



## SIGNALS FROM T·A·R·S·U·S

October 2007

### KATE'S EXCELLENT CHESAPEAKE ADVENTURE: ABOARD THE CUTTER *CHÉRIE*

By Kate Crosby  
Esmont, Virginia

How often have we all said and read how much AR's books have affected us in the real world? Grace under pressure, tacking a dinghy, dowsing for water, dealing with disaster, skinning a rabbit; a great deal has seeped into our adult lives, one way and another. I'm sure we all have our own list. So when I read that the Ocean Cruising Club\* was planning a Spring cruise in the Chesapeake, I knew just what to do, thanks to Port & Starboard's epic waterborne chase of the Teasel on the Norfolk Broads.

"Pierhead jump," said Jim Woodall, "...But you'll have to work your passages. Peelin' potatoes." Well, I know I can do that.

So taking advantage of technology, I stuck out my cyber-thumb in landlocked Virginia and after a brief phone conversation, signed on with Tom Kenney of the cutter *Chérie* (1976, 43' Westsail) for the three-day cruise up the Bay.

7<sup>th</sup> June Cape Charles, Virginia, (Lat. 37-16.8N, Long. 76-00.2W) Starboard side looking North.

Cruisers are assembling at the marina and Dark and Stormies\*\* are circulating aboard Fred & Annie Hallett's motor-sailer *Pelican* (Ships cat, Maggie, a Burmese, short for Magnificat, which she certainly is.) Tom and I introduce ourselves, and we move on to a Captain Flint-level feast of clams, shrimps, sweet corn and watermelon on the club terrace facing the sunset. In front of us is a curling, sandy beach with gulls and herons in the tide pools, a couple of excellent sideways-scuttling crabs, eyes on stalks. Peter Duck would recognize them at once. Behind us, alas, rows of mega-mansions, still in mid-construction but soon to house a population that will alter this peaceful beach forever.

We dinghy aboard *Chérie* and I meet the ship's dog Calvin, and ship's cat Chips. Definitely Sinbad grown up. I stow my foul weather gear and remind myself to wake up before turning over in the narrow bunk – or end up on the cabin sole!



Ship's pooch Calvin "on watch"

8<sup>th</sup> June. First thing, the Captain has taken Calvin ashore for his morning run, then nipped up the mast for a quick repair. AR would approve of Tom Kenney. Sailing may have become much more technical since AR's day, but it still requires the same combination of self-reliance, quick reactions, good judgment, physical strength and manual dexterity it always has. Tom is a retired naval and then commercial airline aviator.

He has owned *Chérie* for 20 years and installed, built or replaced almost everything on board. He navigates without anxiety, his anchor doesn't drag. He is a perfectly self-sufficient single-hander so it's kind of him to sign me on.

There's not much wind. What there is is out of the South West, so we set off with the fleet of five yachts for our first stop, Pungoteague Creek, under jib, staysail and engine.

How AR would have loved the Chesapeake! A marvelous inland sea, a smaller version of the Baltic, full of islands, creeks, shoals, coves. It would take the Walkers,

(Continued on page 8)

# THE NANCY BLACKETT RANSOME'S BEST LITTLE BOAT

By Sheila Campbell  
(UK Correspondent)

AR may no longer be with us, but there is a part of him alive and well and living near Pin Mill, in Suffolk. *Nancy Blackett*, his 'best little boat', is based at Woolverstone, a few miles up the River Orwell from 'this happy place'.

Each summer, she goes to sea intentionally, passing the Beach End buoy en route to places that Ransome took her to, and to some that he didn't, such as Limehouse Basin in London, which required her to negotiate the Thames Barrier at Greenwich. She has renewed her acquaintance with harbours all along the south coast as far as Falmouth, and has appeared at numerous International Festivals of the Sea; by far the most prestigious of those was Trafalgar 200 at Portsmouth in 2006, when she took part in the sail-past HM the Queen during the Fleet Review.

The chief reason for *Nancy's* significance is that Ransome put her centre stage as *Goblin* in *We Didn't Mean to Go to Sea*. It was for this reason that the Nancy Blackett Trust came into being in 1996, led by the indefatigable Peter Willis. Ransome took *Nancy* to Holland in 1936 when he was researching the book, and a long term goal of the Trust was that she should eventually follow her old wake.

The Trust invested time, effort, money and care to ensure that *Nancy* was up to the demands of such a voyage and in the summer of 2001, it happened. *Nancy's* North Sea voyage could not truly be described as a re-creation of *Goblin's*, and nor was it meant to be. For a start, the average age of the crew was closer to the mid-40s than the low teens. The weather was more kindly – too kind, she had to motor most of the way across, and rather than have no skipper, she had three; *and* the engine and navigation lights worked!

*Nancy* has now been to Holland three times, the 2003 crossing being crewed by two real live children of fourteen and fifteen; one was even called Susan. They made sure that the voyage was as close as possible to the book, even down to taking authentic WD food, sharing watch during the night, and playing their penny whistles. This being real life, they were accompanied not by younger siblings, but by two grown ups.

*Nancy's* third crossing to Holland was made in 2006, and it has been the intention that she should go again this year, but so far bad weather has put paid to the plans. If you would like to learn more about the Nancy Blackett



*Nancy Blackett* on the River Orwell

Trust, go to <http://www.nancyblackett.org/>  
The Trust has an international membership, and new members are always welcome. Follow the link on the website to find the printable membership form.

