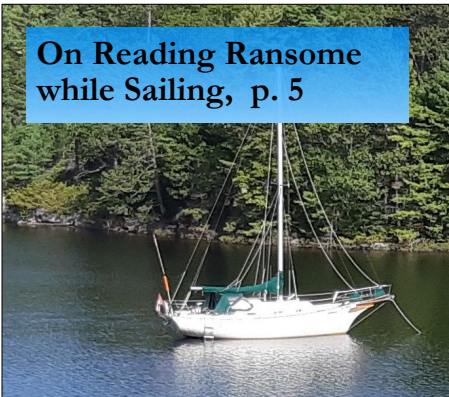




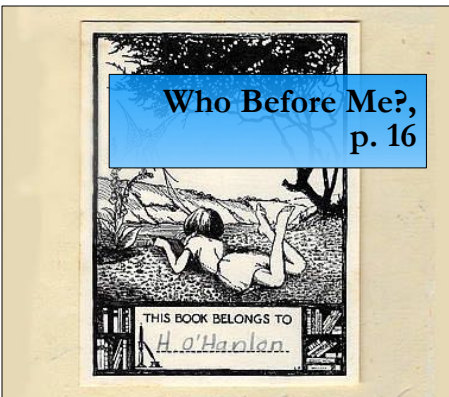
Signals from TARSUS & North Pole News

January 2021

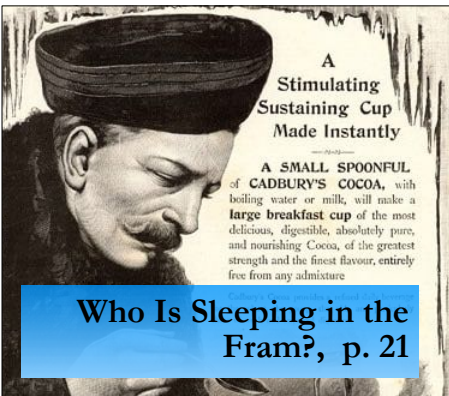
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Ship's Papers — Important information for the Crew



A View from the US Helm

By Robin Marshall
TARSUS Coordinator
210 N 18th Street W Bradenton, FL 34205
45tarsus@gmail.com

Well what is there to report? Regrettably not much. Like the majority of you, we are hunkering down and trying to stay healthy, though the future looks a little

brighter. Regrettably, here at least the rollout of the vaccine is slow, but hopefully it will speed up and maybe we can get back to normality soon.

I must thank all who have renewed again either with me or online.

Online payments can be made here: https://payment.arthur-ransome.org/?product_cat=overseas-

subscriptions

Seems the link I put on the renewal form was difficult for some, hopefully this will do the job.

Please also note my email on the form (usa@arthur-ransome.org) ran into technical issues and is no longer current. Please use 45tarsus@gmail.com instead.

The problem arose with the launch of the new Society website: <https://arthur-ransome.org/> I had been wondering about the lack of emails for quite a while.

The new site is worth visiting if you have not done so yet. Members have a special section, so check that out.

Hoping we can take down plague flags soon.

Keep well and safe everyone.

Remember if you have any concerns or questions contact me 45tarsus@gmail.com or phone 941-726-1974.

Robin



Greetings from the North

By Ian Sacré, TARS Canada Coordinator
750 Donegal Place, North Vancouver, BC V7N 2X5
gallivanterthree@telus.net

Greetings TARS Members!

Once again it is time to write the usual winter newsletter but, sadly, there is little to report concerning the Soci-

ety. That being said, you may find a couple of items interesting.

By now most of you will be familiar with the new membership classifications, with UK *Signals* and *Outlaw* publications available online for those who wish to read them electronically instead of receiving paper copies. I have noted that few seem to be choosing the electronic option; membership savings by going electronic amounts to only £5 per year.

You will also be pleased to know that we have a brand new and very enthusiastic Overseas Coordinator, Krysia Clack. Krysia is a first-class communicator and sends along Arthur Ransome and TARS titbits she believes may be of interest to overseas members. Krysia has always been quick to respond to emails and is a delight to work with.

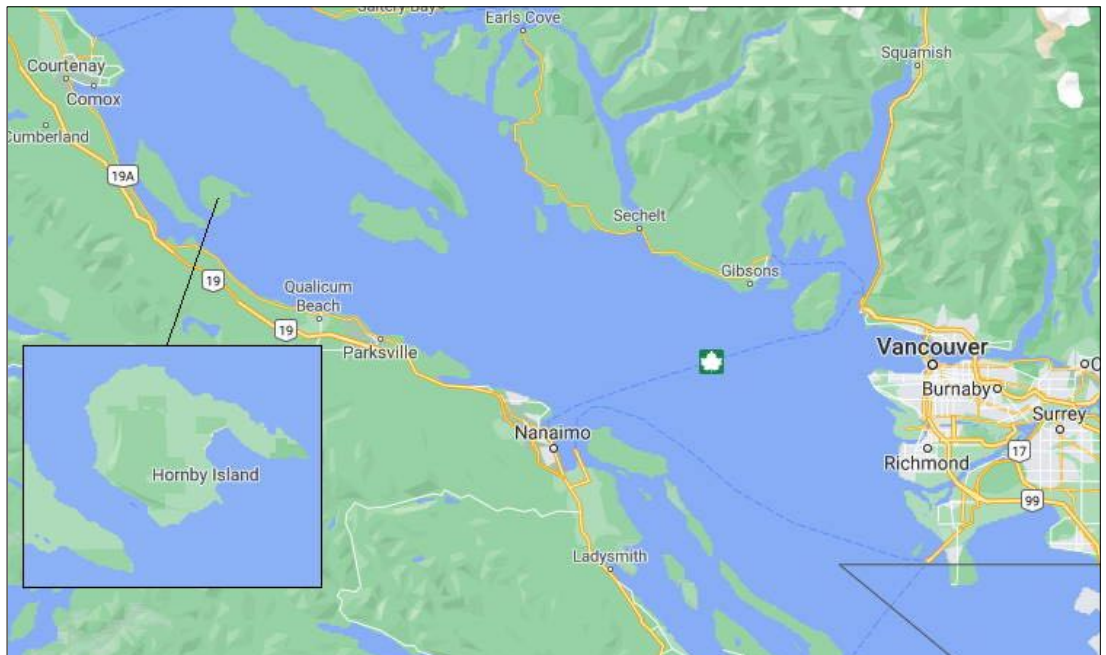
Many of us have had their lives disrupted over these past many months

by the plague which is ravaging the planet. In my case, I have been banished from my home in North Vancouver by my two daughters who insisted that I self-isolate at their holiday cabin on Hornby Island.

The winter population of Hornby is about 750 souls, swelling to about five thousand during the summer months. Girdled by the seas of the Strait of Georgia, it takes three ferries to get here and the best part of five and a half hours from home if one makes all the ferry connections. Both inter-island ferries are weather dependent and strong SE gales such as we have been having these past several weeks often force ferry cancellations. I was allowed to bring one dear old friend and, arriving as we did during the second week of December, we enjoyed Christmas and New Years in each

other's company. We have had four power failures since arriving and since the repair crews have to come from Vancouver Island, they too are dependent on the ferries. No ferries, no repairs!

The permanent island population is a fiercely independent collection of inhabitants who take virtually every calamity, such as electrical power failures, in their stride. Many have auxiliary power supplies in the form of portable generators, and those that don't simply light their always-ready lanterns, throw another log into the stove, and settle down to wait it out. Like all small islands there appears to be a sort of bush telegraph, and local gossip seems to travel fast. As one moves about the island one often comes across little groups of two, three or four people busily exchanging



the latest happenings in their lives or the lives of their neighbours while mumbling through their face masks. When southerly storms come whistling northwards up the Strait one can drive around the whole island – in less than an hour – to choose the best spot to storm watch. A favourite place is Tribune Bay, which is exposed

to the full blast of such tempests; after a good blow the beach is strewn with logs, many of them having escaped from log booms under tow up and down the coast.

In a normal summer Tribune Bay is packed with visiting holiday makers, and the shallow bay becomes a temporary anchorage to dozens of visiting pleasure boats and, of course, the occasional hullabaloo roaring about the bay disturbing other sailors with their wake.

I am immensely lucky to be able to enjoy my plague-driven self-isolation in such a lovely place and hope other members are seizing the moment whenever and wherever they can.

Stay well, and wishing everyone calm seas and fair winds.

Ian





A Note from the Editor

By Simon Horn, sjhorn@gmail.com

Welcome to *Signals from TARSUS/North Pole News* for January 2021.

I hope you are all doing well and managing to get through the pandemic safely.

Thanks for all your contributions. It is a big issue this time, since we have a number of items that are longer than usual. We also have a couple of new first-time authors (new at least since I have been editor). Much appreciated.

The AusTARS Cup, which I was awarded for 2019, resides far away in Abbott Hall in the Lake District. Winifred Wilson was kind enough to send me a picture (at top right) so that I could see my name.

(Long ago, when I was starting out as a magazine editor, a more senior assistant editor also did radio spots for us. She sometimes came to work wearing a highly appropriate “Almost Famous” t-shirt. Perhaps I can now get one of my own!)

In this issue

In *Dipping our Hands*, new contributor **Ross Cossar** describes his re-read of the Ransome 12 in “On Reading Ransome while Sailing *Sea Bear*”.

Then **Marilyn Steele** provides another letter from Ransome to Helene Carter, his American illustrator, this one from February 1932 when the Ransomes were in Syria.

In *Kanchenjunga’s Cairn*, **Alistair Bryden** has been “Panning for Gold” in the tracks of the Klondyke gold miners.

Paul Nelson describes “The Great

and Epic and Magnificent Andele Adventure”, when a young Paul and two friends built a wooden “Jon boat” and then sailed it through a week of adventure on Louisiana’s Tchefuncte River.

Jules Blue’s “Bagging the Monros” tells the tale of his family’s two different days of hiking up and down Scottish mountains, and daughter Martha adds her poem, “How to Write A Mountain”.

In *The Ship’s Library*, our second new contributor, **Kate Crosby**, pens a charming look at the interesting things that can be learned from the endpapers of second-hand books in “Who Before Me?”.

I follow with my review of Mike Bender’s *Sunlight and Shadows*, last year’s Amazon publication.

In the *Beckfoot Kitchen* **Molly McGinnis** provides an ode to cocoa in “Who Is Sleeping in the Fram?”, tracing the many references to the hot drink in Ransome and giving us her own recipe.

