



Signals from TARSUS & North Pole News--January 2014

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Ship's Papers--Important Information for the crew



View from the Helm

By Robin Marshall, TARSUS Coordinator
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I hope you all had a Happy Christmas, and best wishes for 2014, which I hope will be good for everyone.

On reading my message from last January, I mentioned meeting with Eric Abraham, who came down to Florida with his traveling display of funtastical works of art. Sadly, I learnt that Eric passed away last September; I always enjoyed meeting him and seeing his latest creations. He was a very keen TARSUS member and will be sorely missed.

You will notice in this newsletter and in Signals a plea from Alan Harkin regarding Amazon Publications. I urge you to take note of his plea, and think about subscribing to the latest publication; it may be the last. Also in Signals, the yellow supplement on the Barnstaple IAGM has the incorrect phone number for The Barnstaple Hotel. It should be 01271 376221.

I also noticed another plea in the same issue for volunteers, a problem we all face, as to date there has been reluctance by anyone to take on my own post. It is still open, folks!

So far I am very happy to say there has been a good response to the request for renewals, so if you have not got round to it yet, grab that checkbook. I would remind you to contact me first if you are unsure if have already paid, before mailing a check. I had a few members last year who forgot and paid twice. Unlike last year, I am getting prompt notice of any who pay by PayPal, so I hope I will not be sending reminders again to ones already paid.

Have a great winter. Keep warm and have fun! Robin



Greetings From the North

By Ian Sacré, TARSCanada Coordinator

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My goodness, didn't 2013 rush by in a dreadful hurry? Here it is mid January already, the sun has long started its climb northward, though for many in this northern winter frozen hinterland, it cannot reach the spring equinox fast enough! Our deep chills, ice storms and power outages will have caused many of our fellow Tarry members a significant amount of hardship. Opportunities to duplicate the resourcefulness of the Arthur Ransome cast of characters could, I am sure, have well been done without and I rather think that even Susan may have been hard put to cook a Christmas Turkey Dinner with all the trimmings on a camp fire! I suspect though that Roger could have been pressed into turning the spitted bird provided he was kept amply supplied with currant buns! But not to make light of it, for many it has been a very hard winter and we still have some way to go yet.

But when we read of the inspiring real life adventures of the Sir Ernest Shackleton and his terrifying eight- or nine-hundred mile small boat voyage from Elephant Island to South Georgia in the southern ocean and the skill of Frank Worsley, Captain of the *Endurance* and Shackleton's navigator on the small craft voyage, it perhaps tends to put our trials and tribulations with our Canadian weather into a more meaningful context. Before Shackleton was Scotsman John Rae from the Orkney Islands who, on behalf of the Hudson's Bay Company, explored and travelled thousands of miles in the Canadian Arctic often 'wintering over' under horrifying conditions, as is beautifully told by author Ken McGoogan in his book, 'Fatal Passage'. Before Rae or Shackleton was the incredible small boat voyage of Captain William Bligh. I feel that these characters and many others may well have served to stimulate AR's imagination and provide him with titbits of material for the books he wrote for us. But I would like to think that having read about these adventurers, we too may dream and live a life of 'high adventure' regardless of our age.

Our Canadian TARS membership grew by one this year as we were joined by Gordon Proudfoot.

Welcome aboard, Gordon! We also welcome back into the fold, after an absence of several years, Ross Cossar the fold, after an absence of several years, Ross Cossar and family. As of this date of writing we have twenty-five fully paid up TARS Canada members for 2014.

Names and Membership Numbers have been dispatched to TARS HQ along with a big bag of gold doubloons paid to me in the form of subscriptions. (Actually 625 pounds sterling, including donations paid to HQ by non-romantic PayPal!). I expect I shall hear from the remaining five after the Christmas Holiday dust is well and truly settled.

I was grateful to hear from a number of Tarry members who took the time to provide me with minor updates regarding their address changes and other data. This information has also been sent along to HQ for updating the master records.

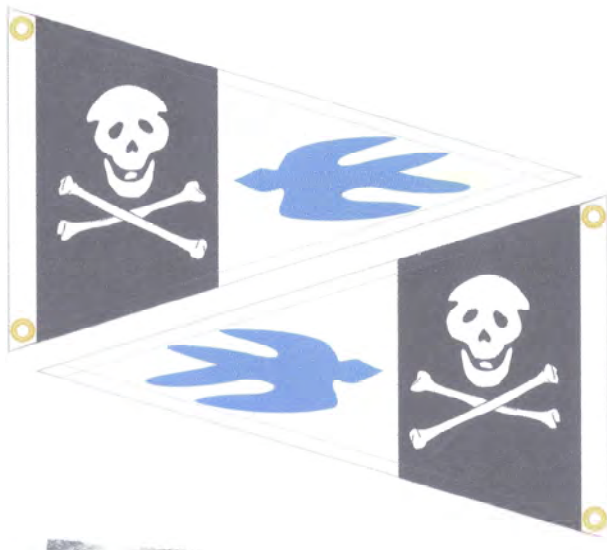
The 2013 Mixed Moss publication took its time in getting here, as many of you experienced. My own copy did not arrive until the 18th December, some two months after it had departed the printer. The 'experts' are looking into the matter to see if we can determine the reason if any for the delay. It would appear that we will need to allow at least six to eight weeks if surface mail is the method of choice in the future. You will have read in the 2013 Mixed Moss that the editor, Nicholas Hancox, is looking for contributions for the publication. It is intended to publish the next edition in the spring rather than autumn, as has been the practice in the past. Nicholas has requested appropriate contributions by March.

