



SIGNALS FROM T·A·R·S·U·S

October 2006

ON THE APPALACHIAN TRAIL

By Jim Wessel Walker

Last summer we hiked Pictured Rocks in day hikes, spotting a car to bring us back to shelter at the end of each day. We did not have to carry tents, sleeping bags, and cooking gear and were able to shower each night, cook in a kitchen, and sleep in a bed. But we spent a lot of our time in the car going to and from the trail each day, so we decided to try backpacking this year.

A college friend of Mary, whose trail name is Bluebird, is through-hiking the Appalachian Trail. She set out from Mt. Katahdin in Maine in the middle of June and plans to reach Springer Mountain in Georgia before Thanksgiving, having hiked 2,160 miles on the trail as well as extra miles on the road into town to look for mail, French fries, and ice cream. Bluebird invited us to join her and her hiking buddy Buster for a few days.

In the spring we shopped on line for lightweight tents, bags, stove, LED headlamps, trekking poles, and dehydrated dinners. In the summer we started training hikes carrying loaded packs. At local grocers we stocked up on fruit leather, summer sausage, hard cheese, Norwegian flatbread, and trail mix. We had vowed to keep our packs below twenty pounds, but could not do it. With food and two quarts of water each the packs weighed in at twenty five pounds or a little more.

We met Bluebird and Buster in Salisbury in western Connecticut, seven and a half trail miles south of the Massachusetts border. They had been bounding along the trail at fifteen to twenty miles a day but were willing to slow down to our speed for a few days. From previous experience at Pictured Rocks and along Hadrian's Wall we knew that ten miles a day is our limit, with less on the second day out, which for us is always the hardest. Kind friends put all six of us up for the night in the Berkshires and on Monday morning Mary's sister, Margaret, dropped us off on the trail. The hikers were Mary, Bluebird, Buster, and Mary's parents, Donna and me.

We enjoyed two hundred yards across a grassy meadow and then headed straight up the side of Wetawanchu



Bluebird, Buster, Mary, Jim, and Donna at the start of the hike.

Mountain, down to a stream, over Raccoon Hill, Mount Prospect, and then a steep descent to the Great Falls on the Housatonic River. The younger members of the party headed into Falls Village to look for mail while Donna and I slept in the shade near the river. Then we had to leave the river and climb back into the mountains over Belter's Bump to Belter's Campsite. The rules about fires and camping vary from state to state. In Connecticut fires are forbidden and camping is allowed along the trail only at designated campsites.

It rained hard on Tuesday morning so we did not get away until about noon. The weather was beautiful all the rest of the week. Scarcely had we reached the top of Sharon Mountain when the sound of unmuffled engines came roaring up at us from the valley far below. There was motor racing at Lime Rock Racetrack that afternoon. It took us several hours to put Mount Easter between us and the noise. We spent the night at Pine Swamp Brook,

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ALONG THE APPALACHIAN TRAIL:

(Continued from page 1)

known among hikers, according to the guidebook, as Mosquito Alley. We wore headnets at supper that night.

Margaret met us on the road just west of Cornwall Bridge on Wednesday afternoon, bringing supplies and complaining of loneliness. Donna decided to keep her company for the rest of the week, so they went off to sleep between sheets and enjoy the music at Tanglewood.

The rest of us climbed over the top of Silver Hill and then descended once again to the banks of the Housatonic and the start of an enjoyable five mile stroll beside the river. We camped half way through this stroll at Stony Brook where Bluebird and Buster, traveling faster than Mary and I, arrived in time for a swim before dark.

The weather was quite warm and muggy, so we drank prodigious amounts of water. There were frequent springs and brooks along the trail where we could refill our water bottles. We filtered our drinking water, of course, and washed both dishes and faces with biodegradable soap.



Buster, Bluebird, and Mary with trail magic.



On Schaghticoke Mountain.

ANGELS, 'TRAIL MAGIC' AND COMMUNITY

(Continued from previous page)

The pleasant river walk ended on Thursday morning with a really steep scramble up St. John's Ledges and over the top of Caleb's Peak followed by Fuller Mountain before the trail took us back down to cross Macedonia Creek west of Kent. There is a meadow between the creek and the highway occupied by friendly cows. Mary and I were reminded of our hike along Hadrian's Wall two years ago, when we nearly always had cows or sheep for company. Another reminder of northern England was a genuine rabbit-eared stile over the fence at the end of the meadow. And at the foot of the stile was a cooler containing cans of pop, ice, and a note from 'Just Jim' and 'Dancer' inviting hikers to help themselves. We hear that through hikers and other trail angels leave treats like these when they have the chance. They call them trail magic.

The trail is not as lonely as we had imagined. The through hikers, all of whom use trail names, catch up on the news when they run into other through hikers. We met perhaps half a dozen northbounders each day, giving Bluebird and Buster a chance to inquire after southbound friends ahead of them. We were also overtaken by a few southbounders who traveled a lot faster than Mary and me. Through hikers also leave news for their trail friends in the log books at each shelter along the trail. So even solo hikers turn out to be members of a moving and changing supportive community.

