



Signals from TARSUS

Dec/Jan 2009

A View from the helm

It is just five months since I took over the helm of TARSUS from Dave Thewlis, it has not so far been all fair weather sailing, the main squall on the horizon is the future of Signals from TARSUS.

Unfortunately shortly before I took over, Debra Alderman found she would be unable to continue as editor due to changes in her occupational responsibilities.

Debra has been doing a sterling job producing a professional style publication and I am sure we all are most grateful for her past efforts and wish her well in the future.

There is also another factor which affects the production of SFT and that is financial, owing to a fall in membership and the low exchange rate of the Dollar TARSUS did not receive a contribution from TARS in sufficient amount to cover our future costs, as publication costs plus our normal administration costs have risen as with everything these days.

So what to do? Assuming the membership wish to continue with SFT we have a few options.

1 The most cost effective is to send SFT to members who can receive it electronically, this is the method used by a large number of organizations today. One advantage is it could be in color including the pictures accompanying the articles. This could produce a more exciting presentation with more pages. I realize this would not be for everybody as some are not online, and for those we would still send a paper copy.

2 Cut down the number of issues to at the most twice a year.

3 cut the number of pages to no more than two however the mailing costs could still be a controlling factor.

Assuming members are happy with one of these options we still have the loss of an Editor to deal with. I do not have the time nor the skills needed to put together something that is readable.

I appeal therefore for a volunteer or volunteers to take on this task, it occurred to me perhaps more than one member would like to do this, if we had say two or three then it could rotate from one edition to the next each having its own unique flavor.

Debra is willing to assist any aspiring applicants with coaching if needed.

There is also another exciting method for receiving news and views and a way for TARSUS members to get to know each other. The Arthur Ransome website has been transformed and included in it is now a Forum, we will endeavor to have our own TARSUS thread on this forum, plus there are also plenty of other threads to post views and questions, this forum is restricted to TARS members so you can feel safe from spam and other interlopers. Be sure to take a look.

I am attaching a survey to this issue so please respond so I can get a feel for members needs. Please contact me with your wishes and views on this so we can proceed in the coming year.

I would like you to welcome the following new Members:

Vanessa & Jeff Hodgson and Family of Palmer Lake, CO

Mrs Anne Y Wachsman, Riverside. CT.

and Raymond Frandsen Edina, MN

I wish you all to have a great Winter Holiday, a wonderful Christmas and an adventurous New Year.

Swallows and Amazons for Ever.

Robin Marshall

WHAT TO READ NEXT!

By Pam Adams

Admit it, we've all been there. There comes a day when we've read and re-read the AR canon so many times that we are (temporarily!) in need of a break. I would like to suggest some authors and books that I think fans of the Swallows and Amazons will enjoy, and that may not quite as familiar.

The Little Britches series, by Ralph Moody, is set primarily in the American Mid-West, starting in the early 1900's and running into the 1920's. The stories are autobiographical, based on the author's life. The eight books are very different from the fantasy world that the Swallows, Amazons, and D's inhabit. Ralph has plenty of adventures, but they're based on his real life, where he helps to support his family, first on a ranch, and then in various cities. The books are currently in print from the University of Nevada Press, and available through the usual bookdealers.

Little Britches (Descriptions below from www.amazon.com)
Ralph Moody was eight years old in 1906 when his family moved from New Hampshire to a Colorado ranch. Through his eyes we experience the pleasures

and perils of ranching there early in the twentieth century. Auctions and roundups, family picnics, irrigation wars, tornadoes and wind storms give authentic color to *Little Britches*. So do adventures, wonderfully told, that equip Ralph to take his father's place when it becomes necessary.