While on the subject of publications, please remember that our editor, Elizabeth Jolley, is always on the lookout for material for Signals from TARSUS & North Pole News. It takes a tremendous amount of effort for Elizabeth to produce this publication, which can only continue to be successful if we contribute to it. Anything even slightly Tarry would, I am sure, be welcome.

Finally, as some may know, the Swallows and Amazons burgee has not been available from the UK TARS Stall for some time. I have therefore looked into the possibility of having some made of exactly the same design as the original, but on this continent. I was successful in this endeavour and found a flag maker who can make them for us if there is any interest. The verbal quote I received was between \$17.50 and \$19.50 each for an appliquéd cut and stitched flag depending on size. Digitally printed burgees on polyester fabric would cost about the same. By having them made on this continent there would likely be savings in overseas postage costs. Between Canada and the United States we have in excess of 100 TARS members, which would lead me to believe that this project might be viable. The attached picture shows both sides of the burgee. If any member is interested in having a burgee of their own perhaps they would be kind enough to let me know by email: gallivanterthree@telus.net If enough interest is shown I will see about moving things to the next step. On the next page is a picture of the burgee in question shown from either side:

I hope the coming year is fulfilling for everyone and once again if anyone is coming to Vancouver please let me know so that we can get together for at least a gam and a meal.

Wishing you all fair winds and calm seas! Ian Sacré



TARS Website has a new address: <http://www.arthur-ransome.org.uk>

All Things Ransome, a website devoted to keeping articles, artwork, and anything related to Ransome, is online at: <http://www.allthingsransome.net>

Membership Information:

Member Benefits

The descriptions below apply to **TARSUS** and **TARS Canada** only. Members in other countries receive the publications listed, with the exception of Signals from TARSUS/North Pole News, and pay their local equivalent of the UK prices.

FAMILY Member: \$62.75 (Must register the names of all members of the family)

Family Members receive:

Mixed Moss, the yearly Literary Magazine

Signals, the news from UK Regions and headquarters and some overseas groups, three times per year

Outlaw, the newsletter for Junior members

Signals from TARSUS/North Pole News, the quarterly newsletter of TARSUS & TARS Canada.

ADULT Member: \$52.50

Adult Members receive Mixed Moss, Signals and Signals from TARSUS/North Pole News.

SENIOR Member: \$44.00 *Please note this is a new rate for 2014*****

Over 65 years of age you are eligible for Senior Membership & receive the same publications as Adult Members.

STUDENT Member: \$35.00

Student members must be engaged in full-time study. They receive the same publications as Adult Members.

JUNIOR Member: \$17.50

Junior members, under 17 years, receive Signals and Signals from TARSUS/North Pole News, plus Outlaw.

To apply for TARSUS or TARS Canada membership, please complete Application Form (next page)

Renewal of Membership
THE ARTHUR RANSOME SOCIETY - TARS US & CANADA MEMBERS

Subscriptions for the calendar year 2014 fall due on **1 January 2014**

Please pay now while you remember! This will save the work of having to track you down to determine your subscription intentions and will ensure that you will not miss any publications in 2014!

New Members Exempt

If you joined TARS in October, November or December 2013 then your subscription covers calendar year 2014 as well, and there is no need for further payment until January 2015.

Senior or Pensioner status: If you are 65 or over then you are eligible for the Senior rate.

Additional Voluntary Contribution:

The subscription, payable by all members, covers the basic operation of the Society, including all the benefits that each member can expect to receive. Any additional donations will be reserved for spending on additional activities or projects. This may include: TARS Library; the Ship's Baby Fund; making donations to outside bodies (such as the Nancy Blackett Trust or Horstead Centre); or helping to increase funding for regional "Books for Schools" schemes. Donations to TARSUS/NORTH POLE NEWS are also welcome to help with the newsletter and prizes for competitions or promotions.

Name:				Membership No:	
*Type of Membership:					
Junior (overseas up to 16)	\$17.50	<input type="checkbox"/>		Family (overseas)	\$67.25 <input type="checkbox"/>
Student (any age in full-time education)	\$35.00	<input type="checkbox"/>		Senior (overseas 65+)	\$44.00 <input type="checkbox"/>
Adult (overseas)	\$52.50	<input type="checkbox"/>		Corporate (overseas)	\$105.00 <input type="checkbox"/>
Additional <u>Voluntary</u> Contribution \$ _____	Please use my contribution as follows: _____ (You may indicate more than one use; if you do please advise the proportion to go to each. If you leave this blank the Trustees will decide how to allocate your contribution.)				
TOTAL Subscription + Voluntary Contribution \$					

US MEMBERS: Please make cheques (in US Dollars) payable to "The Arthur Ransome Society" and send with this sheet to:

Robin Marshall Phone (941) 896-9169 E-mail: robin@arthur-ransome.org.uk
210 - 18th St NW. Bradenton, FL 34205-6845

CANADA MEMBERS: Please make cheques (in Canadian Dollars) payable to **Ian Sacré**, and send with this sheet to:

Ian Sacré Phone (604) 984-2295 E-mail: gallivanterthree@telus.net
750 Donegal Place, North Vancouver, BC V7N 2X5

Or pay by **PayPal** with a **credit card** at: www.tarseast.co.uk/TARS_Subscription_Renewals.html
 Be sure to have your **member number** ready, and click on the appropriate "**Overseas Member**" box.
 If you have any questions please contact Robin Marshall for assistance.