We camped Thursday night high on the slopes of Schaghticoke Mountain, enjoyed a refreshing swim in the Housatonic River at lunchtime on Friday, and after a final climb over Ten Mile Hill, met Donna and Margaret where the trail crosses from Connecticut into New York. In five days we hiked forty five miles, almost the entire Connecticut section of the Appalachian Trail. On our last morning we passed the one-third mark for Bluebird and Buster, seven hundred and twenty miles behind them, fourteen hundred and forty to go.

Hiking is a lot harder in western Connecticut than it is in Michigan. The Appalachian Trail goes over mountains, not around them. The countryside, of course, was beautiful. Much of our hike was through dense woods, but there were rocky clearings on the heights where we could enjoy a view of mountain ranges one behind the other stretching away into the blue distance. At one lunch stop we could see three cell phone towers at once, but we found our phone less useful than expected when attempting to rendezvous with Margaret. The signal is reliable only on the mountaintops; the roads and the towns are in the valleys.



Mary and Bluebird filling waterbottles.

Jim Wessel Walker, a retired Professor of Environmental Studies, is the father of Ten-Gong Contributing Editor, Mary Wessel Walker. He sails the Wildcat on lakes great and small in and around Michigan.

Adventurers Wanted!

Have any adventures to share with our readers?

New insights into the AR books? Recommendations of great travel, reading and other adventures for us armchair

travelers? Photos, projects and other ideas are also most welcome!

Please send them to Signals from TARSUS editor, Debra Alderman.

dalderman@antiochsea.edu

Deadline for the Winter issue : December 1st.



Feasting the S&A Way

HOW TO HAVE AN ARTHUR RANSOME PICNIC!

By Mary Wessel Walker
10-Gong Contributing Editor

CANNONBALLS

(courtesy of Jim Wessel Walker)

Mash together the following:

1 tin of Spam

½ onion

3 Tablespoons corn meal

1 egg

Roll into 12 balls and bake at 400 degrees F. for 30 minutes.

Food is an important part of all the Ransome stories, so what better way to celebrate the Swallows and Amazons than by having a themed picnic of Ransome-ish food? The Ransome picnic has been an important part of the small TARS gatherings that have occurred here in the Midwest but even if you're not attending a TARS event, you could have your own Ransome feast on your next sailing trip or picnic.

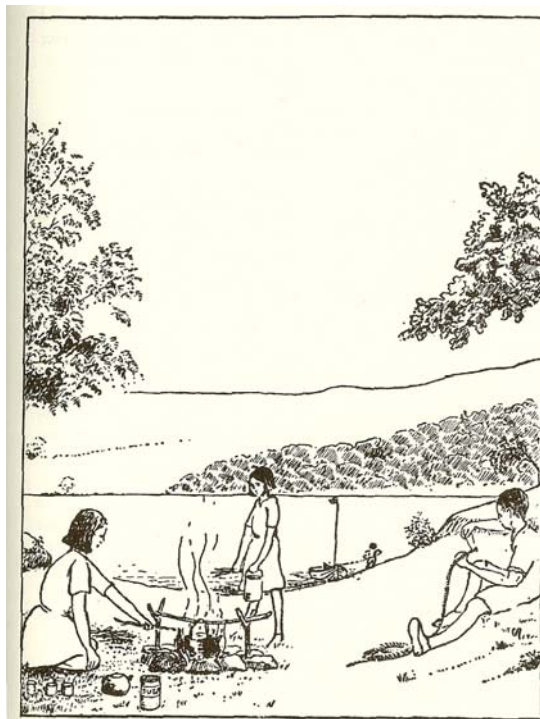
The best way I know of to plan for a Ransome picnic is to go through the books carefully to find references to various meals the Swallows and Amazons (and Coots and Eels and Ds!) eat. Then try to make some of their favorite foods.

Some ideas to get you started:

- Fill a puncheon (a thermos could work) with lemonade and carry it on an oar like the Amazons do the day they meet the Swallows.
- Buy or make yourself a loaf of brown bread and cut it into thick slices and eat with Oxford marmalade like Miss Lee. (Look for Oxford marmalade at a grocery store with lots of imported food. If you can't find it, re-label another kind and it will taste better!).
- You might try a small tin of sardines (letting the oil drip through your fingers into the sand as they do in *Peter Duck*), but I warn you that we had some one year and my dad had to eat most of them and later he was sea sick!
- Of course, no explorers can get anywhere without plenty of chocolate. Think about getting Roger's favorite kind with nuts and raisins in it.

