



SIGNALS FROM T•A•R•S•U•S

November 2000

Fall and Winter Greetings!

This newsletter accompanies *Signals* and either *Mixed Moss* or *The Outlaw* (or, if you are family members, both publications). I hope that everyone had a delightful summer and fall. We have a fair amount for this newsletter including no less than three submissions from Mary Wessel Walker, our 10-Gong Contributing Editor! So, to the keyboard!

Membership Renewal for 2001

TARS membership renewals are due on 1 January 2001. *If you find a Membership Renewal Form in this packet, your membership is up for renewal!* If you did not receive a form, your membership already covers 2001 because you have prepaid, or because you joined after 1 October 2000 and your membership is through 2001.

The form was produced for U.K. members, so the one you will get has an additional sticker attached with your name, membership number, and membership type; it also has the membership renewal amounts in \$US printed on it. Please make out a check now to The Arthur Ransome Society (or TARS) for the correct amount, and send it to me; my address is on the notice and on this newsletter. If you want to change your membership type, indicate same on the renewal form and send it back with the correct amount for the new type of membership you want.

Note that renewal fees have changed because our exchange rate is now set at \$1.50 = £1.00.

New Membership Renewal Process

Starting this year, we are going to put TARSUS on the same renewal calendar and cycle as the rest of TARS. This will mean one less plea for renewal from those who haven't gotten around to it yet. It will also mean TARS won't print extra copies of publications just in case late renewals are received. Here is the new drill:

1. With the November/December mailing (this one) you'll get a renewal notice.
2. With the February mailing, those who haven't yet renewed will get a notice saying that if they haven't renewed by the end of March they won't receive the April mailing.
3. Those who still haven't renewed by April will not get the April mailing but will get a last "farewell and adieu!" postcard.
4. Any who renew after the April mailing will have their memberships reinstated but TARS will not try and send them the missed mailing.

In other words, please renew now. It's less work for us and you don't risk missing the April mailing (or losing your membership).

Welcome

Welcome to Robert Boardman; Amy, Dorothy, Duncan, John, Nancy and Susan Hilchey; Claudia, Ellen, Richard (and Richard) Hough; Tom Napier; Eliza Ramsey; Sam Shemitz; Sally Spangler; and Donna and Miranda Wenaus.

Résumés

Two new Résumés are included, for Robert Boardman and Tom Napier. 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).

Our British Account Exchange Rate

The new exchange rate for calculating and paying for memberships, TARS Stall orders, etc., is £1.00 = \$1.50. Please note this for future reference.

TARSUS on the Internet

Many of you have looked at the Arthur Ransome web site www.arthur-ransome.org/ar/ which is maintained by TARS volunteers. I have recently made several TARSUS-related pages available to provide more information about TARS in the United States. You can find the TARSUS pages at www.arthur-ransome.org/ar/tarsus/tarsus.html. Contents include an overview of TARSUS, how our financial exchange works with the U.K. (the *Our British Account* flyer), a TARSUS-specific membership application form, and past issues of *Signals from TARSUS* (back to April 1998).

TARSUS in the Seattle Area

(Editor's note: I received this in late August, just too late for the last SfT. Sorry, Debra!)

Ahoy! My name is Debra Alderman, and in the past year my seven-year-old son, Akiva, and I have

read the entire Swallows and Amazons series and become members of The Arthur Ransome Society. We look forward to the periodic arrival of the club's great publications, and hope one day to travel to England and do a "pilgrimage" to the sites described in such wonderful detail in the books.

But meanwhile, here in the Pacific Northwest we seem to have a large concentration of Arthur Ransome aficionados. We'd be thrilled to meet other folks who share our love of these books and the outdoor adventures that inspired them.

I'm hoping to organize several events over the coming year which will be fun for all ages and relate to many of the activities featured in the series, such as bird and nature observation and conservation, sailing and boating skills, camping, orienteering, cartography (map-making), prospecting for gold, semaphore and other types of signaling, skating, sledding, snow-shoeing, and even some sea-shanty singing (I can even tell you where you can get a pair of "splatchers" – also known as "bog shoes.")

