our insurance will cover the loss).

I look forward to hearing from you.

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Feature Column: Ransome Readers Recommend

Last issue, we started this column of short reviews of books which Ransome readers want to recommend to others, especially Juniors. Mary Wessel Walker, our 10-Gong Contributing Editor, initiated the column and wrote: "Sometimes we stumble across books that, for one reason or another, remind us of Ransome. Maybe

characters remind us of Ransome characters, or maybe they go sailing or camping. Sometimes a book reminds us of Ransome because it just FEELS right. In this column of *Signals from TARSUS* we invite all TARS, especially Juniors, to write short book recommendations for other Ransome lovers. Be sure to include a mention of the general age group and reading level you think the book is best suited for. Send your recommendations to Mary Wessel Walker at 3007 Geddes Ave., Ann Arbor, MI 48104 (jcgw@umich.edu) or to Dave Thewlis (dthewlis@arthur-ransome.org).”

Big Tiger and Christian: Their Adventures in Mongolia
Fritz Mülenweg

Big Tiger, a Chinese boy, and his friend Christian, a European boy brought up in Peking (now Beijing), go kite-flying one afternoon in the early 1920s. Accidentally they become mixed up in China's civil war in 1920s and find themselves on a 1200 mile journey across Inner Asia and the Gobi Desert through Mongolia to Urumchi, sent as messengers on an army truck. During the course of their journey they meet and befriend the desert nomads, and from herdsmen, horsemen, soldiers, Buddhist llamas, traders and travelers of all kinds learn the customs and courtesies of the life of the Mongols. Their truck is stolen, they become involved with bandits and robber barons, good men and bad, and throughout they apply their native wit and intelligence to outwitting danger and helping their friends. One of the great things about this book is that the boys, both 12, do the sort of things that real boys could actually do -- the same way that the Swallows and Amazons do things that people of their ages would be able to do.

This is a terrific adventure story, and it helps that the author spend years in Mongolia. The places and many of the people are real and the author gives them their real names. He spent New Year 1931-32 with the Mongolian shepherd Naidang and his daughter Sevenstars, who appear in this book, and to them he owes a large share of the story. I loved this book when I first met it at the age of 12 myself, and was delighted to find a well-worn copy years later. It is now part of my collection, and I reread it occasionally just as I reread Arthur Ransome's books. The protagonists are real people doing real things, and it is a delight to share their adventures with them.

The Pearl Lagoon
Charls Nordhoff

This is the story of Charlie Seldon, who lives on the coast of California on a ranch purchased from Spanish land grant. Charlie's uncle, Harry Seldon, long ago left home and became a trader in the south seas. One evening his schooner, the *Tara*, puts in unexpectedly for a single night -- for Uncle Harry to convince Charlie's parents to let Charlie come along on a several-month voyage to the south seas, to Tahiti and to the Pearl Lagoon of Iriatai. Charlie goes, and this story of his adventures, the people he meets and the tribes and customs of the south sea islanders at the turn of the century is gripping and fascinating. Charles Nordhoff was the author with James Hall of the *Bounty* Trilogy and knew the south seas as few other authors did, and he evokes the places, people and customs with surety. This book was published in 1924 and I can only regret that it hadn't made it to England in time to become one of the Swallows' favorites, because I think it would have rivaled Robinson Crusoe in Titty's estimation (remember Titty and Roger diving for pearls?) I recommend it very highly to readers 12 and over with a sense of adventure themselves.



From our 10-Gong Contributing Editor (her regular column):

In Which I Study Latin

Now as the memories of our summer adventures are fading into the distance and next summer seems such a long way off that we are only beginning to look at nautical charts of far away places, we turn to our textbooks.

Hic liber est meus
Testis est Deus
Si quis furetur
Per collum pendetur
Like this poor cretur.

This book is mine
The witness is God
If anyone steals it
From the neck he will be hung
Like this poor cretur.

Knowing Latin saved the Swallows and Amazons from coming to a sticky end at the beginning of *Missee Lee*. This is one of the most unique plot twists imaginable! When my Latin teacher was sick for a while this year, I lent him *Missee Lee*. When he returned it he told me, "I can't imagine anyone could make a story about people reading the *Aeneid*!" But Ransome did. The story allows Roger to come through as the real hero, and Nancy (crushed at the start by Miss Lee saying, "Flench is *not* a classical language!") takes a back seat for once. But this story is not all about the Swallows and Amazons busily translating the *Aeneid*. They also have their usual Ransome moments, full of semaphore and coded chantey singing, daring escapes, and a terrific opening scene. Perhaps it is this combination of Latin and Ransome that makes *Missee Lee* one of my favorites of the Ransome canon.