Kanchenjunga's Cairn--places we've been and our adventures

A Duffers Tale

By Ian Sacré

At an earlier time we lived in Manotick, Ontario, a small hamlet twenty-five kilometers south of Ottawa on the Rideau River. Manotick, which means 'island' in the Algonquin Indian language, was named by the founder, Moss Dickinson, in 1859 when a weir was built across the west branch of the river and Mr. Dickinson obtained the water rights and constructed a mill out of stone. In addition to the grist mill he also built a carding mill, a saw mill and a bung factory. The mill was renamed Watson's Mill when it was bought in 1946. It is now a historic site and still an operating gristmill.

We lived on the island, which was not as isolated as one might think because there were bridges connecting the island to the mainland on both the island's east and west shores. The west branch, north of the weir and mill, is shallow and almost dry in the middle of summer, but the east branch forms part of the Rideau River Canal, a shallow but navigable waterway that runs from Ottawa all the way to Kingston, Ontario; 202 kilometres or 126 miles and 45 locks away to the south west.

Many years before our sojourn in Manotick we had inherited a very heavy cedar and canvas covered Peterborough Canoe complete with integral sponsons which were intend to make the craft more stable. Weighing well over 125 pounds, it could accommodate our family of four and the dog with ease. But portaging the canoe was a major effort, and it was not exactly the fastest craft to propel manually, even with all four of us paddling hard. Canoe expeditions were therefore somewhat limited in scope and an exercise in stamina and determination not often found in large measure in two leggy teenagers. The frequent question "How far is it?" can only be asked so many times before the skipper finally gets the message. My wife's diplomatic "Don't you think we've come far enough?" or "There's a lovely swimming and picnic spot over there", often brought a welcome and timely end to our trips.

And so it was, early one summer and without telling the family, I started considering the possibility of increasing our canoe range with the aid of a cunningly mounted outboard motor at the stern of the canoe. After thinking about various mechanical solutions to the engine-mounting problem on a double-ended craft, I decided that a strong transverse member made of ash, firmly secured to the gunwales with hook bolts, projecting over the side, off to port, would serve as a mount for the small but old outboard motor which I just happened to have stashed in the garage. I decided to keep the whole project secret until the system was perfected, and then with suitable smugness I would suggest to the family that we go for a cruise down the canal, perhaps all the way to Kingston on Lake Ontario!

A week or two later I had the motor bracket finished and was ready for trials. I did not want an audience because one dare not swagger like a pirate when one is not sure what the outcome is likely to be. So when the family announced that they were off early one Saturday morning to a craft fair, I decided I would seize the moment and conduct trials while they were away. On enquiring innocently when they would return, "Oh", my wife said, "We'll be gone all morning I expect". "Don't hurry on my account", said I. Then as soon as they were out of sight, I sprang into action, nearly getting a hernia as I lifted, shoved and heaved the dead weight of the canoe onto the top of my car. Outboard? Check! Fuel? Check! New bracket? Check! Life jacket? Check! Feeling like Mr. Toad in *The Wind in the Willows*, I sped off to the launching place amongst the reeds just south of the island's east bridge, but less than a minute's drive from our house.

Dead calm, flat water, blue sky, no one about; perfect conditions for trials. Off came the canoe, which I slid into the water amidst the reeds. On went the bracket, and then the outboard was mounted. Now I should mention a little personal history by way of colour. By profession I am a mariner, and for many years sailed the seven seas, and finally reached the lofty position of Captain of Foreign-Going cargo ships trading worldwide. Later I spent a number of years as a Marine Surveyor, verifying the stability calculations of ships about to load

grain, timber and other products for ocean-going passages. So I was familiar with vessel stability and all that it entailed--free surface effect, metacentric heights, shifts of centres of gravity and buoyancy--all the mysteries of the black art that ensures ships and small craft remain right side up! So the possible small problems arising from an outboard motor weighing only forty pounds hanging over the side of a canoe were a piece of cake! I knew the forces involved and what to do about them. Or so I thought!

Poling the canoe out of the weeds, I paddled clear and found that I had to sit well over to starboard to offset the weight of the motor to port, a situation I might add, that I had fully anticipated. I gingerly started the motor and then grinning, I am sure, like the proverbial Cheshire Cat, off I went on the canal under power! Hot "dang", as my younger brother was wont to say, it worked! Down the river I went, fairly scudding along, the old canoe going at a clip faster than she'd ever gone in her entire life! Would the canvas skin be peeled off at such a speed? I hoped not. Finally, after a couple of miles I decided I'd gone far enough and it was time to go back and get home with the canoe before the family arrived. The 180-degree turn was made, albeit cautiously, because I had noticed that the transverse stability of my craft was decidedly iffy with the side-mounted motor. I was commanding a very tippy canoe indeed!

By now, of course, the morning had advanced, and as I approached the bridge I saw a number of fishermen dangling lines from the bridge while their families played on the grassy bank of the river below the bridge. Oh heck, now there was an audience! Then it happened. As I approached the reeds and shallow water, I knew I had to shut down and tilt the motor, and quietly paddle the last few yards to the shore. With thoughts of stability totally gone from my mind, I moved to the centre line of the canoe, and reached to close the throttle and tilt the engine. My weight shift caused the canoe to capsize instantly, dumping me into a mess of eel grass and reeds, frogs, toads and perhaps even the odd muskrat, from which I emerged seconds later with grass and heaven knows what else hanging from my head as I stood up in all of three feet of water! I righted the canoe and waded ashore, trying to behave all the while as if capsizing was a perfectly normal, seaman-like way to disembark from such a craft, as I removed the water-borne debris from around my head and shoulders. On seeing the excitement, my audience on the bank seemed to rapidly grow to some twenty or more gawking souls, who though very amused, didn't actually laugh even though they were having a free morning's entertainment. Indeed, two or three actually came to my aid and helped me load the canoe onto the car after I had removed the drowned outboard and bracket!

