



SIGNALS FROM T·A·R·S·U·S

June 2008

GEOCACHING FOR HIDDEN TREASURE

By Ike Stephenson

When was the last time you slid down a hill with a cattle dog on your lap? I never did until I went geocaching.

For those unfamiliar with the term, geocaching is a high tech version of old-fashioned orienteering combined with the delightful surprises of a treasure hunt.

You use a GPS to find geocaches. Global Position System (GPS) uses 24 satellites to provide data. Receivers then take the signals of at least four of these satellites and turn them into items like: latitude, longitude, speed, bearing etc.

For some, using a GPS can seem intimidating. My history with GPS dates to at least the 1990s when I first remember seeing a hand-held GPS during a sailing trip from Florida to the Bahamas. Being old enough to have taken a course on dead reckoning navigation using parallel rules, compass, buoys, lighthouses and seat of the pants, the little hand-held device was pretty futuristic. Before the introduction of GPS there was something called Loran. I don't remember handheld Loran systems. At best, boaters used small monitors that could be on deck near the helm of a sailboat.

During my time in the marine industry, I continued to use GPS and they got smaller and more sophisticated. I carried a hand-held one as I sailed here and there. Pretty much it was another tool, just like a pair of shoes or good wet weather gear.

Then for a couple of years I was off the water and away from GPS. But then I started seeing GPS show up in backpacking and hiking magazines. So for Christmas I asked for a GPS and my wife delivered.

Prior to Christmas, I'd heard about and dismissed the concept of geocaching. I figured it was just too easy to be fun or interesting. That is not the case anymore as I am now a frequent 'cacher'. Whether it is a sport, activity, or past time, it is fun and *AR-ish*.



In order to take part in the high-tech sport of geocaching, you need to invest in a hand-held GPS like the one shown here.

A geocaching adventure begins at <http://www.geocaching.com>. Here you can find descriptions of caches and their coordinates (latitude and longitude), and perhaps a hint or two to help you find the cache. Plug those coordinates into your GPS and you are ready to 'cache'. Within a five mile radius of my home zip code there are 55 geocaches. Typically, I hop into my truck and get most of the way to the cache that way. This doesn't mean you couldn't look for all the geocaches in a state park and hike to all of them.

It is not until you follow the directions given with the coordinates and are near the position of the cache that you really begin using your GPS and navigation skills. The GPS will give you a straight line course to the cache. However, should a steep sand dune, river, swamp etc. be in the way, you will need to deviate from the direct route and improvise a way to the cache. The geocaching website allows you to look at topographic maps for the cache area. This is a good way to plan an easier, less hilly, swampy route.

One of the benefits of GPS is its extreme accuracy. Your screen will say something like "accurate to 24 feet". This means those last 24 feet can be up to you and your set of human senses. So, while GPS does much of the navigational work, the hardest yards are still up to you. Another of my dogs is a combination of husky and beagle. I believe it's the husky nose that makes him a great asset in these last 24 yards.

(Continued on page 7)

SfT reader Robert Dean takes on “myth buster” Tom Napier: **THE CASE OF THE VANISHING HOT POT...PART 2**

By Robert Dean
Middletown, Delaware

My father read the Swallows and Amazons series to our family when I was a child, and he frequently commented on the good advice that Arthur Ransome imbedded in his tales. I didn't appreciate this at the time, but on reading them to my children, I found myself making similar comments. My sense is that Ransome's advice was always good, and his instructions always well thought out. It is, indeed, one of the joys of the books. (Recall that Ransome had once done a stint ghost-writing instruction books on athletics.)

So I was a little bothered to read in the January edition of *Signals from TARSUS* that one of his pearls of wisdom might be suspect, as described in “The Case of the Vanishing Hot Pot.” I would like to make a case for the wisdom of AR.

First, consider the evidence. Mrs. Blackett says in WH that “It was once upon a time when I was young” “and a whole lot of us spent a day on the ice. A big hot-pot and a basket of things was sent down to us from the house.” From these statements we know that the hot-pot was “big” and meant to feed a “whole lot” of children, all of whom had a good appetite

We also know, from the scene on top of Kanchenjunga in Swallowdale, that Mrs. Blackett's childhood began in the last decade of Victoria's reign. There were still a number of big houses then, with large kitchens. The large kettles and pots that once hung from cranes in the open fireplace were still around. These were always made of iron.