Ian Sacré starts off *Pieces of Eight* with “Boxing the Compass”. Do you know the 32 traditional points of the compass by name? Here’s your chance to show it.

Lastly, **Martha Blue** ends the issue with “Written”, her story of the Scottish island of St Kilda just before the



The AusTARS Cup

1930 evacuation of the remaining 36 inhabitants to the Scottish mainland.

The next issue is scheduled for May 2021 and as always, I need your contributions.

This issue I was pleasantly surprised by several items that came in quite early. Please start thinking about what you might write now. Don’t wait for my first reminder on April 1.

Take care of yourselves,
Simon

Guidelines for Submissions

Preferred document formats:
Microsoft Word (docx), Apple Pages, RTF.

Illustrations and photos:
You can indicate in your article where you would like your illustrations to appear, but please provide them separately in jpg or png formats, since they may be difficult to extract from text.

Images should be reasonably large: I can make a big photo smaller without losing quality, but I can’t make a small one big!

Dipping our Hands — Personal relationships with the books

On Reading Ransome while Sailing *Sea Bear*

by Ross Cossar (Norwood, Ontario)

My wife Lisa and I have a Bayfield 32 cutter-rigged sailboat named *Sea Bear*. Her new home port is in Penetanguishene, Ontario, Canada in the south-east area of Georgian Bay. *Sea Bear* is our third boat following *Great Northern* (a 16-foot, sloop-rigged Albacore dinghy) and *Goblin* (an 18-foot, sloop-rigged Edel 540). While I have been sailing for 45 years, Lisa and I have been sailing together for about 25 years. We have raised our children around boats and now have been introducing our grandchildren to sailing as well.

After many years of sailing in an area known as the Bay of Quinte at the eastern end of Lake Ontario, we motored *Sea Bear* through the Trent Severn Waterway in the fall of 2019. Then, following winter storage, *Sea*

Bear was launched for a season of exploring. This area of Georgian Bay includes the fresh water archipelago known as the 30,000 Islands. It is a stunningly beautiful landscape of rocks and trees and water. Navigation is a critical skill in an area where you might have visible rocks just 15 feet off the beam and still have 50 feet of water under the keel. Beyond the islands and the hundreds of anchorages, Georgian Bay offers fantastic sailing opportunities. The Great Lakes are understood to be fresh water seas for good reason. In over three weeks of sailing we barely managed to see but a fraction of the offerings.

We, like most people, have been impacted by COVID-19 in some way and one of my responses to the stressors in the spring of 2020 was to de-

cide that I would reread the 12 volumes of our beloved Swallows and Amazons in order. My mother read these stories in her youth. I was raised reading these books. We raised our children with these books and we are now introducing our grandchildren to them. I know the stories thoroughly and Lisa has a good general knowledge of them. I read the first book a chapter per night before falling asleep. While familiar of course, I found the act of re-reading these fictional stories it to be quite soothing.

As I was about to start reading *Swallowdale*, I asked my wife if I could read the first chapter to her, and that was the start of our joint reading of the series aloud to each other most evenings. We are currently about to be swept out past the Beach End Buoy in



We Didn't Mean to Go to Sea. From reading a chapter before bed each evening we also started reading while sailing (on the gentler days) and in the anchorages we visited. The following are some of our thoughts.

Reading aloud to Lisa has forced me to slow down and to avoid skipping some of the narrative that I am either quite familiar with or that I have trouble with. Within my head I find it quite easy to jump past some parts. The primary example of this is Ransome's use of the local dialect by the supporting characters we meet. I can become a bit tongue tied by it and taking time to work through it slowly has led to a greater appreciation of his writing craft.

Reading together has been like a holiday. Although we have not been big travelers, in 2006 we did visit Britain for a few weeks. A significant part of our trip was spent visiting the Ransome landscapes. As we encounter the places within the stories where we have been we can stop and remember

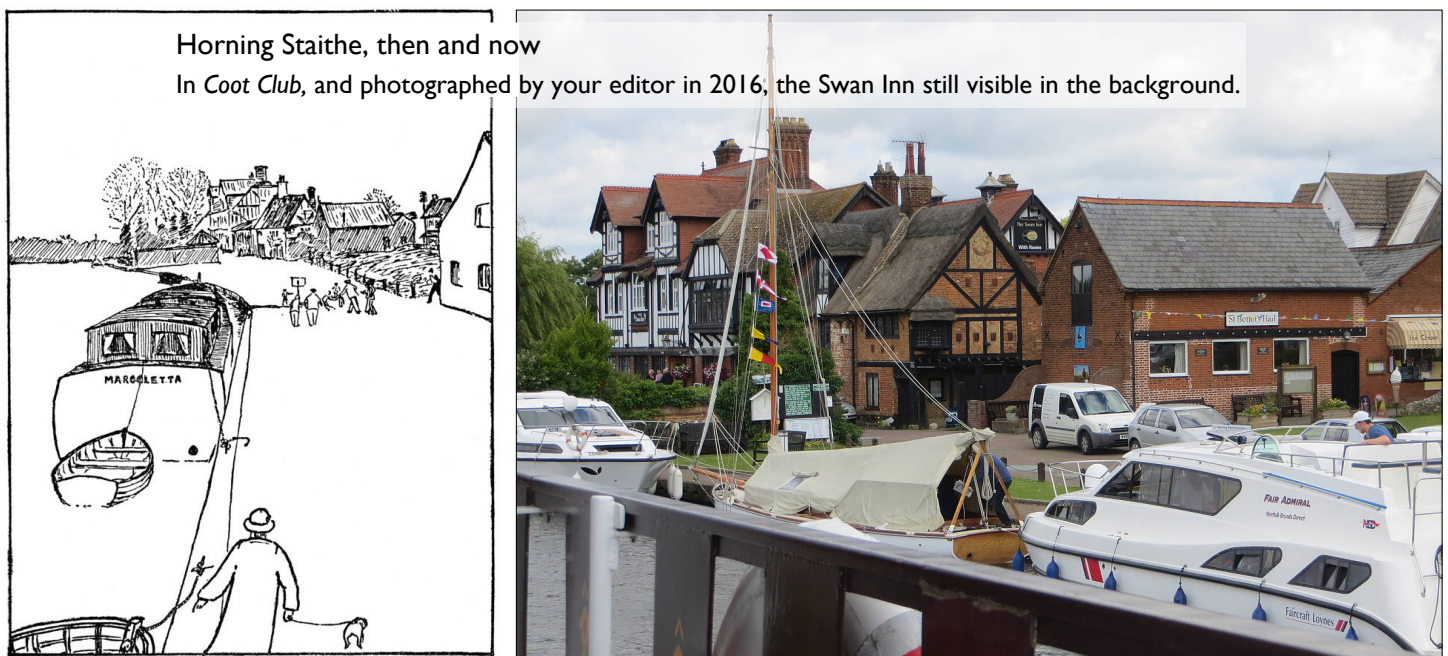
them. Having had lunch in the Butt & Oyster, visited the Norfolk Broads and climbed Kanchenjunga, to name only a few, we are able to connect with what we are reading. These books have enabled us to travel around Britain, to Crab Island and soon enough even to China. The descriptive language that Ransome uses has been a particular treat. Again, by reading the stories aloud we find ourselves taking better note of the details and stopping to appreciate the gentleness with which he guides our imaginations. Ransome's chosen words help us to feel the motion of the *Teasel* on Ranworth Broad and the heat of the fires burning the High Topps.

Additionally this summer, I read one of the books from my mother's library that was produced by the Ransome Literary Society. I have not taken time to read many books about Ransome himself but I found myself fairly captivated and, by extension, sharing what I was learning with Lisa. I have no doubt that I will continue to read more of this genre as I endeavor to

learn more about how these stories came to be.

I'm one who credits Arthur Ransome with teaching me to sail. I ingested the terminology as a young lad and have applied many of the skills over the years in my own boats. Lisa came to sailing through me as an adult. As we encounter Ransome's sailing instructions within the prose we find ourselves stopping to discuss our own boat and our own similar experiences. Through the exercise of comparing and contrasting our sailing to the stories we continue to learn.

Of course we have read these stories aloud before as we have been reading them to the next generations. The difference, which we so appreciate now when reading them aloud to each other, is our sharing time together. COVID-19 or not, regardless of a need to isolate, reading these stories almost as if for the first time has been worth every ration of chocolate Roger ever dreamt of.

