



SIGNALS FROM T·A·R·S·U·S

January 2006

Ten-Gong Contributing Editor Mary Wessel Walker shares a winter holidays memory:

...IN WHICH WE BUILD A SAILING SLEDGE

This is an old adventure, which took place six or seven winters ago. My little sister Margaret decided to build a sailing sledge. Perhaps the reason was that my ice skates fit and hers didn't, but for reasons I no longer remember, I wasn't a big part of the building of or riding on the sledge, but I can tell what I remember. At any rate, it was a good winter for ice activities in Michigan.

The land at our second home (the Little House), while hardly lakefront property, does contain the corner of a lake. Before you start having visions of grandeur you must understand that this lake is called Grass Lake for a reason. It's pretty good for canoeing and probably fishing in the summer, but hardly appropriate for sailing. In the winter, it's a great place to take walks and sometimes to go skating and our neighbors go ice fishing.



A little push from an A.P. and Margaret was off and away!

One year Margaret took it into her head to build a sailing sledge. She started with our old "runner" sled which has never been much good in the snow but is probably much like what the Swallows, Amazons and D's used in *Winter Holiday*. She raided the garage for old broom handles and made a square sail out of a large sheet of plastic with a broom handle as a boom at top and bottom. The mast was the handle of a long pool-scrubbing brush. I think the mast and sail were tied or taped together in a permanent



Margaret managed to go pretty far, pretty fast.

fashion. A length of clothesline served for stays running from the ends of the upper boom to the stern of the sledge. It was actually one big loop which hooked around the back or was sat upon by the rider. To step the mast my dad put a bolt in the forward part of the sledge to hook the mast onto, but mostly the mast was held up by the rider.

We hoisted the burgee from the *Wildcat*, and Margaret was ready to hit the ice. Fortunately there's enough open space around the lake for there to be a good wind. After a few false starts and a little push, Margaret was off and away! Although she didn't discover the North Pole, I think she managed to sail all the way to the start of the grass several times.

It was a lot of fun and fairly straightforward to build a sailing sledge. I think you could probably try the same yourself. Perhaps I'll dig out our sail and try myself this winter when the lake freezes over. The sled doesn't have to be fancy, but the less surface area in contact with the ground, the better. Using a sled with runners works very well because there's so little friction. Send in accounts of your sailing sled adventures!

Mary Wessel Walker is a senior at Bryn Mawr College and hopes to do something outdoors after graduation, but doesn't know what yet.

HIKING HERE AND THERE:

By Jim Wessel Walker

Some day soon the North Country Trail will extend all the way from Lake Champlain on the eastern border of New York to the Missouri River in North Dakota, some 3,200 miles through seven states. In August my family (Donna, Mary, Kate, and Kathy) and I were privileged to hike what must be one of the most beautiful sections of the trail, through Pictured Rocks National Lakeshore in the Upper Peninsula of Michigan. Pictured Rocks lies on the southern shore of Lake Superior between Munising on the west and Grand Marais on the east, a distance of 45 miles. The terrain is varied. There are delicately tinted sandstone cliffs overlooking the clear green and blue waters of the lake. There is a twelve-mile long beach. There are sand dunes that rise several hundred feet straight out of the water. There are waterfalls, sparkling streams, beaver dams, and swamps.

This hike was inspired by last summer's hike along Hadrian's Wall Path National Trail in northern England. The Ten-Gong Contributing Editor was on her way to spend a term at Edinburgh University and took her father along to help carry her stuff. We left the stuff in Wallsend, where Hadrian's Wall meets the North Sea, and hiked 84 miles to Bowness on Solway, overlooking the Irish Sea..

This was our first long hike, and we had a wonderful time. The weather was perfect, sunny and breezy nearly always. The countryside is beautiful, flat to gently rolling in the west and in the east. The trail runs along the bank of the River Tyne through Newcastle in the east and beside the River Eden through Carlisle and along Solway Firth in the west. In the middle, though, the wall and the trail climb along the crests of basalt cliffs that provide an imposing defense against invasion from the north.

The Roman remains are spectacular. It is not just the wall. There is a milecastle every mile with two turrets at equal intervals between milecastles. And there are forts, Segudunum, Cilernum, Vercovicium, Aesica, Vindolanda, all built on essentially the same plan, with barracks, commandant's house, store rooms, stables, and bathhouse.

We saw central heating in commandant's houses and plumbing in the bathhouses. Acid soil at Vindolanda has preserved such remarkable artifacts as leather sandals, a wig, combs, armor, and wooden tablets with personal letters on them.