- Check a fancy grocery store for real ginger beer in bottles like they drink in *We Didn't Mean to go to Sea*, but only get a few bottles until you're sure you like it. It tastes much stronger than ordinary ginger ale.
- For the staple pemmican (corned beef) we often use Spam instead. Look in *Pigeon Post* for a description of cannonballs and try making them yourself if you have a chance to cook. (Hint: Susan is making them when Roger arrives in camp to announce he has found the gold.) *See my dad's recipe in box on this page.*

These are only suggestions. The books themselves are full of detailed descriptions of food and you should look for episodes and meals that stand out to you. We have never had a chance to cook a rabbit, as the Ds do in *The Picts and the Martyrs*, but maybe you will. Perhaps your Ransome picnic will feature freshly caught fish or even eels. Or maybe just a cake decorated with familiar looking boats, like they eat at the feast in *Swallows and Amazons*. Whatever you eat, be sure to label it with quotations from the books so that everyone remembers the Ransome characters eating it. Take turns reading the quotations aloud during the meal. Enjoy your picnic and send Ransome food suggestions in to *Signals*. Just try to avoid the salt beef and hard tack!



A talented mate is essential to every expedition!

LOOKING FOR LOVE IN ALL THE WRONG PLACES

By Kate Crosby

Book shopping in Falmouth last year I reflected on the vast gulf between the fictional worlds of AR and Daphne Du Maurier as writers. Is there any small link between the wonderful safe world of childhood and the dangerous shores of adult life that these two writers depict? AR gives us a world where masts break, not hearts, and they are mended before summer is out. Salvage from a wreck is Susan's comforting kettle, not a corpse from the past. The accusatory figure in black goes away on the train, not up in smoke with the house.

Looking closer, I am struck by how far AR appears to push this gulf. Deliberately? Even within the general canon of children's contemporary literature, there is a surprising lack of ordinary heterosexual relationships among AR's front and center adults. Captain Flint, confirmed bachelor. Molly Blackett, widow. Mrs. Walker, navy widow most of the time. Mr. McFarlane, widower. Where's Mr. Barrable? Peter Duck – three daughters but wife gone. Timothy – what a hope! (And I don't believe a word of any of those Tarboard rumors about Timothy and Mrs. Blackett, or Timothy and Nancy, or Timothy and Captain Flint). Oh yes, now I come to think of it, Timothy does have a (female?) friend in the hotel by the pier who provides chicken and cakes and pies for him. MISS Powell, MISSEE Lee. No Mrs. McGinty.

The Great Aunt? PERISH THE THOUGHT! "Miss Turner, poor old thing, had never married at all," Mary Swainson thinks to herself before rowing the martinet to the houseboat in *The Picts and The Martyrs*. The Billies, bachelors in the wigwam for the charcoal burning season. Jim Brading (OK, a bit young). Mrs. Tyson... is there a Mr. Tyson?

Of course there are some happily married couples throughout the canon. Dr. & Mrs. Dudgeon show us a glimpse of domestic happiness with a baby to prove it.

Professor & Mrs. Callum enjoy doing things together, but we never meet them squarely on the page. (Are they about to make an entrance in *Coots in the North*?) The missionaries glancing appearance in *Secret Water* depicts them as a pair of welcoming parents. Yet AR seems more comfortable with older married couples like Mr. & Mrs. Dixon, brilliantly observed as the two halves of a complementary marriage. Mrs. Dixon friendly and talkative, Mr. Dixon reserved and taciturn, but observant and ready with what's needed at the right moment in *Winter Holiday*. "Of all the Eskimos Mr. Dixon came to know most of what was going on among the explorers and of what was being planned. Sometimes for days he would not talk at all, and then he would come out with something to Dick



*One man's hand:
obscure literary
reference or simple
narrative device?
You decide!*

that showed he had been thinking all the time about conditions in the Arctic."

Old Mr. & Mrs. Swainson are Mr. & Mrs. Dixon twenty years on, they must be close to their golden wedding anniversary, singing and stitching their way through the day in *Swallowdale*. And it is here, suddenly, that we come to a moment of real, live, grown up romance when Mary Swainson greets her handsome woodsman in the summer dusk. We can almost see her blushing as she bustles him on his way.

"Good night, Jack. Good-night, Bob. There's no call for you lads to wait...you'd think those lads had nothing else to do," said Mary, looking after them, "loitering about." But she waved her hand as they passed out of sight.

And we are right. By *The Picts and The Martyrs* it's all settled. Mary "reminded herself that she was...going to marry Jack the woodman, as soon as she thought fit."

Which brings me to AR's one (intentional?) subtly erotic moment that always takes me by surprise, as it does Mrs. Walker on board the Goblin:

And then she saw something else. Someone must have seen Sinbad go past the cabin portholes. A hand, a lean, brown hand, came up out of the forehatch and felt this way and that for the kitten. Mother's mouth dropped open... "Ted!" she cried.

That small exchange tells us so much about the private, grown-up relationship between the Walker parents. Which of us does not know the hands of the beloved?