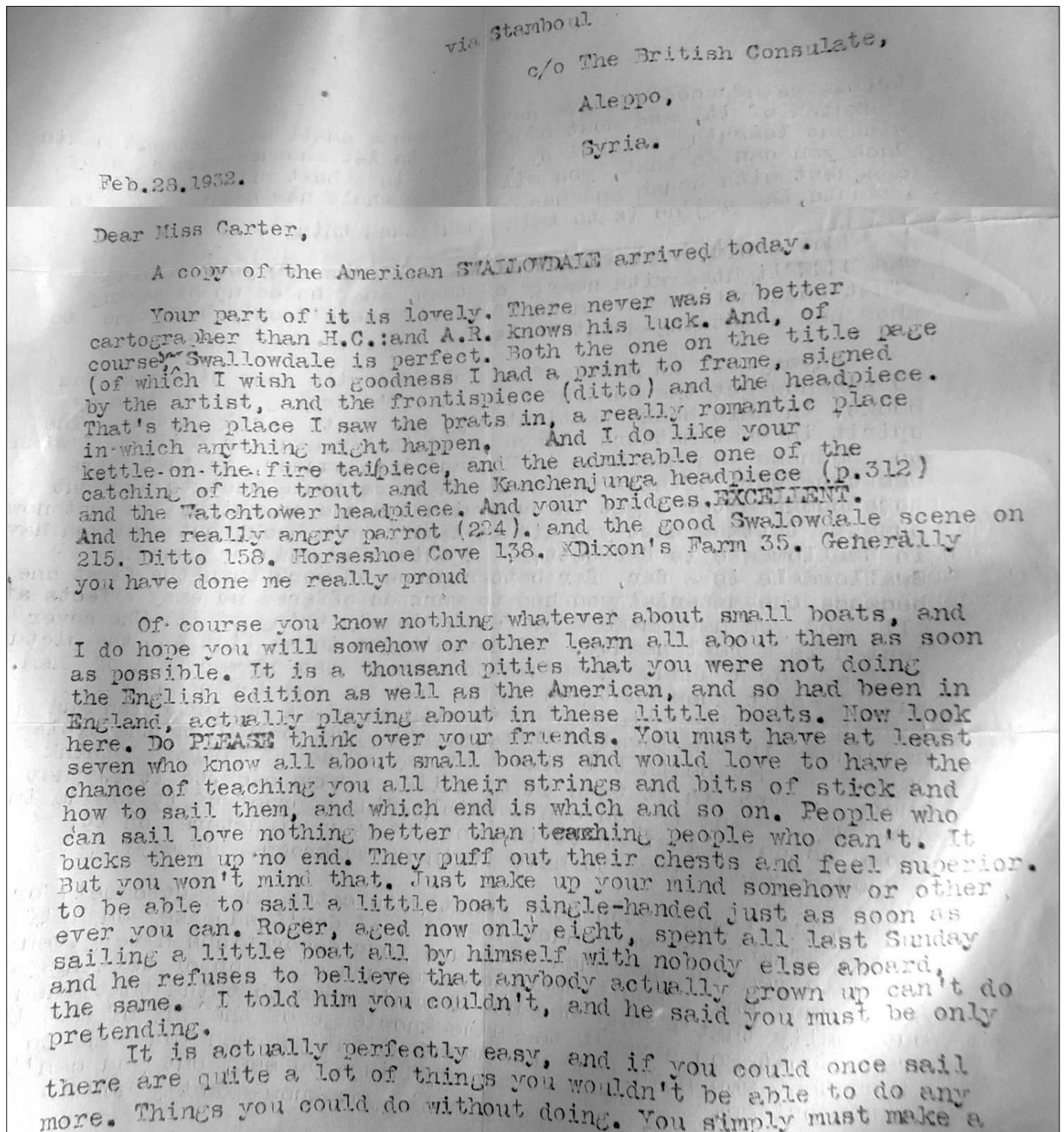


Another Letter from Ransome, February 1932

Courtesy of Marilyn Steele (Damascus, MD), presented by Simon Horn

Another Ransome letter to Helene Carter, written while the Ransomes were in Syria. He has just received a copy of the American edition of *Swallowdale* and is very pleased with Carter's illustrations. The only hiccup is that Carter appar-

ently knows nothing of sailing and sailing boats, and this showed in some of her illustrations. Ransome suggests most strongly that she find someone to teach her about them so she will be ready for future books.



triple-reinforced resolve never to see a small boat without making sketch of it, and most of all not to let another summer go by without learning to sail by yourself in a boat with one sail. Once you can do that, you will find a whole new country open to conquest with brush and pen. And you would understand why, for example, the sail of the little boat on page 213 is all wrong. Hung at the wrong point on the yard, and with the luff all in a curve precisely where it must by its very nature be a taut straight line.

What a pig he is to talk about such things.

Not a bit. The father of the Swallows saw your drawings was ~~delighted~~ delighted with nearly of them, and ended up by saying "What couldn't we have made of her if there'd only been time to show her something about boats."

Anyway, I am most awfully pleased with your pictures. You do somehow get the sort of feel that I'm trying to get into my books. In this book, particularly, the boats hardly matter. The spirit is what matters always, and that you never fail in. To goodness you had been in England last summer, or that there was some sort of half way house where we could meet to plan out more books after I get through with the one on which I am just now busy. I liked what you did in last year's book, but what you have in Swallowdale is far better. I think the endpaper map in Swallowdale is a far, far better piece of work than the first one, because the material you had to work on offered no easy effects at all, and you have made a perfectly lovely thing of it. The cover design is a real beauty. I haven't put in my list ALL the pictures I like, for I should have had to make a list of very ^{many} all of them. But, I don't know what you think, but the one I find myself turnin' back to again and again with complete satisfaction and happiness is the lovely little moonlit Swallowdale on the title page. It may be that I like that way of doing things. I think there is more in it than that. Children turn back to it in just the same way. And if you can possibly find a proof of it for me in those colours, just as it is, and put your signature on it, I should really love to have it in my workroom. Greedy?

Well, I must stop now, and try to catch the fast camel for the north. Thank you very much indeed. I don't suppose you half begin to realise how much pleasure your decorations have given me. And I must say I don't seem to make much of a job of telling you, but really that's only because I can't bear to think that when you draw a boat you haven't the same knowledge of the WHY of all its lines that you have (and use so beautifully) when you come to draw a bridge. You can draw anything you see, but you can't be expected to see a boat sailing until you know exactly how it sails. Off again? No. Goodnight. And thank you again, very very much

Yours most faithfully
Arthur Ransom

The layout of the first page has been slightly modified so that everything would fit in. Please note that if the poor

quality of parts of the letter makes it hard to read, you can enlarge it in your PDF reader. — Ed.

Kanchenjunga's Cairn — Places we've been and our adventures

Panning for Gold

By Alistair Bryden (Calgary, Alberta)

As we all know, the plot of *Pigeon Post* revolves around the search for gold on the High Topps. Ransome was well informed on the subject, as his good friend Oscar Gnosspelius (the model for Squashy Hat or Timothy in the books) was an experienced mining engineer who had travelled widely, including to South America. Ultimately, of course, in the book it turned out that our intrepid prospectors had failed to discover gold but instead found copper deposits, which Timothy and Captain Flint had actually been looking for, and subsequently decided to mine.

Due to Covid travel constraints I spent this summer in B.C., and it's hard to travel far in B.C. without seeing signs of the many gold rushes are part of the province's history. The men who "moiled" for gold were some of the earliest explorers of the huge north of the province. They built towns, settlements and villages that would flourish for a few short years before the gold was worked out and the miners moved on. Usually they would leave or abandon their cabins, houses and streets, which since then have slowly been reclaimed by the forest.

The towns and settlements only sprang up after gold was found. Even more ephemeral were the campsites of the prospectors, who ranged widely across the country armed with their gold pans, checking every stream or creek for the magical trace of "colour", the gold at the bottom of

the pan that indicated there might be commercial quantities of gold in the stream that could make a man's fortune. The old prospectors must have been truly tough, fighting through bush without paths or maps, carrying all their supplies in a pack, with none of our lightweight gear. They would live on what they could hunt or fish. Even today it's an adventure to go into the interior with maps and food — and a GPS beacon. Ransome grew up before the First World War and the gold rushes were well within living memory; the Klondike gold rush, for example, ran from 1896 to 1899.

This summer I spent time in the Stikine (1860s gold rush) and Cassiar country (1870s gold rush) and also

further south in the Cariboo (1858 gold rush). On Dease Lake just south of Cassiar I paddled over to Laketown, a ghost town that once had 5000 inhabitants. In the Cariboo there are many ghost towns, including of course Barkerville, near the Bowron Lakes Canoe route, which has been restored as a heritage town. It's a fantastic spot to visit if you are at all interested in history.

This all sounds like ancient history but actually it still resonates today. People still head out to the creeks and rivers of B.C. armed with gold pans, looking for "colour". I spoke to a young fellow yesterday who was spending a wet and stormy day by the river banks panning for gold. But I had to tip my

The Old Cariboo Road, 1867



Barkerville heritage town

hat to Ransome after one conversation at a remote lodge in northern B.C. and another in the Selkirk Mountains. Both conversations were with helicopter pilots, who were flying exploration crews into the mountains to drill test holes for mineral exploration. “I suppose they are looking for gold” said I, after all of the reading I had done on gold exploration. “Nope”, both pilots replied, they are working to delineate some very promising reserves of copper.



The Great and Epic and Magnificent Andele Adventure

By Paul Nelson (New Orleans, Louisiana) with co-captains Guy Leefe and Richard Leefe

Every year waves of Air gather off the west coast of Africa and make their way across the Atlantic. Although invisible, we can certainly feel their effects when they reach the Caribbean Islands.

Yet, there are other types of waves which form in Europe and make their way across the Atlantic. Again, we cannot see them, but can certainly feel their impact. These waves are not of air, but of Ideas turned into wonderful books.

Three delightful books have converged to inspire a great and epic boating adventure.

First, there is just the very idea of boating. How wonderful... but how wonderful? Kenneth Grahame tells us in *The Wind in the Willows* through his Water Rat: “Believe me, my young friend, there is nothing – absolutely nothing – half so much worth doing as

simply messing about in boats.”

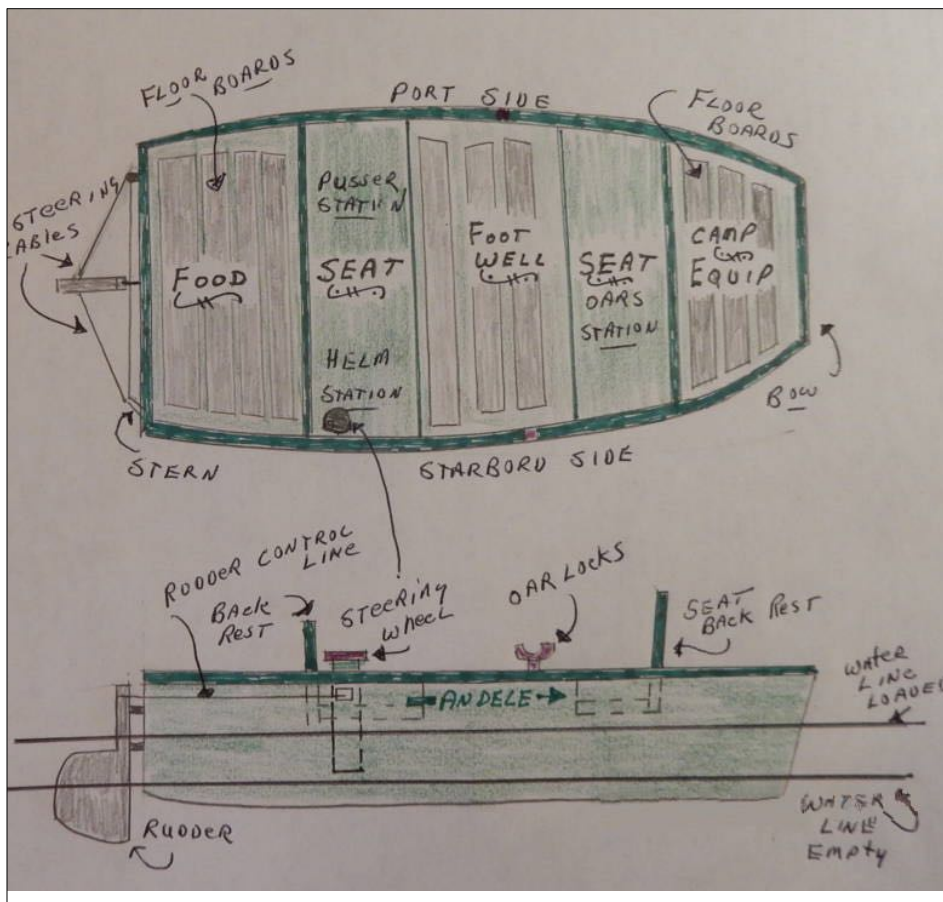
Second, there is the idea of travel, the adventure. But where? Of course... how about on the great English river of life: the Thames. But how wonderful? Jerome K. Jerome tells us through his perfect and especially funny book, *Three Men in a Boat*.

