



Signals from TARSUS & North Pole News--January 2011

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View from the Helm



A voyage to the North Pole

Sometime around February last year I contacted Harry Miller, the TARS Canada coordinator, with an idea for a webpage on the TARS site that would give information about both North American affiliates, hoping that it would attract more members. Unfortunately the email got lost in cyberspace for a while only to be discovered by Harry just before Christmas. After some discussion it was decided that the website needed some more planning but there was no reason why Canada could not contribute to Signals from TARSUS, as their own newsletter "News from the North Pole" had ceased some time ago.

So welcome to our fellow TARS in the farthest north--at least they seem that way down here in Florida, but are just a hop skip and a jump for members in the adjoining border states. Of course with our winter so far, some will feel they really are at the North Pole.

With reference to the website, if anyone is experienced in setting up one we would be pleased of your help. Also we need illustrations and photos of typical Ransome-like activities showing North American locations, as well as pictures of members' boats.

Typically this is a quiet time of the year for most members now the holidays have departed, and the weather is against a whole lot of outside activities, unless its skating, skiing, etc. Some of us are past that though hopefully the juniors are able to still enjoy it.

The following new members have joined us since the last issue; I would extend a hearty welcome to all:

Larry Kooperman of California
Emmett Lurssen of California
Tova Forman of Washington State
Dr. Elisabeth Cummins of Texas
Sefa Agnew of Michigan
Edward Carson of New Jersey
Janet Snow of North Carolina

I sincerely hope you enjoy being TARS.

I would like to thank all of the members who have renewed for another year, and those that purchased patches, which are almost sold out. I would remind those that have not sent in their renewals to "Stir Your Stumps". Otherwise this is going to be last SFT you will receive, so don't miss out.

I wish everyone a very happy new year and look forward to hearing of any travels or adventures you may have in the coming year.

Greetings from the Great White North!

While it isn't the Pole it is certainly white today.



This is TARS Canada's first effort at joining our Southern neighbors' newsletter and we are happy to be able to contribute to and receive "Signals from TARSUS."

I have made a first attempt at determining who can access it from their computer (it's a link to Dave Thewlis' website "All Things Ransome", thus you won't need to download any files) and who will need a paper copy. You can help me refine this determination by contacting me at: harryandmarymiller@rogers.com or by phoning me at: 416-694-6301. Of course we'd like as many as possible to use their computer to save on mailing expense.

The advantage to Canadians is readily apparent as our small numbers (28) preclude a successful newsletter of our own. It would be nice if we could contribute enough for American Tars to find us useful.

To that end I have contributed several pictures of "Great Northern Divers" better known to us as Common Loons. The first two are from a canoe trip I was on several years ago. Around the corner from where we were camping we surprised a loon on her nest and you can see her sliding into the water with the second picture of her eggs. We kept away the rest of that day and when we were moving on the next day she was back on the nest.



Loon heading to water



Nest with two eggs

Being too decrepit to continue the tripping tradition we now have a cottage on a very small lake that always has a pair of nesting loons. The lake is small enough that upon taking off, loons need to make one or two circuits of it to gain enough altitude to escape. In the 22 years there have only been two successful fledglings and the one you see was this past summer.



Adult Loons with two chicks

TARSUS, TARS Canada & TARS Leadership Information

TARSUS Coordinator: **Robin Marshall** robin@arthur-ransome.org
210 18th Street Bradenton, FL 34205

US Members, please contact Robin Marshall with your questions, concerns or ideas--he will forward your e-mail or letter to the appropriate board member.

TARS Canada Coordinator: **Harry Miller** harryandmarymiller@rogers.com
234 Kingswood Rd. Toronto, ON M4E 3N7

Canada Members, please contact Harry Miller with your questions, concerns or ideas--he will forward your e-mail or letter to the appropriate board member.

Signals from TARSUS editor: **Elizabeth Jolley** erjolley@mail.com
675 NW 114th Ave. Portland, OR 97229

All Members--Please send your articles & ideas for articles for Signals from TARSUS to Elizabeth any time--she will publish articles when there is space.