Mary and Donna beside Lake Superior

We learned on this hike that we can not cover much more than ten miles in a day. We spent eight days on Hadrian's Wall and five days on Pictured Rocks. In northern England we stayed at youth hostels or B&B's each night, riding the Hadrian's Wall bus if the day's hike did not bring us to our sleeping place.

There are no youth hostels and few buses in northern Michigan, so we used a two-car shuttle, driving to a further trailhead each day and then hiking back to where we had left a car the day before. The system worked, but it meant that we spent too much time in the car and not enough time on the trail. Next year we may try backpacking, camping each night beside the trail.

The hikers we met in England carried next to nothing. They could count on food and drink at a pub in the next village. On the North Country Trail in contrast, there were many large packs. There are, after all, no pubs or villages between Munising and Grand Marais. The countryside in northern England is open. There are few trees, lots of sheep and cows, hundreds of

Continued next page

EXPLORING GREAT TRAILS OF NORTH AMERICAN AND GREAT BRITAIN

stone walls crossed by stiles, and expansive views, reaching as far as the mountains of the northern Lake District. In northern Michigan we were seldom out of the trees. The views were more intimate and felt less wild, even though the local fauna include bear and deer rather than sheep and cows, and the works of human hands are seldom to be seen. Perhaps we felt this way because we are used to forests and not to open grassland.

Jim Wessel Walker, a retired professor of environmental studies, is father of Ten-Gong Cont. Editor Mary Wessel Walker. He sails the Wildcat on lakes great and small in and around Michigan.



Jim and Mary beside Hadrian's Wall

Member Resume: Glenn Shea of Niantic, Connecticut

I have had the *Swallows and Amazons* books under my nose any number of times without taking special notice of them, particularly during a few weeks in 1986 spent walking the Lake District and five years working in the bookshop at the Mystic Seaport in Connecticut.

But a few years ago I began working at the Book Barn, a secondhand book shop in Niantic, Connecticut, read a few of the Ransomes as they came in and began talking them over with co-work Chuck Howard, another Ransome enthusiast. (The Barn almost never has any Ransome in stock because Chuck and I are always buying them up and pressing them on friends). In 2003 I used my tax refund check to order the Jonathan Cape hardcovers in parcels of twos and threes until I had, and had read, the entire set.

Once finished, I started on my second time through, Chuck got me copies of the videos, and then discovered the Ransome Society via their website.

It's been fun to read the TARSUS resumes and the newsletters and to discover that I am not the only non-sailor to enjoy the stories. It's been fun, too, to see people weighing in with their opinions. Though some of the books are better than others, I don't think there's a really bad one in the lot, and I, for one, think the oft-picked-on *The Picts and the Martyrs* to be perhaps the funniest book in the series. As for Ransome's illustrations versus Helen Carter's or Mary Shephard's, I think Ransome's own pictures hit just the right unsentimental note.

I'm a Connecticut native who has worked as a bookseller for almost thirty years. The Book Barn, where I'm working now, has three goats, two dogs, eighteen cats, twelve humans, seven buildings and over 250,000 used books and is a terrific place to visit (directions are on the store's website, www.bookbarnniantic.com) Any Ransome fans traveling in the area are encouraged to come on in and say "Karabadangbaraka".

—Glenn

EXPLORING IN ELBERETH: WISCONSIN DELLS

By Claire Barnett

Further north up the river from the Lake of the Hills, the Wisconsin River flows through constricted sandstone cliffs, creating wonderful rock formations. The land on both sides of the river is preserved by a university foundation, so no development mars its natural beauty.

Unfortunately, the surrounding lands are a busy tourist area with zillions of hotels, amusement parks and tacky gift shops, making summer holidays in Rio and on the Norfolk Broads seem quiet by comparison! In summer, the river is crowded with tour boats and Hullabaloes in speedboats. But in the fall, both major pests — mosquitoes and tourists — depart, and then the river is deserted and beautiful with its fall colors. That is when Elbereth and I trailer north. After launching, we pass under a narrow bridge and then head to starboard, going upstream into wider waters, until coming to The Narrows.



Shops and boat company

I never tire of seeing the fall colors on the cliffs and the rock formations. Upstream, the river widens out into a large flowage lake. There are cliffs along one side, and the wide expanse of water looks inviting. Unfortunately, it is full of tall stumps like much of the Lake of the Hills, so I limit my travel to the southwest toward Stand Rock, a famous rock pillar and the site of a Native American ceremonial. I shut off my engines and drift, enjoying the fall colors and cool breezes, and having a picnic lunch in Elbereth's snug cabin.

