



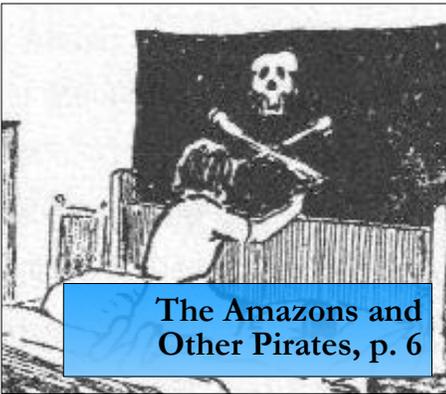
# Signals from TARSUS & North Pole News

January 2022

## Contents



**Spur of the Moment,  
p. 4**



**The Amazons and  
Other Pirates, p. 6**



**Mrs Dixon's Pork Pies,  
p. 17**

*Ship's Papers:* ..... pg. 2-3

- A View from the Helm* — Robin Marshall, TARSUS Coordinator
- Greetings from the North* — Ian Sacré, TARS Canada Coordinator
- A Note from the Editor* — Simon Horn

*Kanchejunga's Cairn:*

*On The Spur of The Moment* — Ian Sacré ..... pg. 4

*Captain Flint's Trunk:*

- The Amazons and Other Pirates* — Maida Barton Follini ..... pg. 6
- Missee Lee: A Possible Origin Story* — Alistair Bryden ..... pg. 8
- Mummy, Mother, Mum?* — Robert Dilley ..... pg. 9

*Dot's Latest Story:*

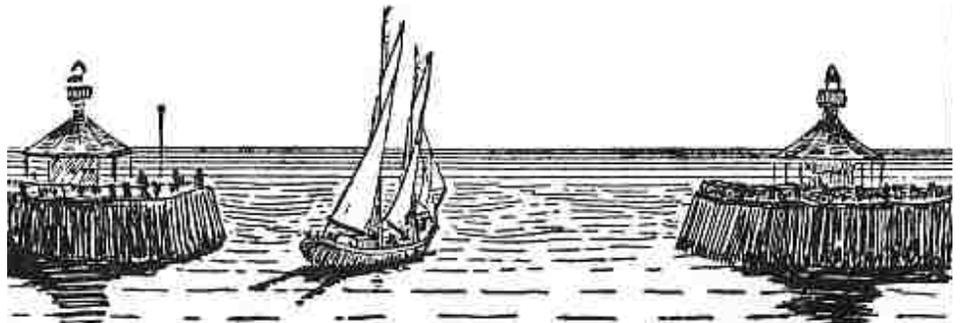
*Swallows and Amazons in Bermuda (NOT!)* — Simon Horn ..... pg. 10

*Beckfoot Kitchen:*

*Mrs Dixon's Pork Pies* — Adam Quinan ..... pg. 17

*Pieces of Eight:*

*Snowy Winter* — Molly McGinnis ..... pg. 19



## 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](mailto:45tarsus@gmail.com)

Happy New Year everyone. Let's hope 2022 has less nasty surprises than last year.

Please remember to get those renewals in either to me or online at <https://payment.arthur-ransome.org/>

One of our past members, Jane Duffy, has sent me a parcel of books which she felt members might like. If you are interested I will send you one or more, just request what you would like. Then you can send me the shipping and packaging cost.

Here is the list:

#### About Arthur Ransome

*In Search of Swallows and Amazons*  
by Roger Wardale  
*Arthur Ransome on Fishing*  
by Jeremy Swift

*Arthur Ransome Under Sail*  
by Roger Wardale  
*Good Little Ship*  
by Peter Willis  
*Captain Flint's Trunk*  
by Christina Hardymont  
*The Last Englishman*  
by Roland Chambers

#### By Arthur Ransome

*Old Peters Russian Tales*  
*Racundra's First Cruise*  
*Racundra's Third Cruise*

#### Children's stories in S&A vein by other authors

*The Salt Stained Book*  
*A Ravelled Flag*  
*Ghosting Home*  
*The Lion of Sole Bay*  
by Julia Jones  
*Brambleholme Summer*  
*Brambleholme Autumn*  
by Duncan Hall  
*Oxus in Summer*  
*Escape to Persia*  
by Katharine Hull and Pamela Whitlock

\*\*\*

Please give a loud ahoy to new member: Michael Delay.

Keep well and safe everyone.

Remember if you have any concerns or questions contact me at [45tarsus@gmail.com](mailto: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](mailto:gallivanterthree@telus.net)

Greetings Canadian TARS Members.

Another December has rolled around and once again Simon has reminded me that a fresh newsletter is due.

I think the most important occurrences which have taken place affecting the Society membership are the changes to the methods by which member's personal data is kept up to date and stored, and the way in which TARS membership subscription renewals are being handled.

I have received a number of queries from members who were a little flummoxed as to how they should proceed now that nearly all TARS subscription renewal action is being handled at the UK headquarters level, rather than through the method used in past years, when most Canadian members

sent me personal cheques to cover their renewal fees.

The flummoxing (is there such a word?) seems to be about how to start the renewal process! Perhaps this will help those still pondering the matter. At the beginning of December we all received an email headed *Your membership is due for renewal*. Scrolling down the page a bit, one comes to the third paragraph with four points. The 1st point is the key! It says, visit [The Arthur Ransome Society Payment Site <https://payment.arthur-ransome.org>](https://payment.arthur-ransome.org) which is highlighted. Click on this phrase and it will lead you into the wonderful world of subscriptions.

Choose the one that applies to you and click on it and you are nearly there. If you are using PayPal to pay it is self explanatory, but if you are using a credit card then you still need to use the PayPal portal to lead you to your credit card. Good Luck!

Those of us who have used the new system have found it takes us a wee bit of sorting out and getting used to but, after the learning process, it is very simple. The only down side I can see is that I will no longer be able to send

out gentle reminders to those who have not renewed their memberships because I will not be in the know as to who has paid. That task now resides with Headquarters in the UK.

Like so many others, I had wistfully hoped that by now the plague would be a thing of the past, but sadly this is not the case. Flare ups seem to continually occur both here in Canada and around the world, throwing travel plans in disarray. The travel rules seem to change almost weekly, which

adds to the frustration.

Despite the fact that much of the population has been double shotted and boosted, the infection still seems to slip through the cracks.

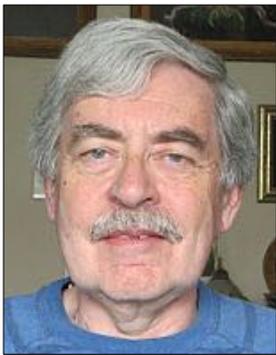
I do hope the Christmas Holidays went well for every one and that the New Year unfolds as you hope.

Stay well and take good care of each other.

Ian Sacré

Canadian TARS Coordinator

---



## A Note from the Editor

By Simon Horn, [sjhorn@gmail.com](mailto:sjhorn@gmail.com)

Welcome to *Signals from TARSUS/North Pole News* for January 2022.

Thanks as always to everyone who contributed. Like the last, however, this issue is also bit thin. Although the total number of pages is a respectable 21, this is

only because seven pages are taken up with *Dot's Latest Story*, where your editor has provided “a missing chapter” of *Peter Duck* called “Swallows and Amazons in Bermuda (NOT!)”.

I hope you find it worthwhile. It combines two of my enthusiasms, Ransome and the long-gone Bermuda Railway. The Bermuda references are as accurate as I could make them, while I hope it remains true to the spirit of Ransome's work.

I have been working on it for a while, not sure whether it was a good idea, but now it is done.