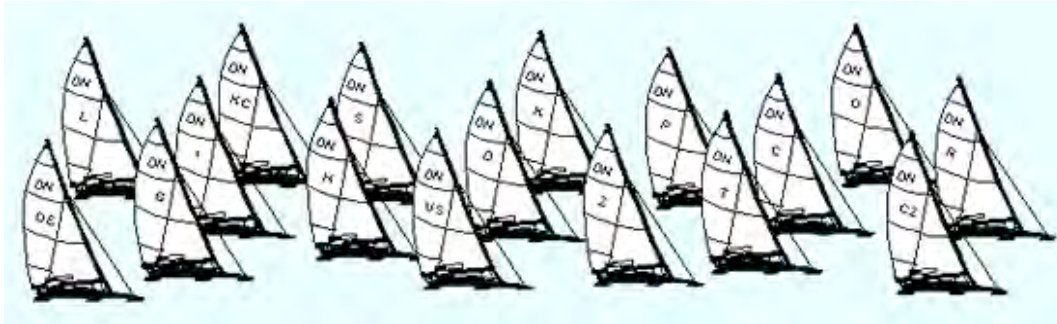
TARS--The Arthur Ransome Society--Board:

National Chairman:	Flo Galbraith
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Overseas Members' Rep & Chair Literary & Resources:	Ian Khan-Gilchrist
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	Mike Glover
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"Signals" Editor:	John Hunwicks j.hunwicks@btinternet.com

Overseas Coordinators:

Australia:	David Bamford
New Zealand:	Dr. Peter Summers
Japan:	Tamami Nakayama

Kanchenjunga's Cairn--Places We've Been & What We've Done



-Ice Yachts-

(IDNIYRA letterhead [logo](http://www.idniyra.org) originally designed by Evert Vanderberg; <http://www.idniyra.org>)

It's Winter Holiday Time

By Ike Stephenson

I'm writing this December 23rd, which in Arthur Ransome terms means one thing: Winter Holiday! During school years that is a defined and much looked forward to time. In Northern Climates plans are often based around snow activities.

Ice yachting is mentioned in Winter Holiday and one of my fond winter memories includes it. Our family's big Christmas celebration occurred Christmas Eve. We often visited at neighborhood gatherings so Santa Claus could make fewer stops.

One year, upon our return from the neighbors', my Dad sent me out to the boat rack. Strange, as the rack was for sailboats and it was winter!

As I got closer I saw a sleek light blue DN ice boat. Boy was I excited when I realized that was one of my Christmas presents! Learn more at www.idniyra.org

Now that I live in North Carolina, snow, ice and winter-type weather are exceptions, not rules. Still, maybe I will visit an indoor ice arena and practice ice-skating!



Racing ice yachts; 2003 Central Lakes Regional Championship

Juniors--Win the AR book of your choice:

Recently, via Robin Marshall, I asked Tars America junior members to write me about their Winter Holiday plans. In return, I said I'd send them the AR book of their choice. This offer still stands! Send your story about what happened during your Winter Holiday to: ike.stephenson@gmail.com.

Amazon is Coming to North Carolina

By Ike Stephenson

I have a letter my Dad wrote to an English boat builder. In it he asks for specifications on a small sailing dinghy. He says he will sail it from his home to the local marina.

Later that boat became a replica of Amazon or at least very much like her. The original Amazon, previously known as Mavis, is now on display at Windermere Steamboat Museum. Soon my Dad's Amazon will be with me in Cameron, North Carolina.

Dad sailed Amazon faithfully on Green Bay out of Menominee, MI for over thirty years. The varnished beauty floated on her mooring and was frequently photographed by visitors and sailors alike.

After his death, she became mine. I have great positive memories of sailing in her when young.

At that point, I could imitate my favorite character Roger and serve as an "ahead of the mast" look out.

Later, on a trip home while sailing off my Dad's house we damaged Amazon's rudder. This resulted in a perilous journey back to the marina and to moorage, steering with just the sails. After that feat was accomplished, we felt a bit like Captain John after the shipwreck of Swallow.