Lady Chatterley did:

She looked at his smallish, short, alive hand, browned by the weather. It was the hand that caressed her.

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NATIVES, CASH AND CLASS:

By Tom Napier

Having grown up in a 1950's Scotland not vastly different from Ransome's 1930's Lakeland, I ponder matters that younger readers might not. I sense, for example, that the children's carefree lifestyle requires a good deal of money to change hands behind the scenes. The Swallows never seem to have much pocket-money but all those cans of milk and baskets of eggs must cost Mrs. Walker a bob or two. Her frequent deliveries of fresh groceries to the campers must also be paid for and having the natives report if they don't see the children every day must rate a good tip over and above the price of milk. I am reminded of Mahatma Ghandi's aide who once remarked on how much it cost to keep Ghandi living in poverty.

Natives and cash

Renting accommodation to visitors made a useful addition to farm income at a time of year when there was work to be done but no cash yet coming in from the harvest. The natives are good-natured but some of their tolerance of the children must derive from the knowledge that supplying their needs makes a useful contribution to the bottom line. In PP, Mrs. Tyson's concern about the fire risk, were the children to cook in the hills, must have mingled with disappointment at losing the chance to bill their mother for their meals while they camped in the orchard.

Swallow is an oddity. Had the Jacksons made a considerable investment in a sail-boat in the hope of renting it to holiday-makers? Swallow is quite old and may have been fairly cheap but it still seems a risky investment for a farming couple who must be barely making ends meet. Not all visitors would want to sail; Swallow must spend much of the year unused and unpaid-for.

When John holes Swallow some of his chagrin stems from having done damage for which he cannot possibly pay. His first thought is what the Jacksons will say; later it's his mother he dreads facing. In the event, it is Captain Flint who mentions the wreck to Mr. Jackson. By then Swallow has already been delivered to the boat-builders and its speedy repair has been negotiated.

Captain Flint is open about paying for the repair; he considers it only fair exchange since the Swallows had recovered his manuscript. He then turns coy as he persuades the boat-builder to rearrange his schedule, more, one suspects, with good folding money than with his pleas on behalf of the children.

Pocket-money and groceries

The children have some money of their own. The first purchase in the series occurs in SA when John splurges a five



The S, A and Ds respectfully tapped into Slater Bob's expertise in Pigeon Post.

shilling birthday present on rope and grog in Rio. This sum was about a half a laborer's daily wage. Even 25 years later I'd have considered spending five shillings (four weeks' pocket-money) a major investment. There are odd inconsistencies. Both the Swallows (in WD) and Dick and Dot (in BS) have trouble scraping together a sum of money yet, in PM, Dot invests in a cook-book that must have cost ten shillings. The reference in PP to Peggy wasting twopence on a phone call suggests a shortage of ready cash yet later the same morning she, presumably, pays her share for the torches, hammers and sun-goggles. References to the Amazons carrying or using money are rare, I recollect none outside PP. Nancy does suggest that the cost of the crockery dropped by cook can be stopped out of their pocket-money.

Groceries would be charged to Mrs. Blackett's account. In PP the children make two expeditions to Rio with Mrs. Blackett's shopping lists. There's no hint that she's sent them off saying, "Here's a couple of pounds, that should cover it." In those pre-self-service days, foodstuffs other than canned goods came in bulk and were weighed and packaged while the customer waited. Grocers delivered against a telephoned order and billed monthly. Having a lad fill orders when convenient and then make a delivery round made a lot of sense.

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A LOOK BETWEEN THE LINES

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Natives and class

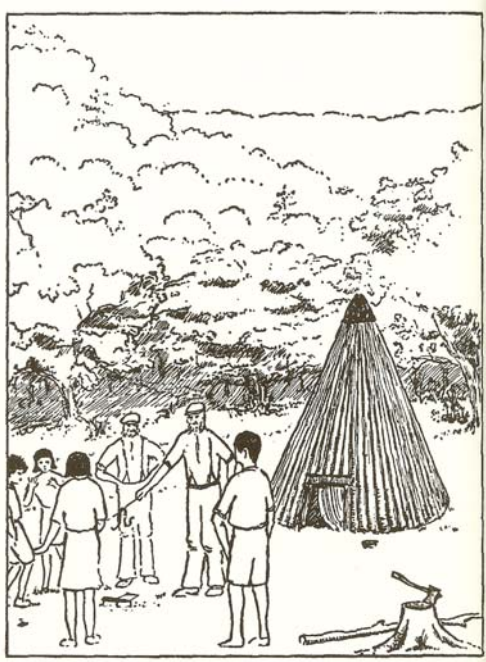
Some of the natives' compliance arises from the remnants of the English class system. Nancy's assertiveness is backed by an expectation of the deference due to her position. Socially, she out-ranks many of the people she deals with.