It seems that on one especially gloomy day, Jerome feels under the weather. Pulling out his large medical encyclopedia he compares his current ailments with those listed in the book. He decides that he has a touch of every ailment, with the exception of housemaid’s knee. Off to the physician he hobbles where the doctor makes a complete exam giving Jerome a slip of paper from his prescription tablet. Even without reading, Jerome rushes to the pharmacy and presents the order to the pharmacist who reads and returns the paper to Jerome stating that he cannot fill the order.

“Why?” cries Jerome in desperation. “Sorry sir, we don’t supply that prescription.” At that point Jerome looks at the scrip which simply states: “You are fine; just take a vacation”. And with this instruction, Jerome and his two friends rent a 15-foot rowboat for a 10-day trip on the Thames. (This is my favorite book... get a copy, pull yourself up to your fireplace, feet up, and treat yourself to a perfect and brilliant read.)

Third, there is the idea of the boat itself. As we have learned from Arthur Ransome in his book, *Racundra’s First Cruise*: “Homes are but badly built boats so firmly aground that you cannot think of moving them”, and then he continues “the desire to build a boat is the desire of youth, unwilling yet to accept the idea of a final resting-place”.

So we have the ideas boating, traveling, and the actual boat.



The Plan

Two weeks later the basic Jon boat was completed needing only some interior modification.

Engraved launching notices were sent out to thousands... 17 attended, including three mongrel dogs more interested in dropped BBQ burgers than the nautical activities. Grog (root beer) was poured over the bow and the christened Andele hit the water with great cheers.

Three days later all supplies and gear were assembled for our great 10-day adventure on the mighty Tchefuncte River. Transportation to said river was to be Dad's '56 Chevy. Apparently the General Motors engineers did a marginal job of making the roof strong enough for the Andele. They also skimped on the rear leaf springs.. But, all was OK as we trundled off with a sagging roof and sagging rear end to our river destination.

As you may have surmised, three of us friends, Paul, Guy, and Rich, had read the above books and decided that nothing would do but to build our own boat and go on a wild adventure.

Apparently one needs plans of some type to build a boat. Alas, in 1963, we had no internet or Google, but, we found out about a large building here in New Orleans that had lots of books: a library... who would have dreamed up such a place. They even had a staff fellow called Dewey who helped us find the best place to send off for plans. We thanked Mr. Decimal, and with a 5-cent stamp we sent off for the 5-page detailed Jon Boat Plans. How hard could it be? Plywood, dimension wood, ring

shank nails, Resorcinol glue, and band-aids were all that were needed.

That great summer, we drifted, pad-
Ready to go!

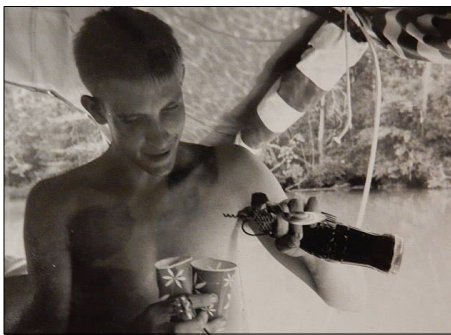




Afternoon stopover

Thus ended our great 1963 Andele adventure. Memories inspired our maritime interest and embedded the seeds of interest in Arthur Ransome and the Swallows and Amazons. And so, where is the jon boat now? .. Gone the way of the dodo bird, with the exception of the steering wheel.

And every once in a while if I feel like taking a river adventure, I can put my hand on the wheel, close my eyes, and take a river cruise, and even feel a mosquito biting my neck! What fun!



Rush order for Cokes

dled, swam in the river, and camped in the adjacent swamps and, on occasion, spent the nights camped on the river front lawns of homes. It was camping on these lawns that I learned that phrases like “what the hell are you guys doing here” and “you guys have three minutes to clear out” are NOT terms of endearment.

The 10 days turned out to be seven as we ran out of food, especially Vienna sausages and Cokes, our staples. Plus we were really smelling pretty funky, a combination of boy sweat and old Louisiana river water. So, with a pull-out location determined, Dad’s 56 Chevy was reacquired. Apparently the

Front yard camping

Chevy’s seven-day vacation did not automatically repair the roof and rear leaf springs. Darnn! But the trip home was interesting and I am sure the Chevy enjoyed having the scroungy Andele, scroungy camping gear and even really scroungy boys on board for the return trip. And yes, it took all of my Coast Guard earnings for one year to pay Dad back for poorly designed Chevy cars and the interior cleaning. Oh well... c’est la vie.

All that remains!



Bagging the Monros

By Jules Blue (Stoke-on-Trent, Staffs)

The diverse mountain massifs of Central Perthshire – especially those of the Ben Lawers range above Loch Tay that connect the rolling hills and rugged ridges, sparkling lochans and vertiginous vistas of folded and faulted, isolated mountains in the heart of Scotland – bookended a sum-

mer that never quite was the summer we had anticipated this year. A temporary escape from the net of pandemic shock and the ever-relentless rolling out of more and more invasive internet expansion? No. Botanical explorations? Perhaps. Or, we just wanted to climb the mountains!



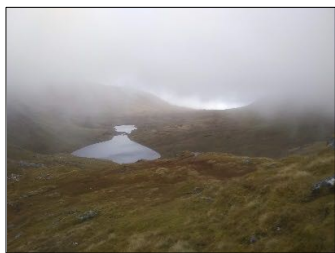
We three (myself as AP/responsible adult, Martha age 13, Aurora age 11) tasted the sharp bite of pale-white-blue dawn air, a blue paler than harebells, which sliced the morning light with a surgeon's courage and set out to 'bag' six of the nine local Munros in one long day and ended up bagging seven but only saw half of these

through the hoolie of every several, sudden sodden downpour of rains and rising churning mists and low cloud inversions and following the odd mis-guiding old, yellowed and worn track made by thousands of invisible feet and then, finally, rewarded with expanded panoramic horizons which appeared just as suddenly and fleetingly!

We held out our hands and grasped the winds as Meall Corranaich/Hill of Lament (3507 ft), Beinn Ghlas/Grey-Green Hill (3619 ft), Ben Lawers/Hill of the Hoof (3983 ft), Creag an Fhithich (3566 ft), An Stuc/the Peak (3668 ft) – the wildest, wettest, windiest ridge, Meall Garbh/Rough Rounded Hill (3668 ft), and Meall Greigh/Rounded Hill of the Stud Horse (3284 ft) were all surpassed in nine timeless

hours, following a final sogged bag of crow that gained its lost momentum and took its final fling of the day like a question mark hanging in the air.

Munro? Scottish mountains of over 3000 feet are collectively called the Munros after Sir Hugh Munro, the man who first set out to catalogue them. Munro was a founder



member of the Scottish Mountaineering Club and was landed gentry, with an estate at Kirriemuir. His first catalogue, published in 1891, was borne of a meticulous study of the Ordnance Survey one-inch- and six-inch-to-the-mile maps together with research from his many mountaineering expeditions.

He spent around two and a half decades refining his list. Munro died in 1919 with only three of his listed mountain tops to climb, the Inaccessible Pinnacle on Skye, Carn an Fhìdhleir/Rocky Hill of the Fiddler in the Cairngorms, and Carn Cloich-mhuilinn. If you ‘complete’ the feat of climbing all 282 you can notify the Clerk of the List and have your name recorded in the book, *Munro’s Tables*. Being a compleator qualifies you to purchase a commemorative tie or brooch! We’re not quite there yet! (9) Hill-runner Steven Fallon holds the current record for the most complete circuits – 15!



At nearby Loch Rannoch, with Schiehallion in view, we came across some colourful local history by the chilling name of MacGregor! There was an island mid-loch which, we discovered, is called Eilean nam Faioleag (Island of the Gulls), the ownership of which has changed hands on many occasions. The MacGregors, taking it from the Menzies clan, fortified the island and kept it as a safe place of retreat. The island is an old crannog (human loch dwelling) dated to around 1100 AD. Its original surface area was greater but the raising of water levels when the loch was dammed for hydro-electricity generation reduced this. The tower in the centre is a 19th century folly – but it looks eerily fascinating!



No tweed jackets, woollen breeches or hob-nailed boots or trusty A-frame haversack could be found to make the encounter more Ransomely-authentic and so we had to rely on more modern and synthetic gear for protection! We met barely a soul, albeit two men, dressed for drier climes in shorts and thin tops and who required our expert map-reading skills and compass use to work out where they were! We were also blessed to bump into two mountain path restoration engineers who apparently make a daily journey on foot to ‘heal the hills,’ as they put it – over 250 million boot prints are left behind annually, creating an erosional scar that has defaced the land.

Days later we were up in the clouds again but this time in greater numbers as the whole family (now including mother Rachel and Esme, age 7) took on the mighty cone of Schiehallion/Fairy Hill of the Caledonians (3555 ft). And on this occasion the skies were clearer and so we could see how far we had to walk at every step!





The before-mentioned MacGregors came to Rannoch around 1400. Their chief had been a John MacGregor, who died in 1390 leaving no immediate successor. This left them vulnerable to claims for their land by the powerful Campbells of Lochawe. By treacherous deeds, the Campbells usurped the MacGregors' rights and drove them out of Glenorchy. The MacGregor reputation of being fearless was renowned, and when Dugald Stewart of Appin needed support to enforce a revenge raid on Clan Iann Buidhe (Clan of John of the Yellow Hair) the MacGregors were eager to oblige. After a fierce battle, this proved to be a profitable enterprise that allowed the MacGregors to settle on the fertile lands of Dunan. Later, a new clan chief emerged with legiti-

mate title claim to the land the Campbells had taken – Duncan MacGregor. He disputed the Act of Council, made in 1488 in the name of King James IV when he was still a child king, that had given power to the Campbells to pursue and to destroy the MacGregors. The clan became known as 'the children of the mist' for their habit of disappearing back into the wilds of Rannoch after battle. However, in 1603 King James VI, in a desperate attempt to bring peace to the warring clans, ordered that the name of MacGregor be banished and the clansmen to be put to death with impunity. In 1775 the Act of Proscription against the MacGregors was removed and there were still MacGregors living peaceful lives in Rannoch!