Amazon has a centerboard, three thwarts, and lug rig. Several years ago Dad had a bad incident while trailering Amazon home and damaged the mast. Thankfully, I am fortunate enough to know a craftsman who is building a new mast for our cherished vessel. Once that is complete, and a few repairs are made to the trailer, she will head south to her new home.

The pleasure of sailing her and the extensive upkeep required by her varnish will be all mine. I hope that many fellow TARS members can have the pleasure of a sail in her.

Her maiden voyage under my ownership will be off Ocracoke Island this spring.



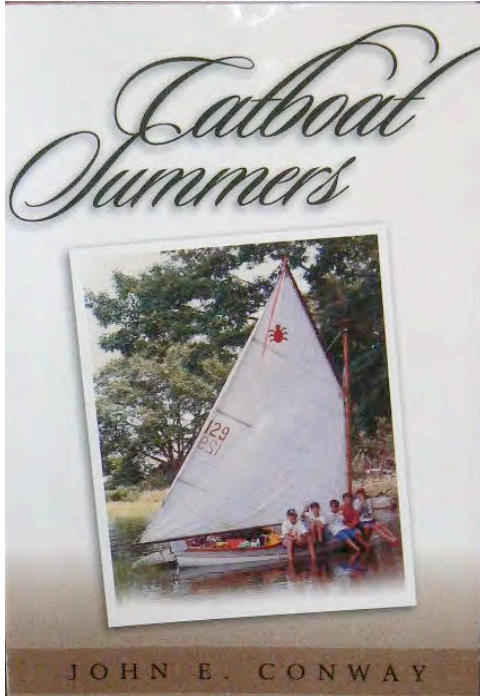
Ocracoke Harbor ("The Pond")

Editor's Note: Ocracoke Island gives me some of the same feelings that we all get when we read the AR books--adventure, excitement, holidays, fun! My grandparents lived there during my childhood, and we were lucky enough to visit every few years, a long trip from Oregon. At that time, Ocracoke Village was very small, with tiny lanes leading into thickets of beach pines, past cottages & larger houses, the white church, the small school. We walked everywhere or rode bikes when we could borrow them, played on the Pamlico Sound beach near the house & walked down the beach to the old hiding place of Blackbeard the Pirate! Check out this link to Google Maps, and zoom in to find "Oscar's House bed & Breakfast" on Live Oak Road, and "Lightkeeper's Guesthouse" on Creek Road. Our house lies about halfway between those two, on a private driveway. We used to buy nickel candies at the little store on Creek Road :-)

<http://maps.google.com/maps?client=safari&rls-en&q=ocracoke+island+map&oe=UTF-8=&hnear=Ocracoke+Island&gl=us&z=9>

P.S. If any member does get a chance to visit Ocracoke Island, I hope you contact Ike to take him up on his offer of a sail, and I hope you have a wonderful visit to my old childhood haunt!

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



Catboat Summers

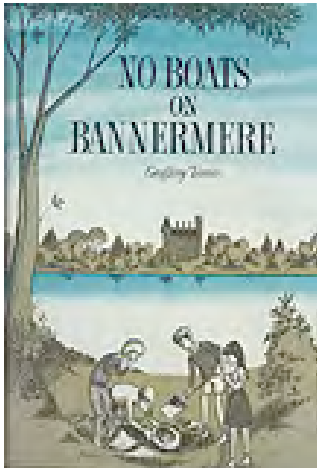
By John E. Conway

Catboat Summers chronicles a decade's worth of adventures in New England waters with a series of tales from 1993 onwards, when the Conway family recklessly purchased a 100-year-old wooden boat, one of the famous New England Catboats. You can follow their trials and tribulations in restoring BUCKRAMMER back to her original pristine condition.

There follows many entertaining adventures that the Conway family have whilst sailing those waters.

I found the book very entertaining and I am sure it would have been a boat that AR would have loved to have; certainly those of us who have had wooden boats will have empathy with the Conway's and a little jealousy at missing out on such a craft. The various adventures and explorations of the children are quite in keeping with his AR's famous characters. For those of us who like boats and salty tales this is worth a read.