Consider who obeys Nancy and who does not. Sammy, the policeman, does what she tells him. The postman cooperates under sufferance but feels a need to justify his reluctance by reference to regulations. The doctor, although he ultimately succumbs, is further up the social scale than the constable or the postman. He could have told Nancy to get lost.

Children were less class-conscious than adults but they would tend to associate mostly with others having similar backgrounds and tastes. In my childhood, one of the first questions you asked of a new acquaintance was, "What does your father do?" This roughly positioned him or her in the, then faded, class system but also gave a hint to their intellectual level.

The enigmatic Blacketts

One of the mysteries of the Ransome books is why, on top of Kanchenjunga, the Swallows ask who Bob Blackett is.



Despite their class differences, the Billies were respected for their skill, their folk medicine, and their interesting pets.

They might have been unaware of his first name but they should have known he once existed. The Walkers had met Mrs. Blackett, were they too tactful to ask what had happened to Mr. Blackett? Nancy's almost dismissive, "He was father," suggests a figure long gone and never well known. As Nancy and Peggy would have been born around 1916 and 1917 it is natural to suppose that Bob Blackett died in action towards the end of the Great War. If Molly and Bob were, say, 12 and 14 when they climbed Kanchenjunga in 1901 they could easily have married around 1910. When war broke out Bob would have been in his late twenties and a good officer candidate.

I raise this issue because Nancy and Peggy derive their class from their family. The Beckfoot property has the air of being a landowner's residence rather than a working farm. In an earlier century the stables that appear in PP would have housed the carriage horses, not the ones that plowed the fields. The associated farmland must have been sold or leased, there is no hint that anyone in the family is involved in land management. Indeed, no one seems to have any occupation. I can't help wondering what Molly Blackett does during term-time. She is a supporting actress, ceasing to exist once she leaves the stage.

Molly's pension as a war-widow wouldn't pay for a cook and a parlormaid, much less a mob of painters and plasterers. The respect she shows the GA may be because, as the only survivor of an earlier generation, the GA owns Beckfoot and controls the family purse-strings. If Bob Blackett's family had had any money, Molly would have been in a much more powerful position vis à vis the GA. My image of Bob Blackett is of the charming but penniless son of a yeoman farmer who marries his childhood sweetheart, fathers two children, then dies heroically on the battlefield, his literary duty done.

The Swallows and the Ds

If the Blackett family is backed by inherited Turner wealth then the Amazons, though not members of the landed gentry, would be well up in the upper middle-class, "The quality" perhaps though not "County." (The latter category is represented by Col. Jolys.) The other main characters have similar status but, interestingly, come from parallel branches of the class system. Under the English system the oldest son inherited the title; younger sons were relegated to the church or the military. The hierarchy of both conveyed legitimate status, one of the finer points of etiquette was what

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NATIVES, CASH AND CLASS

(Continued from page 7)

position in the church corresponded to what rank in the aristocracy. Ted Walker comes from the military branch. He must be a fairly senior naval officer, after all, the First Sea Lord is aware of his existence. He would have been a bit old to captain a destroyer, he had probably been accumulating a few more years of active service before moving to his desk job at Shotley.

A fourth independent branch of the class system, academia, arose in the early twentieth century. The Callums' parents never appear on stage but they confer status on Dick and Dot. The Ds are following in their parents' footsteps, giving the adventures an intellectual slant. When the Ds first meet the Swallows and Amazons it is their ingenuity and inventiveness in "signaling to Mars" that establishes their credentials even though it is their skating ability that ensures their acceptance.

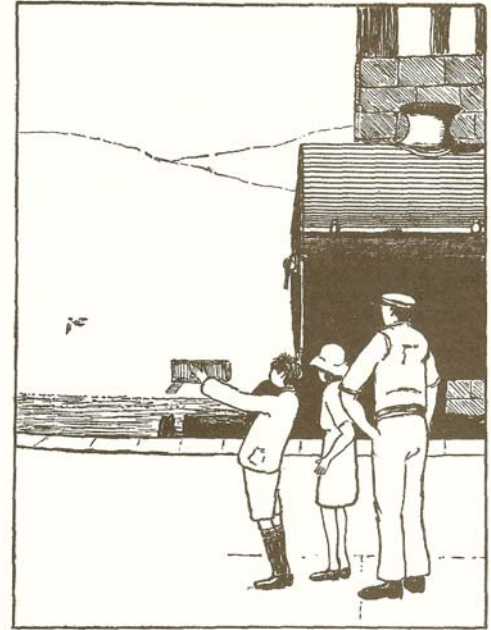
This is an early example of ability overshadowing class, a paradigm that came to the fore with the disruption of the Second World War and the introduction of free university education for qualified students. In Britain today, inherited ability trumps inherited position and, to some extent, inherited wealth.

The Ds' distant dealings with the lower-class Death and Glories contrast with their closer relationship with Tom Dudgeon, the doctor's son. (The Hullabalos were lower middle-class people aping the upper middle-class. They failed to realize that consideration for others is a necessary criterion.)