You may join or renew your membership of the Nancy Blackett Trust via the TARS U.S. Coordinator and pay in dollars.

To join, download and fill out the membership application and send it with your check for \$31.50 (£15 overseas membership) to Dave Thewlis, the TARS U.S. Coordinator (Dave's contact information is on the back page of *Signals from TARSUS*). Please make your check out to TARS but indicate in the memo area that it is for membership or renewal of NBT. You may also renew when notified by the NBT by sending your check directly to Dave Thewlis.

## Help Wanted: New TARS US Coordinator

After many years of incredibly dedicated service, Dave Thewlis is ready to pass the torch of TARS US leadership.

**Thanks for all your work Dave!!!**

Luckily, this volunteer position isn't too time consuming! Duties include: processing new memberships and renewals, and generating mailing labels for *Signals from TARSUS*; maintaining a TARS bank account, and sending money periodically to the U.K.- about once a year. *Optional, but could be fun and challenging:* working with active members to promote both TARS membership and the discovery of AR books by a new generation of North American readers. Perks include getting to know TARS members in the US, UK and worldwide through periodic correspondence.

If you'd like to learn more and possibly volunteer for this important position, please contact Dave Thewlis directly. His contact info is on the back page of this SFT issue.

# REDISCOVERING THE JOY OF A QUEST... EATING LOCALLY IN THE 21<sup>ST</sup> CENTURY

*Plenty: One Man, One Woman, and a Raucous Year of Eating Locally*

by J.B. Mackinnon & Alisa Smith

Published April 2007

Book review by Debra Alderman  
Mercer Island, Washington

A daily dose of farm-fresh eggs, milk and home-baked treats were staples of the Swallows' and Amazons' camp rations. In fact, before Mrs. Walker would consent to letting her offspring camp out on an island, in a valley, or on a mountainside, she would first make arrangements with nearby farm families to provision her crew with wholesome food. She clearly believed that tinned milk would do for Sinbad the kitten, but her human children needed the real stuff.

We North Americans (and most of those living in the industrialized world), over the decades since AR's era, have seen our food supply become alarmingly industrialized, processed and de-personalized. As this has happened, city-dwellers and suburbanites have lost track almost completely of the cycle of the seasons and many children don't even realize that milk comes from cows and vegetables grow out of the ground. Supermarkets and centralized distribution of food means that we are eating produce, dairy products and meat from the other side of the country and even the opposite side of the globe on a daily basis.

In reaction to this trend, a resurgence in interest in locally produced food has occurred in the past decade, resulting in the blossoming of farmer's markets in hundreds of communities through North America and the UK. These markets are a great opportunity to chat with the people who grow your food and buy products from farms within a day's drive of where you live. I've got several of these markets to choose from in the Seattle areas. Over this summer I've had the delightful experience of buying a large portion of my weekly supply of groceries directly from organic farmers, artisan cheese and butter makers, producers of gourmet honey and jam, and bakers of amazing hearth-baked bread.

But it's not just the quality of the food that makes it worth it to try to eat food grown in one's region. Local food advocates say that we need to consider the "carbon footprint" of our diet. While it's a treat to get tomatoes in the middle of the winter, think of the CO<sub>2</sub> that's been sent out into the atmosphere by the jet that flew those tomatoes from Chile to Boston or Saudi Arabia to Manchester! According to an article in the British publication *The Independent*, "air freight emits more greenhouse gases per food mile than any other mode of transport." ("Food miles: The true cost of putting imported food on your

plate", May 31, 2007),

<http://environment.independent.co.uk/lifestyle/article2600309.ece>)

In addition to helping preserve the planet a bit longer, farmer's markets and grocers that purchase locally grown food are helping to revitalize rural economies and increase the viability of the family farms and small, high quality producers of naturally made products.

But is it really possible to turn back the clock and eat the way people did in the Lake District circa 1930? Seemingly in answer to that question, a couple in Vancouver B.C. set themselves a quest of sorts to take local eating to the extreme. A little like the protagonists in *Swallows and Amazons*, they didn't really know why they needed to set this goal for themselves. But who really needs a reason to climb a mountain, discover gold or reach the North Pole? That it's a challenge and that it's not going to be easy is a great deal of the appeal.

Their jointly written memoir, published in spring 2007, is called *Plenty: One Man, One Woman, and a Raucous Year of Eating Locally*. Their experiment with local eating all started while they camped out at their "vacation property" which is actually an off-the-grid abandoned homestead, inaccessible by road, in the wilderness of northern British Columbia. When unexpected guests showed up, they and their friends were able to "harvest" a satisfying feast from field, forest and river. They began to wonder if they could actually live on the food that is grown, raised, produced or caught in their immediate region of southwestern BC and northwestern Washington State. Thus began a crazy adventure. It almost began as a dare, they almost gave it up on several occasions, their relationship almost didn't survive it.

But they did successfully find out that there's an abundance of wonderful, healthful food available within 100 miles of their urban neighborhood. They visited farms, discovered edibles growing wild right in the city and grew a few crops of their own in their pea patch and in containers on the terrace. They learned to cook what was in season and to preserve a bit of the good stuff to get them through the rest of the year. Meanwhile, like the Swallows and Amazons, they made some great friends and discovered what fun having a quest can be, whether it's summiting Kanchenjunga or finding locally grown wheat.