### Also in this issue

In *Kanchenjunga's Cairn*, **Ian Sacré** tells us about his decision to buy a used cruising yacht sight unseen, despite pandemic and the vagaries of climate

in “On The Spur of The Moment”.

**Maida Barton Follini** opens *Captain Flint's Trunk* with “The Amazons and Other Pirates”, contrasting Ransome's Amazons – who “said good-bye to being the proper young ladies expected by older generations” – with the activities of real pirates and privateers.

Next **Alistair Bryden** continues the pirate theme with “*Missee Lee: A Possible Origin Story*”, asking where Ransome found the inspiration for the central character of the book: U.S.-educated political figure, real-life Chinese pirate, or both?

**Robert Dilley** asks another question in “Mummy, Mother, Mum?”: how did the way the Swallows refer to their parents change in the various books?

After my story, new contributor **Adam Quinan** takes charge of *Beckfoot Kitchen* to show us how to make “Mrs Dixon's Pork Pies”, providing step-by-step pictures to whet your appetites.

In *Pieces of Eight* **Molly McGinnis** talks about the childhood activities she remembers from a “Snowy Winter” in the 1940s, and includes a recipe for making maple syrup taffy on snow.

\* \* \*

The next issue is will come out in May 2022. As always, only if your contributions make it possible. Has *Winter Holiday* inspired you to Ransome-like activities despite our current plague? Or has being at home given you the opportunity to re-read the twelve! Do let us know.

Please start thinking about contributing right away. Don't wait for my first reminder on April 1.

Now fully vaccinated, I and my family remain healthy. So far, so good.

I hope you all remain well,  
Simon

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

### On The Spur of The Moment

By Ian Sacré (North Vancouver, B.C.)

Last summer a friend and fellow sailor living in Comox, B.C. was enthusiastically expounding to me all the virtues and advantages of his latest acquisition, which was an aging, British-built, Westerly Centaur 26 sailboat. The Centaur has twin keels upon which she can sit on a relatively flat beach as the tide falls away. With a simple sloop rig she is easily managed single-handedly under sail. Fitted with a reliable two-cylinder Volvo diesel of some 25 horsepower and with four or five bunks and a simple head and galley, she is the perfect boat for coastal cruising in British Columbia. Indeed, my friend continued, she was, in her day, the most popular small cruising yacht in the UK, so much so that the Westerly Company built 2,444 of them over a period of about eleven years.

After the conversation I became curious and quietly started doing a little research on the boat. It turned out that Centaurs were to be found all



over the world, with quite a few having found their way to North America. In fact, some had even been sailed across the Atlantic to the United States! All in all, a heavily built, solid, robust design.

In recent years I have been spending considerable time on Hornby Island where my two daughters have summer cabins. The only thing lacking in my stays on the island was access to a

sailboat with sleeping accommodation. A sailor really does need a boat if he or she is to be truly happy!

Then it happened! Trolling the internet one day in early October I found a Westerly Centaur listed at an estate sale in Calgary, Alberta of all places.

After musing for at least five minutes, I contacted the auction house that was handling the sale on behalf of the deceased owner's beneficiaries and was told that it was not really being sold by auction in the conventional sense but just to put in an offer and the auction house would present the offer to the beneficiaries. It seemed simple enough.

I had but one poor picture of the boat and asked for more details but neither the auction house or the next of kin were able to tell me anything about the vessel.

With Covid 19 and its variants on the rampage again, a personal visit to Calgary from Vancouver to examine the boat was not possible either.



Fortunately, the Centaur was sitting on a trailer which would be included in the sale and this would certainly help with solving the logistical problems if I were to buy the boat. The only problem was that I did not have a vehicle strong enough to tow a boat and trailer package weighing about ten thousand pounds from Calgary to Hornby Island, a distance of eleven or twelve hundred kilometres. While my vehicle could handle some short local towing, heavy duty towing over the mountain passes was not on.

Then my number two daughter came to the rescue. Her husband Desmond has his own company and was working on a project up in Fort McMurray, Alberta. "I'll just get Des to bring one of his big trucks down to Calgary next time he comes home to Abbotsford and ask him to tow the boat back to Vancouver and over to Hornby Island!" said Pam.

With the logistical problems more or less solved it was time to "fish or cut

bait" as they say in Newfoundland. And without further ado I decided to fish.

Pam offered to negotiate my offer because our contact at the auction house did everything by texting and I do not text. The offer was accepted after I had sweetened it up just a tad and I became the owner of a boat I'd never seen, located eleven hundred kilometres away!

The next ten days was a flurry of activity as emails with the sons of the deceased owner flew back and forth. The boat had apparently been sitting in the back garden of his house for close to five years without attention, and gear and equipment was strewn around in the garage and on the property. As good as their promised word, the brothers gathered up everything that looked like it might belong to the boat and dumped it in the boat and in the cockpit, on top of nearly five years accumulation of dead leaves!

Then in the third week of October I was informed that my son-in-law was on his way home and would pick up the boat in Calgary. At noon the next day I was delighted to receive a call from him telling me that he was rolling with the boat in tow. I was a little anxious for him because the trailer, although fitted with surge brakes, had not received any servicing for at least five years. The next day I was thankful to receive another call that Des had arrived safely in Abbotsford at noon that day. The only mishap had been a flat tire on the inside rear dually axle at 2 a.m. in the morning just west of Kamloops. After a day's rest in Abbotsford, Pam and Des took the boat over to Hornby Island ready for me to begin her much-needed refit.

Ten days later, the roads which Des with the tow had traversed in British Columbia were washed out, severely damaged and closed until the end of December! Luck was indeed on our side.



## Captain Flint's Trunk — News from abroad (and history)

### The Amazons and Other Pirates

By Maida Barton Follini (Halifax, Nova Scotia)

“I am Nancy Blackett, master of the Amazon, the terror of the seas,” said Nancy, to the Swallows at their first parley.

“Her real name isn't Nancy,” Peggy told them, “Her name is Ruth, but Uncle Jim said that Amazons were ruthless... We are Amazon pirates from the Amazon River.”

And in the change from Ruth to Nancy, the Blackett girls said goodbye to being the proper young ladies expected by older generations, and freed themselves from the constrictions placed on females in prior times.

Most children and many grown-ups have been introduced to pirates, through Daniel Defoe's novel *Robinson Crusoe*, Robert Louis Stevenson's *Treasure Island*, or James Barrie's drama, *Peter Pan*. These outlaw characters seem to have an ongoing appeal to people, young and old, who respond to the break with convention, the flouting of laws and regulations, and the freewheeling life of pirates. Children especially can enjoy modelling themselves on buccaneers, who have exciting adventures, perform dangerous exploits, and manage to evade adult rules.

When Ransome invented Nancy and Peggy as Amazon Pirates, he allowed these girls to be everything proper young ladies were not. They could sail the waters, ramble the shores, pull sledges over the snow, climb mountains, and camp out under the stars. As pirates they could stay out at night,

and then as children slip back into their homes again, “in time to get up for breakfast when called.”

Being pirates also meant raids on their uncle, Captain Flint, to restock their supply of green parrot feathers to put on their arrows, and to wake him to his duty as an uncle, by setting off a firework on his houseboat roof.

The Amazons were not the only pirates in Ransome's books. In *Coot Club*, Dick and Dorothea meet the pirates of the vessel *Death and Glory*, the three boat-builders' sons, Joe, Bill and Pete.

But after saving the sinking *Margoletta* and rescuing the Hullabalooos, the three boys give up being pirates and decide that “salvage was the thing”.