How to Write A Mountain

by Martha Blue

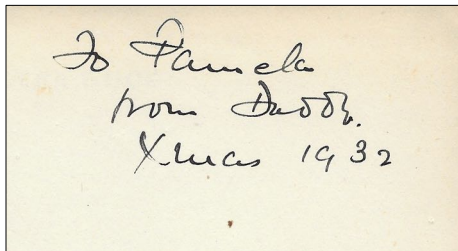
a hat is needed – a thinking hat,
favourites work best;
pac-a-mac – keep everything dry,
especially wit;
make note, keep well-fed,
you need food for thought;
water is always necessary
– as is ink;
take a mirror for signalling
and reflecting;
pack your best-kept map
for finding best lines;
you may need spare socks,
in case of tributaries;
stow your poet's first-aid kit –
dictionary, spare pencil,
sharpener, paper;
a stamped, blank postcard
is perfect for sending your
masterwork on for scrutiny;
a compass helps to find the way
forward or backwards –
to retrieve memories or dreams;
if bagging a Munro, bring a net
to battle against midges
or for catching the local language;
taphad leibh,
write hard, stony words to match
the surroundings,
not soft, chocolate words that
melt and run –
no running – take your time.
Taphad leibh*

**Taphad leibh* = Thank You in Scottish Gaelic.

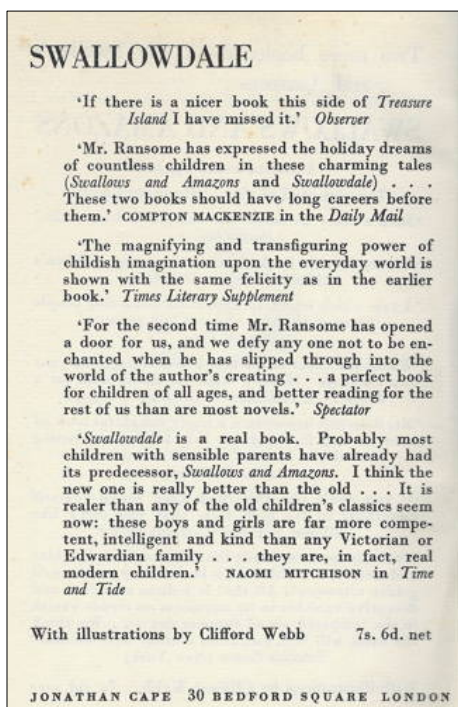
Ship's Library — Books we've read and want to share

Who Before Me?

By Kate Crosby (Esmont, Virginia)



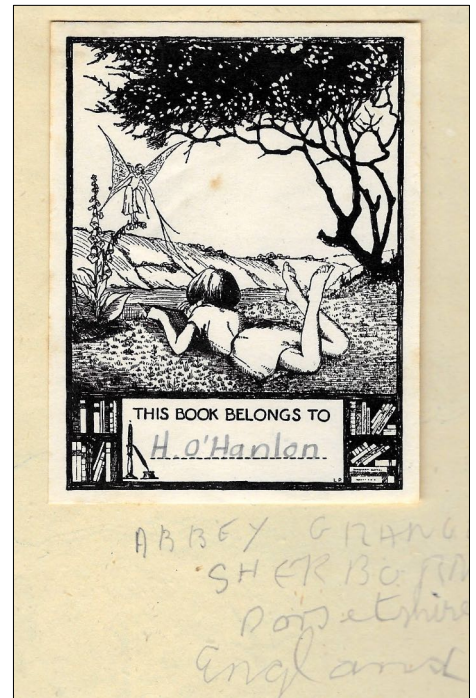
An added pleasure of secondhand books, peripheral to the volume itself but hugely intriguing, are the extras that often come along too. Bits of paper falling out, inscriptions, prices, the particular edition. Lucky Pamela received her copy of *Peter Duck* fresh off the presses, Second Impression, December 1932. And with a smaller, inserted page before the end papers, promoting *Swallows and Amazons* on one side, *Swallowdale* on the other, “With illustrations by Clifford Webb. 7s 6d. net.” If only. £1.00 for me in a Falmouth charity shop.



Looking through the rest of my battered green hardbacks, I'm surprised to find how few originated with me. Who is I. P. King? Looks like a boy's writing, firmly inked in both *Secret Water* and *The Big Six*, 1947 and 1948. An East Coast man? Was he a wartime kid? £5.00 each. And H. O'Hanlon? *Swallows and Amazons*, ink name on a bookplate, looks like a girl's bookplate, with pencilled “Abbey Grange, Sherborne, Dorsetshire, England” underneath. Reprinted September 1944. Wait a minute, I have a cousin in Sherborne.

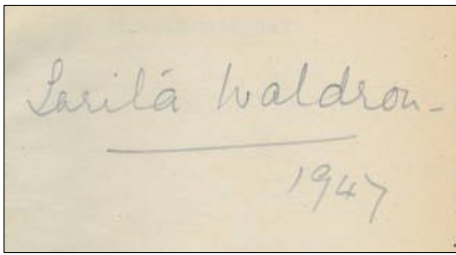
Hugh tells me that Abbey Grange is now the Headmaster's house at Sherborne School. Before that, it was owned and occupied by Geoffrey, known as Jack, O'Hanlon, Classics master at the school. (He won a classical scholarship to Oxford. Later he was awarded First Class Honours in Classical Moderation in 1906 and graduated in 1908 with a Second in Litterae Humaniores). Geoffrey/Jack was previously housemaster of Sherborne's Westcott House during the time of its most prestigious pupil, Alan Turing of Enigma Code fame, 1926 to 1931. My “H” must be an O'Hanlon relative, but none of Geoffrey/Jack's three children have an initial H. (Many thanks to Cousin Hugh Watkins for this research.)

I have three first editions: *Secret Water*, 1939. “Elspeth, a very Happy Christmas from Ken (?) Christmas 1939,” also right in line with Cape's plan to have a new AR in time for Christmas each year. No dust jacket. I appear to



have bought it from Nigel Williams Rare Books, Charing Cross Road. £25.00 – ouch. Then, my only American edition, *Great Northern?*, Macmillan 1947 [JDS]. Illustrated by AR (not Helene Carter?) \$7.50. Nice oatmeal coloured boards. Disintegrating dust jacket. Lastly and probably my best – *The Big Six*, a present from good friends, in good condition, with pristine dust jacket. At one point it was pencil-priced 7/6. Nice.

Then, I have to confess two horrible discoveries. *Missee Lee*, Second Impression March 1942. “Timothy Perkins”, in ink. I remember I borrowed it for a train journey and never returned it. And, *Winter Holiday*, 1946, boldly pencilled “Sarita Waldron 1947”. I borrowed that on the Thames at Marlow when our parents were having drinks at The Compleat



Angler (real Hullabaloo country). Swore to return it. How often have I cursed delinquent book borrowers? (Worse when I know a book is missing, but can't remember who has got it.) Glad I can't see TARS Librarian Winifred Wilson's face if she reads this. Especially as a couple of mine obviously have been returned. *Swallowdale*, 1948, with my name and school number, 142, in Mum's hand is right here. *Coot Club*, 1948, has "Please return to Crosby, 3, Ormonde Gate, S.W.3." many years after the sprawling ink "Katharine Wood" above.

Of them all, I like Pamela on the fly-leaf of *Peter Duck* the best. Christmas 1932. The war to end all wars long over, the next one barely on the horizon. 'Dark at teatime', yes, but with all the Christmas kerfuffle over, she's in front of the fire, slice of Christmas cake – the kind with crackly royal icing – at hand. Lovely "new book smell" as she opens it. I can join her aboard the Wild Cat, "on deck in a summer morning tacking out of harbour under jib and mainsail."



Inspired by Kate's article, I took a look at my Ransome collection and discovered some evidence of previous owners.

On the left, from a 1937 reprint of *Swallows and Amazons*, still with the Clifton Webb illustrations, Frances Hodge's Auntie Robin presented this book to her niece and, judging by the handwriting, wrote in her name, too. Luckily Frances seems to have made it her own by adding the Snow White stamp.

On the right, from the 1937 first edition of *The Far-Distant Oxus*, the owner was one P. M. Munro, who received the book in January 1938. The little bookshop plate shown here shows that it was purchased from "Spencers' Educational Supply Stores, 24c Dalton Road, Barrow-in-Furness".



What about you? Have you collected any second-hand Ransomey books with fascinating historical or literary inscriptions? If so, let me know. If you can, photograph or scan the inscription and send it along. It might make an interesting sight for your fellow TARS.

— Ed.

Useful Links

The Arthur Ransome Society (TARS) website: <http://arthur-ransome.org>

All Things Ransome, a website devoted to keeping articles, artwork, and anything related to Ransome: <http://www.allthingsransome.net>

The Arthur Ransome Wiki, an encyclopedia on Ransome, his life and works: http://arthur-ransome.wikia.com/wiki/Arthur_Ransome_Wiki

Sunlight and Shadows, by Mike Bender

A review by Simon Horn (Montreal, Quebec)

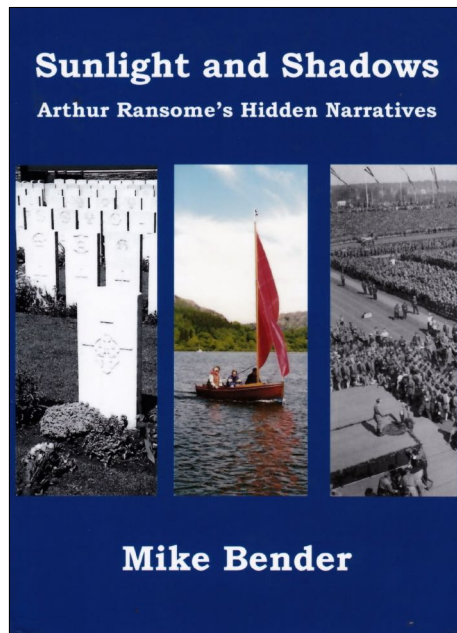
I had a lot of trouble writing this review. Essentially, I think, this was because I found the book so consistently annoying. Annoying, not because it was challenging my view of “the great man”, not because it was questioning the reasons behind Ransome’s choices or actions, but because it was psychoanalyzing at a distance, making statements based on preconceptions, drawing conclusions without adequate – or sometimes any – evidence.