Review by Robin Marshall



No Boats on Bannermere

By Geoffrey Trease

Dedicated "For Jocelyn who wanted a modern story for a change", this delightful book begins with a single sentence: "I never meant to listen."

Within pages, we've met our main character, Bill, a young fellow who would like to be an author. However, he wisely tells everyone he is going to be a teacher, because "You can't very well say you're going to be an author. You can't be sure you'll be good enough."

With humor and witty writing, Trease takes our hero and his family to an inherited cottage on the shores of Lake Bannermere. There are boats, an island, a waterfall, a mountain to climb, friends to make, and above all a mystery to solve. I started reading as soon as I got a copy from the library, and

had a hard time setting it down.

Happy reading!

Review by Elizabeth Jolley

Sea Bear's Galley—Puddings, Biscuits & more!

Semaphore Cookies

Last Christmas the Black Harts sent us some gingerbread men which could be arranged to say "Merry Christmas" in semaphore. Here is the photo and the recipe:

Yield: about 2 1/2 dozen 2 1/2 inch cookies

Needed:

1 cup packed brown sugar
1/3 cup shortening
1 1/2 cups dark molasses
2/3 cup cold water
7 cups all-purpose flour
2 teaspoons ground ginger
1 teaspoon salt
1 teaspoon ground allspice
1 teaspoon ground cloves
1 teaspoon ground cinnamon

Mix brown sugar, shortening, molasses and water. Stir in remaining ingredients. Cover and refrigerate for at least two hours. Heat oven to 350 degrees Fahrenheit. Roll dough 1/4 inch thick on floured board. Cut with floured gingerbread cutter, (last year I used our gingerbread man as a pattern for the body of the



semaphore men to trace on cardboard, and drew the arms according to each letter, then, I used a knife to cut the men out. This year I am planning on making just the body and cutting the arms out by myself without having to make all 26 letters of the alphabet out of cardboard. This may or may not be a good idea).

Place about 2 inches apart on lightly greased cookie sheet. Bake until no indentation remains when touched, 10 to 12 minutes; cool. Decorate with frosting and candy if you want to.

Cook's Tip: use a SHARP knife when cutting out the gingerbread, and don't saw along the pattern. If you do, the outline of the gingerbread will not be as neat.

-- Captain Jasper of the Scoters and Cook and Surgeon Margaret of the Black Harts

Editor's Note: I would use a standard gingerbread man (or woman) cutter to cut out each figure, then carefully move the arms into the correct positions for all semaphore letters with an arm on each side. For those with the arms both on one side of the body, neatly cut off one arm and attach it to the other side of the body, smoothing the seam to make it hold well & not show. This method will work best if the dough is a tad sticky, so you may need to let the cut cookies warm up a bit before you shape the arms.

Red Amazon Hat Knitting Pattern

Measure the largest distance around the hat-wearer's head. Knit a 20-stitch gauge swatch in your choice of red yarn on a needle just a little larger than your yarn. (Cast on 20 stitches, knit for 25 rows and measure the swatch's width and height. The width measurement divided by the number of stitches gives you the stitches per inch that your yarn and needles create. The length divided by the number of rows you knitted is the number of rows per inch.)

Multiply your stitch number by the number of inches around the hat-wearer's head. Cast on this number adding a stitch, if necessary, to make the total number divisible by four.

Knit 2, Purl 2 for 2 inches, then knit for 6 inches. Divide the number of stitches in half and place a marker (I use a small loop of different colored wool) at the beginning and at the half way mark.

Now the decreases begin: When you get to the first marker, K1, K2together, knit around to three stitches from the halfway marker, SSK, K1, move the marker, K1, k2 tog, knit around to three stitches from the beginning marker SSK, K1. Next row: K all around. Next Row: Repeat the decrease row as above. Continue in this 2-row pattern.

When you have 8 stitches left, break the yarn, leaving a 12-inch tail. Using a yarn needle, run the tail through the remaining stitches twice and pull the stitches up so they are snug. Put the needle through the resulting hole and bury the ends in the inside stitches. I follow the inside stitches for about 3 inches then trim off the excess. If you are using a yarn with a high proportion of non-wool fiber, go farther and backstitch for 3 stitches before trimming the tail off.