The romantic version of pirates, adventurous, bold and dashing, has spawned a slew of books, movies and song. The violence of real piratical adventuring is less attractive. An example of a real ruthless pirate is Captain Black Bart Roberts, who captured approximately 400 ships in his lifetime, killing all the captains and crews. He was eventually hunted down and killed by the British.

Pirates often get mixed up with privateers, and sometimes begin as priva-



teers and turn pirate. A privateer was a captain of a vessel who is given a “letter of marque” from his sovereign, permitting him to attack and seize ships and cargos of opposing nations. Captain Kidd was commissioned by the British as a privateer, but in 1698 he captured a ship under French protection, commanded by a British captain. When he returned to New York City, then under British rule, he was arrested as a pirate. Sent to England for trial, he was found guilty of piracy and murder, and hanged.

During the American Revolution, privateers were commissioned by both the British and the Americans. From New England, privateers raided the

Nova Scotian coast, and from Nova Scotia, well-armed ships went out to attack American merchant vessels. Nova Scotia celebrates her privateers as a colourful part of her history. The “Pirates of Halifax” is a current group of re-enactors who dress in swash-buckling costumes and present musical performances, singing sea chanties and pirate songs at local occasions.

A favorite song, *Barrett's Privateers*, written by Canadian singer/songwriter Stan Rogers, tells of the dark side of privateering:



### **Barrett's Privateers**

Oh, the year was 1778  
(How I wish I was in Sherbrooke now!)  
A letter of marque came from the king  
To the scummiest vessel I'd ever seen.

*Chorus:*

God damn them all!  
I was told we'd cruise the seas for American gold  
We'd fire no guns - shed no tears  
Now I'm a broken man on a Halifax pier  
The last of Barrett's Privateers

Oh, Elcid Barrett cried the town  
(How I wish I was in Sherbrooke now!)  
For twenty brave men all fishermen who  
Would make for him the Antelope's crew  
*(Chorus)*

The Antelope sloop was a sickening sight,  
(How I wish I was in Sherbrooke now!)  
She'd a list to the port and her sails in rags  
And the cook in scuppers with the staggers and the jags  
*(Chorus)*

On the King's birthday we put to sea,  
(How I wish I was in Sherbrooke now!)  
We were 91 days to Montego Bay  
Pumping like madmen all the way  
*(Chorus)*

On the 96th day we sailed again  
(How I wish I was in Sherbrooke now!)  
When a bloody great Yankee hove in sight

With our cracked four pounders we made to fight  
*(Chorus)*

The Yankee lay low down with gold  
(How I wish I was in Sherbrooke now!)  
She was broad and fat and loose in the stays  
But to catch her took the Antelope two whole days.  
*(Chorus)*

Then at length we stood two cables away  
(How I wish I was in Sherbrooke now!)  
Our cracked four pounders made an awful din  
But with one fat ball the Yank stove us in  
*((Chorus))*

The Antelope shook and pitched on her side  
(How I wish I was in Sherbrooke now!)  
Barrett was smashed like a bowl of eggs  
And the Maintruck carried off both me legs  
*(Chorus)*

So here I lay in my 23rd year  
(How I wish I was in Sherbrooke now!)  
It's been 6 years since we sailed away  
And I just made Halifax yesterday.  
*(Chorus)*

God damn them all!  
I was told we'd cruise the seas for American gold  
We'd fire no guns - shed no tears  
Now I'm a broken man on a Halifax pier  
The last of Barrett's Privateers

## Missee Lee: A Possible Origin Story

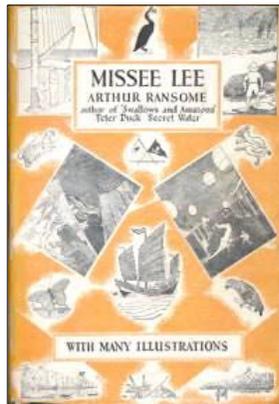
by Alistair Bryden (Calgary, Alberta)

Missee Lee has always struck me as a wildly bizarre character who suddenly appears fully formed in the canon with no warning or anticipation. The only comparable characters in the series are Black Jake's crew in *Peter Duck*, but they are fairly stock villains. Missee Lee is anything but stock.

Ransome seems to have created almost all the characters in the series from life. It's easy to believe, for example, that somewhere Ransome met a prototype of Jemmerling or a model for Mrs Barrable. Peter Duck is based on Captain Schmel, an Estonian sailor who accompanied Ransome on a cruise aboard his yacht *Racundra*, while many of the supporting characters in the Lakes are clearly based on real-life farmers and locals, as of course are many locations. But all of these characters, and to my mind all the characters in every book except *Missee Lee*, reflect the genial, sailing, fishing, Lakes- and Broads-loving Ransome image that Arthur loved to project.



Ching Shih



*Missee Lee* is the only book in the series where we briefly glimpse the other Ransome, who played chess with Lenin, knew Trotsky and married his secretary. The other Ransome who likely worked for MI 6, travelled widely and met Mrs Sun Yat Sen, one of the models for Missee Lee. This Ransome is a decidedly more formidable, capable and indeed more dangerous character than good old Uncle Arthur.

Sun Yat-sen was a Chinese statesman, physician, and political philosopher, who served as provisional first president of the Republic of China and the first leader of the Kuomintang (Nationalist Party of China).

Rosamond Soong Ch'ing-ling (Mrs Sun Yat Sen), his third wife, didn't attend Cambridge but she did go to college in the U.S. and spoke fluent English. Her sister married Chiang Kai Shek. But while this background may help to explain the pedantic Latin-loving part of Missee Lee, it doesn't explain the wild pirate background.

Amazingly, there may have been another component to Missee Lee's character. There was a real life Chinese woman pirate named Ching Shih. One of the most successful pirates in history, in the early 1800s

Ching Shih led one of the largest, most successful and feared gang of pirates the world has ever seen. She had up to 70,000 men under her command and 1800 vessels. This of course puts the more famous Caribbean pirates to shame. Astonishingly, she is not well known, but I have to believe that Ransome heard tales about her during his visit to the Far East and that she is one of the models for Missee Lee.

**Author's note:** While there are several sources that reference Mrs Sun Yat Sen as a model for Missee Lee, I couldn't find any references that explain the character's pirate background. However, I don't currently have access to reference sources that might provide more information. If any readers can provide any insight I'd be interested.

**Ed. note:** If you would like to learn more about Ching Shih check out this video from Extra History on YouTube:

Cheng I Sao—Pirate Queen

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=-p2lhxUqMMQ>



Soong Ch'ing-ling

## Mummy, Mother, Mum?

by Robert Dilley (Thunder Bay, Ontario)

I recently finished reading the AR collection to my grandchildren as I did long ago to my children (this time round using Messenger Kids as the latest generation is somewhat scattered.) This has brought back to my attention the following old puzzle: why do the Walker children call their father “Daddy” and their mother “Mother”? Surely most do what mine did: “Daddy” and “Mummy” when little; changing to “Dad” and “Mum” at some point in their teens. Some may switch to “Father” and “Mother” in their middle age (my daughters not infrequently refer to me as “AP” online – saving space, I presume).



I can understand the Swallows still using the little-kid format for their



Mother visiting Titty alone on the island (1974 film)

father, as they see so little of him and their memories of him are from a time when they were just little kids. But why does their mother get addressed and referred to so formally? In no way does she come across as remote and aloof. While willing to give her children a good deal of freedom (more than my ex-wife would have allowed our children) she always seems very close and

involved in their adventures.