To add insult to injury, I arrived home just as my family was returning from the craft fair. "Daddy", said my youngest daughter, as I stood with the water pooling in the driveway, "Why are you all wet"? Regrettably, it was one of those times when I could hardly say, "Ask your mother!", for there are occasions in our lives when we are just plain duffers and that particular canoe capsizing was one of the many times in my life that I felt like a complete twit!



Dipping our Hands—personal relationships with the books

My first Ransome book – Swallowdale

By Adam Quinan

The very first Arthur Ransome book I read was Peter Duck, which I found by chance in my school library. I read and enjoyed it, not worrying about the “unrealistic” plot, as I had no other Ransome stories to compare it with. It was an exciting adventure, which certainly led me to want to read more. I eventually found and read all of the other books in the library in their green bound Cape editions (but without dust covers).

My parents were not unaware of Ransome. In fact my father worked for the same oil company as an Altounyan cousin of the original family that Ransome transformed into the Walkers, and I remember my mother telling me of the Armenian family who became English in the books. My parents, as far as I know, had not read him as children themselves and while happy for me to read them, did not think of buying me my own copies.

For years we never owned a Ransome book, but by a strange means one book finally came into our household on a permanent basis. It didn't start out that way though. It started as just another Ransome book borrowed from the library to re-read. However, this library was the British Council library in Baghdad, where my father was working for the oil company. While we had it out on loan, the Iraqi government had a falling out with the British government over some political issues and the British Council library was suddenly shut down and its staff expelled along with the other diplomats. Eventually, the British diplomats returned after several years and the British Council library re-opened in new premises with new books. My parents tried to return the long overdue Swallowdale and were told that it had been written off and we could keep it.

Because it was always I around, I re-read Swallowdale a number of times as I grew up, even in my teenage years. I became familiar with the exciting, exhilarating downwind rush to Horseshoe Bay with its frighteningly sudden end on Pike Rock. I dived with John to the murky depths to salvage Swallow and felt the misery of the marooned sailors who found a new refuge in a delightful valley, with its own cave. Later I followed the explorers up Kanchenjunga (or the Old Man of Coniston, as the natives call it) with a party of TARS at an AGM. We did see the Isle of Man, where my parents settled after leaving the Middle East. I admit to never having been lost on the moors in the fog, but I have sailed through fog listening to the lonely hoots from a lighthouse (oops – wrong book!) to guide our way.

I later bought all the Ransome books and re-read them very now and then and read them to my children as they grew up. However, I still love Swallowdale and consider it my favourite Ransome book as it has been part of my life for so long.

Pocket Knives of the Swallows and Amazons

By Charles Preston

As our pirates and explorers sailed and camped throughout the books sited in the Lake District, knives were essential tools in their adventures. Susan might have used a kitchen knife in camp, but that would have been somewhat dangerous to carry about; hence folding pocket knives (also called clasp knives) were the thing. From AR's references to them, it is clear that they were of several types.

The knife lost by Peggy and found by Roger on Wildcat Island in Chapter 9 of SA, also mentioned in PM as “Peggy's knife”, was definitely a seaman's knife, as shown in the drawing at the end of the chapter in SA. A seaman's knife is commonly (but not always) made all of steel, with no scales on the handle. It usually has a sheepsfoot blade, a marlinspike for splicing rope, and sometimes a “shackler” which one uses to do something to a shackle, but I have never figured out just what or how.

The “pocket knife with a file in it” that Nancy got for Christmas in Chapter 4 of WH had a metal file (which the crew promptly wore out), and we learn in PM Chapter 6 that it had “a lot of tweaks in it, tin-openers and corkscrews and things.” It was very likely, I think, a Swiss Army knife, manufactured by Victorinox since 1891, and the only type I know of likely to include a metal file. The distinguishing feature of all but the simplest

ones is their many “tweaks”. The typical medium-sized modern one pictured below has 13 tweaks: a large blade, small blade, scissors, bottle opener/screwdriver, can opener/screwdriver, reamer, etc.—and a wood saw, but no metal file. The more expensive and larger models (some big enough to choke an elephant) have up to 50 features. A few modern models include a metal file. Most Swiss Army knives have bright red scales. All these knives are of quite high quality.

Susan would have favored a common “camper’s” knife, also known as a “Boy Scout” knife, having a blade, can opener, screwdriver, bottle opener and reamer. This type of clasp knife would be very handy for opening cans of pemmican and bottles of ginger beer. Lacking pockets, she might have carried it (closed, of course) on a lanyard around her neck. A satisfactory knife like this could be had in 1930 for about \$1.50. But today the ones listed on [Amazon.com](https://www.amazon.com) range from about \$15 to about \$85, the difference probably reflecting better materials (e.g. the ability of the blade to take and hold a keen edge). The scales used to be bone, but now are usually simulated bone, made of plastic--usually black or brown--rather than the yellow of the knife shown below:



Seaman's Knife



Swiss Army Knife with "tweaks"



Camper's Knife

Most, or all, of the other adventurers had pocket knives, which could have been either camper knives or plain pocket knives having one or two blades and no other tweaks. We know that in Chapter 16 of SA, Roger is given a pocket knife if he can meet a swimming test. And we learn there that Titty has one, with which she has been defacing trees by cutting blazes on them (tut, tut, Titty!). And Dick certainly used a pocket knife to clean the trout and skin the rabbit in PM.

In the 1930’s, whetstones were used to keep one’s knife sharp, but that requires a degree of skill. Today, various “gadgets” for sharpening would be more practical for our adventurers.