Who says what?

In Britain vocabulary and pronunciation are recognized class indicators. For example, Americans, who commonly pronounce "either" as "eether," sound oddly déclassé to British ears. (The "proper" pronunciation is "eyether.") Pronunciation is rarely indicated in printed dialogue except when the author attempts to render a regional dialect phonetically. In Ransome's books you may reasonably assume that explicit dialect indicates a lower-class speaker. The children would have learned generic southern English accents (BBC English) wherever their homes were.

The Amazons, as country-dwellers, would likely be bi-lingual. They would drop into the local dialect when speaking to farm workers but would use standard English amongst their peers. After the shipwreck in SD, Nancy



The Ds established themselves with the group with academic credentials. Their skills and knowledge made them assets to the group.

lapses into dialect in supposing that Captain Flint can "howk" up Swallow. This word is roughly equivalent to "tug" but you'll find it in few dictionaries. One notes that Nancy refers to "lunchtime" while the Swallows refer to their mid-day meal as "dinner." The latter is a distinctly lower-class usage.

Did class matter?

One thing we don't see in the books is snobbery. The children are aware of social distinctions but their encounters with those whom their contemporaries might have regarded as their social inferiors are genial. Jackie, Slater Bob and the Billies are interesting people from whom they learn, not yokels whom they patronize. Ransome was writing fiction for contemporary children so the existing class structure was an unconsidered aspect of the books' background. As his characters grew older they might have had to take class more seriously but by then Britain had changed, class had largely lost its importance in day-to-day relationships.

Tom Napier has impeccable upper middle-class credentials, having degrees in physics and electronics and having worked for a university and two international research organizations. He has been developing electronic equipment in the U.S.A. since 1981 and has written over 40 articles for electronics magazines.

SIGNALS FROM T*A*R*S*U*S

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LOOKING FOR LOVE...

(Cont. from Page 5)

Lady Chatterley's Lover was not in AR's library at the time of his death, but the echo could be more than coincidence. Ready or not, AR knew, as we do, that the magical world of children's literature must, in the end, dissolve into a different reality with all the pains and passions of adulthood. "The lamentable change is from the best, the worst returns to laughter."

TIDBITS FROM TARUSUS

Signals needs you!

Thanks to the many new and veteran Signals contributors for submitting their creative, thought-provoking and entertaining articles for this issue of *Signals from TARUSUS*. Our next issue will be mailed around the beginning of January, so all summer and fall adventure write-ups as well as plans for the future, and any thing else of interest to our readers are most welcome.

Deadline for the winter issue will be Dec. 1st.

Contact me for submission format and length guidelines. Thanks! Debra Alderman, *Signals* editor:
dalderman@antiochsea.edu

Welcome new members

The following folks have joined TARUSUS since the Spring 06 issue:

Enan Zelinski, Wisconsin, junior
Patrick Jupiter, Washington, adult
Ari Ross, Louisiana, junior
Gerard Mittelstaedt, Texas, adult

TARUSUS contact information

Dave Thewlis is the TARS U.S. coordinator. Please note his new address:
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Resumes of fellow TARUSUS members:

Dave says he can supply a complete new resume file to any TARUSUS member who requests, but will have to charge about \$3.50 for it in printing and mailing costs. If newish members would like to share their "resume" or short biography, with all the current members, they can also submit it to Debra Alderman for publication in *Signals from TARUSUS*. dalderman@antiochsea.edu

Amazon Publication 2007



More than 20 years before Hugh Brogan and Christina Hardyment's seminal works, Hugh Shelley wrote the first serious appraisal of the work of Arthur Ransome and the appeal of the Swallows and Amazons books. In eleven short chapters such as 'The Holidays', 'Characters and Character', 'Forerunners, Fairy tales and Fantasy', 'Children and Adults' and 'Children and the Writer', Shelley became the first to analyze their amazing success, and the only commentator to interview Ransome himself and to benefit from his input.

The inclusion of Ransome's comments in his diary when he corrected the proofs, and the annotations in his personal copy will make the Amazon edition of Hugh Shelley's little-known monograph, first published by The Bodley Head in 1960, rather special.

Arthur Ransome by Hugh Shelley (96 pp, hardback) will be published (with the permission of the Random Century Group) for subscribers, at a suggested contribution of \$26 for overseas airmail, and will appear to coincide with the TARS AGM in May 2007.

To purchase this publication, send your check for \$26 made out to "TARS" to Dave Thewlis, the TARS U.S. Coordinator, and indicating on the memo line that it is for the 2007 Amazon Publication.

This price includes postage. Mail your check to:

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

Did you know that September 19th is commemorated throughout the U.S. as

"National Talk Like a Pirate Day"?