The only exception I can find is at the beginning of *Secret Water*. On the very first page we have reference for the planned family visit to this hidden archipelago “where Jim had marked a cross on the chart, Daddy and Mummy were to sleep afloat . . .” Then Susan has a comment including “Daddy and Mother”; Commander Walker uses “Mummy” a couple of times and then the word disappears. “Mother” evermore. Anyone got a good explanation for that?.



The telegram (1974 film)

### 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/](http://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/](http://www.facebook.com/groups/tarsfriends/)

**The Arthur Ransome Society in New Zealand & Australia:** [www.facebook.com/tarsnz/](http://www.facebook.com/tarsnz/)

**The Arthur Ransome Group:** [www.facebook.com/groups/2612950856/](http://www.facebook.com/groups/2612950856/)

## Dot's Latest Story — Writing by our members

### Swallows and Amazons in Bermuda (NOT!)

#### being the lost Chapter XXXVa of *Peter Duck*

by Simon Horn (Montreal, Quebec)

The *Wild Cat* is on the way home, but Uncle Jim and Peter Duck decide that they really want a new foresail, and new topsails. They are already too far north to return to the Caribbean, so Bermuda is their only choice...

*This story cheats, of course. While the Wild Cat could definitely have stopped off in Bermuda to refit, the Bermuda Railway was not fully operating until the middle of 1932. But since Peter Duck is a story, who knows when it was supposed to happen? So while purists may complain, I felt that Roger had to be given his chance.*

“Land Ho!”

The cry came from the foredeck, where Roger had been waiting since breakfast, determined that Bill should not be the first one to sight land this time.

Bill, meanwhile, had been kept busy working on ropes by Peter Duck, so he wasn't on the look out. And in any case, anticipation on the *Wild Cat* was nothing like it had been when they had approached Crab Island. Now the treasure was on board and they were on their way home.

“Is that really Bermuda?” asked Titty, the first of the crew to reach the foredeck after Roger's cry.

“It should be,” said John, running up behind her and peering ahead at the growing smudge on the horizon.

Bill, ropes forgotten, soon joined them. “It has to be. Stands to reason, Mr Duck wouldn't steer us wrong. Nor the Cap'n.”

Nancy remained at the wheel, with Captain Flint beside her, and while the two mates had poked their heads outside the deck house to take a look, there wasn't much to see yet, so they went back to their work.

Peter Duck strolled up to the others on the foredeck. “Yes, that be Bermuda. Before long you'll be able to make out the two lighthouses, the tall one to the west and the shorter one at the east end.”

The island grew larger, and before long they could see a tall lighthouse on the western half.

“That's Gibb's Hill light,” said Peter Duck. “At night you can see it some 25 miles out. St. David's light will show soon.”

“You've been here before, Mr Duck?” Captain Flint asked as he walked forward.

“Some 30 years back, I should think,” he replied. “On the way home from the Gulf of Mexico in a trading barque.”

The St. David's lighthouse could now be seen just peeking above the land.

“Which way do we go?” asked John.

“We head east,” said Mr Duck. “The place is surrounded by reefs, and the channel is northeast of the island. We'll be taking a pilot. That'll be a sight. The Bermudian pilots come out to meet you in narrow 30-foot gigs, either sailing or rowing with 15-foot sweeps. Sometimes two or three will race out to meet you, and the first one to reach you gets the job.”

\* \* \*

As it turned out, Bermuda piloting had changed since Mr Duck's time.

As the schooner drew closer to the island, Captain Flint hauled up the pilot flag. Before long a vessel appeared, first following a twisty course and then

heading straight for them. It was not a long, narrow sailing gig with long oars, but rather a low motor boat, almost as long as the *Wild Cat*, that delivered their pilot.

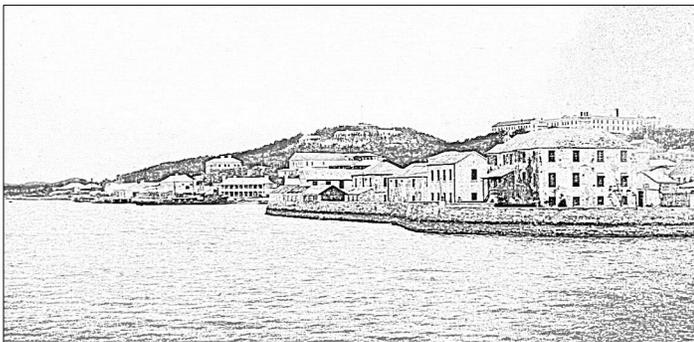
“Heading in to St. George’s, captain?” asked the man as he climbed up on deck.

“We’re looking to replace some sails,” Captain Flint answered. “Will St. George’s do us?”

“You couldn’t do much better. And wharfage fees are lower than off in Hamilton.” He looked along the deck. “What’s your draft?”

“Not over 7 feet.”

“Perfect,” said the pilot with a grin. “If you were a liner we’d have to make our way out a bit and back through the channel, but at 7 feet we can take a short cut.”



So St. George’s it was. With the pilot at the wheel and Peter Duck alongside, the little donkey chugging along, the *Wild Cat* was soon making its way through a straight cut between two islands, with a broad harbour growing visible beyond.

The harbour opened up quickly beyond the cut. To starboard the crew could see the old buildings of St. George’s town climbing up the low hills, while to port a number of low tree-clad islands partially obscured the far shore, where occasional white houses stood out against the green of the trees. As they drew closer to the town a few isolated palm trees became apparent.

“It’s not very tropical,” said Titty, as the ship slid past the town.

“Too far north,” said Captain Flint. “Those palms you can see were planted.”

As the pilot edged the *Wild Cat* towards the far end of a long wharf, a loud whistle rent the air.

Look, look,” said Roger. It’s a train.”

And indeed, beyond the wharf, a stubby railway train of two coaches could be seen slowing pulling to a stop.

“It doesn’t have an engine,” said Roger, already eager to jump ashore and investigate.

To be fair, most of the crew were equally eager to go ashore and explore, but it was already late.

“Not so fast,” said Captain Flint. “We have to wait to be cleared by the harbour authorities in any case, And I don’t know about you lot, but I could do with some supper.”

John and the the two mates looked a bit sheepish.

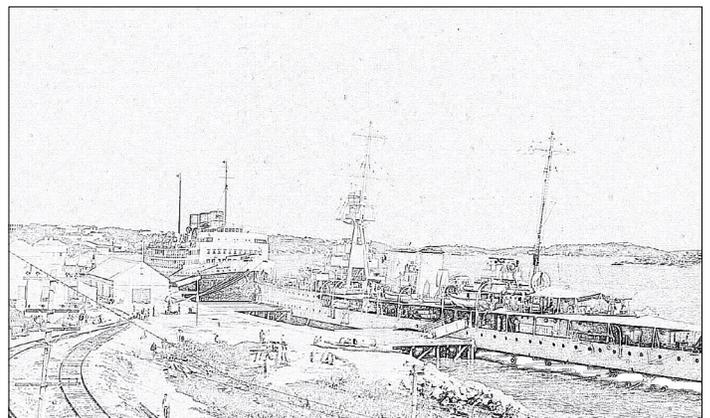
“And we need to make sure the ship is in a proper state for a stay in port,” said Peter Duck.

So they did.

\* \* \*

“The engine must be in the front coach,” said Roger. “You can see the driver.”

They could. There he was, looking out his cab window at the crowd of passengers milling about “St. George’s Station”, as the signboard said, waiting to board the stubby two-coach train for Hamilton, the capital.



The entire crew of the *Wild Cat* had spent the morning in St. George's Town, the Captain and Peter Duck looking into purchasing new sails and other needed equipment for the passage home. Bill had tagged along with them, while the Swallows and Amazons had explored the old town.