In an article on pocket knives, it would not do to omit a few safety rules :

SUSAN SAYS-

- Never run or walk around with the blade open- close it!
- Never "stab" with a pocket knife- they are not designed for it, and the blade could accidentally close on your fingers, resulting in a very bad cut.
- If you whittle with a knife, always whittle AWAY from your hand or other body part; i.e. Hold the whittling area AWAY from your hand; never cut in a way that, if the blade slips, it could cut you or someone else.
- Make sure all your friends (any local natives) are too far away from you for your knife to reach them as you use it. Maintain a "safety circle".
- Keep your knife sharp; a dull blade encourages excessive force, which could cause a slip and an accident.
- It hardly seems necessary to say twhen closing a pocket knife, keep fingers out of the way!

CAUTION:

If you are traveling to the UK, be aware that in the last 60 years, the government has adopted very restrictive laws about knives, including pocket knives. Some states in the US also have unexpected laws on this subject. Go to www.wikipedia.org and search “ knife legislation” for information.

Ship's Library—books we've read and want to share

Ponies at Seven Islands Farm, written by TARSUS member Kate Crosby

(Available at <http://www.amazon.com/Ponies-at-Seven-Islands-Farm>)

Book Review by Hannah Hodgson

I remember when I was ten or eleven, how I would always seem to have a book in my hands. The library was (and is) walking distance from our house, and I would come home with my arms completely full of new worlds to discover and explore. I remember one time I brought home *Misty of Chincoteague*. It was the first of many adventures with horses that I was soon to discover. It captured my imagination, and I would imagine the feel of a horse beneath me as I galloped off into the sunset.

Now recently, at sixteen years old, I read Kate Crosby's *Ponies at Seven Islands Farm*. It was like, for a moment, going back in time to the days I would spend with Misty, curled up on a mat in the sun, or with a blanket wrapped around me and a cup of hot cocoa. It took me back to dreaming of my own wide-open field with my own chestnut horse, galloping through the sunflowers and the daisies. If I were still ten, Callie, the main character, would be among my many imaginary friends, and together we'd venture off into the wide unknown on our well-loved ponies.

This book was a very fun read, with a hint of mystery and a streak of adventure. Callie was a lovable character, and I enjoyed spending a couple days with her. Yes, I did read this book in a matter of two days. I was caught up in the adventure that is lovingly portrayed through Kate Crosby's beautiful prose. If I ever have a family, this is a book I would love my kids to read.

Crosby is a wonderful author and this book is perfect for 8-12 year olds with a love for books, adventure, horses, or just a really fun time!

Book Review by Katrina Elms

The book *Ponies at Seven Islands Farm* was well written and very interesting for what I believe is a family-friendly book about love and friendship. This book was slow at the beginning, but gradually moved forward as you discovered the plot and developing knowledge of the characters. The love of animals was big in this story and I developed a connection with the main character, as I've been very interested in animals. The book needed a bit more description but it was clear about the main ideas, the plot, the theme, the characters, the conflict and the setting. After a while the story fit in place perfectly and it made the story move on in a way that made you not want it to end. It was also well based so everything fit together in order so there was no problem with the changing of settings and the jumping around of the characters. This story was also well balanced so it is a good story for all ages.

I really enjoyed the way this book was put together and I hope Kate Crosby will continue her writing because I'll be waiting for another one of her books.

Book Review by Elizabeth Jolley

I am very proud of our own TARSUS member, Kate Crosby, for her well-written book, *Ponies at Seven Islands Farm*, a fun read for pre-teens and anyone who loves horses! Kate uses all the best features of a good tale: likeable characters, well-described settings, a bit of mystery, and a strong family backing for our main character, Callie. Detailed descriptions of the farm unfold as the children move in & explore. Friends are made, both human and, more importantly, animal, and a mysterious neighbor becomes important to the rest of the tale. This book would make a great gift for young readers, and should be on your family's bookshelf. I'm looking forward to the next literary adventure Kate brings us!

“A Thrilling Unknown”: Keeping AR’s Reputation Alive

By Christopher Cory

The weekly short story in the September 23 *New Yorker Magazine*, “Bad Dreams,” by Tessa Hadley, has a long opening passage about the Swallows and Amazons books. The characters’ idyllic world is a foil for a slightly rebellious little girl who one night awakes and very quietly turns over all the living room furniture. Her mother hears nothing, and in the morning concludes it was done by her father in a moment of stress that neither husband nor wife wants to acknowledge, sets the room to rights, and clearly will never clear up her mistake.

The story is a bit chilling (and probably too subtle for virtually all children who might read “Signals”). Nonetheless, this passage, in a major, upscale US publication, is a boost in recognition for the Ransome S&A books (except, of course, for readers who think the author made up the whole Swallows and Amazons passage, and for those who don’t bother reading *New Yorker* stories at all).

It’s been a good year for US awareness of AR. In the last 12 months the *New York Times Book Review* also gave a major (full page) review to the new (and to me, absorbing) book by Roland Chambers about Ransome’s years in Russia as a correspondent and intelligence operative, *The Last Englishman: The Double Life of Arthur Ransome*.

In the *New Yorker* story, the passage ends with an odd twist, but it begins as only a fan could:

“In the real book she loved, ‘Swallows and Amazons,’ six children spent their summers in perfect freedom, sailing dinghies on a lake, absorbed in adventures and rivalries that were half invented games and half truth, pushing across the threshold of safety into a thrilling unknown. All the details in the book had the solidity of life, though it wasn’t her own life – she didn’t have servants or boats or a lake or an absent father in the Navy. She had read all the other books in the series, too, and she acted out their stories with her friends at school, although they lived in a city and none of them had ever been sailing. The world of ‘*Swallows and Amazons*’ existed in a dimension parallel to their own, touching it only in their games. They had a ‘*Swallows and Amazons*’ club, and took turns bringing in ‘grub’ to eat, ‘grog’ and ‘pemmican’; they sewed badges, and wrote notes in secret code. All of them wanted to be Nancy Blackett, the strutting pirate girl, though they would settle for Titty Walker, sensitive and watchful.”