The rest of the series:

Man of the Family
The Home Ranch
Mary Emma and Company
The Fields of Home
Shaking the Nickel Bush
The Dry Divide
A Horse of a Different Color

<http://www.nebraskapress.unl.edu/product/Little-Britches.671954.aspx>

Sydney Taylor's All-of-A-Kind Family is set in the same era as the Moody books, but in a very different place. Ella, Hetty, Sarah, Charlotte and Gertie are five sisters, living with their parents in New York City at the turn of the century. The books are in print, and seem to be readily available. There's an online reader about the series located here. <http://www.jewishlibraries.org/ajlweb/awards/companion.pdf>

All-of-a-Kind Family (Description from www.amazon.com)

There's something to be said for a book that makes you wish you'd been part of a poor immigrant family living in New York's upper east side on the eve of World War I.

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Sydney Taylor's time-honored classic does just that. Life is rich for the five mischievous girls in the family. They find adventure in visiting the library, going to market with Mama, even dusting the front room. Young readers who have never shared a bedroom with four siblings, with no television in sight, will vicariously experience the simple, old-fashioned pleasures of talk, make-believe, and pilfered penny candy. The family's Jewish faith strengthens their ties to each other, while providing still more excitement and opportunity for mischief. Readers unfamiliar with Judaism will learn with the girls during each beautifully depicted holiday. This lively family, subject of four more "all-of-a-kind" books, is full of unique characters, all deftly illustrated by Helen John. Taylor based the stories on her own childhood family, and the true-life quality of her writing gives this classic its page-turning appeal.

Other books in the series:

All-Of-A-Kind Family

More All-Of-A-Kind Family

All-of-a-Kind Family Uptown

All-of-a-Kind Family Downtown

Ella of All-of-a-Kind Family

Jumping from New York back to the West, I want to talk about Andy Adams. Andy's work is usually classified as Western writing. It makes for great adventure literature, and is suitable for children of all ages. While both Moody and Taylor wrote in the 1950's and 60's about the early 1900's, Adams wrote in the early 1900's about the late 1800's. His best known work, The Log of A Cowboy, is usually seen as autobiographical, but it is a novel; as its subtitle says: "A Narrative of the Old Trail Days." A group of cowboys, including Tom, our twenty-ish protagonist, drives a herd of cattle from Mexico to Montana in the heyday of the cattle trails. The book is nothing like what we think the West was- there's plenty of hard work and tall tales, but hardly any gunfights, and not a love interest in sight. We know that Nancy never read this book, or she would have given up the gold mining in a heartbeat, and instead of Pigeon Post,

we would have a book where the Swallows, Amazons, and D's rustled Jackie's family's cattle and drove them to Yorkshire.

Two others of Adams' books are definitely juveniles. Wells Brothers: The Young Cattle Kings, and The Ranch on the Beaver, tell the story of Joel and Dell Wells, two orphaned boys who, after being befriended by some of the cowboys from Log of A Cowboy, are able to start a cattle ranch. The books are enjoyable and the adventures exciting, with the boys earning success in the best Horatio Alger manner. While some of Adams' works are in print, they can be difficult to find. Several of them are available on Project Gutenberg, and there's always the various used book outlets online.

<http://www.gutenberg.org/browse/authors/a#a773>

The above are all books that I've enjoyed. I can recommend them without reservation, and hope that you find as much fun and adventure in them as I have.

Pam Adams
Pomona, CA
Crew Member #3814
Swallows and Amazons Forever!

I DID MEAN TO GO TO SEA

By Pete O'Neill

Author's note: Names have been changed, but the story is true.

All the indicators were there, but I was oblivious to them: no one was there to pick me up at the Honolulu Airport as arranged in a late night phone call back in March, when I had agreed to help a good friend sail his 38 foot ketch from Hawaii to her home port in Long Beach, California.

After checking with the airport information desk for messages, I figured two hours was an adequate wait, so I caught the bus to the Ala Wai Yacht Harbor where Green Sea was docked.

I missed the next series of indicators as well. She looked pretty battered -- well why not I asked myself; she'd been cruising the South Pacific for the last two or three years. There were tools everywhere as I climbed aboard after my hails went unanswered.