As we head back, I maneuver into a couple of rocky side channels just for fun. The river is quite deserted now, especially during weekdays. I continue further down river to the dam, where the tour boat docks are at the bottom of a cliff, with shops above. It looks more like a river setting in Germany than in Wisconsin.

Then we go back past the laid-up tour boats, under the narrow bridge, load up, and head home to put Elbereth to sleep for the winter. The cool weather and fall colors seem a fitting end to the year's explorations.

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.



Rocky cliffs line the shores

The raft men who moved logs down the river in the last century, called the scariest part of the river the Devil's Elbow. There, the river is stood on its side - 60 feet deep on the fathometer, and about forty feet wide. There is a sharp corner that must be really dangerous still in the summer with the big tour boats going through. The current is strong there too.

2nd Annual TARSUS Northwest Corroboree!

August 17-21, 2006

Join the tribe on a camping trip to Camp Sherwood Forest, a privately-owned former summer camp property along the shore of Willapa Bay, on the Long Beach Peninsula in Washington State. Arm-chair adventurers and non-boaters are most welcome!

Activities will include:

- Sailing & messing about in boats
- Swimming
- Hiking
- Pearl diving
- Surveying/orienteering
- Prospecting for 'gold'
- Creating and 'eeling' totems into campsites
- Bird and wildlife watching
- Signaling to Mars
- British camp-style teatime
- Outdoor cookery
- Stargazing
- Semaphore drills
- Huge corroboree each night, complete with shanty singing and storytelling
- Much more



Able seaman Akiva Krauthamer and his AP, Moti Krauthamer, try out an innovative type of boating at the 2005 Pacific NW TARS Corroboree. If you can paddle, sail, or even drift with the current, join the fun on Wallapa Bay this summer!

The Venue: This former summer camp has offered to let us use their fantastic property for our regional TARS gathering. It's about 1.5 hrs. from Portland, OR, and about 3 hrs. from Seattle.

The beach in front of the camp is very shallow--you can wade 100 feet away from shore at high tide, and that 100 feet is all sand at low tide. Boats with a deep draft or solid centerboard will not be able to moor there, but there is moorage space for a fee/night at the marina about one mile away, and easy road access. There is also a boat ramp that costs \$5. The smaller flat-bottom boats can tie up to the camp's swimming dock, or anchor in the shallow water, and they will be sitting on sand when the tide is out. This is an ideal location for those learning to sail. The property owners will have their motor boat in the water for rescues! They also have an inflatable kayak and several canoes, with life jackets, for non-windy days. There is space for tent camping and we have access to an old lodge with refrigerators and running water. Showers are wood-fired and toilets are in outhouses. We are allowed to have campfires as well as use camp stoves.

The Cost: \$10 activity fee per person (no charge for 'ship's babies' under 5 years old) plus \$2-\$5 per person per night for camping (depending upon number of registrations received). Families or groups will be responsible for bringing their own food and camping equipment. Families that bring boats will be responsible for their own boat launch and moorage fees.

Registration info: All TARS members and like-minded family & friends are welcome! Anyone interested in participating is urged to contact Elizabeth Jolley, Chief Corroboree Coordinator, for registration information as soon as possible so she can plan appropriately. Please send her your name, email address, phone number, number of people and ages of those in your group, and which days you plan to attend. Her email is: erjolley@aol.com and her phone number is: 503-644-9501 (Elizabeth lives in Portland, Oregon, so please note that she's on Pacific Time).

OREGON FAMILY MAKES THE TREK...

Editor's Note: If you're been toying with the idea attending the international TARS gathering (AGM) in the Lake District in May, Elizabeth's article should help you start planning. TARSUS member Avi Lank writes to recommend that if you plan to go, you should book your accommodations right away!!

By Elizabeth Jolley

For three magical weeks, our family stepped into the shoes of Walkers, Bracketts and Callums, exploring the reaches of Coniston Water and special places along its shores. Our 'Ship's Papers' included Captain Matt, First Mate Elizabeth, Able Seamen Ben, Caroline & Helen, Ship's Boy Will and the friendliest of our natives, Grandma Jane!

Lucky us, we rented a cottage at Bank Ground Farm, a.k.a. 'Holly Howe'. Our first find was the Lake spread out below us through the bus windows—just as AR described it—an inland sea, ready for our exploration. Bank Ground Farm, also seen first from just above it, evoked clear memories of 'Signaling to Mars', as the side we approached was just the view pictured in *Winter Holidays*. From that moment on, we spent many hours searching for all of the spots AR drew and described in his books.