The ship was still all right for stores, but the mates had some money just in case and, with encouragement from Roger, the party stocked up with chocolate at Robertsons Drug Store on York Street.

"Look, they have ice cream," said Roger. "Can't we get some?"

The younger crew and Nancy looked interested, but then Susan said, "It's getting late. Probably Captain Flint and Peter Duck are already back at the ship, and wondering what's happening about lunch."

"Come on Rogie," said Titty, "perhaps we can get ice cream in Hamilton after lunch."

Captain Flint and Peter Duck were indeed back at the ship, along with Bill who, as usual, had preferred not to leave Mr Duck and, in any case, was still greatly limited by his broken arm.



Once lunch was over the Swallows and Amazons prepared to take the train through the island to Hamilton, the capital and Bermuda's only city. Peter Duck had shown no interest ("Ports is no good, and tourist ports is worse.") while Captain Flint felt he had too much to do on board.

So by a quarter to one, the shore party lined up at St.

George's station, just behind Penno's Wharf where the *Wild Cat* lay.

The two-coach train for Hamilton was waiting to depart, a single motor coach at the front coupled to a first-class coach behind. Captain Flint had been feeling generous, so in John's pocket was the 10/ each they would need to pay for a first-class round trip to Hamilton and back.

The travellers climbed up into the coach, to find comfortable basket chairs cozily arranged in groups of four on one side of the narrow aisle and two on the other.

"Perfect," said Nancy, quickly grabbing a window seat, with Roger close behind.

At the far end of the coach, a conductor seemed to be giving them a funny look, and the few other passengers didn't look sure of them either.

\* \* \*

At 12:55 on the dot the short train bumped its way out of the station, and before long crossed the main road to enter a deep cutting.

The fares had been lower than expected. The conductor had explained that the 12:55 was one of five "statutory trains" a day, with the lower fares required by the Railway Act. "If you come back on the 5:30," he continued, "you can pay the cheap rate again, though that train is usually busy."

"Thank you very much," said John.

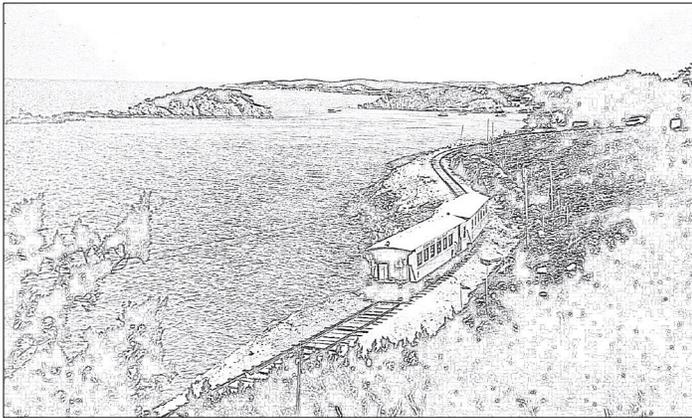
The conductor continued to chat, pointing out things they should be watching for along the route.

The route climbed through narrow cuts and over wooden trestles, but each time, before the train had time to really get going, it would pull up for a quick stop at another station, often with nothing there but a little wooden shelter on a stubby low platform.

"It'll take forever at this rate," Nancy complained.

"Well," said the conductor, "It's not a fast train, but we should be in Hamilton before two."

Soon the train reached the North Shore, high above



the ocean, and far in the distance they could see the island where it curved around to the north.

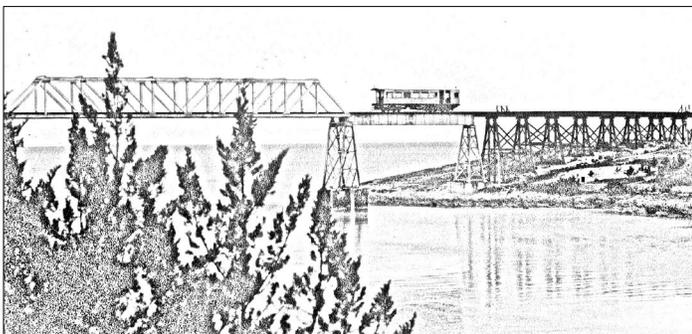
“You can’t really make it out,” the conductor commented, “but that’s the Royal Naval Dockyard. That’s where you can see the navy ships, and old cannon along the walls. The railway doesn’t go that far, not yet at any rate. That’s Royal Navy property, and I don’t think they want us.”

The train soon rumbled across a big swing bridge onto the main island of Bermuda. There were many trestles and many cuts and many small stations. Every now and then one would have a stone-built station or freight shed. At most stops few people would get on or off but occasionally, at a more important stop, parties of tourists would climb aboard, and the carriage would become noisy with conversation.

After about half an hour the train climbed onto a long trestle and then over a high bridge.

“Look,” cried Titty, “it’s a harbour.”

To the left a long narrow inlet stretched in from the sea, with many boats moored along it, and a village



along the banks on either side. Part way along on the right they could see a large hotel.

It was gone in a flash, and soon they were again running along the North Shore, now higher up from the sea.

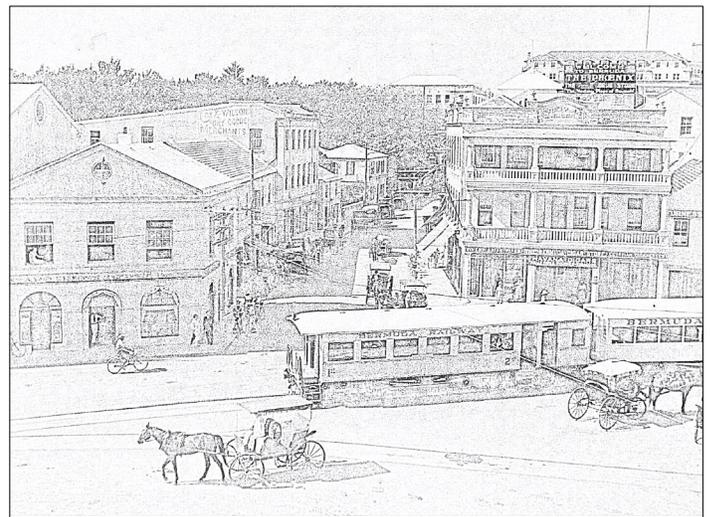
“Look, said John, “ you can see the Dockyard better now.”

“I wonder if Daddy has ever been there?” said Susan.

Soon, however, the railway route moved inland, away from the shore, and it became clear that they were entering a more built-up area.

“If you are sightseeing,” said the conductor, “you want to get off at Queen Street, as soon as we come out of the tunnel.”

Before long the train rattled through a short tunnel, and then made a sharp left turn, the line now running down the centre of what appeared to be the main street, with a wide harbour close on the right.



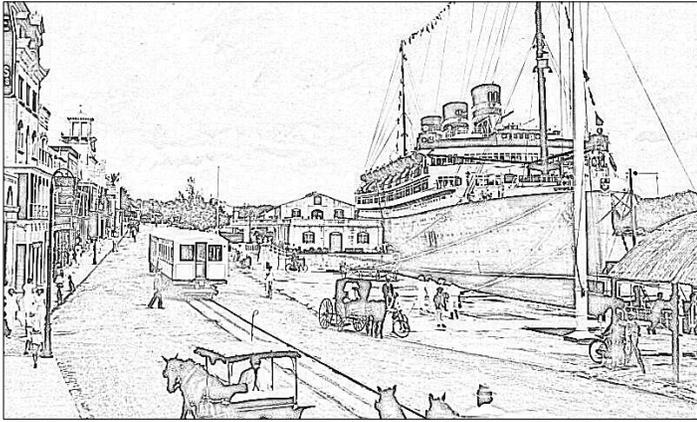
“Here we are,” said the conductor, as he shepherded them off the train. ‘Front Street and Queen. Have a good visit.”