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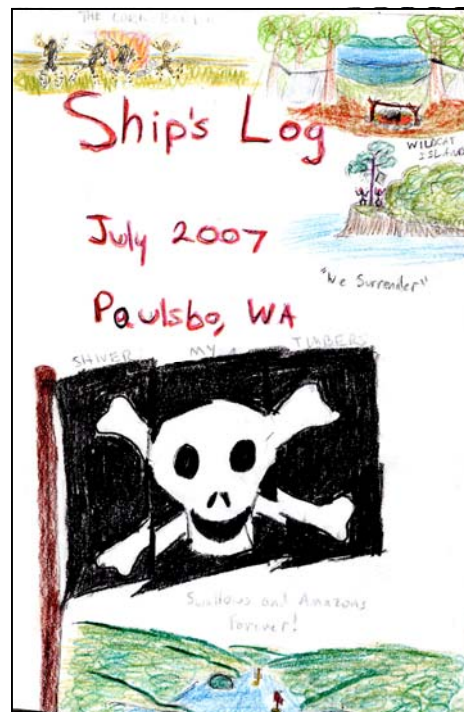


# PACIFIC NORTHWEST TARS

## “Ships’ Log” of the Pacific NW Corroboree 2007

Poulsbo, Washington, USA  
N 47.50.28 W 122.36.5

Crew of the <i>Bucephalus</i> :	Alexander Forbes, Captain and Owner Diane Forbes, Mate & 2 <sup>nd</sup> in Command
Crew of the <i>Semaphore</i> :	Moti Krauthamer, Captain and Owner Debra Alderman, Mate Akiva Krauthamer, Able Seaman
Crew of the <i>Swallow</i> :	Helen Jolley, Captain and Owner Matt Jolley, Mate Elizabeth Jolley, Mate (and the better cook!) Jane Rondthaler, Able Seaman Will Jolley, Ship’s Boy
Retired Pirate:	Pat Jupiter
Savages & Pastry Shoppers:	Susan Peterson Patrick Smith Caroline Smith
Friendly Natives:	Melanie, Steve & Tessa



### Ships’ Log: 19 July 2007

“Tyson’s Farm” –tents in the orchard, farm fences here and there, Swallows, Amazons & D’s all accounted for! (Actually Forbes, Jolley, Krauthamer-Alderman & Smith-Peterson families plus Jane, Tessa, Melanie & Pat) .....a drizzle now & then.... tea and cocoa and the outpost kitchen....stars out just before ‘lights out’.

--Mate Elizabeth



Alex, Elizabeth and Diane camped out on farm’s porch

### Ships’ Log: 20 July 2007

Breakfast toast, Jam, Oatmeal, Blueberries, and granola....First sail on the *Bucephalus* good wind. Second sail *Swallow*....nearly tipped over quite a lot. Diane couldn’t stop grinning!

--“Savage” Caroline

The wind was alternating spanking and low-to-none. Captains were Helen (steersman Diane) and Alex (Melanie acting helmsman as needed). *Bucephalus* chased down *Swallow* and circled and swooped around, both boats raced a little when the wind was strong. The wind was and it wasn’t. Occasionally quite strong, coamings almost under water, the purling sound of pushing waters-- And then *Swallow*’s mast keeled over and down went the sail flat on the water. A shroud had snapped. Nobody panicked. ....amid shouted advice and plenty of careful folding & stuffing, the decks were cleared for towing, and we (*Bucephalus*) pulled *Swallows* in to the mooring. ....plans were made to take her mast up to the farm, and tow her over to the landing in the afternoon and put her on the trailer. .... So ends the Saga of the Disabling of *Swallow*.

--Able Seaman Jane

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# CORROBOREE 2007

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## **Ships' Log: 20 July 2007**

Steve and Pat paddled a 16-foot by 41-inch Old Town canoe (with oarlocks -- *A.B. Jane*) ....out against a stiff breeze and tide. .... After maneuvering with the sailboats, exchanging friendly waves and smiles, [we] sipped the [paddles]. One rower provided decidedly more power than two paddlers. When the canoe headed home, it fairly flew before the helpful wind and tide.

--Retired Pirate Pat



Photo by Akiva Krauthamer

This mama seal was the *Semaphore's* moorage buddy

## **Ships' Log: 21 July 2007**

Mate Diane taught knots, especially to Caroline. She taught the dangers of the "square" knot and advised never to use it to tie two ends [together]. Earlier before the dismasting, the *Bucephalus* was observed out-racing the *Swallow* at times and playfully coming astern to take the wind out of *Swallow's* sails!

3 TOTEMS AND NO COROBORREE!

(A note from Mate Elizabeth: no campfire, no slices of tasty eel, but delicious stew anyway!)



Photo by Pat Jupiter

Bringing the *Bucephalus* into the dock for a quick crew change.



Photo by Elizabeth Jolley

Capt. Helen sleeping aboard *Swallow* before the mast incident

## **Ships' Log: 21 July 2007**

Well, *Swallow* is in sad shape. A sailing dinghy without a mast is like a person without drive. There's no way to get going. But I admit the whole thing was very exciting. One moment *Swallow* was literally flying through the water, heeling over enough for water to come in a bit. The next moment there was a large crack (the port shroud breaking) and then my mind blanked out the mast falling. Next thing I knew the sails were in the water and the mast was down. .... Once the mast fell, there was a nice sudden moment of calm after the storm. Of course, nobody wants calm forever, or else life would be boring, and ten minutes later as *Swallow* was being towed by *Bucephalus* and I was steering a very calm *Swallow*, I felt a little bored. Of course, now there's plenty of things to do with *Swallow*, just none of them are sailing.