These arguments for a large iron pot put a much different complexion on the analysis. I submit a sample pot, one of many on offer on E-Bay, that is 8.5” high, 10.5” across the top, and holds 2.5 gallons. While this is only a medium sized sample from the era, it is about all you would want to carry down to the lake. 20 pounds of iron pot and 20 more for its contents would be a good load in its awkward (and hot) condition.

One advantage of the iron pot is that it ensures rapid heat conduction. Another advantage of a larger pot is that it would not cool down nearly as much during the time it was being carried down to the lake, so that assuming an initial temperature of 90 degrees C. would be reasonable.



This pot might have been more the size, shape and heft of the one that Mrs. Blackett's family might have owned when the skaters supposedly lost their lunch to the icy depths!

I will use the data from the analysis by Tom Napier, and the same method of analyzing a square centimeter column of the pot's contents. I then paraphrasing Tom as follows:

A square centimeter column of ice having a mass of 1 gram is 1.09 cm deep. A column of ice 8 cm (about 3 inches) thick contains 7.34 g and requires 609 calories to heat and melt it. The contents of the hot-pot are 20 cm deep, and hence supply 20 calories per degree change in temperature. In supplying 609 calories per square centimeter the hot pot cools by 30 degrees, that is, starting at 90 degrees it would need to drop to 60 degrees to melt through the ice.

From this we see that there is three times the heat needed to melt through three inches of ice, or enough to melt through nine inches. This would rise to ten inches if the heat in the iron pot was also added into the calculation. (iron has only one-ninth the specific heat per gram as water.) All this from what I consider only a medium sized cooking pot. With a larger pot there would be even more margin. You certainly need a margin, because the speed of the heat transfer, and, thus the speed of melting, is proportional to the temperature difference between the hot-pot and the ice. So a factor of three or four would ensure a reasonably rapid melt-through.

In conclusion I believe that Mrs. Blackett's cautionary tale is authentic. I would like to think that AR had heard this tale once, and was simply passing it along as good advice.

Editor's note: This “myth” of the sinking hot pot has caused so many of our readers to brush off their calculators and cogitate the probabilities of this story having basis in reality! It may be too late for this season to find ice in your area, unless you live at one of the poles. But additional theories and ideas are welcome! Submit by Aug. 25, 2008 for inclusion in the next issue of *Signals from TARSUS* to: dalderman@antiochseattle.edu

Provisioning Your Crew:

THE MYSTERIES OF BUNLOAF, REVEALED!

By Elizabeth Jolley with assistance from Jane Rondthaler
Portland, Oregon

“...there was a great buttering of **bunloaf**...”

“A knapsack full of **bunloaf** and apples and tea and sugar and chocolate...”

“There was **bunloaf**, pemmican, butter, a pot of marmalade, four apples and two tins of sardines.”
(quotes from *Swallowdale*)

Reading AR's books makes me hungry! List upon list of long delicious meals fill the pages. As I read, I pick an apple from our fruit bowl, allow myself a ration of chocolate from the “secret” stash in the high cupboard, or steep a milky mug of hot tea. These are easy S&A foods to find. But we don't have seed cake, proper pemmican or other British foods in our grocery stores.

Bunloaf has always sounded like a tasty treat to me, so I decided to test it out at home. Based on a recipe from the booklet, “Favourite Home Baking Recipes,” which we brought back from a trip to England a few years ago, this turns out to be a tasty spiced fruit-filled tea bread. So tie on your apron and imagine yourself in Mrs. Jackson's farm kitchen!

Lancashire Bun Loaf

Note: Since this is an English recipe, some amounts are given as weights. Conversion charts are available online if you don't have a food scale.

6 oz. dried currants
6 oz. raisins
2 oz. candied peel (optional)
Boiling water to cover fruit
1 ½ pounds white bread flour
2 tsp. salt
2 oz. butter, softened
10 oz. warm milk
5 oz. warm water
1 tsp. mixed spices

Grease two 1-pound loaf tins. Pour boiling water over dried fruits and peel in small bowl. Set aside to soften. Heat oven to 170 degrees F. Turn off oven and leave door open.