Please e-mail or call me to let me know if you or anyone you know would be interested in any of these types of events, and if you'd be able to help with the planning.

Hope to hear from you soon!
Karabadangbaraka!

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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 worldwide. 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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(New member information deleted)

New Feature Column: Ransome Readers Recommend

All of us who love Ransome's work have noticed this one problem with it. There's not enough! But 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 new 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.

All Sail Set

Armstrong Sperry

This is the story of the greatest ship ever built: the clipper, *Flying Cloud*. Set in the age when great sailing ships ruled the ocean, this book tells of *Flying Cloud's* maiden voyage around Cape Horn, which set a world record. It is also the story of Enoch Thatcher, a young man who loves the *Flying Cloud*. He watches her come to life and then he sails on her maiden voyage; he crosses the Line and rounds the Horn for the first time with her. This is a wonderful, fast-paced story. Readers who can read Ransome by themselves will have no trouble enjoying All Sail Set.

The American Boy's Handy Book

Daniel Beard

This is a must read for anyone who ever wished they were a Swallow or an Amazon. Girls, do not be put off by the title. This book contains directions for just about everything the Ransome characters do, and much more that I'm sure they would have done if they'd thought of it. The American Boy's Handy Book is divided into four sections, one for each season. A few highlights include flying war kites, how to build 10 different kinds of boats (including a "Crusoe raft" which Titty might have liked), how to build an ice yacht, and a whole section on snowball warfare. I strongly recommend this book to Ransome readers about age twelve or older. Even if you cannot undertake the larger projects in this book, there are plenty of small things to do which even city dwellers can enjoy and anyone can dream of doing the other things . . .

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The Second Annual TARS Adventure on Lake Erie: The Fleet

Mary Wessel Walker, 10-Gong Contributing Editor

For the second year in a row, a small group of hardy TARS met in Sandusky in August eager for a pleasant day of sailing and swimming. Again, Captain Phillips hosted us on his Morgan yacht the *Promise* with his wife, Lee and granddaughter Nicole. All four of the Wessel Walkers came this year. Also, the Weavers from Ann Arbor brought their large boat *Tobago* and their homemade, Ransome-inspired wooden dinghy. The Weaver family consisted of Captain Mark Weaver and children Meg and Ben. We were sorry that Kaitlin McCarthy couldn't join us this year.



The whole crew on the *Promise*

We divided our party into two groups: Captain Phillips, Lee, Donna (Wessel Walker), Nicole and I went on the *Promise* and Captain Mark, Captain Jim Wessel Walker, Margaret, Meg and Ben went on the *Tobago*. The wind was light, so we decided to motor and we gave the smaller *Tobago* a head start. On board the *Promise* we sang sea chanteys while I played the penny whistle. We passed the *Tobago* and reached Kelley's Island perhaps



Meg and Capt. Mark in the cockpit of the *Tobago*

20 minutes before them. Although we had most of the food (including the now-traditional Ransome picnic) with us in the *Promise* we waited for them before eating lunch. On the *Tobago* the others had a good time, and even went under wind power alone for a while, although in the end they started "motor-sailing". We anchored in a pleasant harbor on Kelley's Island, not the same one as last year. As soon as the crew of the *Tobago* arrived they jumped into the water and swam to the *Promise* because they were so hot and hungry! The water was pleasant and warm. Then we all ate a good lunch. This year's Ransome delicacies included a home-made seedcake and chocolate biscuits. We did not eat Pemmican, but enjoyed the Weavers' fresh luncheon meat instead.

After lunch there was a lot more swimming. We raced between the *Promise* and the *Tobago*; some of us swam all the way to shore (!); we swam laps around the *Promise*. Then someone noticed a beach ball floating near the *Promise* and Meg, Margaret, and I all went swimming out to rescue it. It was a very dramatic rescue, because every time you get near a beach ball in the water, waves push it just out of reach! In the end Meg and Margaret succeeded in rescuing it and all three returned triumphantly to the *Promise*.