I had made the same trip with the same skipper on the same boat 20 years earlier, and we had a super trip, the skipper, his wife, one of their daughters, a friend, and myself. But the skipper and his wife had almost finished their extended cruise when they landed in Hawaii and the wife decided she had had enough and flew home to California. I might have considered why she didn't want to finish the trip, but the lure of making an ocean passage was still pretty strong in me -- something I was to be cured of.

According to the skipper's plan, we were to provision the boat the day I arrived, sail over to Kauai the following day as a little shake down cruise, visit some of his friends for a day or so, and then weigh anchor for California which we hoped to make in about 21 days, the same as the previous trip.

The crew this time would include the skipper's troubled nephew, Alan, and Tom, the son of one of the skipper's friends.

We did not leave the next day; we spent the day working on the boat, making trip after trip to the marine supply store. Indicator number three -- missed that one too,

focusing instead on the work to be done and helping out as any good crew would do.

After working on the boat for almost a week, I did begin to wonder why the skipper hadn't attended to all these tasks during his stay of a month or two in Hawaii, so we would be ready to go as planned.

Now my summers are somewhat free, being a school teacher, but I had a short family vacation planned, and there's always the need to be in my classroom before school starts in mid August. It was July 10 before we dropped anchor in Hanalei Bay on the island of Kauai, and then we rented a car and visited people and saw the sights all around the island, which would have been fun, except we ended up spending three days there, and I was running out of time.

On the night sail over to Kauai, I discovered one of the reasons the nephew had problems: he wouldn't listen. No matter how many times he was reminded to hold on the the boat (one hand for you -- one hand for the ship) when moving about the cockpit, deck, or cabin, he continued to crash about like a drunkard. I wondered how he was going to make it.

We finally made the jump, set up our watch schedule, and seemed to be making good progress on our 1000 mile beat northward.

Because of the trade winds, which blow almost exactly from the direction of California, sail boats typically have to sail close hauled due north until they reach the area north of the Pacific High (pressure system) where they can catch westerly winds and make a right turn and head for the coast, 2000 + miles to the east.

I didn't know it because the skipper had not confided in me, even though I had had a standing invitation to join them as first mate anywhere, anytime, but it had not been a normal weather year out in the Pacific. In fact, it turned out to be one of the largest El Nino events in recent memory.

Summer hurricanes form off of Mexico in August, normally, and head toward Hawaii, mostly heading to the north of the islands and losing strength in the somewhat cooler water. This was July, and they were already forming and swirling

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Across the Pacific in our direction. Much of their punch had dissipated, but they still brought strong winds, confused seas, and plenty of rain.

On the second day out of Kauai, nephew Alan was playing with a huge conch shell in the cabin and dropped it on his foot. One of the large spines had split his big toe nail right down the middle. Wounds in the tropics can easily become infected, but it didn't stop him from continuing to crash around the boat.

I thought this was more than enough to deal with, and even though Captain Flint wouldn't have approved, the following days were to see things that had me wanting to swim all the way back to Hawaii. Stay tuned.



EVE at Falmouth

THE VANISHING HOTPOINT (more thoughts)

Bv Peter Hyland

This is a comment on Robert Dean's article in the current 'Signals From TARSUS' about the Vanishing Hot-Pot. Robert says that he thinks that AR heard this tale once and was passing it on. I reckon I know where AR got it from. I have been reading about Canon Rawnsley, a famous clergyman who lived in the Lake District at the end of the 19th century. He was a friend of John Ruskin, and was one of the founders of the UK 'National Trust'. He was also a friend of W G Collingwood, whose family 'adopted' AR as a young man.

Anyway, Canon Rawnsley has reported that the hotels at Bowness-on-Windermere ('Rio' to us) served 'take-away' hot-pots during the great freeze on Windermere in the winter of 1877-78. They were taken onto the ice, and Rawnsley saw some of them which had been left on the ice burn a hole and drop through. These became famous incidents and AR must have heard about them later. It is very probable that AR met Canon Rawnsley when he was staying with the Collingwoods.