Put flour, salt and yeast into large mixing bowl; cut or rub butter in until flour looks crumbly. Drain the fruit and add to

the flour mixture. Pour in the warmed milk and water; mix to make firm dough. Knead on a lightly-floured board until dough is smooth and elastic. Put the dough into a lightly oiled bowl and cover with a tea towel. Set bowl into oven and close door. Let rise 45 minutes or until doubled in bulk. Knock down to remove all the air. Divide in half; shape each half to fit into loaf tin. Set tins into oven again & close door. Let rise 30 minutes or until dough is puffy. Remove tins, preheat oven to 375 degrees F. Bake 30 to 35 minutes until tops of each loaf are browned and firm. Cool on a wire rack.

Now, pack a bunloaf, some butter or marmalade, an apple, a slice of cheese or meat, and of course, some chocolate in your knapsack. Walk on a lakeshore, hike to a waterfall, climb up a secret valley, and on the way enjoy a real S&A lunch! For a treat indoors, try it toasted alongside a steaming mug of tea—mmmmmm!



Elizabeth enjoying a fresh slice of bunloaf

AHOY SIGNALS READERS!

You may not be ready to write the great American novel, but you've got stories to tell! I need your contributions of articles, photos, do-it-yourself ideas, travel tips, book reviews and announcements of Ransomish happenings in your part of the country!



Deadline for the Fall 2008 issue of SFT is August 25. Please contact me to let me know if you have something for the next issue!

Thanks and have a great summer!

Debra Alderman
3915 96th Ave SE
Mercer Island, Washington, 98040
dalderman@antiochseattleu.edu

CHOOSING THE RIGHT GEAR

By Jim Wessel Walker

Some years ago the Wessel Walker family went camping and hiking in Pictured Rocks National Lakeshore in the Upper Peninsula of Michigan. We planned to pack in five miles to a back country camp on the shore of Lake Superior from which we would explore the surrounding countryside. When we unloaded the car at the trailhead we found that we could not carry all our gear. We would have to make two trips. At the campsite at the end of the first trip, before we had put down our packs, we were attacked by ferocious, flesh-eating fish flies. We fled, back up the trail, carrying Margaret who was quite small at the time and could not run fast enough. We gave up backpacking and took up bicycle touring instead.

We returned to backpacking two years ago when a college friend of Mary's invited us to join her for a week on the Appalachian Trail. I described that trip in *Signals from TARSUS* in the fall of 2006. We made serious preparations by outfitting ourselves with lightweight gear and by taking training hikes with loaded packs. We had a good time. Other members of my family were busy in 2007; I had to hike alone, fifty miles on the North Country Trail in the Manistee National Forest. For 2008 I am thinking about the Shawnee National Forest in southeastern Ohio. In this article, I'm sharing with SfT readers what I've learned about choosing and purchasing backpacking gear.

After several days on the trail I get blisters on my heels. I have not solved this problem yet, but I am firmly resolved, on my next outing, to carry lots of blister treatment. Next to the skin I wear thin, smooth liner socks and over them thick, cushioned hiking socks. These socks are not to be bought at your local discount store. Buy online or in person from a serious outdoor outfitter. The liner socks are light and easy to wash. I try to start each day with fresh, or nearly fresh, dry liner socks

I have seen people hiking in sneakers or sandals, but when I have an extra twenty-five pounds on my back I want sturdy boots on my feet, boots that support my ankles and cushion my soles. And I can think of half-a-dozen hikers whose boots have come apart on the trail. Don't scrimp on boots. And do try on lots of pairs before you make a selection. Boots, I think, should be bought in a store, preferably one with experienced and helpful staff.

Over the tops of the boots I wear gaiters. Gaiters keep pebbles, twigs, leaves, and sand out of the boots and keep the socks dry when the grass is wet.



On the Appalachian Trail. Donna is wearing hiking pants with zip-off legs. Bluebird and Buster are wearing gaiters. Mary's internal frame pack is in the foreground. The bulge on the top of her pack is her sleeping bag.

When we hiked on the Appalachian Trail I carried flip flops to wear around camp, but they are not satisfactory because a wet foot slips in them. All the "through hikers" (those attempting to hike the entire Appalachian Trail) we met had Crocs strapped outside their packs. Crocs are great. They are easy to put on and take off, they stay in place even on a wet foot over uneven ground, and they are thick enough to protect the soles of the feet from sharp pebbles.