Nicole, Donna, Capt. Jim Phillips, Margaret & Capt. Jim Wessel Walker picnicking in the *Promise* (CW from bottom left)

After a snack, the group divided up to head back. Captain Phillips, Donna, Lee, and Captain Jim went on the *Promise*. Captain Mark, Meg, Ben, Margaret and I went on the *Tobago*. The tired crews motor-sailed back, and I even got to steer the *Tobago* for a while. We sang more sea chanteys and eventually we arrived safely back in harbor. Only one more adventure occurred. As the *Tobago* was leaving the marina with the Weavers on board, on their way to the dock where they had launched her, they discovered that they still had a towel from the *Promise* on board. They pulled in as close as they safely could to the outer wall of the marina; Ben threw the towel onto the walkway on top of the wall near the *Promise*. The other TARS cheered, impressed; so too were some bystanders, for they joined in. It was a happy way to end the day.

Next year: an armada? Contact the Wessel Walkers or the Phillips about an expedition next summer!

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What I Did on my Holidays

Steve McRobert

I thought that my fellow members of TARSUS might be interested in the Arthur Ransome related things that I did on my extended summer holiday in England this year. The first thing that I did that might be of interest to fans of AR was to visit the Maritime Museum and the old Royal Observatory in Greenwich, which is by definition at 0 degrees of longitude. I am sure that AR himself would have been as fascinated as I was to see the original clocks made by John Harrison in the 17th-century, which were the first ever marine chronometers able to keep time accurately enough to determine a ship's longitude at sea. These clocks have recently been made famous by the book Longitude by Dava Sobel, and by the television documentary and dramatized version based on the book. Close by is the famous tea clipper *Cutty Sark*, referred to as the "kutazak" by Captain Sehmel (the person in Ransome's classic book *Racundra's First Cruise* upon whom the character "Peter Duck" is based).

Next up was to make a second attempt at recreating the voyage of the *Teasel* from Coot Club (CC). I did not have to go very far to do this, because my mother lives on the River Yare at Cantley in the middle of the Norfolk broads. I rented a 25 foot gunter rigged sailing cruiser from the Martham boat building and development Co. at Martham on the river Thurne just up river from Potter Heigham. I first rented a boat from this company in 1981, and they offer very competitive rates because they deal directly with the public. Nearly all other boat yards work through either the Blakes or Hoseasons booking companies, which charge an 18 percent commission which of course gets passed on to the customer. You can rent a keelboat just like *Flash* at Martham.

Unlike the *Teasel* our boat, *Jade*, came equipped with a quite powerful diesel engine mounted in the very front of the boat (in front of the counterweight for the mast). Having the engine so far away from the cockpit made it pleasantly quiet during those regrettable periods when negotiating bridges, lack of wind, adverse tides or head winds made it preferable to motor. To see what she looks like go to <http://www.mbbdc.mcmail.com>. At present a photo of *Jade* is at the top of the "yachts" page.

To try and keep this from growing too long I will assume that everyone has read Coot Club (if not, now is the time). Seen from the water very little has changed. Assume that everything is as described in CC, I will note the differences as they come up. On the first day we did not get away until late afternoon so just sailed up to Horsey mere and tied up for the night in the dike near the windmill (most of the "windmills" on the broads are actually wind pumps for draining the marshes). It was a conveniently short walk to the pub in a nearby village. It can be taken as read that we always moored up near a pub every night.

The next morning the wind was fairly howling, so we took down two reefs on the mainsail before sailing up to Hickling broad where both my crew and I have spent many happy hours windsurfing (and some thoroughly miserable hours as well, when it was cold and we had not yet learned how to windsurf properly). We then sailed to Potter Heigham where we had to put the mast down to negotiate the notorious Potter Heigham bridge. After that we sailed down to Thurne mouth, where the Thurne joins the Bure and moored up for the night. Monday was one of our big days, going down through Yarmouth, across Breydon water and then, unlike the *Teasel* (but like the *Welcome*), going up the river Yare to Reedham. The Twins stayed aboard the *Welcome* and she turned down the new cut, but we carried on up the river to Cantley. All made much easier with the engine but still hard work raising and lowering the mast several times.