The Swallows and Amazons spent a happy afternoon exploring Bermuda’s capital.

They all watched the little ferries coming and going from the ferry dock near where they got off the train.

John and Nancy were impressed by the large trading

barque that was moored at Hamilton docks (“A pity Mr Duck isn’t here,” said Nancy) until a massive liner appeared and grabbed their attention. They watched



the complicated process of bringing it alongside the dock. (“Now that has engines, Roger,” said John.)

Front Street was crowded with people, many of them obviously visitors by their expensive-looking clothes and broad American accents.

The explorers wandered into Trimingham’s department store, and were impressed by the large variety of goods the ubiquitous American tourists were buying (“It all seems very expensive,” said Peggy) but left quickly when a store clerk gave them a hostile look.

They came out on a different street, also crowded with tourists and shops. Wandering along, they had just found “The Bermuda Bookstore” and were thinking of going in when Titty caught sight of “The Goody Shop” and its large sign announcing ice cream. (“It must be good!” grinned Roger.)

Ice cream won, though they did visit the bookshop afterwards.

Before long the afternoon had almost passed (“We mustn’t miss the train,” said Susan) and they made their way back to Front Street to look for the station, which was opposite the Cenotaph. (“It’s not really a station,” said Peggy when they found it, “it’s more like a bus stop.”)

\* \* \*

As it turned out they were early, and the 5:30 had not yet arrived. Peering east along Front Street, Nancy could just see a train far away in the distance. “That must be it,” she said.

By now a crowd of Bermudians was starting to arrive, all eager to get home on the one cheaper late afternoon train.

But Roger, meanwhile, was determined to get a closer look at the big liner that was now docked and looming over the low buildings between Front Street and the harbour.

“Come on, Titty,” he said, “we’ve got plenty of time.”

Susan started to protest, but John said “Just five minutes...” and the two younger Swallows ran off.

“I’ll go along to bring them back,” said Nancy, who also wanted a look at the big ship.

As the train pulled in a few minutes later, John, Susan and Peggy stood, worried, amongst the growing group of passengers. The train was longer this time, with a locomotive pulling three carriages, one first class like the one they had travelled in earlier, and two others, apparently second class, with central doors and no end platform.

“Where are they?” said Susan. “John, you’ll have to go after them.”

“Wait, look,” said Peggy, “I can see Nancy.” And indeed there were the three, running back along Front Street.

By now the passengers had begun to climb into the train, and when Nancy and the errant Swallows arrived, they all moved into line for the first-class coach.

They climbed aboard, but this time the coach was already more than half full. “Just find a seat where you can,” said John. Susan found two seats for her and Titty, but the others grabbed single seats where they could. Soon newcomers were standing in the aisle.

A few minutes passed, and then, after a high whistle from the engine, the train pulled out, heading back

towards the next stop, Queen Street, where they had arrived. After a quick pause to allow a few newcomers to board and join the others already in the aisle, the train began to move again and turned sharply to the right to enter the tunnel.

As the train pulled out into the light, already slowing for the next station at Richmond Road, Susan stood up and called, “John, where’s Roger?”

John and Susan ran up and down along the narrow aisle to be sure that Roger wasn’t in some window seat, glued to the glass. But he wasn’t there.

“Where’s the conductor?” said Susan. But by now the conductor wasn’t there either.

“He must have moved to another coach,” said John. But there were no gangways between the coaches, so there was no way to change from one to another except at a station.

The train slowed to a stop at the next station, high above a large tennis stadium. But the children dithered, and before they could decide to get off to look in the next coach, the train was pulling out again.

“Come on, John,” said Nancy. “At the next station we’ll get off and check the next coach. You lot wait here.”

The train soon slowed, and Nancy and John climbed down quickly as soon as it drew to a halt. Equally quickly they climbed into the next, 2nd-class, coach pushing ahead of a few bewildered passengers who were waiting to get on.

But as the train pulled out they could see that Roger was not there either.

“We’ll have to try the last one,” said John.

At the next station they repeated the same process, but this time, as they climbed on, they found the conductor right in front of them.

“Oy, what are you two up to?”

With some difficulty John explained that his brother was missing, that he had been with them in Hamilton

but that they could not find him on the train. The conductor helped them search the final coach, but there was still no Roger.

“Well,” said the conductor, “I wouldn’t worry too much. He’ll just have to get the next train, though I’m afraid there’s nothing before the 6:45. At Prospect I’ll call into Control and ask them to take a look for him at Cenotaph Station.”

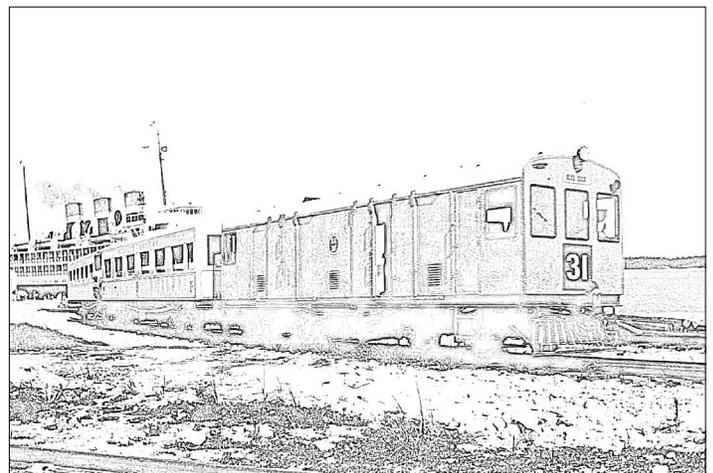
There was nothing else to do, and at Prospect, the next stop, John and Nancy returned to the first-class coach to explain to the situation to the increasingly worried Susan and the others.

If, as they climbed aboard, they had been looking forward towards the engine, they might just have noticed that, after the driver had acknowledged the conductor’s hand signal to proceed and then withdrawn his head into the cab, a second, smaller head could be seen peering back from the cab window.

\* \* \*

It wasn’t a very comfortable journey, especially for Susan and John. Nancy and Peggy, and even Titty, could still appreciate the beauties of Bermuda outside the train’s windows. And it was beautiful, with the bright sun on the blue sea and the sky, the stands of Bermuda cedar trees and the palmettos. But for Susan especially, worry about Roger just got in the way.

For her the journey seemed interminable, but by 6:25 the train pulled back into St. George’s Station, on time.



The Swallows and Amazons, one person short, climbed down onto the low platform, accompanied by the conductor. “I’ll just speak to the stationmaster,” he said, “and see if he’s heard anything about your brother from Control.”

But at that moment, they saw the driver descending from the cab of the locomotive. He then reached up to the cab doorway to help another, smaller figure get down.

“Roger!” cried Titty, and she ran towards him, followed by the others.

“Roger, where have you been?” said John.

“Hullo,” said Roger, “It was wizard. Mr Kitchen let me ride with him in the cab, all the way from Hamilton.”

“But Roger, we thought you were lost. We thought you’d missed the train. We’ve been ever so worried.”

“Sorry, Susan,” Roger answered. “I didn’t mean to, but as you were all lining up to get on, Bill — Mr Kitchen — asked me if I’d like to see in the cab. Then, when it was time to leave, he said I could stay if I wanted.”

By now the driver, looking a bit sheepish, had walked up.

“You said it was all right, didn’t you?” Roger asked.

“Well, I suppose I did,” he said.