Sunlight and Shadows is two books in one: the first is Bender’s attempts to psychoanalyze AR, to find the “hidden narratives” that Bender sees underlying his work; the second – the last two chapters – is his look at the future of Ransome’s work and, by extension, TARS.

Some authors become institutions, if you like, their works continuing to be read, seen as classics, while others, most, do not. TARS, as an association based on Ransome’s work, is likely to disappear if Ransome’s works are not considered classics. The question for TARS is what, if anything, can be done about this.

Bender’s second book deals with a real issue that TARS should think about. I don’t disagree, and I don’t propose to go into it. The first book, I’m afraid, I sometimes find almost ludicrous.

Bender begins by looking at Ransome’s childhood and his mistreatment by a father who considered him useless and a failure, and a family that did not even detect that Ransome’s extreme shortsightedness explained much of his early academic difficulties and the bullying he suffered at school.



And I looked, and behold a pale horse: and his name that sat on him was Death, and Hell followed with him. Revelation 6-8

Sunlight and Shadows epigraph, p. 9

This would lead to a lifelong lack of self-confidence and feelings of inadequacy.

Ransome’s move to London to become a writer despite the lack of support, even from his mother, and his determination to make his own way, leads to a poor diet that would have long-term health effects.

In search of a happy family, Ransome makes a foolish marriage with Ivy Walker and has a daughter, Tabitha, both of whom he will eventually flee.

The loss of his brother Geoffrey in WWI leads to lifelong survivor’s guilt. He will never talk about death as a result.

For Bender, all these factors can be seen in the Swallows and Amazons series, especially the absence of fathers and even any mention of the war.

There is no doubt that, writing in the late 1920s, Ransome’s outlook was affected by the war and its aftermath.

What bothers me, however, is Bender’s determination to see this everywhere and only in the most negative way possible.

When he mentions Nancy talking about the Great Aunt making her mother cry by referring to her dead father, Bender says this is unusual, since in Ransome “the expression of any strong emotion is usually frowned on” (68) But, supposedly, Ransome deflects from this sorrow “by describing Titty’s ‘tsunami of rage’”. (Pardon me, but I have always understood rage to be a strong emotion.)

Later, when the children are on top of Kanchenjunga, reading the message left 30 years before by Mrs Blackett, Uncle Jim and Bob Blackett — “He was father” says Nancy — no one says anything (no strong emotion, remember).

For Bender, Nancy is wracked with grief she cannot express, and she is high-spirited to hold off the grief: “would it not be more accurate to see Nancy as a lost teenager, her behaviour a ‘manic defence’ against her parental loss?” (76)

Actually no, I don’t think it would, unless you would have us believe that “high-spiritedness” is always some kind of psychological deviation.

Uncle Jim suffers the same treatment: “The reliable, cuddly, Uncle Jim is illusory. More convincing might be the assumption that Jim Turner has post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD),

called at that time ‘shell shock’. He resembles a man running from his flashbacks... (73).

The problem with all this is not that one should not analyze Ransome’s characters, but that Bender is so determinedly one-sided about it, based on psychological generalities rather than evidence.

Bender’s analysis of Ransome’s emotionally crippled characters continues in Chapter 5, “The War Next Time”.

Once again we are atop Kanchenjunga, where Nancy suggests the expedition add their own note to the cairn, to be discovered by others in 30 years. On the surface this may seem “a pleasant continuity”, but no, “I think we can see another, deeper, more ominous meaning. Would the next generation find that they too were reading the note signed by male relatives lost in another war?” (79)

Yes, perhaps Nancy is thinking of her lost father, but why does that necessarily mean she is not also thinking positively about the future!

Bender underlines the references in Ransome to “lurking” and his emphasis on outdoor skills and attitudes. Ransome, as an experienced war correspondent, Bender hypothesizes, knew a second war was coming, and, more important, expected “that Germany would successfully invade England” (82).

As a result, the S&A books were intended to prepare Britain’s children for the inevitable guerilla war to follow. “I suggest that the Swallows and Amazons series can be seen as a blueprint for the sort of society needed to wage successful guerilla warfare

in the English countryside.” (82)

Bender then goes through the ideas and values he says the books promote, such as professional and scientific leadership, cooperation across classes, conscious individual patriotism, male and female cooperation, etc.

It is hard to know how to respond to this. I will let any historians among you consider whether Ransome in the mid-1920s foresaw war and defeat by a resurgent Germany, let alone the rise of Hitler. But for the rest?

The values of cooperation and self-reliance, the important roles played by the girls, all this is true. But to turn this into a conscious attempt by Ransome to prepare Britain’s youth for guerilla war? I just don’t buy it.

Chapter 6, “The Undermining of Captain John”, is actually a good example of not seeing the whole because you have concentrated on the parts.

Yes, John made a whole bunch of mistakes in WDMTGTS that a more experienced seaman would not have.

Is Bender saying that, if Ransome had not been emotionally crippled by his upbringing, John, as his proxy, would not have made those mistakes? And a boring book it would have been! Not being run down by a liner because it saw you in plenty of time and therefore took evasive action is a hell of a lot less exciting than surviving by the skin of your teeth.

At the end of the story Father does not say, you *may* make a seaman at some point in the future. He says, you *will* make a sailor yet! The point is, John successfully got them to Holland despite his errors. He did not run them aground on a sandbank, he did

not crash them into a liner (thanks to Titty), he did not lose the ship to salvagers.

Yes “a lot of things were lucky”. Fair enough. But what Bender is trying to say is that Ransome was driven to create an unsuccessful male hero, a duffer, because he always saw himself as one. Perhaps. But like seeing the entire S&A series as a handbook for juvenile guerilla war, I think he misses both the essence of the book and Ransome’s skill as a writer..

(Ransome was far from perfect, but he was not totally unaware of his success as a children’s author, despite it all.)

Bender continues this approach in the next chapter, “The Maltese Telegram” essentially saying that John is a failure because Ransome saw himself as a failure in his father’s eyes.

Bender sees making mistakes as failure... not mistakes.

His interpretation is always the worst one. The telegram that starts it all off, “Better drowned than duffers; if not duffers won’t drown”, is interpreted by Bender as “Is John such a duffer that he will drown his brother and sisters?” (119)

In other words, the telegram is not giving Daddy’s permission, but throwing the decision back on Mother. If so why does she – and the children – interpret it as permission? Why are they allowed to go?

It is John’s responsibility, not all of them. Fine, he is the eldest.

The whole thing, and Mother’s note in the tent, is simply a reminder to not mess up. Of course the parents were concerned that things could go

wrong, That is what parents are for. But parents also know when it is right to give permission to do things that will allow their children to grow.

Bender continually treats the crew of the *Swallow* as if they were an adult crew on an adult ship. John makes mistakes that the master of a real ship should not make. Again, fair enough. But going along with what Susan suggests is not because he “can never contradict or confront her” (126) but perhaps a recognition that she has part of the responsibility for the younger children and may have something to contribute. (Rather than what appears to be Bender’s position: “I am the captain, I know what is best, so shut up and do as you are told.”)

It seems to me that Bender doesn’t really get the stories at all.

Certainly, Ransome’s view of life was to a great, perhaps even overwhelming, extent a result of his mistreatment as a child. To say that this then informs the content of his writing to such an extent that he is, perhaps unconsciously, sabotaging one of his main characters as a result seems to me unwarranted.

For Bender, mistakes = failure, concern = condemnation, will = may, and so on.

Chapters 8 & 9 continue Bender’s psychoanalysis of Ransome, especially his relationship with Evgenia, his second wife — “unhappy co-dependency” and “sado-masochistic pattern” (151) — and her destructive effect on his creativity. In Chapter 10 Bender talks about Ransome’s truncated *Autobiography* and his estrangement from the Altouynyans.

On page 176 he states “...a psychologically able Ransome would have finished his *Autobiography* years before.” And there is the centre of Bender’s entire argument. Ransome was not “psychologically able”. He was emotionally crippled by his childhood, his wives, and so on.

He talks about Ransome’s inability to recognize the role of the Altounyan family as his inspiration for S&A, described as “The descent into paranoia...” (180)

Once again, it is not that Bender has no point to make. No doubt Ransome, like everyone else, was the product of his upbringing and his experience of life. But when, for example, Bender discusses Ransome’s problems with memory, I think generalities like “...there can be many causes of memory difficulties, such as your consciousness being blocked by

pain, and by depression and grief...” (175) tell us more about Bender’s attitude than they do about Arthur Ransome.

As I said at the beginning, I will not look into the real issues discussed in Chapters 11 and 12, where Bender discusses how Ransome’s work should be carried on into the future if we want his legacy to survive.

However, I do not find it surprising that Julia Jones’ review of Bender’s book in the September-October 2020 issue of *Signals* champions his position that TARS’ restriction of the public’s general access to Ransome’s legacy can only hurt the future, but says very little about the bulk of his book, other than remarking that aspects “should provoke a lively discussion”.

Bender is so determined to look beneath the surface of Ransome’s twelve that he seems to lose sight of the whole, he seems condemnatory rather than analytical. Praise of Ransome’s achievement is overshadowed almost entirely by Bender’s negative interpretation of its origins. And while I agree that TARS and all enthusiasts will have to work to keep Ransome’s legacy alive in the future, I am far from certain that *Sunlight and Shadows* contributes to that.

Are You on Facebook?

Despite the many problems with Facebook, it does enable groups of like-minded people to share and exchange. (These are the groups I can find. Let me know if you find any others — Ed.)

The Arthur Ransome Society (TARS) Facebook Group: www.facebook.com/groups/762560473886537/
(This is a closed group, so you will have to ask to join.)

Arthur Ransome’s Swallows and Amazons in North America: www.facebook.com/groups/tarsfriends/

The Arthur Ransome Society in New Zealand & Australia: www.facebook.com/tarsnz/

The Arthur Ransome Group: www.facebook.com/groups/2612950856/

Beckfoot Kitchen — Eating with the Swallows and Amazons

And Cocoa to Drink...

Who Is Sleeping in the Fram?

by Molly McGinnis (Manteca, California)

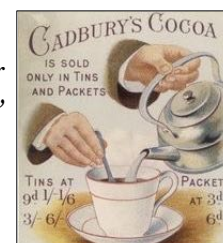


“Wait a minute,” said John. “Who is. Now then, S-L-E-E-P, sleeping. It’s coming out now. I-N-T. In the F-R . . .