Incidentally, Canon Rawnsley was in charge of preparing bonfires on the fell-tops to celebrate Queen Victoria's Golden Jubilee, and he said at the time that he was determined that "the red glare on Skiddaw" should once again wake "the burghers of Carlisle" (quoting Macaulay). This is described in a biography by his second wife, Eleanor F Rawnsley, published in 1923, which AR must surely have read (or Rawnsley himself may have passed this on to AR). Maybe that is where he got the idea for Titty quoting those lines when they were on the summit of Kanchenjunga in 'Swallowdale' ?

Best wishes

Peter Hyland

TARS UK



TEST YOUR KNOWLEDGE

A winter holiday quiz on WINTER HOLIDAY

1. How many stairs to the D's Bedroom.
2. What is the name of Mr. Dixons Farm hand?
3. What did the D's use to light their fire with.
4. The name of the planet they signaled to.
5. What was the first words The S&A's said to the D's.
6. What was on the wall at Mars the next morning?
7. What is the signal for come to Holly Howe?
8. When the D's arrived at Beckfoot the first time what did Mrs. Blackett tell them.
9. What day was the lake frozen completely across by the islands
- 9 b. What year did Mrs. Dixon say they drove coach and horse on the Lake
10. What colors are in the plague flag and what design.
11. What was Dick looking for when he spotted the sheep.
12. There was hammering in the farmyard that night what did the D's think it meant.
13. What did they call Wild Cat Island when it was frozen
14. Who carried the Dispatch s to and from Beckfoot.
15. What was the first one from Nancy.
16. What was the name Houseboat was to be called.
17. What was the explorer's name who had the original ship.
18. What was the name of the book on the houseboat that told of his expedition.
19. The D's saw a Brown sail coming around Darien what was it.
20. Nancy sent a picture which had a group of people dancing on the shore what was the message.
21. The Jacksons had a dog what was his name.
22. The D's were elected to stay in the houseboat overnight Dot was watching on deck and saw a figure pulling a sledge coming toward her who did she think it was.
23. And what did she think was in the suitcase on the sledge.
24. What picture did Peggy send to Nancy in reply to her picture.
25. When Capt flint returned with the D's to Dixons Farm what did he ask Mrs Dixon for?
26. The next morning what was on the sign hanging from the houseboat?
27. The D's wanted to modify their sledge, in what way.
28. What did the D's see to make them head for the Pole. And why did they think it was the right thing to do.
29. On their way to the Pole what happened.
30. They left a message in the cache what did it say.
31. How did Nancy know they were at the pole.
32. What did the note on the box say the one nearest the flagpole?
33. When all the explorers awoke after the great adventure at the Pole who did they find had arrived.

Answers in he next issue, or read the book again



Holly Howe (Background farm) after snow a few weeks ago

FALMOUTH 2008

By Robin Marshall

Early this year my wife Linda and I were discussing our plans for a vacation, Linda said 'you know we really should go and visit Mum this year' My wife's mother is in her 80's and not in robust health so I agreed that a visit to Mum in England was a must. When to go? Well it just happened that the first issue of Signals for 2008 had arrived the day before with details of the International Annual General Meeting (IAGM) for TARS to be held in Falmouth in May.

It struck me that if we went in May/June it would be a chance to include that in our trip, I said to Linda who is not an AR fan, 'you know its been 35 or more years since we went to Cornwall how about spending a few days there on the way to Mum's ?".

She replied "I would hardly think Cornwall is on the way it's in the west and mum lives in the southeast.'

So I had to come clean as to the real reason for going there, after some discussion as to whether we could afford it, and would she not be bored sitting in boring meetings, I explained there was only one meeting and the rest of the time there were trips and eating and socializing so she reluctantly agreed.