Even though you just missed it, take a moment now to put it on your calendar for next year! It's not too early to stir your stumps and shiver your timbers! Send in your favorite 'Cap'n Nancyisms' and how you have found ways to work them into ordinary conversations at work, school, PTA meetings, etc. Contributions will be published in *Signals from TARUSUS* Winter '07 issue. Barbequed billygoats!! hurry and email ideas to: dalderman@antiochsea.edu

2006 I.A.G.M. HIGHLIGHTS

By Avi Lank

The genius of Arthur Ransome's imagination was well on display at the 2006 International Annual General Meeting of TARS, held in Coniston May 26 to 28.

The village of about 1,000 is on the northwest tip of Coniston Water. Coniston is reminiscent of the Finger Lakes of western New York State, a long, narrow, deep body of water between steep hills, called fells locally. It is one of the two lakes from which Ransome took many of his locations, the Secret Harbour being the most spectacular example. The place really exists on Peel Island, which is about two-thirds of the way down the east side of the lake.

Our friends at Northern Region, who organized the IAGM, provided a ferry service to the island, where visiting TARS found a campsite complete with chocolate and a cake for Bridget's birthday party. A quick walk south took them to the harbour, which looks exactly like Ransome describes and drew it. Rock walls shield it from prying eyes on the lake, yet stand at the proper place and the straight, narrow channel is unmistakable. Someone had even hung lanterns for leading lights. The only thing missing was Titty's dipper.

Some of the other sites scattered around the lake include the Dogs Home, Octopus Lagoon, the Amazon River and Boathouse, Houseboat Bay and possibly Beckfoot. While Ransome rearranged their relative locations, and threw in others, especially from neighboring Lake Windermere, it was exciting to see how they compared individually to the imagination of childhood.

Kanchenjunga, known to the natives as the Old Man of Coniston, also towers over the village. More intrepid TARS, including Helen Jolley a junior member from Portland, Ore., climbed a foggy Kanchenjunga on Saturday. Along with my wife and me, Helen and Doug Faunt comprised the American delegation at the meeting of about 240 people, one from as far away as Japan.

Helen, whose trip was partly paid for by the Ship's Baby Fund, spent some time at the juniors camp at Ground Bank Farm just across the lake from Coniston. Ground Bank was the model for Holly Howe, and the juniors camp was a tent city at the bottom of the field down which Roger tacks during the first chapter of "Swallows and Amazons." During a cruise on the lake, Helen was in the camp enthusiastically semaphoring the

boat, saying what I have no idea.

The main meeting site was the John Ruskin School in the village. Meals were served in a communal dining room, giving plenty of opportunity to meet fellow TARS, and programs were conducted in the school's gym / auditorium. Climbing ropes and portable basketball hoops were pushed aside to make room for plastic chairs filled for talks.

Margaret Ratacliffe started out on Friday by considering the relative influence of Ransome and J.K. Rowling on a generation of young readers. That was followed talks on everything from charcoal making to copper mining and a trivia quiz competition Saturday night. (*See opposite page for the entire quiz—at home version*).

Great Aunt Maria showed up later Saturday for an evening of entertainment, her great nieces Ruth and Margaret sitting demurely beside her balling yarn. The highlight was provided by a black-tied TARS named Robert Thompson who had managed to find a series of five short piano pieces by John Franklin based on "Peter Duck." As Thompson noted, Ransome acknowledged getting a copy from Franklin, but didn't say he liked them.

Good judgment. The movements are entitled "Pirate Song," "Peter Duck," "Ship's Parrot Talks to Ship's Monkey," "The Monkey and the Crabs" and "Roger Before the Mast." To say they are camp would be an insult to brightly colored bell bottom polyester pants.

The evening ended with a dragon parade put on by the juniors twisting through the buildings on campus. Another highlight occurred Sunday afternoon, when well-known British actor and TARS member Gabriel Woolf read passages from some of the books and the beginning of an original composition set on Wild Cat Island just after the end of the "The Picts and the Martyrs."

Following each night's activities, the bar stayed open late, and conversation flowed as smoothly as the beer. My wife and I made many new friends before retiring to a bed and breakfast up the road. Thompson's Saturday-night attire notwithstanding, the IAGM was informal. Many TARS camped in the playing field beside the school, and at dusk, which is quite late in Britain that time of year, the Boys Toilet was filled with people brushing their teeth.

Susan would have been proud.