--Captain Helen

## **Ships' Log: 21 July 2007**

It's been a successful corroboree (sans bonfire) here in Poulsbo and our wonderful hosts Alex & Diane have been so great about shlepping us back and forth to the marina and making all these fantastic hospitality arrangements! I'm also grateful to Elizabeth for making it feel like camp. But probably the most memorable part of the weekend was sailing on *Bucephalus* and then getting to watch her crew do a salvage/rescue mission to assist *Swallow*..... it was pretty exciting but everyone had a great time....

See you all next time!

Karabdangbaraka!

--Mate Debra

--Captain Moti

--A.B. Akiva

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

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# TOM'S AFLOAT AT LAST

By Tom Napier  
North Wales, Pennsylvania

I may have set a record, some 55 years, for the interval between first reading Ransome's books and finally setting foot on a boat of my own. I'd sailed club dinghies on Lake Geneva and in the Mediterranean in the mid-1970s but had never bought a boat.

In the end it happened sooner than I expected. Last fall, after living in southeast Pennsylvania for 21 years, I finally noticed that there was a sailing club at Lake Nockamixon, my nearest practical though limited (1,450 acres) sailing venue. I joined, crewed a couple of times and was persuaded to sign up for a slip at the marina. There was a three to five year waiting list so I expected to get in some seasons of practice on other people's boats before buying one of my own.

Imagine my astonishment when I was offered a slip this spring. (Rumor has it that high gas prices persuaded many power-boat owners to give up their slips.) I had to buy a boat within weeks or lose my place in line.

Although there are some 24-foot slips at the marina the majority have a 20-foot length limit so I researched sailboats just under 20 feet long. This seemed to be as small as one could go and still expect reasonable onboard accommodation. I immediately ran into Catch 22. Any boat one could sleep in was too big to readily tow anywhere, such as the Chesapeake Bay, where overnighting would be legal: a boat small enough to tow would have no accommodation.

Suddenly faced with impending ownership, I started looking at shorter boats. While I might find a crew-member to help me out on weekends, I wanted to have the option to sail during the week, too. A smaller boat would be easier to sail single-handed. The lower initial financial commitment also seemed like a good idea. After all, I'd still have the option of buying a bigger boat in two or three years as Plan A had called for.

That's when I discovered the Precision 165. This, as the number suggests, is 16' 5" (5 meters) long and is light enough to tow with a compact car. Unlike most boats that size, which have little more than a cuddy in the bows to store the sails, the 165 has a respectable, if cozy, cabin with two narrow but usable berths. Its weighted keel makes for stability and saves the cabin being cluttered with a centerboard case. I thought it worth a look and was planning a 50-mile trip to the nearest Precision dealer when I heard that someone nearby was selling one.



Tom's afloat at last in *Fiona*, his Precision 165

Although nine years old, she was in immaculate condition. I looked her over and decided she would meet my requirements.

Not having a hitch on my car, I had a neighbor haul her to the lake the first weekend in April that the weather wasn't too cold and wet. I soon found that single-handed sailing isn't too tough, at least in less than Force 3 winds. Single-handed docking and undocking is a different matter. At least until one masters the art of being at both ends of the boat simultaneously. I can't cast off the bow warp and also be in the stern controlling the outboard. (Where are Nell and Bess when you need them?) Luckily I had some margin for error as it was early in the season and few other slips were occupied. I got in lots of practice before they filled up.

Getting out under power has become routine, there's enough clearance to back out and turn towards the entrance. My technique on returning is to come alongside the end of the slip, cut the motor and hop off with the bow and stern springs in hand. Even though there's now a boat occupying the other half of my slip there's still room to turn the boat through 90 degrees and warp her in. I just have to watch that the sharp corner of the dock doesn't dig into her side. A fellow club member recommended turning under power and driving straight in. She, presumably, doesn't have to deal with an outboard which drives the boat at a minimum speed of a knot and a half and can't be quickly reversed. I might give it a try with a crew-member fending off in the bows.

One problem neither I nor, apparently, anyone else, had foreseen is that the local gasoline contains ethanol which damages two-stroke motors. Even my local landscapers have had to buy new weed-whackers.

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# FIONA'S A PERFECT FIT!

(Continued from page 6)

My outboard was tending to stall a minute or two after being started, generally just as I was casting off at the bows. One day, as I was returning to my slip, it left me marooned in mid-lake, drifting with lowered sails. It took ten minutes of fiddling with the choke to get the motor started; Roger would have been shocked at the sentiments I expressed. An electric trolling motor began to look rather appealing.

Things came to a head the following Saturday. The motor wouldn't start at all. Abandoning my day's sailing, I lifted the motor off and took it home. As a first investigatory step I drained the fuel in the tank into a glass jar. It promptly separated into two layers, about 40% of light brown liquid on the bottom with 60% of dirty green liquid floating on top.

I concluded that this was not vinaigrette dressing but alcoholic water and impure gasoline. Far from being puzzled at the motor's unwillingness to start, I was now amazed that it had run at all. I'd heard that ethanol in gas absorbed moisture but finding 40% of bad vodka in one's tank is disturbing. One possible contributory factor was a horizontal split I found in the gas tank's filler flange. Moist air might have been sucked in during the cool spring nights but it's still hard to account for the quantity of water I found.