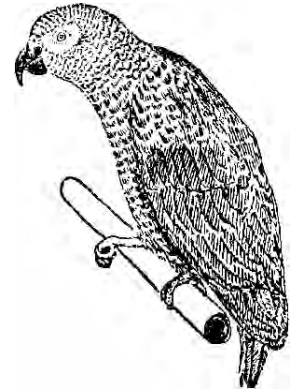
Then the perfect weather darkens as the girl recalls the dream that woke her, a fantasy of how the kids came out in real life. (Semi spoiler alert: AR did NOT write this):

“Now the child seemed to see the impersonal print of the dream epilogue, written on the darkness in front of her eyes. ‘*John and Roger both went on t’o*, it began, in a businesslike voice. Of course, the words weren’t actually in front of her eyes, and parts of what was written were elusive when she sought them; certain sentences, though, were scored into her awareness as sharply as if she’d heard them read aloud. ‘*Roger drowned at sea in his twenties*.’ Roger was the youngest of them all, the ship’s boy, in whom she had only ever been mildly interested: this threw him into a terrible new prominence. ‘*John suffered with a bad heart. The Blackett sisters . . . long illnesses. Titty killed in an unfortunate accident*.’ The litany of deaths tore jaggedly into the tissue that the book had woven, making everything lopsided and hideous. The epilogue’s gloating bland language, complacently regretful, seemed to relish catching her out in her dismay. Oh, didn’t you know? ‘*Susan lived to a ripe old age*.’ Susan was the dullest of the Swallows, tame and sensible, in charge of cooking and housekeeping. Still, the idea of her ‘ripe old age’ was full of horror: wasn’t she just a girl, with everything ahead of her?”

The *New Yorker*’s “This Week in Fiction” blog for that issue has a fascinating interview with Hadley:

[this-week-in-fiction-tessa-hadley-bad-dreams.html](http://www.newyorker.com/magazine/2014/09/22/this-week-in-fiction-tessa-hadley-bad-dreams)

it, Hadley says she indeed was a girl who read Ransome and had a similar dream. She gives the fictional girl, and presumably herself, credit for inwardly, and only momentarily, “sneering at herself for her hopefulness.”



Pieces of Eight

The Junior Pages

Edited by Deirdre Iams-McGuire



Twenty-two Gongs

Our previous editor for Pieces of Eight, Jessika Hodgson, has retired (that does sound very funny for junior members!), so before anything else I'd like to thank her for all her years of wonderful work – we've enjoyed your puzzles and photographs and stories very much! Twenty-two gongs at least for our fabulous skipper!

This means that if readers would like to send something in (and I hope they will), please send them to me, Deirdre: deirdre@oro.net or Elizabeth: erjolley8@gmail.com – I'm afraid I can't offer anyone sixpence (genuine or otherwise) for writing in as I believe Peter Aitchison was/is doing with the *The Outlaw*, but I would like to see some submissions! Right now I'm looking for: drawings, photographs, recipes, crafts, jokes, poems, songs, stories, games, or questions or anything else you can think of!

Dot's Journal: Farewell and Adieu

It's a bit of a cliché title amongst us TARS shipmates, but I'll go with it anyway. Nothing really captures the bittersweet feeling of weighing anchor like "Spanish Ladies."

I have the honor of passing on Pieces of Eight to Deirdre, who is more than qualified to take command and steer you into new waters. I'll warn you, she's a bit of a Nancy Blackett, so prepare yourselves, me hearties! ;-) She's brilliant, though, trust me. And after my ramblings, I'm sure you'll be grateful for a new leader with a fresh perspective.

As for me, oh, I'm feeling the Captain Flint itch. I'm ready to stop gathering moss and get rolling on to a new adventure. But I won't lie, I am a little sentimental, and I have to keep myself in check or you might find yourself reading something like a scene out of one of Dot's books. "Was this to be the end?" No, Dot, it's not the end. It's just the beginning. But there's a weird mix of emotions going on, nonetheless.

This is short, but after all, if we lingered too long over our adieus then we'd have less time for camping, exploring, hiking, skating, and yo-ho-hoing. I just want to end with a BIG thank you to Mrs. Jolley for being generally awesome in every way, to Deirdre for volunteering her time and creativity to POE, and to all of you readers who enjoy the fruits of our labor. That's what makes it fun! –Jessika

The Nightfire Pirates--Part 6

By Hannah Hodgson

Jeremiah's parents, as it turned out, were not dead. But Mrs. McDougal gasped when she saw her son standing at the door and wrapped him into a hug, scolding him and crying with relief at the same time.

"We were afraid you'd fallen into the harbor and been drowned!" she said as his family crowded around him.

“Well I haven’t,” Jeremiah said, prying away from the embrace. “But I have to find a cursed box.” The whole family went silent. Jeremiah scratched his head, then told his story all in a rush.

“Cursed box?” Mrs. McDougal said. “Psh. There’s no such thing.”

“Whether or not there is such thing as a cursed box, there *is* such thing as a box and Captain Steel wants it. And he has Williams, who doesn’t know anything about it, so he could die. And I like Williams.”

It was almost too much for his seven-year-old head to work through, so Jeremiah sat down and rubbed his temples.