Then I make a tassel from the rest of the yarn and attach to the top of the hat. You could make a pom-pom or leave it plain.

There is a long history for this hat, also called a Phrygian bonnet or the Cap of Liberty. You see it in paintings of the French Revolution, but it goes back to Roman times. It is often worn with the top folded over and the tassel over one ear.

***If you need help, this link explains the decreases: <http://www.knittinghelp.com/videos/decreases>

Swallows and Amazons Forever!

PJ Hatfield Bauer



Another style & a big smile!



Our "Roger" in his red hat!

Glossary

Gauge swatch -- Assures correct sizing

Marker -- Slides on needle between stitches to mark a spot

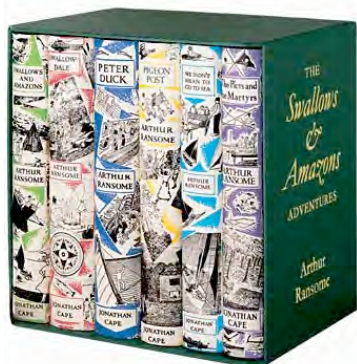
K -- Knit P -- Purl

K2together -- Slip needle into next 2 stitches & knit as if they are one stitch.

SSK-- Slip two stitches from left to right needle without knitting. Reach left needle into both stitches from left to right; knit stitches together.

Editor's Note: This is a moderately hard pattern, and should be attempted by a knitter with some prior experience, or with a good knitter to help you understand what the directions mean :-)

Dipping our Hands—personal relationships with the books



AR Collection

By Ike Stephenson

Just came in from our chilly garage. Recent additions to it are several shelves of books to accommodate a total of 88 of AR's "Swallow and Amazons" series, many secondary books on the Lake District and the Broads, lots of TARS publications, AR's autobiography and biography. These, too, were Dad's.

There is a 1931 USA edition of Swallows and Amazons. A 1998 Cape reprint of We Didn't Mean to go to Sea. From 1940, a McMillan USA Swallowdale. Also, from the WW II time frame, Winter Holiday 1943 edition. Coot Club from 1964, and so on.

Of the 88 total, 27 are paperbacks. A 2001 Swallows and Amazons trade size. Further soft covers from 1968 and 1974, and so on. There are 9 different Swallowdales and 6 different Missee Lees.

Set aside are the books I know my Dad used as his reading copies. Surely these are the ones he read to me as a youngster!

As we know there are 12 Swallows and Amazons books. This year I will go to these shelves and take down one title per month to enjoy reading through a heart-warming legacy from Arthur Ransome and my dad.

Out,
Isaac W. Stephenson

Native Post—links to stuff you might want to know about

World Catalogue of Library Books--

By Elizabeth Jolley

A day or so ago, I read a note on TARBoard from a member who had read a book long ago, and has recently written a Wikipedia entry on the book. The title looked appealing, so I looked to see if our local really great bookstore, Powell's, had a copy for sale. Alas, no copy there. I searched rapidly through a few more sites & Google matches, and suddenly I caught sight of the address:

<http://www.worldcat.org>

What a wonderful surprise for me! WorldCat is an online catalog service for libraries world wide, and claims to have 1.5 billion items available through libraries. I searched for "No Boats on Bannermere" (see book review on pg. 5), and found to my delight that a copy was available at my daughter's university library, right here in our home city! Of course, I asked her to check it out for me, and here it sits, waiting for me to finish typing & start reading :-)

Check out WorldCat to see what books you can find in a library close to you--you never know what may be waiting nearby! Obviously this works best if the book you want is in a local library, but ask your librarian about an inter-library loan if you find your book at a faraway location.



From the Beckfoot Kitchen: Hard Tack

Here is a piratey snack that is very easy to make. Warning: DO NOT be a “greedy little pig” like Roger and eat too much of this—it will give you a stomachache. ☺



Hard Tack

Mix one teaspoon of salt with one pound of flour.
Add enough water to make a very stiff dough.
Flatten the dough to about 1/2 inch and cut it into about 4 inch circles.
Punch holes in each circle with a fork.
Bake in a flat pan at 250 degrees for two or three hours.