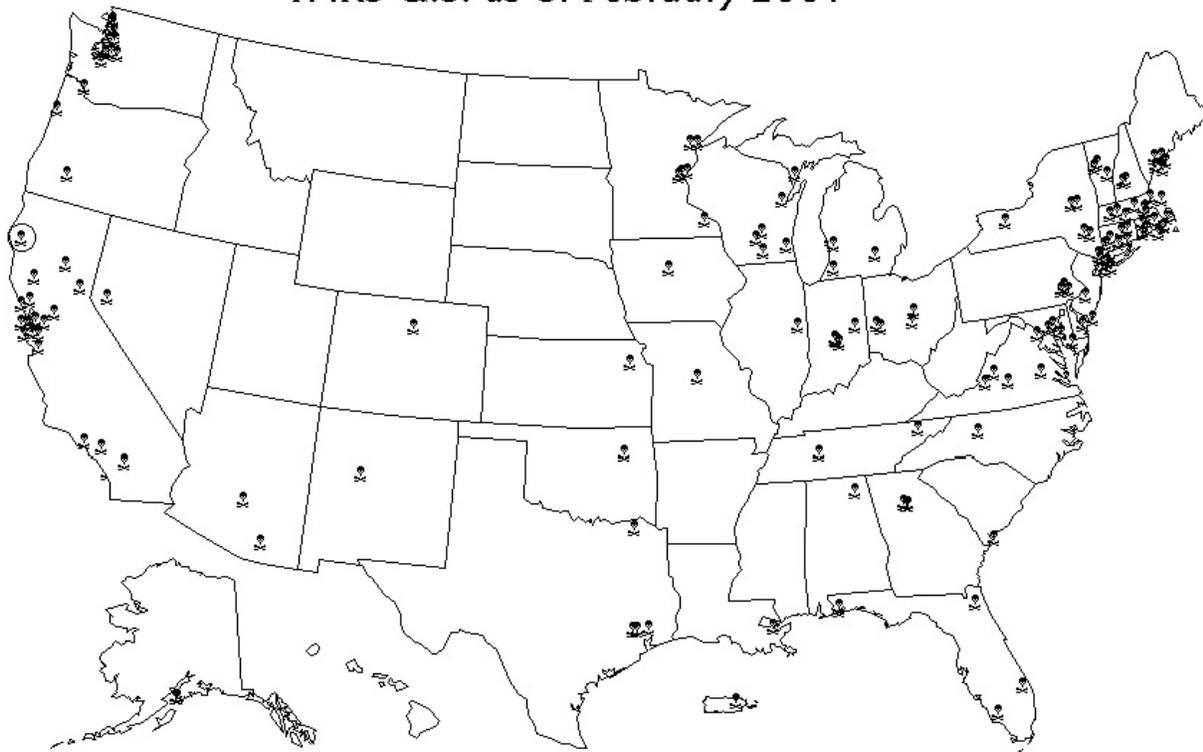
I have been taking Latin at my school for nearly five years now. This is rare in these days when education is often devoted to teaching something that will be "useful in your career" or "look good on college applications". In Ransome's day Latin was a standard part of a boy's education. Today, most schools don't offer Latin, but at my high school there are two classes of advanced Latin students, and in the past few months we have been reading Book Two of the *Aeneid*, the part Miss Lee makes her Latin students read. "It's Virgil's beastly *Aeneid* . . . ' I know that bit . . . It's where Father Aeneas starts spouting. . . We had it last term I was at school.'" (*Missee Lee*, Ch. 5)

Well, that's precisely what we've been reading. We've even translated the part where Laocoon gets eaten by the snakes. It is fun to read *Missee Lee* when you can recognize familiar ideas. Though my class does not memorize the speech "Common are to either sex . . .", I do know what it is referring to. "Mensa, mensae" which Nancy and Peggy learned, is actually a recitation of the noun endings. My class recites the shorter endings-only version "-a, -ae, -ae," and so on. We all have to be able to write all of the declensions down in under a minute! Although it is perhaps not the easiest way to get into the Ransome spirit, I think learning Latin is interesting and worthwhile. You never know when Latin will come in handy! (You never know when you'll run into a Cambridge-educated pirate like Miss Lee)!

About the author: Mary Wessel Walker, 10-Gong Contributing Editor, is sixteen years old and has just taken her Aeneid Final Exam at Huron High School in Ann Arbor, MI, where she is in eleventh grade. She provided me with a more Ransome-ish picture after the last Signals from TARSUS, but unfortunately my copy of it didn't turn out well enough to reproduce.



TARS U.S. as of February 2001



AK-2	CO-1	GA-3	LA-1	MI-4	NH-2	NY-9	PA-4	TX-4
AL-1	CT-5	IL-1	MA-11	MN-6	NJ-2	OH-6	PR-1	VA-11
AZ-2	DE-1	IN-5	MD-6	MO-1	NM-1	OK-1	RI-2	VT-3
CA-22	FL-4	KS-1	ME-6	NC-1	NV-1	OR-2	TN-2	WA-15
								WI-6

TARSUS has 156 households distributed approximately as shown including Alaska and Puerto Rico.



My special thanks to Susan Bruce for her Résumé, and to Mary Wessel Walker for her column.

I'd like to especially request book reviews for the "Ransome Readers Recommend" column, and particularly reviews by Juniors (Juniors are welcome to recommend books for adults and APs as well as other Juniors, by the way!) Also, let's get thinking about TARSUS events for 2001.

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