“This is not our concern. It’s the police’s.”

Jeremiah bit his lip. He wished that he could give it over to the police, forget about it, and just settle down into ordinary life. But... well, there was Williams. And he was also madly curious about the box.

“Mother,” he said, standing up. “I’m going to find that box if it’s the last thing I do.” He then turned and hurried up the stairs.

“Where are you going now?” Mrs. McDougal asked.

“To bed. I’m dead tired.”

When the sun rose and shone on Jeremiah’s face to wake him up, he sprung to his feet, his head whirling with sleep-warped thoughts about Captain Steel’s box. What could the contents be? And, as a more grim and difficult thought, did he even have a chance to find it? Finding something dropped to the bottom of the harbor was nigh impossible.

Jeremiah hurriedly put on some clothes and rushed down the stairs. His mother was in the kitchen, so Jeremiah decided to tiptoe past, lest she try to stop him. But she caught his movement in her peripheral vision.

“Jeremiah?”

Jeremiah stopped.

“Yes, mother?”

“Are you really going after that box?”

Jeremiah took a deep breath.

“Yes. I have to.”

His mother turned, but instead of the anger or stubbornness that Jeremiah expected, her eyes were aglow with pride.

“You are a brave boy,” she said. “I am proud of you, you know that? And I...I couldn’t bear to lose you.”

“I promise I’ll be careful.”

She nodded.

“But I’m still sending your sister with you.”

Jeremiah’s sister, Ruth, appeared. She smiled. Jeremiah smiled.

“Bye, Mother!”

Jeremiah called over his shoulder as he and Ruth raced down to the harbor. Ruth was five years older than Jeremiah, but that by no means had damaged their relationship. She and Jeremiah had always played. And she was always one for a good adventure. Jeremiah couldn’t have planned it any better.

“Captain Weaver and John will be here,” Jeremiah said, looking up and down the already busy docks, but catching no sign of either. “I’m sure they will. John wouldn’t give up on Williams by any means.”

But when an hour had passed and there was no sign of either man, Jeremiah’s faith lessened. He looked at Ruth in despair.

“Well,” she said brightly, “Let’s surprise them and find it ourselves, yeah?”

Jeremiah smiled.

Ruth had won awards at school for her swimming. She was fast, she was good, and she could hold her breath for a record amount of time. Jeremiah knew if anyone could dive down and find a box, she could. And so, it was without much discussion that Ruth slipped out of her dress, under which she was wearing her bathing suit, and jumped into the water. She gave Jeremiah a quick thumbs up, then kicked downwards. Jeremiah bit his lip nervously. For all he knew, Captain Weaver had thrown the box in at the other end of the harbor. They could be searching for hours and hours. Why hadn’t John and Captain Weaver shown up? In truth,

he felt a little betrayed. He had been sure that they'd be here. They could have helped.

Ruth resurfaced, gasped for breath, then shook her head at Jeremiah. When she had caught her breath, she dove again. And yet, maybe she was diving for nothing. Maybe...

"Jeremiah!"

Jeremiah whirled around. There stood John.

"Sorry I'm late. I've been at the police station."

"But why?"

"For Fred of course," John said.

"But we're going to find the box and get Williams back ourselves!"

Fred ruffled Jeremiah's hair. Then he knelt down.

"You have done enough already. You don't need to bother yourself with boxes. Let the police handle this one. The police and me."

Jeremiah scrunched up his nose. "Where's Captain Weaver? He should be here so we can find the box!"

"Captain Weaver...wasn't able to come," John said. "He was unwell," he added.

Jeremiah snorted. "Yeah right. He's a coward."

"Jeremiah," John said, taking a deep breath like every adult that was about to give a lecture. "You see...finding a box in a very large harbor is like finding a needle in a haystack. It is pretty much impossible. But the police will search for the *Nightfire*—"

"And won't find them!" Jeremiah interrupted angrily. "And Williams will die. We *have* to try."

John put his hands on Jeremiah's shoulders.

"You've done enough, my boy. You need to go home and let others handle this."

At just that moment, Ruth resurfaced, spluttered a bit, then gasped, "Jeremiah! I found it!"

She pulled herself up onto the docks, toting a small box. Jeremiah and John rushed over. The box was covered in muck, but when Ruth had wiped it off a bit, Jeremiah could see the intricately carved lid. And he knew, he just *knew* that this must be the cursed box.

But how...? He looked at Ruth wonderingly. They must have been meant to have it. Some fate had decided that they would find it. It was for Williams' sake. Jeremiah laughed a laugh of relief. John laughed too, but it was a different kind of laugh. When Jeremiah turned toward him, his face was set in a cruel smirk. He stretched out his hands.

"Give it to me."

Jeremiah shook his head. "John, this is for Williams. We're going to get him safe home with this. And plus, it's cursed."

"It's mine!" John said with a fierceness that was unexpected.

Ruth backed away, with the box tucked under her arm. John advanced at her, but Jeremiah grabbed his coattails.

"I don't know what this box is, but you can't have it!"

John shoved Jeremiah away, and he toppled over. Then John strode toward Ruth. Ruth kept backing away, but soon ran out of dock. John laughed. Then Ruth jumped.

"Jeremiah!" she called, then she tossed the box in his direction as she fell into the water.

Jeremiah grabbed the box and ran the other direction. He dodged through alleyways and streets, not even choosing a destination but just running far away from John. The change in him had scared Jeremiah. Suddenly a perfectly nice man was creepy and wanted the cursed box for himself. Why? Ruth appeared out of nowhere.

"Well he was super nice, wasn't he?" she panted, her words thick with sarcasm.