WHO IS SLEEPING IN THE ‘FRAM?’”

Don’t let’s bother about this wretched cocoa,” said Susan. “It’s never going to boil tonight.”

If the water had boiled... if cocoa had been made... if someone had slept in the Fram... maybe everything would have happened differently from then on!



Was Nansen financing a new project, helping pay off debts, or just using up some of the 1500 pounds of cocoa Cadbury supplied to the Farthest North expedition?

Cadbury's Cocoa Essence

“absolutely pure and nourishing Cocoa, of the greatest strength and the finest flavour.”

After years of raising money for building the Fram and for the exploration, Nansen started for the Farthest North in June of 1893, and as you can see in the photo at the bottom right, the voyage of the Fram was a reality by the time this 1893 Illustrated London News advertisement appeared..

That was the last of Nansen’s explorations, but not the end of the Fram’s. Amundsen took her to Antarctica in 1910 and in 1912, where his expedition raised the Norwegian – and the Fram’s-- flags over the South Pole.



“Pete made cocoa from a tin of cocoa and milk powder ... he had made it before the water really boiled, so that the powder of the cocoa tickled the roofs of their mouths.” The Big Six

My brother and I loved our cold Nestlé Quik when we were Pete’s age! It appeared in the United States sometime in the late 1940’s and we loved to stir it into cold milk and crunch the little floats of cocoa and sugar. A year or two later Nesquik – the same mix – came to England.

Cocoa in the Caribbees

The first day of the Wildcat's voyage begins and ends with hot cocoa.

Breakfast was almost as much of a scramble as washing. They had it on deck — just thick bread and butter and steaming mugs of cocoa.

Not long after, Ship's Boy Bill is rescued, but not exactly welcomed, by the crew of the Wildcat as they try to slip the Viper in the fog. Finally, he is accepted:

"Peggy, what about scaring up a mug of hot cocoa for the passenger?"



Cocoa appears again and again in the books. No wonder Roger had no trouble finding an empty cocoa tin in which to save "maggot" infested flour! Whatever the "maggots" were, Roger has them at hand to revive the little bird "like a spotted flycatcher, only with green on its wings," that lands on the Wildcat, a day off Crab Island.

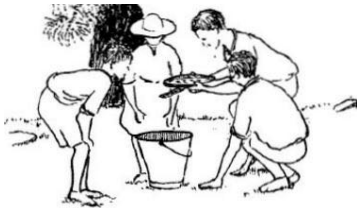
Dick's notes: the "maggots" were probably mealworms, larvae of various Tribolium beetles. The beetles are found everywhere, easily bred in buckets of bran, and a favorite food of aquarium and terrarium pets. The bird was probably a Tody, as seen here.



Cocoa Among the Pigeons

Cocoa tins come in handy in more than one book!

"We've a lot of milk to spare ... and we've got that cocoa to use up."



Well, yes. The tin went to the gold panners and the cocoa went into a paper bag.

I wonder if the cocoa was the kind with the milk already in it and Susan just made it with milk for extra richness, and because there was such an abundance of milk from the farms?

And elsewhere...

We Didn't Mean to Go to Sea

She shovelled a heaped spoonful of powdered milk and cocoa out of a tin into each mug. She stirred them one by one and added a little more hot water.

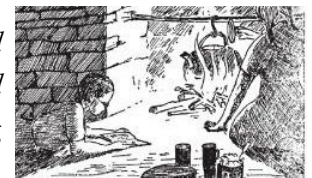


Great Northern

"There's a kettle boiling. Cocoa all round and then bed. What time have we got to get up?" In the cabin, over steaming mugs, the red herrings worked out the plans that were to mislead Gaels and egg-collector alike and leave Dick free to take his pictures...

The Picts and the Martyrs

They made their cocoa, adding hot water little by little while they stirred. "I'm sure they all do it," said Dorothea. "Do what?" said Dick, sipping his drink. "It's burglars' wives I'm thinking about," said Dorothea. "I'm sure they all have hot cocoa ready..." (The Great Aunt would have been drinking cocoa shells boiled in water, and serve her right!)



Secret Water

She bought a tin of cocoa complete with milk ("It'll only want hot water and it'll be just the thing to have after the feast to-night.")

Cocoa is not mentioned in *Swallowdale* or *Coot Club* but surely plenty was made and drunk. There's no cocoa in *Missee Lee*, but the crew escaped the burning Wild Cat only with a "watertight box of iron rations" in each dinghy. They'd probably have had plenty of cocoa mix in the big schooner. Missee Lee would have drunk a lot of cocoa in her Cambridge years, and was proud of serving the crew with everything Cambridge style, but she didn't offer them cocoa as well as strong milky tea. Maybe she didn't think of cocoa as a breakfast drink?

Cocoa Now...



Cadbury's ads stressed their products' purity and healthfulness, made with sugar and cocoa powder with or without dried milk. But now... my nephew made me a cup of this once ...

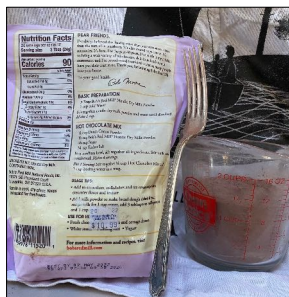
Sugar, corn syrup solids, vegetable oil (partially hydrogenated coconut or palm kernel and hydrogenated soybean), dairy product solids (from milk), cocoa processed with alkali, and less than 2% of salt, cellulose gum, sodium caseinate, dipotassium phosphate, sodium citrate, sodium aluminosilicate, mono- and diglycerides, guar gum, artificial flavors, sucralose.

I wonder how many of these substances had even been invented when the Ransome crews were adding boiling water to their Cadbury's.

Make Your Own



Sugar, cocoa, milk powder



All mixed up



1 cup near-boiling water

This Bob's Red Mill recipe is simple and fast, and was the best recipe of all I tried – including my own. BRM powdered milk is in many supermarkets and health food stores in my area and online. It's my favorite milk powder, though some health food bulk milk powder can be very acceptable. To make 4 mugs of cocoa mix with a fork:

- 1/4 c unsweetened unflavored cocoa powder
- 1/3 c granulated sugar
- 1/2 c BRM powdered milk

That's it! Put 1/4 cup of the mix in a mug, add 1 cup of boiling or near-

boiling water as you stir with a fork. Adding a little water to make a paste first helps get the mix out of the corners – otherwise run the fork around the bottom edge of the mug several times. My trial glass was chocolatey, rich (don't ask me why, the milk is nonfat), and not overly sweet.

I stored the rest in a not very tight plastic bag and it got a little bit lumpy – I wonder how much trouble Susan had mixing the paper bag cocoa. Keep your ready-mix in an airtight container... such as a cocoa tin...

You could of course mix with cold water and heat in the microwave, but

pouring from the electric kettle into the mug seemed a lot easier!

The best cocoa powder to use is dark alkali-treated, unsweetened and unflavored Dutch Process, most often sold now as 'baking cocoa.'

Bland, lighter colored unprocessed ('natural') cocoa was mostly what I found sold for making cocoa -- except, unsurprisingly, for Droste Dutch Process.



Once you have your mug of cocoa steaming before you, you can add all kinds of things – float a bit of whipping cream on top and drink the cocoa through it, for instance. Sprinkle on a bit of cinnamon, scrape a nutmeg over it, drop in a few mini-marshmallows... For a crowd, whip a cup of 30% cream lightly, with some powdered sugar (or

squirt some on from a can if you must), and add a dollop to the top of each cup. Or – for grownups only (keep the crew away!) add a tot of brandy, rum, bourbon... You may want to make a special mix with a little less sugar for liqueured cocoa: Kahlua, Bailey's Irish Cream, Cointreau, Grand Marnier, Crème de Menthe...

Fancy It Up



Pieces of Eight — The Junior Pages



“Boxing the Compass”

By Ian Sacré (North Vancouver, B.C.)

In reading Arthur Ransome’s *Secret Water* it will be recalled that the intrepid crews were tasked with the job of conducting a survey and com-

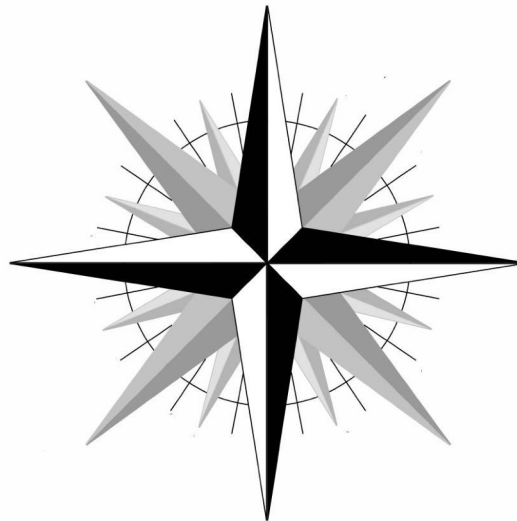
pleting a chart of what came to be called Swallow Island. Thank heavens the sailors were not encumbered by modern electronic devices which would have given them a series of GPS positions in short order and a map drawn simply by connecting the position dots. Ransome would thus have been robbed of a theme upon which to base the adventure.

What is interesting is that the author chose to have the surveyors take all the line of position bearings using compass points based on the old 32-point compass rose notation, rather than the 0 to 360 degree notation of more modern compass roses. In order to use compass point notation, his surveyors needed to be able to “Box the Compass”.

Where does that expression come from and what does it mean in practice? It’s based on the old Spanish word *boxar*, meaning to sail around. In practice it meant naming all the points and quarter points of the compass clockwise and then counter clockwise.

If we forget for a moment the 1/4, 1/2 and 3/4 points, there are 32 points of the compass. Each compass point being separated from the point next to it by 11-1/4 degrees. (If we add in the fractional points this increases

the compass rose to 128 divisions.) So a map or chart created by using a magnetic compass in point notation would have been a rather rough affair at best. In practice, greater accuracy would have been obtained by using a sextant to take horizontal sextant angles, had such an instrument been available to the *Secret Water*’s survey crews. A sextant can be used to measure angles to within seconds of arc of accuracy!