After I'd cleaned gunge from the carburetor and refilled the tank the motor ran well so I put it back on the boat. I even reset the idling speed so docking is easier now. I'm holding off on that trolling motor but I did invest \$54 in a leak-free replacement gas tank. Meanwhile, there's a premium price waiting for anyone with cans of ethanol-free gas for sale.



Surprising room in a micro-cruiser for sleeping space & gear.

Despite her roominess my boat is only about three feet longer than the dinghies that I (and the Swallows and Amazons) once sailed. Still, there's no obvious Ransome-related name I can give her. Those of Ransome's boats that are larger than dinghies have berths for four to eight. I've called her "Fiona" in honor of my Scottish roots.

I have some unfinished Ransome business on the lake. Last fall, while crewing in a larger boat, I was startled to see in the distance a gaff-rigged dinghy with a red sail. As we were engaged in a somewhat informal race at the time (we came in third last) I was in no position to take a closer look. I'll be looking out for her this summer. I wonder what reaction I'll get if I come alongside and call, "Scarab Ahoy!"

## TARS publications now being mailed directly from the U.K.

By Dave Thewlis  
TARS U.S. Coordinator  
McKinleyville, California

Beginning with the current set of publications, the Trustees have decided to mail publications directly to overseas members rather than bulk-mailing them to a distribution point and have them repackaged and remailed. If you have received your most-recent mailing you will have seen that it came from the U.K. - and that there wasn't a *Signals from TARSUS* enclosed. This means that we will be mailing *Signals from TARSUS* separately, as we have done with this issue.

Assuming that this new method of distribution works for TARS and they continue to mail directly from the U.K., it also means that we have more freedom on our schedule (and periodicity) for *Signals from TARSUS* now that we're not tied to the U.K. schedule, and we'll know more once we have understand all of the costs associated with these mailings. We may be soliciting everyone in the future about possible changes to *SfT* in terms of schedule, number, or other possibilities.

Since we aren't trying to bundle with other publications, Debra Alderman, the editor of *Signals from TARSUS*, has volunteered to take care of mailing the newsletters directly. So I would like to thank Debra for taking on this additional job -- and especially David Bates and Anne LeVeque, who have taken care of our bulk mailings for years.

# CHESAPEAKE ADVENTURE

(Continued from Page 1)

Blacketts and Callums years to explore and map them all. Captain John Smith tried it in 1608. This is the 400<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the founding of Jamestown, and a group of 12 adult explorers are following his track in a best-guess replica of a 17th century shallop. (There are no exact records to copy for the 28' clinker- built open boat.) To inaugurate the John Smith Chesapeake Bay Water Trail five women and seven men are committed to the 1,500 mile journey, oars and sail (and bucket) only.

*Editor's Note: According to the website <http://www.johnsmith400.org/> "Captain Ian Bystrom and the crew of the John Smith Shallop successfully completed their 121 day, 1,500 mile voyage at Historic Jamestowne on Saturday, September 8, 2007."*

By lunchtime the little wind has died on us and the biting flies are moving in. Tom gets one for one with the fly swatter but he's not gaining on them. When I go down to the galley to make tea, the flies attack *en masse* and the cabin temperature is 92°F.

Eventually we reach Pungoteague and the splash of the anchor is swiftly followed by the splash of the crew and happy groans of relief. Cooling off in the creek certainly changes one's point of view! Over drinks and dinner we listen to the weather forecast – a front coming our way from the West tomorrow. Sure enough at midnight we are on deck in our pajamas, dealing with a line squall of 25-30 knot winds. Anchor chain shortened to keep us from swinging into the other boats, everything tied down, we can go back to bunk. Calvin and Chips decide the only really safe place amid the lightning and the wind is piled up together on my feet.

9<sup>th</sup> June. Pungoteague Creek. In the morning we poke out into the grey Bay to find a mean Force 6 right on the nose, with a nasty chop to butt into. Tom tries a short cut over some shallows and bumps the keel quite hard a number of times. No comment from the Captain; the crew is silent.

After an hour of this head wind we give up trying to make Deal Island and hang a starboard to follow *Pelican\*\*\** into Onancock. Gliding up the twisty river, it's my job to call out the channel marker numbers (Red Right Returning). "Er...number... 11, I think, plus



Ship's Kitten Sinbad (AKA Chips) on navigation duty

Mrs. Osprey." Sticks in her messy nest are hanging over the numerals. It's wonderful for me to see the ospreys – such rare birds in Britain – making a comeback in the Bay. DDT has been banned for years and the nests are protected. There's a nest on almost every channel marker going up to Onancock. We watch some adult birds standing guard and others off fishing for the chicks. Just as exotic for me are the pelicans, winging low over the waves. "Good sign", says Tom," they mean there's fish about.

At the head of the creek is the town dock and village of Onancock. We have almost bisected the Eastern Shore, the Atlantic is just over the hill. Time for some boat maintenance. Tom paints the dinghy bottom, upended on the foredeck. I do a little clumsy stitching up of fraying canvas. Tom has an old sailmaker's palm, but it turns out to be easier to grab the needle tip with a pair of pliers and haul it through. It's our turn to invite the Pelicans for supper. I'm told to get with the cans in the bilges. (This is the "peelin' potatoes" part.) If you think other people's kitchens are a nightmare, try other people's GALLEYS!

After a lot of crawling around lockers, unpacking and repacking the vertical fridge and assessing the contents, I decide on chips & salsa, chili topped with cheese and chopped onion, salad from home, Roger-sized squares of chocolate for dessert. Dinner gets an all-round good review! Then bunk for an early start.