"I thought he was," Jeremiah gasped back.

"Here," Ruth said, and took the box, lightening Jeremiah's load. But as they turned the corner, there stood Captain Steel and Muskrat.

"I take it they're not very nice," Ruth said as they skidded to a stop.

"Nope," Jeremiah responded. They turned, but there stood John. They were trapped.

--To be continued--

What happens when you cross a pirate with a zucchini?

Find all the pirates and their ships listed below to find the answer. X marks the spot, but be careful – there are decoys! Words go up, down, forwards, and backwards. No diagonals.

X T U O K O S O L B R U I S E R R S Y G
 R H E D N O O M G N I N I H S P O R T E
 O O B I L L R M H S Y O C E D E L L U O
 K U T E E H A E T I T M O U S E E L N R
 C S J O E I K N A N C Y R T R E H T O G
 U E D E C O E Y K A N B L A C K J A K E
 E B O O N N Y O O S L A S I H T M E S L
 D O H E R R A M A Z O N I N G B I F P A
 L A L F R O M E R B Y D N A G O S L E L
 S T A R B O A R D C F R O M K H S N G C
 I K E T C H T R T H E R S S E J E H G C
 T O N S L L O W D E N U E I N O E Y Y A
 D E A T H C M O Y U A D I M E H L C O P
 E R E P I V D Q J O E S R E A N E G N T
 E F L I N T R R E D H A O O E R E R I A
 H T O N S I L V E R A T L N P O L L Y I
 Y A F G D R E A D N O U G H T A K E E N
 O B O O N C E L O N G D U O H P L A R Y

Viper
 Black Jake
 Mogandy
 George
 Bruiser
 From
 Ketch
 Simeon
 Boon
 Dreadnought
 Titmouse
 Joe

Bill
 Pete
 Tom
 Port
 Starboard
 Death
 Glories
 Owden
 Ralph
 Strakey
 Shining Moon

Missee Lee
 Amazon
 Nancy
 Peggy
 Houseboat*
 Captain
 Flint
 Long
 John
 Silver
 Polly

*In making this puzzle, I noticed that the houseboat is never given a name; it's always just called The Houseboat. Does anyone have any idea why this might be? Speculations from Aged Parents welcome, too!



To be won by the first to reach the pole:

Submit your answer to the riddle at the top of the word search to deirdre@oro.net by February 10 to be entered in a drawing to win a keychain or bracelet of your name in nautical flags, handmade by Deirdre.

Coot Club

Though many of us are probably having truly arctic expeditions just going about our normal lives with the “Polar Vortex” – where I live in California this means actually having to wear a sweater – spring *is* on its way and that means birds! Soon enough the birds that flew south for the winter will be returning to the north and building their nests and hatching chicks; business will be going well for our friends in the Coots Club!

While I’m not much of a birder myself – at least not as much as I’d like to be! – I do like keeping track of seasonal changes and migrations (lots of woodpeckers and Canada geese at the moment), and who doesn’t like baby birds? Here are some links to bird related things for this spring. I’d love to hear about anything you see, so, as always, please send in any stories or photographs!

Bird Identifier: National Geographic has a very easy to use bird identification program for when you’ve seen something but aren’t sure what it is. Unfortunately it asks for you to create an account if you want to use it more than once – my apologies. Accounts are nuisance. :)

<http://animals.nationalgeographic.com/animals/birding/backyard-bird-identifier/>

Checklists: If you’d rather check birds off as you see them, the Great Backyard Bird Count has lots of printable checklists organized by region – just type in you ZIP or post code and there it is!

<http://gbbc.birdsource.org/gbbcApps/checklist>

No. 7’s Nest: If you don’t happen to live near any good bird watching spots, here are some webcams of different birds. Of course it’s too cold for many birds now, but in the spring they will be a lot more active!



<http://backyardgalahcam.com.au/> - This one’s based in Australia where it’s summer now, so there are actually birds to see! I saw some very colorful ones.

http://cams.allaboutbirds.org/channel/8/Great_Blue_Herons/

<http://explore.org/-/live-cams/player/puffin-loafing-ledge-cam>

<http://explore.org/-/live-cams/player/live-osprey-cam>

<http://www.seabird.org/wildlife/webcams/12/28>

Final Note-- "Farewell and adieu to you fair Spanish ladies" --until next issue!

It never ceases to amaze me how articles appear between issues--I had so many I had to set a few aside for May! Thanks to everyone who has written for our newsletter. It makes for an enjoyable read. I receive notes from members abroad who run into Signals from TARSUS/North Pole News, and they always have complimentary comments!

Tough autumn at my house. My mother fell and had her first broken bone at age 80 and one week. That is not how she had wanted to celebrate her new decade beginning! All is well now, and she is firmly on the mend, but having her live in for a couple of months brought to life the term "sandwich generation" for me--I was the tuna salad, squished between my college-age son and my mother--whew! After a lovely two-week staycation (ahhhh, the pleasures of sleeping in and getting things done slowly & with many mugs of hot tea right in my own home!), I am refreshed, back to my water aerobics & my wonderful half-time job. I am a nanny for a three-year old girl, delightful little bundle of energy, creativity & great language skills (I’ll be reading her S&A as soon as she can sit long enough, I promise!). I love my bosses, "Mommy" and "Daddy", who are bright, busy, fun, nurturing & generous.

I hope your autumn went better than mine :-). And that you have some time during these dark winter days to relax & read a bit, maybe with your own mugs of tea at hand. If the mood strikes, do send articles, stories, photos, artwork, anything related in any way to those wonderful twelve books!

Cheers! Elizabeth Jolley, Editor
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