So that is how three days after our arrival in England saw us picking up a rental car on a dreary Friday morning and setting out for the West of England and Cornwall.

After driving through some showers early on the weather started to brighten, and by the time we got to Exeter it was sunny and bright, after one missed turn (for some reason although Falmouth was a major port and still is of some importance there is no sign off the major route, you have to know Truro is on the way) so having sorted that out after a while we drew up outside our Bed and Breakfast in Falmouth.

It was now a beautiful day and although our room was at the top of the house there was a great view across Falmouth bay with several ships at anchor waiting to go into the port, no sight of a small Chinese junk however.

After a rest from the journey we prepared to go out and find our way to Penryn College the main venue for the weekend, on arrival we were greeted heartily by the good ladies of the South West region at reception, pleased that we had come from so many miles to attend the gathering, having got



our credentials we were taken under the wing of Yvonne Varley the SW chairman who on the way to taking us to the feast introduced us to the very amiable Norman Willis who we came to appreciate later as a very amusing speaker and fun guy.

The feast that was laid out before was wonderful, especially so as we found out later the region at the last minute found they could not use the catering facilities at the college after all and had to find an outside caterer in a great hurry, as it turned out she did a fantastic job.

We were soon into Cornish pasties and local smoked mackerel with lots of salad and other good stuff, there was a bar which had a good selection of grog both alcoholic and non-alcoholic, one of these being jugs of ginger beer.

Whilst scoffing these delights we listened to a talk by Commander Walker the famous father of the Swallows, who kept us up to date on seafaring matters and Falmouth together with an updated history on various members of the family and the other characters, this was followed by some fine shanty singing by the Falmouth Shout who gave their time to raise money for the RNLI the association that funds the lifeboats that rescue unwary sailors around Britain's coasts.

The next day we decided to miss the Falmouth guided tour and go to the museum and try to get aboard Nancy Blackett as the weather forecast for Sunday was not good. We did go aboard, but Nancy was unable to do more than motor around the harbor as the weather outside was too rough. It was so very exciting to see where Arthur had spent so many happy hours sailing.

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The museum turned out to be extremely interesting with many historic vessels including of course *Coch-y-Bonddhu* (Scarab) and *Swallow 2* together with an exhibit featuring the camp site and scenes from the books, hopefully this will inspire a new generation to read the stories.

Being interested in wooden boat building myself I found the exhibit featuring the restoration of a 100 year old dinghy very interesting.

Having spent a considerable time at the museum some of which was sailing radio controlled sail boats on the indoor lake, a great way to learn sailing, we found it was time to head out to the College for Rogers cream tea, definitely a no miss for us as we love clotted cream and scones.

We passed the time until dinner watching the junior's activities with many red capped Amazons in attendance, checked out the TARS and Nancy Blackett stalls then a wander down to the camp ground to see the more hearty TARS.

The Dinner once again was excellent and we had a most enjoyable time making new friends, meeting key figures in the society and talking Ransome it was wonderful to be able to do this and talk to people who knew what it was about and had a love for all things Ransome.

The speaker that evening was Clive Barnes *If Not Duffers* in which he cited the books that may have influenced AR and how the lessons of children being able to do things on their own without parental supervision apply as much to today as they did then, he felt today's children were far too protected and wrapped in as he put it cotton wool.

Sunday was the IAGM in the morning and as our B&B was in walking distance to the museum we walked down in spite of somewhat inclement weather, and we joined all the other members in the auditorium in try to find a place to hang our wet coats.

I will not go into details of the meeting as it is reported in full in Sept/Dec Signals just to say it gave an insight to the internal workings of the Society and

Swallow 2



to the time and effort put in by the various officers, all volunteers who give up a large part of their time to run things smoothly.