Take a look at page 75 of *Secret Water* showing the blank outline map with a series of bearings laid upon it using a magnetic compass. What is interesting about the map is the fact that they used the dike which bore North by East as the survey’s base line but they

did not seem to enter a measured distance between the two dike bamboo poles. Without knowing that distance there would be no scale for distances to anywhere on the rest of the map. Of course according to the narrative the outline map was a tracing of a real chart of the area and there is a sort of scale in the left hand corner of the blank map. A number of other technical points could be brought up but I have no desire to disillusion the reader or spoil the great story.

So now is the time to test the reader’s ability to Box the Compass as all TARS must be able to do if they are to rise above the rank of ship’s boy or girl!

On this page is a blank compass rose showing the thirty two points of the compass, which are unnamed. The examination requires the reader to make a copy of the compass rose and fill in all the 32 points with their correct notation.

For those who wish to cheat, though I know a true TAR would never stoop so low, another compass rose with all the compass points correctly named is found on a later page. Use it after your exam to see how well you did! Are you still a Ship’s Boy or Girl or can we promote you to Able Seaman?

‘Written’

By Martha Iris Blue (Stoke-on-Trent, Staffs)

Author’s note:

I was first inspired by St Kilda and the St Kildans when I saw a display about it/ them at Dunvegan Castle on the Isle of Skye, Scotland. Since then I have researched deeply on the subject and have uncovered many fascinating things about which I would otherwise never have known.

The St Kildans had an interesting way of communicating with mainland Scotland and, as it happened, the rest of the world well up to the 1920s/30s. They would put their messages in a wooden boat-type object, which would be duly attached to a leather bladder full of air, which they would then set afloat and wait for it to reach some form of land, on from which their message could be sent; as you can imagine, this form of communication could be very unpredictable and could take years to arrive somewhere – there had even been cases of these little ‘mail-boats’ beaching as far-away as Norway!

Later on, the St Kildans more frequently used a more reliable form of message relay – the many tourist-boats that visited them over the years. In this story I have incorporated the idea of the St Kildans being far-away from the rest of the world with only unreliable and occasional contact with it. The letter from Flora Gillies to Máiréad has been sent via the tourist boat, and it tells of the unfortunate evacuation of all of the St Kilda inhabitants in August 1930. I have written some of the words in Scottish Gaelic and so have given the translation next to them.

M. I. Blue



Brochel Castle, built by the MacLeod Clan as a stronghold to dominate the Isle of Raasay atop a volcanic plug

23rd July 1930 St Kilda, Scotland

My dearest Máiréad,

I heard that you were in a sick shape and so I thought as to cheer you up while you are in Glasgow Hospital. Things around here have been utterly and acutely depressing. On May 10th we sent a letter to H.M. Government asking them to ‘assist us all to leave the island this year and to find homes and occupation for us on the mainland.’

We leave in August, when we should be making our annual trip to the sea-stack to fetch Gannets for the Kleats, so you may never visit us here again, which deeply saddens me. Yesterday my sister Mary died; I am sure that you will remember Mary by the time that you both clambered up on those charcoal-black rocks and you were stranded by the tide and were forced to wade in up to your necks so you didn’t get drowned; they say she had phthisis, when she passed away she looked that unruffled and serene, like nothing but bàs (death) could touch her with its shadowy entrails, before she departed she gave all she did sealbhaich (possess), I was given her pearl-grey shawl and a strikingly beautiful butterfly brooch, you could almost see the sea in the dark, deep depths of the sage-green lower wings and the Prussian-blue of the upper wings were like the dawn-sky. Oh, Máiréad, she had such dear, clear, crystal cornflower-blue eyes, I miss her so, just to think of them!

I heard as you were in hospital when you turned eighteen, such a young lady now, aren't you, do you wear lace and silk? Have you seen my other sister, Rachel yet, she relocated all the way to Lancashire in England, she left two year ago with the Minister's wife, such a long way from us, all ornamented with velvet, trimmed with a feather in her hat and adorned with jewels, I wish you would meet her soon as she does 'na send many letters at that!

I shall now proceed to tell you the enthralling story that Old Chrissie MacQueen related to us a few days back, from when she were younger an' all, back when Lachlan MacDonald were only three years old, a wee lad!

Here it is in all the words that Old Chrissie did use:

'It was back in the hard year of 1907. I was aged but 37 at the time. The Norwegian Whaling Station at Bunavoneader came over to St Kilda for a new base, the manager, Karl Herlofsen was lodging with me and my family at our small croft house. All the Eileanach (Islanders) had a magnificent feast, three long driftwood

trestle tables spread with the veil of the white table cloths, as they do at every wedding, hiding the dried-out, ashen-look of the grained boards, we had cake and biscuits with fruits and creams and bread and butter and jam, besides, Old John MacDonald had killed his best chicken! Now, you might ask as why they were having such a festivity, it was thought to be the outcome of the men having stable jobs and a money-making profession, the women were pleased and honoured that their little isle had been chosen, "after-all," they thought, "not many people think of this 'Eilean air art iomall de gach nì' (The island on the edge of everything), our 'Dachaigh ann art cuan' (Home in the ocean)." So there it was, all of the dancing and singing and feasting and everyone was that happy they carried it on well into the night, they say it was the biggest spread and celebration in all the St Kildan history, and I can tell you tha' goes well back now there it does, to times 'afore ye could even imagine!

Now there was a man there a' the feast, some as say he were a from the

Whaling Station, some say as he were jus' a visitor, all as I knows is he certainty's weren't welcome, and in the days after the incident I wouldn't ave liked to be him. Anyways, this here man who was present at St Kilda no one ever knows why, he crept away from the merriment as silently, stealthily and swiftly as my cat Penny, some says he was a good practice at it, he rowed a boat inaudibly away fro' the bay, towards the three immense forms o' the whales that were a tied up in the middle of the bay, their poor bloated bodies bobbing gently in the tide, and I mus' admit, I felt a sorry for them, I did'na want for 'em to kill them and yet they did, I know they brought in money and food an' all but I weren't that pleased about the whole affair i' ye ask me! Anyhows this 'ere man goes a rowing up to OUR whales and he starts a cutting into the soft, sheeny-shiny skin o' the first whale, an' he pours the fat and blubber out, OUR fat and blubber, an' he pours it into his, or should I say OUR'S for he had taken tha' too, boat! He rows soundlessly back to shore, dipping 'anly the tips o' the oars into the black waters so as not to sound the alarm tha' summat was up, an' I can tell you, summat was up!' (Now at this point, Máiréad, all the children that were listening to this story all let out one big breath together, partly as in anticipation of what was coming next and partly as in shock as to what this man was and had done!) 'Now I must tell you that we later found out this man's name, it was Callum MacCroit, an' still no one knows where this man a' came from, though we did know why, though I am a coming up to that later!



The Braes near to Balmeanach Bay opposite the Isle of Raasay.

Now this 'ere Callum took his blubber along the Northerly path in an enormous leather bag, he also carried his knife, which were as long as his forearm and sharp as cat's eyes, he made his way towards Old John MacDonald's house, and for why do ya think? Because Old John MacDonald had a store back then! A store? Ye may ask, but it was true as I'm a sitting here, he had a very small store, which sold a few bits of his own produce and other bits he had picked up of the tourist steamers, the reason why most people don't know about his store is because it perished in the accident that I am about to tell ye all, an' he does'na like ter be reminded of it as a rule, now is'na that right, Johnnie?' (Here she turned to 'Old Johnnie' for confirmation, which he duly gave.) ' Now Callum went up to Old Johnnie's house an' store with kilograms of blubber, blubber that we could have and should have sold, he poured all of that nice, fatty blubber all over Old Johnnie's roof and store, along with some candle wax and Storm Petrel oil that he had pilfered before the blubber, he struck a match against the side of the dearg (red) roof and lit all of that blubber and oil, then stepped away as quick as he dared an' he ran along the breakers that were smashing against the sand and pebbles all the ways to that boat he had left there, an', as everyone else was a looking at the flames

and a running towards them, I was the only was that as saw him an' my testament was not enough ter convict 'im or even give 'im a trial, but I know and remember who he was an' what 'e looked like to this day. He had a red beard that matched his tousled red hair, thought the rest o' the folks all said it must have been the flames reflected on his face I know it was'na, he had blue eyes and smooth, un-worked hands, and children, do you know who that was? I'll tell ye, it was Callum MacCroit from the Blue Bess pub on the mainland i' Fort William, he, who had not worked barely any for his barley bread was comin' to steal what we had worked for with our hands an' so as to make sure as we did'na get our bread! Anyways we managed to put out the fire, although as his house was'na that much burned, as he could still live in that, but his store an all the food that was in it was ruined an' gone, all into charcoal and ashes that were a scattered to the four winds, an' he never had enough money to re-build or re-stock to this day!

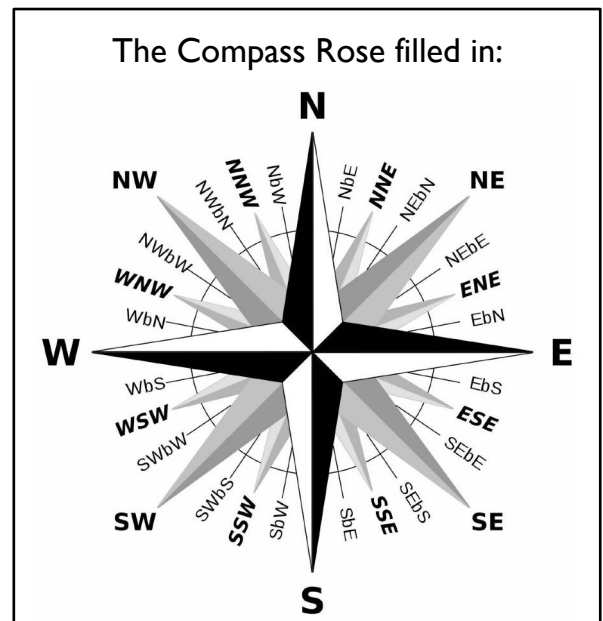
Now, Máiréad, isn't that a lovely but sad story that just shows all the hardships we have to face every day just to earn our daily bread.

That just highlights what I have been telling you about our leaving St Kilda, our 'Dachaigh ann art cuan' (Home in the ocean), our 'Eilean air art iomall de gach ní' (The island on the edge of everything), our 'paradise sa Chuan Siar' (Paradise in the Atlantic Ocean).

Now Máiréad, this is an order, you must get well and come visit us before we leave, I miss you so much but if we are moving to the mainland then I may see you more often the before.

Le mòran de grhàdh agus gach d'Ùrachd airson do shlàinte agus an àm ri teachd (with lots of love and best wishes for your health and the future).

Flora Gillies



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