The next day we sailed back to Reedham, had to sail in circles against the flood tide for quite a while before the bridge would open for us and then headed down the new cut. Unfortunately the bridge that opened for the *Welcome* on the new cut has been replaced by a fixed concrete one, forcing us to take the mast down. On my previous week sailing the broads the bridge keeper at Somerleyton tried to open the bridge for us but in the end was unable to do it, so this time we left the mast down until we had passed under that one as well. Before we got to Somerleyton we rejoined the river Waveney (back on the track of the *Teasel*), and passed the ruins of a railway bridge that has been removed. We decided to go to Oulton broad before going to Beccles because I have had several happy holidays staying with my aunt and uncle at Oulton broad when I was a child. What I always wanted to do then was go and sail on the broad. Well, I had to wait a few years but finally I have sailed on Oulton broad.

We then decided to head to Beccles but unfortunately it was getting late and we had not gone far up the river Waveney before we decided that it was about time to stop. We made a bad decision and stopped at a place called the Waveney river center which looked okay from the water of turned out to be a very new holiday resort, with a fake pub. Not recommended. The next morning we sailed up to Beccles as far as the first bridge for which we would have had to take the mast down, and turned around to return to Cantley by the shortest route. On my last cruise we had gone down the Waveney to the Berney arms. I was only saved from my bad judgment of the wind strength and the speed of the current, nearly leading to the dismasting of the boat at the first bridge we came to, by a diesel engine that started on the first turn of the key.

This time I was worried about breaking the mast with the sheer force of the wind. Heading back towards the new cut we were almost on a dead run, so I let the main sheet right out. This boat has neither a standing backstay nor running backstays. In hindsight I should have pulled the main sheet in much more tightly to reduce the power provided by the sail and to provide some kind of counter acting force to stop the mast from falling over forwards. Anyway, despite my mishandling the mast did not break and the boat was moving along very nicely indeed as we headed home.

On Thursday morning we left Cantley to go down the river Yare through Yarmouth and try to get as far as we could up the river Bure. This time we had a strong ebb tide when we got to Reedham and had once again to wait for the bridge. The wind was in the right direction to hold us against the current (as the *Teasel* did going down the river Bure to Yarmouth), but even with the sheets eased out we were going too fast against the water away from the bridge. I discovered a new trick (new to me anyway) of easing the peak halyard until our speed through the water let us stay in the same place until the bridge opened.

When we got to Breydon water we found that for the first time we had a favorable wind to sail across it. At the far end we had to lower the mast again to get under the new road bridge across the river Yare, which can open but does not do so for yachts. This bridge is in the same place as the railway bridge mentioned in CC which the *Teasel* had to hurry

to get through before it closed for a train. While it was slack water on the river Yare the ebb was still running out of the Bure, just as Arthur Ransome described it over 60 years ago. Having got the mast up after going under the bridges we found that we could not make progress against the wind and the ebb tide, so we cheated and turned the engine on.

This turned out to be useful as we caught up to a Wherry yacht without an engine, with the crew energetically quanting to try and make some headway. Just before we got to them they lost two people, a quant pole and a hat overboard. The crew managed to rescue themselves, but with the advantage of our engine (Roger would have loved it) we were able to rescue the hat and the quant pole for them. We moored up for the night at Stokesby, and then sailed up the rivers Bure and Thurne to return the boat to Martham, arriving just as it started to rain. On the way we stopped at Womack water, a pleasant spot but very bad for sailing as it is completely surrounded by trees.

The next trip was my very belated first ever visit to the Lake District. My mother and I were only there for three days and as many of you will have been there or read about it I will just mention the things that I have not heard of before. I chose to go on the Coniston launch rather than on the *Gondola* because the launch offered a special Swallows and Amazons trip. I enjoyed this very much, finding the skipper to be very knowledgeable about all things related to Ransome. He turned out to be a member of TARS, indeed he is the first member that I have actually met face-to-face. (Readers with Internet access may view Coniston Launch's web site at www.lakefell.co.uk/conilaun/ - Ed.)