9<sup>th</sup> June. Mouth of Pungoteague, 4:45 a.m., gray but quite warm. My job at anchor-up is to put on a stout pair of rubber gloves and kneel like a supplicant before the Head, flaking down the chain as it comes into the locker.

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# ABOARD THE *CHERIE*

(Continued from Page 8)

If this isn't done the chain will 'castle' in a big heap and the shower drain and locker grating won't fit back on top. It's one of the few things that I can really help this single-hander with.

And we're off under jib, staysail (and engine again) doing 7.5 knots. We've got to cross the Chesapeake to make the cruise-ending feast at Solomons Island, Maryland, (Lat. 38-19.3N, Long. 76-27.4W) Port side of the Bay looking North. Plenty of time to practice .... knots!

By the time we are entering the Patuxent River I can tie a mean bowline with my eyes shut, and yes, even a bowline on the bight. "Just as you're leaving you're starting to be useful," Tom says dryly. I have to be able to do a bowline with my hands behind my back before I can hitch another ride on *Cherie*.

Soon we are rounding up by Osprey Point, and the end of the cruise. My job at anchor down is to stand on the fore-deck, release a little of the chain and then hit the electric forward arrow button in the deck at Tom's signal. Of course I think of poor John watching *Goblin's* chain roaring over the bow - just the last of the echoes from a great

many of our favourite books that have resonated for me during the cruise. Ham sandwiches in the cockpit, constantly boiling the kettle for tea, birdlife, charts, buoys – how nice that so little has really changed. Thanks, AR, thanks Port and Starboard, I wouldn't have done it without you.

\*Eligibility for full membership in the Ocean Cruising Club depends on the candidate having completed a 1000-mile (minimum) non-stop passage between two ports by the shortest distance as skipper or crew in a craft of not more than 70 feet LOA. There is a class of Associate Membership for those not yet qualified but for whom a long passage is an ambition. On completion of the necessary miles promotion to full membership is automatic.

\*\* 1/3 Goslings Black Seal Rum, 2/3 Barritts Ginger Beer, wedge of lime, grating of nutmeg on the top.

\*\*\* *Pelican* has a neat tender, *Bill*, a 9' rowing/towing/sailing dinghy with cat rigged Bermudian mainsail. Sadly Annie Hallett couldn't find the sail so we didn't have a chance to try her out. But AR would recognize her lines and appreciate the quality of her construction. A pretty good *Scarab* for today. [www.fattyknees.com](http://www.fattyknees.com)

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## HOW TO BE A DUFFER AND NOT DROWN

By Rob Marshall  
Bradenton, Florida

*A man who is not afraid of the sea will soon be drowned...for he will go out on a day he shouldn't. But we do be afraid of the sea, and we only be drowned now and again.*

~John Millington Synge  
"The Aran Islands," 1907

We arrived at the boat ramp on Cedar Key, with great expectations, Grandson Ryan and I.

Behind us on a trailer was "Wild Cat" my replica Cape Cod Catboat, ahead of us was three days of sailing and socializing at the local annual small boat gathering. We stepped the mast and attached sail boom and gaff and prepared to launch, Ryan trotted off to the ramp to be ready to help with the launch I pulled round with boat and trailer to reverse to the ramp. I was surprised to see some bystanders gesticulating wildly at me to stop check-

ing my mirrors. I could see no vital thing falling of the car or trailer nor some small person in a vulnerable place but I stopped anyway. Too late, there was a loud crack and a series of bangs, quickly getting out of the car I was dismayed to find my mast laying in three jagged pieces.

In my anxiety to get in the water I had failed to notice what appeared to be a telephone line strung between two utility poles below which was a steel stranded supporting cable, which turned out to be two inches lower than my mast. Ryan, on surveying the scene of devastation, said "Granddad you had better get rid of this boat it has a jinx." To which I replied "don't blame the boat—it's the skipper, who is a duffer."

It all started several months before whilst out in our kayaks. I said "you know it would be fun to start sailing again." Ryan seemed to think he would like to learn so I decided to build a sailing dinghy. I would have liked to

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# DON'T BE A DUFFER!

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build something along the lines of *Swallow* or *Amazon*, but knew I did not have the skill or the equipment. Therefore I decided a kit boat was the easiest.

I happened to call on one of my customers and noticed he had a sail boat for sale in his driveway. This was a wood-constructed Cape Cod Catboat replica built in 1989 by a local man who was now deceased. It seemed to fit my needs, so after a bit of bartering and a spot of cash she was mine, complete with trailer and electric trolling motor.

I was anxious to get her in the water, as just two days away was our local traditional boat 'Messabout'. Naturally, I wanted to join in the fun. The day before I practiced putting up the mast and sail (she is gaff rigged—something I was not familiar with) and was fairly satisfied.

The day came and Ryan and I launched her and after a few hiccups we sailed to the meet. All went fine until on our return. I released the line to the center board only to watch with horror as it disappeared through the hole and out of sight. I was sure I had noticed a large knot in the line to stop this happening, seemingly this was not the case. What to do?

After checking that the board was still in the case, we decided to sail back to the ramp. It then occurred to me that with the board down it would be impossible to get her onto the trailer. So the next plan was to beach her near the ramp turn her on her side and either push the board back up or remove it.