The conductor looked at him. “Bill... you’d better hope the old man doesn’t find out.”

“Well,” Bill answered, “the lad was so enthusiastic; he wanted to know all about the engine. I didn’t like to say no.”

The conductor sighed, “I’ll just call up Control and tell them it was a false alarm, shall I?” And he walked off

shaking his head.

“We’d better get back to the ship,” said Nancy.

“I am sorry Susan,” said Roger, looking a little bit guilty. He then brightened and turned to say, “Thanks awfully, Mr Kitchen.” But William Kitchen had gone.

As the group walked back to where the *Wild Cat* was moored, Peggy asked, “What do we tell Uncle Jim?”

“Nothing at all,” said Nancy, “nothing at all.”

\* \* \*

Within a few days the *Wild Cat* was pulling out of St. George’s harbour, with a spanking new foresail and new topsails ready as soon as they were needed. The same pilot saw them out beyond the reefs...

*“A good passage they had, too: one of those passages that come once in a hundred, and make up for the other ninety-nine...”*

The Bermuda Railway ran in Bermuda from 1931 through 1948. It never made money, and when Bermudians decided to let in automobiles in 1946 (they had been banned since 1908) the railway’s days were numbered.

William Kitchen was a real person. As a young man in the early 1930s, he worked on the railway as an engineer in the shops, but occasionally got to drive a train. I like to think that young engineer Bill Kitchen would have allowed budding engineer Roger Walker to ride with him in the cab. The “old man” was William’s father Harold, the railway’s chief engineer. He would definitely not have approved.

I hope you enjoy this. My only regret is that I have not found a way to incorporate my other hobbyhorse, *Doctor Who*.

Ed.

PS: For anyone who is as crazy about trains as I am, you might want to take a look at my website about the railway: [www.bermudarailway.net](http://www.bermudarailway.net)



## Beckfoot Kitchen — Eating with the Swallows and Amazons

### Mrs Dixon's Pork Pies

by Adam Quinan (Toronto, Ontario)

Although Mrs Dixon was baking her pork pies in the depths of winter – they are often served at traditional Christmas buffets – these delicious meat pies are usually eaten cold and so can be very useful on a summer expedition or picnic. You can bake small individual pies which you can eat without a plate or take a larger one and cut slices.



They are also quite fun to make, as they traditionally use hot water pastry, which is quite different from the usual shortcrust or pie pastry. Traditionally the pastry casing was very stiff so that it could be moulded into a pie case without a pie dish. This was called a coffin, as it was really no more than a decorative container for the meat filling and was baked too hard to eat. In the early 1800s flour was very expensive due to the Napoleonic wars, so British pottery makers such as Wedgwood made fake decorative pastry pie dishes with removable lids for cooks

to use. Nowadays the crust is softer and is one of the more delicious parts of the pie. It is also now common to bake the pie in a pie pan rather than as a standalone coffin.

The simplest pork pies are made with just pork and herbs and spices. However, they can be made a bit more elaborate by embedding hard boiled eggs in the meat before baking. I suspect that Mrs Dixon would do this for the fancier pies that she made for special events. This is known as a Gala pie. As well, instead of just pork you can use other meat and ingredients, such as

pork and apple, chicken mixed with ham and apricots, or veal and ham pies, which are also usually made with hard boiled eggs embedded in the middle. In Britain, game pies using venison, pigeons or other game birds baked in hot water crust pastry were common in Victorian times, perfect for your Downton Abbey shooting party.

After cooking, the pie would be cooled and then a gelatin stock was poured over the meat. This was originally done to help it keep for a longer time without refrigeration. Many people like the savoury jelly but others do not and if you are eating it soon after baking or want to eat it hot, then you can omit this step. A purist would make the gelatin stock by boiling up pig's trotters with some vegetables, but most people just use prepared unflavoured gelatin melted in a savoury chicken stock.

### Gala pork pie filling

2 lbs ground pork or 2 lbs of pork shoulder (1 1/4 lb minced, and the rest chopped into small pieces)

1/2 lb unsmoked bacon or ham diced in small pieces

1/2 teaspoon each dried sage, nutmeg, allspice and black pepper

1 1/2 - 2 teaspoons of salt

Mix all the above together and set aside in the fridge.

Hard boil 4 or 5 eggs.

If you are making a rectangular pie trim, the white ends are required so that the yolk looks almost the same as you cut slices. If a round pie leave untrimmed.

Note: Depending on how much preparation work you want to do, either buy ready ground pork or mince your own from pork shoulder. If you do use pork shoulder, chop a third of it into fine pieces

rather than mincing it as it improves the texture. Adding some finely chopped uncooked bacon or ham will improve the colour. The herbs and spices improve the flavour.



## Hot water crust pastry

- 1 lb all-purpose flour
- 4 oz lard
- 1-2 tsp salt
- 210 ml of milk/water

Mix the flour and salt together. Add the lard to the water and milk mixture and bring it to a boil. Pour the boiling water and lard into the flour and mix with a spoon. When it has cooled enough to handle, knead the dough until it becomes flexible and easily moulded. Remove and set aside about one third of the pastry for the lid of the pie.

Allow to stand for 30 minutes. Roll out the pastry and then line the pie dish, making sure there are no holes in the pastry. I used a 9" x 5" loaf tin but you could use a 7" round springform pan. Smooth the pastry into the corners, being careful not to make any holes.



Put a layer of the meat filling down then place the hard boiled eggs. Cover up the eggs with the rest of the meat. Trim the pastry so there is a good sized lip and roll out the lid and attach it by brushing an egg-milk wash round the lip and crimping the lid to the edge of the pie. Make one or more holes in the top of the pie so you can pour in the gelatin stock later.



Use the leftover pastry to decorate the top with any design you like. I tried to do some flags and leaves! Then brush the top with egg wash.



Bake in a 350° F oven for 90 minutes. Allow it to cool.

## Gelatin stock

Make a warm gelatine and chicken stock mix. I use powdered gelatine for this. (I have read of leaves of gelatine but I haven't ever used them.)

- 1 tablespoon of powdered gelatine
- 2 cups of stock.

Add gelatine to cold stock and stir well. Heat the stock slowly but do not allow to boil, stirring until gelatine is completely dissolved. This is probably a lot more liquid than you will need for one pie.

Pour the gelatine stock into the holes in the top of the pie. Tilt the pie to make sure the stock is able to reach all the interior. Then put the pie in a fridge to allow it to set.

\* \* \*

In my opinion, the pie is best served cold, as the filling can be rather greasy and the gelatin melts if you heat it up. To serve, turn it out on to a plate and slice it. The eggs should display as a nice central feature with yolk visible in every slice. It can be eaten with pickles or chutney such as Branston Pickle, or even with mustard.





## Pieces of Eight — The Junior Pages



### Snowy Winter

by Molly McGinnis (Manteca, California)

The Swallows, Amazons, and D's may have done all these things I remember, but I've never read about them in an English book, even *Winter Holiday*.

Here are some things Ohio kids did in snow and with snow not long after the time of *Winter Holiday*.

#### The First Snow

Run all the way around the house barefoot without stopping and you won't catch cold all winter.

Can't you hear Nancy yelling "Hurry up, you tame galoot?" The soft new snow felt good on our bare feet for some of the way but we ran faster and faster to get to the back door as our feet began to sting with cold. Did it work? Well... I had flu every winter and spent days in bed reading Robert Louis Stevenson poems...