At the Windermere steam boat Museum, after seeing the must-see exhibits and having a trip onto the lake in one of the Museum's launches I decided that I just had to sail on Windermere, even for a short time. I did not really want to go out onto the Lake by myself. Fortunately I met a young man from Australia at the Museum who also wanted to go for a sail, so we walked down to Bowness and hired a sailing boat for two hours. There was not very much wind, but I did achieve the ambition of a lifetime, sailing on the lake which was the primary inspiration for the lake in Swallows and Amazons.

I would have liked to go on the Wade Walk organized by the East Anglian Region, but could not get down there on the chosen day. I was able to go with a friend the following day, had a look around Walton on the Naze (including "Goblin Creek") and walked out onto the Wade a little way towards "Swallow Island".

My next TARS related ambitions are to see *Nancy Blackett* (maybe over the Christmas holiday?) and to finally succeed in getting the Northern California TARS members together for some kind of event. Still some nice sailing weather this time of year.....

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

In Which We Are Rescued

The last time I wrote in this column I told how our family capsized our boat in the channel near Cedarville, Michigan. I left off with my family gasping for air and all of our things floating around in the water. Now: The Rescue! After what seemed to me like ages (actually only a few minutes) a motor boat came down the channel. Kind souls, Jim and Linda, and their children Mallory, Bracken, and Tobin, rescued us.

First, they picked up Mommy, Margaret, and me and all the things we were holding onto (oars, shoes, water bottles, and other odd refuse; no car keys or wallets, though!). Linda wrapped us in towels and tried to reassure us as we watched the action. Daddy stayed with the *Wildcat*, by now turtled (totally upside down), and he and Jim tried to rig up a towrope. The only thing that came to hand was our main sheet, so they tied onto and towed from that. After some time they switched to towing through the eye-bolt on the bow. Finally, after a long struggle, she came upright and we could all see the full extent of the damage. The mast and gaff were badly bent and the top of the sail was covered in mud. Apparently the top of the gaff had stuck in the bottom as the shelf outside the channel was steeply pitched. The boom was snapped completely

in half, probably from the towing on the sheet. The boom gallows was also badly bent. It was a horrible sight to see. It was then that the terror of the capsizing, and how much worse it might have been, struck us all. Our TARS and *Wildcat* burgees were a cheerful sight, however, still fluttering bravely on the shrouds.

Another crew of rescuers came to help us. Jimmy and Wayne Lynch picked up our teak floorboards and some other escaping items and then led us into a marina where we could pull the *Wildcat* out. We were very lucky, because Jimmy is a professional paramedic and Wayne is a firefighter. They know what to do in an emergency! They helped us tow her out and then offered to give us a ride in their motor boat back to our camp (on Government Island). They also helped us to get the *Wildcat* out of the water and get the water out of her! In the morning they came back and took us and all our gear back into Cedarville.

We were very lucky in this shipwreck. We made it home because we had a spare car key under the bumper of our car and a checkbook inside. Our boat had to get all new spars and the manuscript to my story (Dorothea-like) was lost along with driver's licenses and credit cards. Our sailing season was cut short this summer, while the *Wildcat* was in the shipyard being mended, but she is good as new, now ready for more adventures. We have learned many lessons from our experience. Fortunately, none of us was hurt; not many Ransome fans can say they have actually lived Swallowdale.



About the Author: Mary Wessel Walker (age 16), 10-Gong contributing editor, is a junior at Huron High School in Ann Arbor, Michigan. She is a sailor, a Ransome enthusiast, and (thank heavens!) interested in contributing ideas, time and writing to *Signals from TARSUS*. She apologizes for the picture and promises a more Ransome-ish picture in the future.

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My special thanks to Robert Boardman and Tom Napier for their résumés, to Mary Wessel Walker and Steve McRobert for their articles, and to Mary for her two columns.

Dare I say it: now it's your turn! Had a Ransome adventure lately? Fond of a book which should be reviewed and revealed to the audience of *Signals from TARSUS*? Planning or want to plan a TARS event in your area this coming year? Let me know! I welcome all contributions to the newsletter. Pictures are also welcome as you can see.

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