'Kanchenjunga' was not hard to find, towering above the small village. We could even see the huge cairn on top from our cottage! The hike up was more difficult. After climbing the steep rocky trail for several hours, we all had much admiration for those intrepid climbers who didn't 'go by the path'. We searched the cairn for loose stones and a cache, but had to imagine adding our names to the little scrap of paper and searching our pockets for a new coin.

Another day, we marched down the narrow lake road to a trail leading up into a coppice. As we crossed a tiny stone-filled beck, 'The Dogs' Home' came into sight across a small clearing. AB Helen, decked out in pigtailed already, handed her spectacles to her younger brother, and the two struck a pose outside the little croft, then peered out through the open window, while their captain snapped photos. 'Dick' & 'Dot' then reappeared as modern-day children, ready to hike back to the lake shore to ride on the *Gondola*—the restored Victorian-era boat that once again takes passengers across Coniston Water.

Wet weather could not keep us home on the day we tackled finding 'Swallowdale'. There are many opinions about where the "real" Swallowdale is. We discovered one possibility up the hills from Brown Howe, almost at the south end of the lake. Following a small beck, we passed a place

where a waterfall might have existed in a wetter summer, then found ourselves in a little dell, with a small but useable 'Knickerbockerbreaker', a somewhat flat camping area, and a really good 'Watchtower Rock'. Not far past the beginning of this very wild path, a wide trail led us to 'Trout Tarn', and above that Beacon Fell, once used by Vikings to warn of coastal invasions.

On the launch *Ransome* we enjoyed an Arthur Ransome tour of the lake. Our tour guide had to ask us to stop answering all the quiz questions, and let someone else have a chance! From the water, we happily identified several 'Beckfoot' possibilities, a definite 'High Greenland', the 'Amazon River', 'Octopus Lagoon', several places where one might imagine charcoal burners at work in the woods, and best of all, 'Wild Cat Island'. From the north, it appeared as little more than a lump at the side of the lake, covered with trees, with the high rocky banks that John swam past. Motoring past the south end, the launch operator swung the boat in close to the island for the best view into the 'Secret Harbour'. Our eyes were glued to the rocks, finding the spot where Titty watched the dipper, imagining *Swallow* and *Amazon* safely moored in the little cove, figuring out where the leading lights had been placed to make a straight line in.

The next day we rented a little electric boat and puttered our way down the lake. Sailing boats are available for rent, but we were all landlubbers at that time: no real



Will and Helen in the remains of the "igloo"

PILGRIMAGE TO THE LAND OF THE S&A'S



Helen found Scarab on Wildcat Island.

sailors among us. So we became Rogers for a while and made the most of our engine power! Wading ashore, we spread out, voices raised in excitement over our finds: “I found the Landing Place!” “This must be where they set up the tents.” “Yes, because here’s Susan’s fireplace!” AB Helen climbed out on to ‘Titty’s rock’, after which we all had a ‘ration of chocolate’ for our hard work!

A ride on the launch to the Park-A-Mor dock put us very close to ‘the Igloo’, visible not far off the road in the cop-pice. It is clearly the exact sort of old stone hut the S, A & D’s used in that cold winter long ago, but it has fallen in since AR’s time. Our youngest AB and the Ship’s Boy were just able to clamber in, standing atop the fallen rocks of the ancient roof.

This was a very chilly day, perhaps in honor of our visit to a spot out of WH, so we hiked quickly along the road to warm ourselves up—nobody had gone through any ice, but our feet were still cold! We hoped to find access to the shore near the Landing Place, across from Wildcat Island. Climbing a stile over a stone wall, we followed a path through a wooded area and arrived at the shore. Our favorite island lay about 50 feet from us, with a narrow strait of lake water between. We pretended we had just escaped the geese at Dixon’s farm (and wished we had some fresh ‘molasses’ to munch on!), then we scrambled to the top of a tiny headland. From there, we discovered a realistic ‘Horseshoe Cove’ filled with grasses around the edge.

As this was a fairly dry year, we also caught sight of a perfect ‘Pike Rock’, and could easily picture the ship-wrecked survivors swimming to the headland to be rescued by Nancy & Peggy ‘in proper style’!