From http://www.gone-ta-pott.com/Pirate_Recipes.html

Colorado Winter Holiday

By Hannah Hodgson

This Winter Holiday in Colorado has been spent hoping that the lake will freeze over, much like the Swallows, Amazons, and the Callums in *Winter Holiday*. Every year it does, but this year, it is reluctant. Temperatures have varied from below zero to above fifty degrees, with no typical temperature, except more to the higher side. But, nonetheless, we have had a somewhat Ransome-ish holiday.

We have skated once, only once, on ice as smooth as glass. It was beautiful, and I was working on my backwards skating, as well as a couple of stories—my Dot side showing. Also, Nancy (Jessika Hodgson, my sister and co-editor of *Pieces of Eight*) was sick, and had to stay home, missing out on the skating. Luckily, it was not the mumps, though.

To the disappointment to the Johns and Rogers of my family, there hasn't been much snow, and definitely not enough to make an igloo. Our hopes rise at a day of snowfall, and fall down again when the next day is fifty degrees. Some days, unfortunately, the lake is more fit for sailing than skating (although on our lake, boating is strictly prohibited) and it takes a few cold nights to freeze back up again. As of today, it went back to being not quite solid enough to skate on.

Not *incredibly* Ransome-ish, but enough so that I can draw parallels. All in all, I love Colorado. However, some days I wish life was more like *Winter Holiday*, and the weather would turn cold enough to freeze the “Arctic”, snowy enough to sled and make igloos, and altogether more wintery.



POEtry

Here you can read (and write!) POEtry—poems inspired by the Swallows and Amazons and other Ransome-ish things, made especially for Pieces of Eight!

The Fram at Night

By Jessika Hodgson

The winter moon rises full and bright
As we walk down through the wood
Down to the Lake and the *Fram* at night
Instead of being in bed as we should

The winter hills rise full and white
Behind the sleeping wood
The stars above pour out their light
But are dampened by the moon

Peggy, she strikes up a song
And Susan puts on the pot
But somehow this still seems wrong
And somehow, we cannot

We slip back out to the cold, cold ice
And breathe the frozen air
Titty and Roger are coming across
Roger thinks we're bears

They don't understand yet
And neither, really, do I
But I know that Mother would want us in bed
So I take one last look across the ice

The winter moon shines full and bright
As we walk back from the Lake
We go back to our beds all snug and tight
Though it's a grand night and no mistake



Calling All Junior TARS!

Hey, all Swallows, Amazons, D's, Eels, Death and Glories, and any other Junior TARSUS members! Please send in your writings, drawings, puzzles or photos to be included in Pieces of Eight! Everything counts towards making Pieces of Eight the best it can be.

You can send contributions to Mrs. Jolley erjolley@mail.com and she will forward it to me, or you can send them straight to Jessika at creativejessika@msn.com.



Roger the Musician and the Penny Whistle

By Robin Marshall

In most of our minds Roger is the member of the Swallows who is always hungry especially for chocolate, has a love affair with engines, and is pretty good at Latin. But he has another side as well; a desire to entertain musically, though this is not often appreciated by the other members of the crew. Apart from Captain Flint who was very good on the squeezebox, Roger was the only one who played an instrument on the voyages and later adventures.

Captain Nancy played the piano, usually under duress from the Great Aunt, but a piano is difficult to put in a tent. They all rousingly sang various sea shanties and were good foot stompers. Roger's chosen instrument was the penny whistle, also called the tin whistle. It's an instrument that has not got a great deal of respect mainly as it was often looked on as a toy. It was however at one time a common item in most British households and on par with the harmonica, the main reason being its low price--indeed it was not called a pennywhistle for nothing having at one time cost just that.

It is unclear if Roger bought one, as the first reference is to one he borrowed from a school friend; very likely a Clarke, who have been making such instruments since 1843. Robert Clarke, a farmhand, turned to their manufacture due to lack of employment from a very rainy season on the farms where he worked. He teamed up with a local blacksmith who made him the tools to roll the tin into shape and pierce the holes. Having done this he set off with a handcart and his tools and traveled around Britain selling his whistles. He was so successful that he was able to start a cottage industry producing them, and the company has continued to this day producing essentially the same whistle.