To ours and every one's surprise when we came out of the meeting we found the weather had cleared up and it was a lovely afternoon which was good as we all had an appointment for a cruise on *The Queen of the Fal* before this there was an excellent buffet I am sure Roger would have loved this as we certainly had plenty to eat throughout the whole 4 days, whilst

distance up the street to the quay to await the arrival standing in line for this I was able to meet fellow TARSUS member Doug Faunt.

Having filled up on provisions we all headed a short of *The Queen*, when she arrived we all got aboard and away we went, the cruise had to be changed, as when we headed to the mouth of the harbor it was found the swell was too great to allow a safe passage so we went up the river instead. It was interesting to see the number of sail boats out they far exceeded power boats which was a pleasure as here in Florida power boats dominate the waterways.

The whole trip was very pleasant with a very informative commentary given by the skipper.

On return to port it was back to the museum for dinner that evening, we passed the time till then watching the juniors sailing the boats they had constructed from scraps on the indoor lake in the Scrapheap Challenge Regatta, lots of capsizes and collisions with much laughter and fun.

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The dinner proved to be interesting, we had a great view from our table over the harbor which was a good thing, as the restaurant in the museum is more of a snack bar during the day and was somewhat overwhelmed by our numbers. So the service was extremely slow. the food however was good and the company fantastic, one felt sorry for the South West region organizers as it was totally out of their control and they had been so good at all the other events and catering that they had done themselves.

On the final day the weather really showed its teeth with high winds and rain, Linda opted to stay in our room and watch TV, I being a bit more adventurous did my own Falmouth tour and joined the other vacationers in dripping around the stores in Falmouth, it was a sight I remembered well from my years in England, on very wet Spring holidays with crowds of parents and children going from shop to shop dodging the raindrops because the weather was too bad to go to the beach.

Some TARS made of sterner stuff than us did go on a hike to the Lizard peninsular so the spirit of adventure lived on.

The afternoon was a little better and we headed for the college for a bar-b-q and corroboree it was too wet for the bar-b-q so had an alternative meal inside followed by the dressed like a pirate competition which was for juniors but several adults got in on the act.

This was followed by a great sing-along with shanties and other songs and ended with *Spanish Ladies* then it was time for goodbyes and sadness at leaving new friends,

There was a lot more events going on that we missed and things I have not covered, for full coverage see Sept/ Dec Signals.

The rest of our vacationer was spent visiting relatives and friends including our nephew in the Norfolk Broads more on that in the next issue.



NANCY BLACKETT about preparing to moor



Aboard Nancy





There was a faint breathless
Cry from Titty,
“A Sail!” “A Sail!”
And they saw the first of the
ice yachts swooping out from
between Long Island and Rio
shore.

TIDBITS FROM TARSUS

Signals Needs You!

Thanks to new and veteran contributors for submitting their creative Thanks to the new and veteran *Signals*, thought-provoking and entertaining articles for this issue of *Signals from TARSUS*. **Spring 2009 issue deadline: March 25.** Contact me for submission format and length guidelines. Robin Marshall *Signals Temp* editor: robin@arthur-ransome.org

And if you've got some spare creativity, proof reading skills and time to spare...

TARSUS ALSO NEEDS YOU !

As you can see from this issue for which I apologize for errors and omissions and just general Amateurism. We need an editor or editors its fun so Debra told me

She will do her best to help if you need it

Welcome new members!

Vanessa & Jeff Hodgson & Family CO

Anne Y Wachsman CT

Raymond Frandsen MN

New updated TARS website

Be sure to take a look at this arthur [-ransome.org](http://arthur-ransome.org)

And the new forum.

Amazon Publications

The new Publication *Ransome's Foreign Legion*

As Described in the flier with Mixed Moss is available

At \$36.75 inc Airmail.

From Alan Harkin Send the check to me Robin Marshall

09 Calendars

These are still available from the TARS Stall

Or Rob Boden.

TARSUS contact information

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CURRENCY CHANGE

The new rate is \$1.75 to the £

On all TARSUS transactions, use the TARS stall online to use a credit card for books etc.