Not the Dick Callum Cup Quiz (Answers at bottom of page 12)

1. Name the three pigeons in Pigeon Post. One point for each named correctly. For an additional point circle the name of the pigeon who flew with the “Fire” message.
2. For one point, in PD why did Peter Duck wash the Wild Cat’s anchor?
3. In SA whose birthday was celebrated with a feast on the Island – and for a second point, what day is Susan’s birthday ?
4. In WH Titty says “No, No, No. Don’t touch me. I’m going to do it by myself.” Do what? (One point available)
5. Which four items did Commander Walker instruct the Amazons to bring, in his telegrams summoning them to SW? One point for each named correctly.
6. In GN who nearly took another’s property at the Pict House? For a second point, what was it - and for a third point, whose was it?
7. In CC when Port and Starboard rowed to warn Tom that the Hullabalos were coming, who rowed stroke and who rowed bow? (One point for each you have right).
8. In SD which two things did Captain Flint use to patch Swallow? One point for each.
9. In WDMTGTS for one point each, where was Daddy coming from - and where was he going to be stationed?
10. In BS the Coot Club had a feast aboard the D & G. Ten items were consumed during the feast – you will score one point for each correct item. Only the first nine items listed on your answer sheet will be considered.
11. For one point, what was Captain Flint’s pet name for Mrs Blackett?
12. For one point, in WDMTGTS which book did Roger find floating on the Goblin’s cabin floor, following the abortive attempt to turn back to land?
13. For one point, in CC which artiste or artistes were about to perform on the Hullabaloo’s radio, just before it was silenced by Breydon Water?
14. For two points, when Scarab was named in PM, what was used in the ceremony and who performed it?
15. Two of the twelve books mention food in the final sentence. Which two books are they and what are the foods? Possible maximum of four points - you do not need to specify which food belongs with which book.
16. For one point, according to the maps in ML, what lay between Chang’s Yamen and the Silver River?
17. In SW, the Egyptians sang two songs while they were stranded in the middle of the Red Sea, awaiting rescue. One point for each song.
18. In WH, which two books did the explorers see when they first went into the Fram? One point for each title.
19. In PM Dot was sent to pick some roses for the GA’s room, but which two varieties of flora did Nancy suggest before settling on roses? (One point for each variety)
20. For two points, when the trap was sprung in BS, which boat was being cast off and whose finger was on the camera button?

Join Pacific Northwest TARS members for a
WINTER HOLIDAYS
NORTH POLE EXCURSION

WHEN: December 24th–31st 2006

WHERE: Not quite the North Pole,
but pretty far north...
Big White ski area near Kelowna,
British Columbia, Canada

WHAT: Our theme will be the book *Winter Holidays*. Activities may include igloo building, snowshoeing, cross-country and/or down-hill skiing, snowboarding, ice skating, inner-tubing, sledding, evening bonfires, dog-sledding, an expedition to the North Pole, and of course, feasting. Luckily for us APs, most of the accommodations at this family-friendly ski area are equipped with hot tubs.

COST: The primary cost for participants will be their own transportation, lodging, and meals—all of which will vary depending on the participant.

Big White features a full spectrum of accommodations from a very respectable, inexpensive youth hostel to the more luxurious condo-type Sundance Resort.

All accommodations book up completely for the holiday week **so plan now!** Pretty much all lodgings including the youth hostel have cooking facilities, so we may do some meals together and some on our own, depending on the preference of those who sign up.

Other expenses will include rental of any gear you may want to use for snow activities, passes for chairlifts, trails and use of other facilities. FYI, at Big White all of the above are significantly cheaper than at better-known Whistler and other big-name northwest ski areas. The snow's great and plentiful in the Okanagon area of B.C. Even though the exchange rate with the Canadian dollar isn't as good as it once was, it's still a very good value.

For more information about Big White activities, facilities and accommodations, check out:
<http://www.bigwhite.com/>

CONTACT: Debra Alderman, Signals from TARSUS editor, is organizing this event. She and her family will be up at Big White for the entire week and will be coordinating TARS Winter Holiday activities. They'd love to have TARS members from all over the US and Canada join them for any length of time between the 24th and the 31st! Please contact her for details via email at dalderman@antiochsea.edu



Not the Dick Callum Cup Quiz Answers (from page 10):
1: Homer, Sappho, Sophocles, Sappho flew with the message. 2: Because Black Jack was sitting on it/listening through the hawse hole. 3: Mrs Walker says Vicky [also accept Bridge/Brigit or Ship's baby]; and New Year's Day. 4: Skate. 5: Tents, compass, gumboots, oilies 6: Roger [also Ian], chocolate [also cake], Ian's. 7: Port = stroke Starboard = bow 8: waterproof canvass (cut from a groundsheet) and flat headed nails. 9: China & Shorley 10: pea soup (although they originally bought mushroom for which no points), bread, steak and kidney pudding, beans, xmas pudding, methylated spirits, sugar, ginger beer, oranges & humbugs. 11: Mops 12: Knight on Sailing 13: The Hoodlum Band 14: Ginger wine & Dorothea 15: CC chocolate WH chicken. 16: High Ground 17: Hanging Johnny & What shall we do with a drunken sailor. (No points for Spanish Ladies – they whistled this, but did not sing it.) 18: Riddle of the Sands & Farthest North – the Voyage & Exploration of the Fram & 15 months sledge expedition (will accept Farthest North!) 19: Deadly Nighthshade & Garlic 20: Cachalot & Pete