The theory was O.K., but on approaching the beach we went aground some way off—the board had stopped us. Having brought the trolling motor along I put it on the transom and attempted to use it to get off the sandbar, going ahead did not work so we went astern, This got us off and by trying another way, got to the beach. We found that the unfortunate this had been an easy passage was that the board had vanished. It must have come out getting off the sandbar. We searched around for a while but by now it was getting dark, so we went back to the ramp and pulled out the boat. I said to Ryan "don't worry I will just make another board."

On reflection back home I was not so sure about building another board as I had no idea what it looked like, how it was constructed, or the size. The only thing to do was to try to find it.

Next morning at low tide there was I wading around try-

ing to peer into the water looking for the lost board. It was a blustery day and visibility was not good, I scoured the water line and quartered the beach, not a sign of it, Oh well back to plan A.

A day passed and during the middle of the second night I awoke with a strong feeling I could find this thing, I could almost see it through the waves. On waking the next morning I was filled with determination to seek it once again, this time my plan was to take my kayak and quarter the whole area peering into the depths, now this was a business day so I did not have a lot of time, but felt I could fit it in that morning.

So off I went, launched the kayak and started paddling around. This went on for quite a while and I was beginning to get down hearted, when suddenly I saw a small patch of something blue, it looked promising as the boat was painted what I considered a horrible blue.

But by then I had gone past it. Now an ocean kayak cannot be turned on a dime—at least I cannot do it. So by the time I had turned about I had lost the sight of it. More quartering a smaller area this time, and then ah! There it was, this time there was no doubt I could see the whole board and the line attached to it.

How to retrieve it? I could have dived in as John did but I was not dressed for that and could hardly visit my customers dripping sea water. Fortunately I had a plan, as I left the house I had grabbed my fishing rod with the vague idea of trying to snag the board if I found it. Well anyone who fishes knows that if there is some underwater obstruction one is sure to hook it sooner or later, one reels in the line the rod bows in half, at first you think you have caught the big one, but there is no movement so then you realize you have snagged an object. This usually results in a broken line, or as sometimes happens here you find a crab pot that has lost its mooring attached to the line.

Unfortunately it seems that snagging items on purpose and snagging them accidentally are two very different things. I soon found it was impossible to hook the center-board, partly because the kayak was not a very stable platform. Keeping station over the board was hard enough, as the kayak kept drifting away.

Then I remembered I had a small anchor aboard that I used to keep me in place when fishing. Rather than anchoring I used this to try to snag the board, after three or

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# LEARN FROM ROB'S MISTAKES

(Continued from page 10)

four attempts I struck lucky and snagged the line tightly, enough to bring it towards the surface close enough that I could reach down into the water and grab it.

On trying to pull up the board another problem arose, I had no idea how heavy it was and pulling up on it almost made me capsize. So I attached the line to the kayak and then it was a case of "row row your boat ashore" or at least paddle it. With some difficulty I got close to the shallows and was able to hop out and bring it in, then onto the beach. So now my boat was complete again.

I now gave the whole boat a critical look, apart from the dreadful color it was also had a fairly scruffy appearance, in view of this the next few weeks were spent scrapping and sanding then repainting, this time a more conservative white with mustard colored decking. I added some wood trim and various other touches to give it a more traditional appearance.

I was now satisfied with the look and then had to decide on a name. The previous owner had named her but had used stick-on letters some of which had fallen off, leaving something that could be considered rather rude. On taking possession of her I quickly removed the remaining letters.

The first name I briefly toyed with was "Not made in China" but this was not in keeping with the Ransome theme, except maybe 'Missee Lee'. *Swallow* or *Amazon* was out but I did consider *Scarab* or *Teasel*. *Teasel* was favored for a moment and briefly *Nancy B*. Then I thought: "it is a Catboat what could be better than *Wild Cat*," so this she became.

The next Duffer moment was to follow shortly. Another reason for the renovation was that I had entered the Great Florida Gulf Coast small boat festival. This had a change of venue at the last moment and was to be held at a yacht club that I had not sailed from.

My trusty crew in the shape of Ryan would also be missing as he was away that weekend. I was able to enlist as a crew an elderly gentleman who was 80+, who liked to climb trees in his spare time, (I am not joking he had won several competitions doing it). This friend had shown an interest in *Wild Cat* and said he had sailing experience. We did an experimental sail the day before and all went fairly well.

On the day of the festival it was rather blustery, one also had to navigate through a large number of anchored boats to get to the open water. The first time out went smoothly enough but it was brought home that my crew was not as agile as Ryan (the 70 years of age difference could have something to do with that). However he did have a tendency to sit up rather high and I was constantly reminding him to beware the boom, not wishing to smote him on the head or, worse still, overboard.

Later that day the wind had strengthened somewhat and on returning to the dock I failed to take this and a fast running tide into account. We got swept into one of the moored craft, this caught our boom and sail and we were held at arms length, as it were, meaning I could not get close enough to untangle us. After some maneuvering I did finally get the stern close enough so I could board the other craft. It took some time to get out of the other boat's rigging without damaging anything. Having finally got free, my crew let go and to my horror *Wild Cat* was rapidly departing without me! Taking a mighty leap I made it into her, landing in a heap in the bottom.

In order to avoid any further mishaps I decided to row back, my crew however decided to become a backseat oarsman, constantly telling me "look out!" and warning me that I was running into a buoy, another boat or some other obstruction. Each time it appeared we were well clear of them. He also grabbed an oar every now and then causing us to spin around. I was getting pretty fed up with this by now, and would have liked to have thrown him overboard. Our exchanges became a little heated to say the least. On finally getting back to the dock he stormed off, muttering about incompetent sailors, and other more uncomplimentary things.