The tin whistle more recently has become more associated with Irish music and is played by many of the famous groups as a solo instrument. This has been helped with modern sound systems.



Roger of course would have known none of this, and found as I have, to become an accomplished player you have as with any other musical instrument to practice, practice, practice. This led to some dismay amongst the other Swallows, and in my case my wife. But once mastered it can be very entertaining; at least that is what I tell Linda my wife.

I do not know why AR gave Roger a whistle but it is very likely he had one himself as a boy, or even still played it. We know he was fond of shanties, but not much has been written regarding his music interests and instrument playing.

I hope this will inspire some to take up what is still a very low priced little instrument--maybe some of you already have. I would be pleased to swap notes. There are many on the market, several made in the US. Some are the original tin variety, and now there is also plastic, as you can see from the picture. The plastic one I find easier to use but the sound is a little different.

Happy Whistling!

Mrs. Barrable's Gallery--Artwork by Members

Secret Water Map

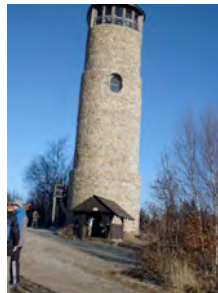
By Petr Krist



Petr sent me these photos of some sights around his home town in the Czech Republic:



Castle in our town



The highest hill



Our block of flats

Editor's Note: This is the third map Petr has created--look for The Lake & Great Northern maps here:

<http://www.allthingsransome.net/armaps/czmaps.html>

On this website, you can click on each of his maps to go to a much larger downloadable map.

Petr tells me he has not seen the areas he mapped: "I have never been to England, I only worked with the topographical maps, map keys and of course with the book." Nice job, Petr! Thanks for sharing your maps with us here in the US.



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



Next issue: May 2011. Until then, I would like to leave you with my heartfelt thanks for your wonderful articles, letters & e-mails, photos and stories. They are by far the best part of the job I've taken on. The hours of cutting and pasting, editing for size, shape, style, grammar, even spelling on occasion, are necessary in order to present a fun newsletter that is easy to read, but getting to know each of you is a treasure in my life.

You share a part of yourself when you allow me to publish your story or your recipe. Each of us is richer in our understanding of the settings Ransome used in his books, the stories he told, the history behind the fiction. We are richer in our breadth and depth of knowledge; we see into a faraway place, a distant time, an activity we know nothing about. Reading to learn is a gift we are given that is nurtured by our parents, our teachers, our librarians, and certainly ourselves.

Every four months, when the time comes for me to start putting together the next issue of *Signals from TARSUS*, I look at the one or two articles the "eager beavers" have already sent in, check my notes about who has promised a recipe or a book review, and start to worry! Will there be enough for everyone to enjoy? If I send out an issue with only those few articles, will folks even bother to read it? Will they be disappointed?

It never ceases to amaze me that just as I am thinking about which of my daughters might be willing to throw something together, and couldn't my mother come up with something easy, and what can I write about????---**THE ARTICLES START ARRIVING!!!** My dread of opening my mailbox & finding nothing there becomes delighted expectation: I see an e-mail address I recognize, the subject line is enticing, and upon opening the e-mail I discover that an "old reliable" has come through with another article for this issue. Or a "newbie" has sent something lovely I wasn't expecting at all :-). What a delight it is to assemble these treasures I have pre-read into a newsletter worthy of your attention!

- So, #1: If you've written for SftUS already, think of the next great idea you have, and write it up.
- #2: If you're new to submitting, try it out--I am not at all picky (except for grammar & spelling!), and I will publish what you send, whatever your age & your writing skill.
- #3: I am especially looking for Member biographies--these can be very simple & short, or longer if you have a lot to say. Include how you "found" the AR books (we all love these stories), and what sort of Ransome-ish activities you've managed to do. Travel to the AR sites is always nice to hear about for those of us currently stuck not in the Lakes District or the Norfolk Broads....with photos, please!

Thank you all so much!
Elizabeth Jolley
Happy Editor :-)