#### My Ship and I

O it's I that am the captain of a tidy little ship,

Of a ship that goes a-sailing on the pond;

And my ship it keeps a-turning all around and all about;

But when I'm a little older, I shall find the secret out

How to send my vessel sailing on beyond.

and wishing I had a rope and pulley basket delivery system like the children made in Louisa May Alcott's *Jack and Jill*. Any of the S&A crews would have had a "rope telegraph" up in a hurry, made just like William the Pug's rope railway (*Coot Club* and *Winter Holiday*), with a thread carrying a string and finally a clothesline.

#### Snow Ice Cream

Bring in some new snow and we'll make snow ice cream.

We collected fresh snow in shallow soup plates and mixed in sugar and cream to make a rather insipid grainy concoction. Delicious? Not really, but Fourth of July homemade ice cream in winter? It was the idea of the thing. But what about...

#### Snow Cones

We loved to get snow cones at the amusement park in summer but why

did we never think of putting a snowball on top of a paper cup or a cone for ice cream and pouring fruit syrup over it? I guess because we were long grown up before there were coffee bars with bottles of Italian syrups to take home, and there were no jars of blackberry and cherry and grape syrup from jelly that wouldn't jell in our mothers' pantries.

#### Snow Angels

If there was a good layer of soft snow, we could make snow angels.



Before going out in the snow, we were cocooned from head to foot in heavy dark wool snow suits. These went over whatever other warm clothes our mother could cram us into.

Snow suits were one-piece. There were buttons and zippers all the way down the front and the legs had straps that went under our short rubber snow boots. Often there were elastics that went from the back of the neck

and down through the sleeves, to clip mittens to. This was supposed to keep us from losing mittens but never did.

Some had hoods to cover our heads and if they didn't we were buttoned into wool hats with deep neckbands and wide straps that covered our ears and fastened under our chins.

It took our mother a long time to get us fastened inside all this. But then we could go outside and make snow angels.

First, there had to be a nice big flat space with a few inches of soft snow over the old hard snow. In other words, the levellest part of the yard.

The best snow angels should look magical, as if the angel had landed from the sky. The further you could jump before flattening out onto the snow, the better the snow angel. A bit of a run-up helped.

Now comes the fun part. We flung ourselves face down onto the snow, stiffened our arms out to the side (this wasn't difficult as elbows could barely bend inside all the sweaters and the snow suit), and moved them up and down from over our heads down to our sides, to make the wings.

Then, we had to stand up very carefully without moving our boots, and try to jump away from the snow angel so it would be alone in the snow.

We would make more and more snow angels, trying to get a perfect one, until we started to squabble because someone's snow angel was on top of someone else's, or until someone had to go to the bathroom. Then we'd run to the house to be pacified or de-layered, whichever was required.

Nancy would jump the furthest of course. Dorothy would have reminded Dick to take his glasses off. Roger would try to do a cartwheel and land on his back, of course. Dick might have tried to figure out how to make a device to catapult a person into the snow...

### Things To Do With Snowballs

*Make a snow pirate (of course!)*

New snow is best, because the little snowballs pick up new snow quickly and become big ones.



Snowmen are quick work with a good crew to roll all the pieces into shape, little snowballs for the smaller pieces and the oldest for the biggest. This pirate won a prize but it doesn't need to be so complicated. The standard ingredients of coal and carrots would be fine for the belt and cutlass, and chocolate coins left over from Christmas for its hoard.



### Make a Snow Fort

Ours were snowball walls and never got very far. Two small snowsuits kids can get very cold building even a little snowball wall, and snow never lasted very long in the part of Ohio where we lived. We had lots of practice from building summer dams: a broad base of three (or more) rows of largish snowballs with more built up from there. The idea, of course, was to make a wall big enough to have a war over. Which brings us to...

### Things Not To Do With Snowballs

Any of these will end outdoors for the day, at least if someone tattles or goes blubbering in for first aid.

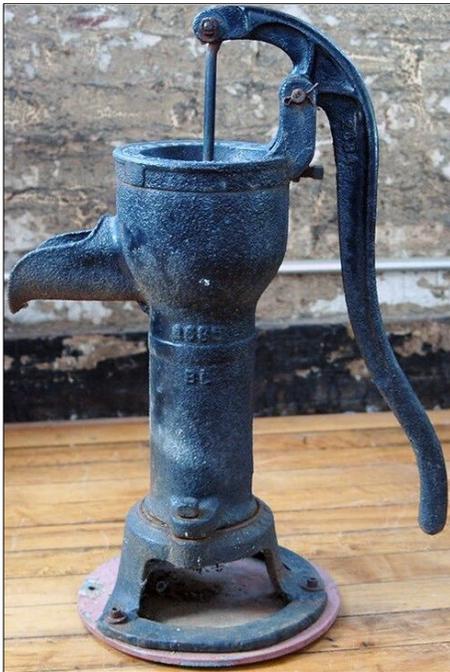
1. Do not build a snowball around a rock and throw it in someone's eye.
2. Do not put snowballs in the freezer to get hard and throw them at someone's face. (Remember, everything else was pretty well covered by the snowsuit.)
3. Do not drop them down the back of your sister's neck.

And especially...

4. Do not dare anyone to put a tongue on the pump handle!

Every back yard had a pump over the well in those days. Very handy when the power went out, and to keep kids from traipsing mud from the creek into the house in summer. But in winter...

...the pump handle was so cold that it burned like fire if you touched it with a bare finger. Boys sometimes dared other boys to lick a pump handle in cold weather. Almanzo knew better than to take the dare.... (Laura Ingalls Wilder, *Farmer Boy*).



All the farm kids where I lived dared each other all the time, more egged on than put off by our mothers' dire tales.

My brother dared me, or we were daring each other, but he was the one who put his tongue on the pump handle to try to get me to. He lost a bit of tongue even though my mother rushed out and poured water over the pump to thaw his tongue loose, and served him right, too. Luckily, our pump was much closer to the house than the one that filled the horse tanks in *Farmer Boy*, where Almanzo figured a boy would have to starve to death with his tongue frozen to the pump forever.

### And Finally...

We'd heard about maple wax, a.k.a. maple taffy (or "tir" in Québécois - Ed), read in our library books about making it at sugaring off time, and we tried to make it, but only ended up with maple slush. Possibly the "maple" syrup that we had (a concoction of sugar and glucose boiled with fenugreek seed), had something to do with this. Maple syrup wasn't something found in Ohio markets in the nineteen-forties.

There's no snow where I live now, so I thought "what would Dick do?" and decided to try something like this:

### Make your own Maple Wax

Freeze an inch or more of water in a pie pan or baking pan.

Have ice cubes and cups of cold water ready.

Boil real, pure, maple syrup slowly to the "soft ball" stage. Don't stir it—stirring makes sugar syrups crystallize. Soft ball test: take a bit of the boiling syrup on a spoon and drop it into ice water. Soft ball means you can gather the syrup up into a sort of gooey ball that hangs together. As it boils, the syrup will look thick and have big rather than small bubbles at the surface as it approaches soft ball. If you have a candy thermometer, start testing at 235°F (113°C).

Drop a big spoonful of the boiling syrup onto the ice in the pie pan. It might make a sort of soft but delicious candy or a cake of sugar, equally tasty.



*Signals from TARSUS/North Pole News* is a joint publication of TARSUS (The Arthur Ransome Society USA) and TARS Canada.

The TARSUS coordinator is Robin Marshall, [45tarsus@gmail.com](mailto:45tarsus@gmail.com)

The TARS Canada coordinator is Ian Sacré, [gallivanterthree@telus.net](mailto:gallivanterthree@telus.net)

The editor is Simon Horn, [sjhorn@gmail.com](mailto:sjhorn@gmail.com)

Please send contributions, questions and suggestions for the newsletter to the editor.