There are places we haven’t found yet-- High Topps, the Peak in Darien, the skating tarn, Dixon’s Farm, the ‘four firs in a row’--but we’ll be back another year. Perhaps we’ll see you there, searching for your favorite places from the best books in the world!

Books that helped us on our way:

In the Footsteps of the Swallows and Amazons

By Claire Kendall-Price
1993 Wild Cat Publishing
Wheldrake, York


In Search of Swallows & Amazons:

Arthur Ransome’s Lakeland

By Roger Wardale
1996 Sigma Press
Wilmslow, Cheshire

Both of these books are available from the TARS Book-store, and at the Coniston Tourist Information Center, a helpful place for explorers!

Elizabeth Jolley lives in Portland, Oregon, and is organizing the 2nd annual Pacific Northwest Regional TARS corroboree on the Long Beach Peninsula in Washington State, Aug. 17-21, 2006 (see page 5 for details).



Ahoy Readers!

**Signals from
TARSUS
wants to hear
from you!**

**Contributions from all sorts of adventurers are most
welcome (even the armchair variety!)**

**Deadline for the April issue will be March 1st.
For details about submission length, format and
topics, contact Debra Alderman, editor, via e-mail:
dalderman@antiochsea.edu**

TIDBITS FROM TAR SUS

Announcements

Signals gets new look

You may have noticed that *Signals* is sporting a new look this issue. As the new editor I am experimenting with a little more of a newsletter look and slightly shorter articles. I hope you like the new format and will consider contributing articles, photos, and other materials for future issues. Deadline for the April issue will be **March 1st**. Contact me for submission format and length guidelines. Thanks! Debra Alderman, *Signals* Editor: dalderman@antiochsea.edu

Welcome new members!

Since the publication of the last *Signals* newsletter, the following folks have joined TARSUS:

Meta Arnold, Student, New Jersey
Andrew Ashcroft, Adult, Arizona
Peter David Flockencier, Junior, Illinois
Pam, Leon, Ted and Emma Hall, Family, California
Martha (Duffy) McHugh, Adult, Maryland
Mary Momdjian, Adult, California
Don Rice, Adult, Ohio
Mikaela Springsteen, Junior, New Jersey
Louis Springsteen, Adult, New Jersey

TARSUS contact information

Dave Thewlis is the TARS U.S. coordinator.
Please note his new address:
4390 Chaffin Lane
McKinleyville, CA 95519-8028
dave@arthur-ransome.org
707-840-9391 (work phone, messages)
415-946-3454 (fax)

Resumes of fellow TARSUS members:

Dave says he can supply a complete new resume file to any TARSUS member who requests, but will have to charge about \$3.50 for it in printing and mailing costs.

Arthur Ransome on the World Wide Web:

Need a little work or study break? Maybe it's been a while since you've been to the TARS international web site: www.arthur-ransome.org
There are on-line quizzes, info to help you plan your pilgrimage to the Lake District, stuff to buy and much more. Check it out.

Don't forget to renew your TARSUS membership!

You should have received a renewal notice with your packet of TARS publications in November. Check with Dave Thewlis if you need more info.

Amazon

Publications 2006



The 2006 Amazon Publications offering will be

Ransome in China 1927: Arthur's Encounters with War Lords, Revolutionaries and Missee Lee
by David Jones. Hardback, 200 pages with 60 illustrations.

Our 2006 book takes a detailed look at Ransome at the height of his career as a political journalist, before he abandoned journalism in favor of Swallows and Amazons. *Ransome in China 1927* brings together a fascinating mixture of private and public correspondence from Ransome as he sails for China, travels the country meeting warlords and revolutionary leaders and returns home from Peking via the Trans-Siberian railway.

We can see how quickly he grasped the very complex situation that prevailed in China in the first four months of 1927 by means of his masterly reports and letters sent to the *Manchester Guardian*. The texts are supported with numerous illustrations and maps, some in color. Perhaps of even greater interest to TARS members is the book's retrospective insight into the origin and construction of *Missee Lee* thirteen years later.

David Jones is just the person to have looked in depth at this important area of Ransome's life as he once kept the Cabinet Office in London informed on Far East political and Defense matters by weekly reports as a member of the Joint Intelligence Staff (Far East) based at Singapore.

The contribution for TARSUS members will be \$42 to cover printing and overseas postage.

Please send your contribution, including your name as you wish it to appear on the list of subscribers, and the address to which you wish the book send (if you will NOT be attending the 2006 Annual General Meeting) to:

Dave Thewlis, TARSUS Coordinator
4390 Chaffin Lane
McKinleyville, CA 95519-8028