Some while later he returned, and we both apologized and all was peace again. So being a duffer seems easier than one imagines. Something even the Swallows found on various occasions, I was also relieved to find on relating these tales to other sailors, the incidents were not that unusual, though maybe in not such a short space of time.

My new mast is now almost finished so I should soon be venturing out to other adventures, with less drama, I hope from now on.

Got any duffer confessions of your own? Get them off your chest and share them with other TARS US members! Deadline for Winter 2008 issue is December 30. Email your contribution to Debra Alderman at [dalderman@antiochseattle.edu](mailto:dalderman@antiochseattle.edu)



## TIDBITS FROM TAR SUS

### 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 TAR SUS*. **Winter 2008 deadline: December 30**

Contact me for submission format and length guidelines.

Thanks! Debra Alderman, *Signals* editor:

dalderman@antiochsea.edu

### Welcome new members!

Bill, Dori, Tasha and Alisha Gottschalk-Fielding, Family  
New York

Beverly Hock, Adult, California

The Sherman-Jollis Family (Caroline Sherman; James, Margot & Natalie Jollis), North Carolina

Ann Porten, Adult, California

Rebecca Welch, Adult, Kansas

### TAR SUS contact information

Dave Thewlis is currently the TARS U.S. coordinator.

Please note his new address:

4390 Chaffin Lane

McKinleyville, CA 95519-8028

[dave@arthur-ransome.org](mailto:dave@arthur-ransome.org)

707-840-9391 (work phone, messages)

415-946-3454 (fax)

### Note: Revised Exchange Rate

The exchange rate between the U.S. and the U.K. has continued to worsen in 2007 and the commercial rate is now near or over the \$2.05 to £1.00 which we have used since last year. As the TARS Stall has not been operative since May, there hasn't been much financial traffic with the U.K., but that will change when the Stall reopens and when it is time for renewals. As our exchange rate has to take into account the commercial rate plus the cost of sending money to the U.K., it has to be set a little above the commercial rate. Therefore, effective immediately, we have a new exchange rate of  $\$2.10 = \pounds 1.00$  which hopefully won't have to change again for a bit and will be okay for the 2008 renewals. This is the rate that will be reflected on the 2008 renewal forms and the rate you should use when ordering anything from the U.K. through me as coordinator. ~Dave Thewlis

## Amazon Publication 2008

### *Before a Peak in Darien*



Arthur Ransome will forever be remembered predominantly for his *Swallows and Amazons* books which have brought a lifetime of pleasure to their readers, as well as encouraging so many to take up the varied activities he described -- especially sailing. It is only later that one discovers how much more he wrote prior to the introduction of 'Roger, aged seven, and no longer the youngest...' tacking up the field from *Darien* to collect the fateful telegram. AR's bibliography contains almost 30 books, translations, articles and contributions (other than his journalism) before the canon.

Whenever Amazon has asked its readers what they would like to be published, there has always been a request for some of his earlier works. Some of these are better remembered than others -- *Oscar Wilde*, *Old Peter's Russian tales*, *Racundra's First Cruise*, *Rod and Line* for example. Two have already appeared: *Blue Treacle* in 1993 and *Bohemia in London* (2002) described as his first real book.

In *Before a Peak in Darien* we plan to republish *The Hoofmarks of the Faun*, together with extracts from *Portraits and Speculations*, *The Elixir of Life*, *Edgar Allen Poe*, *The Book of Friendship*, *The ABC of Physical Culture*, *Pond and Stream*, *A History of Storytelling* and *The Souls of the Streets* (his first published book) together with an introduction by Paul Crispt. We hope that this will both please those who wished to read some of his earlier work as well as introduce others to the stepping stones that were to lead to *Swallows and Amazons*."

The cost to U.S. TARS of the 2008 book, including P&P from the U.K., is \$43 air post or \$38 sea post. If you wish to subscribe, please make your check out to TARS or The Arthur Ransome Society, mark it AP2008 on the memo line, and send it before next March to Dave Thewlis

*PLEASE NOTE: Your check must be received by March 15, 2008 for you to subscribe in advance of publication. After that time, you will have to wait until the subscriptions are filled; any leftovers will be available from the TARS Stall at a slightly higher price somewhere around midsummer.*

## Local Foods (Continued from page 3)

The ingenuity and perseverance that it took these two to figure out what to do with all manner of fresh foods as they became available was inspiring. AR fans will recall how much more satisfying it was to read of Dick and Dorothea's rabbit cooking hijinx in *The Picts and The Martyrs*, and the Mastodon's impressive fresh eel stew made with eels he caught himself in *Secret Water* than Susan's million-and-one creative pemmican iterations! In the same way, James and Alisa's experience discovering home canning and rendering their own sea salt is a refreshing modern day adventure story. As with the *Swallows and Amazons* series, I, the arm-

chair adventurer enjoyed living vicariously through James and Alisa's challenges and triumphs and was inspired to attempt a smaller scale adventure of the same sort. This summer I decided to make homemade jam and yogurt and grow edible things in my own garden for the first time in decades. OK, the jam making was an incredibly messy unsuccessful disaster, but the home made yogurt turned out—even if it did take all day and my kids didn't touch the stuff. For now I'll stick to the very delicious goodies I can buy at the farmer's market. Mates have to keep the crew happy, after all!