Hiking tends to be hot work. Wear clothes that will dry quickly. Avoid 100% cotton. Carry something fresh and dry to sleep in. I favor pajamas, though serious hikers would regard them as an unnecessary indulgence. And talking of indulgences, I carry a book in a plastic bag to pass the time if the weather keeps me in my tent. Evenings and mornings can be cold, so I carry a warm sweater. A Packtowl is compact, light, and super-absorbent. It can be hung outside the pack to dry.

I have an excellent set of nylon hiking trousers and shirt from Campmor, featuring many pockets with velcro closures. The trouser legs can be zipped off, without removing the boots, to make shorts if conditions are favorable. Shirt sleeves can be rolled down and the collar rolled up if bugs are a problem. I do not favor jeans and T-shirts. Jeans are too tight and never dry. Mosquitoes bite right through damp T-shirts. If there are swimming opportunities along the trail I wear nylon and polyester water shorts from Land's End. But bugs, poison ivy, nettles, and ticks frequently make the wearing of

(Continued on page 5)

CAMPING GEAR

(Continued from page 4)

shorts

inadvisable. I generally hike in the woods, where sunburn is not a concern, but I would certainly cover up if I were hiking in the sun. I always wear a broad-brimmed hat, but in the sun I would also wear sunglasses and sun block.

Rain gear is essential in my part of the world. Both parka and trousers should be made of a waterproof fabric that breathes, Gore-Tex for example. Rain gear tends to be expensive, but I have been happy with my set from Land's End. I can wear the parka around town as a windbreaker. The trousers keep my seat dry on dewy mornings in camp. Rain can bring out the mosquitoes. I carry a head net and insect repellent and have occasionally been glad of them. Gardens Alive sells a non-toxic insect repellent that works for me.

For a long time I felt that trekking poles were a complication I could do without. I was wrong. More experienced hikers persuaded me to take them on the Appalachian Trail and I now like them well enough to use them even for power walks around the neighborhood. On the trail they push me along faster when the going is easy, they heave me up steep climbs, they ease me down steep descents, and over rough ground they help me balance. I have seen fancy trekking poles with shock absorbers, but am more than satisfied with the cheapest set I could find.



Mary on the Appalachian Trail. From the top: Tilley hat, internal frame pack, Campmor hiking shirt, foam sleeping pad, trekking poles, white liner socks, grey hiking socks.



Our two-person tents with rain flies in place.

We bought our packs years ago, before our first trip to Pictured Rocks. At that time, external frame packs were the sensible choice. I understand that sophisticated hikers now prefer internal frame packs, which carry the load more nearly over the hips. We have not yet felt a need to buy new packs so I can not make a recommendation. Packs, like boots, should be bought in a store where you can try them on, loaded, and get helpful advice from experienced staff.

You will also need a rain fly large enough to cover your pack unless you plan to hike where it never rains.

I can carry a twenty-five pound pack about ten miles a day on an extended trip over fairly level ground. People

(Continued on page six)

S.F.T. SEEKS HIDDEN "TREASURE"

Calling all *Signals* readers! If you've been keeping your writing talent hidden, it's time to take it out, brush it off, and share it with SFT readers! I need your submissions of Ransome-themed articles, photos, personal stories, travel tips, puzzles, quizzes, etc. for coming issues of the newsletter. If you have a story idea, feel free to contact me for feedback on how to develop it for the edification of TARS members across the United States! Email me at dalderman@antiochseattle.edu

Deadline for Fall issue: August 25, 2008

—Debra Alderman, SFT editor



CHOOSING THE RIGHT GEAR

(Continued from page 5)

who through-hike the Appalachian Trail go much faster, but they generally carry lighter packs. Lighter packs mean fewer comforts and more expensive gear. You decide, but keep the weight of your pack down and set modest goals until you know your own strength. Our external frame packs have enough spare frame to carry tent and sleeping pad strapped on outside the bag, using nylon straps from the hardware store.

I need a tent that is well-ventilated, rainproof, and insect proof. In kinder parts of the world you may manage with less, thereby saving weight. We are happy with the Clip Flashlite from Sierra Designs. When I am alone I can spread out and bring all my belongings into the tent with me. It is a bit of a squeeze for two adults, with no room for packs, but we manage.

There is good advice about sleeping bags on the REI website. Obviously, your bag should be as light and compact as you can afford, consistent with keeping you warm. Ours are Piute 600 Fill Down, rated to 20 degrees F. I have no intention of camping in freezing weather, but I do not like to be cold. A sleeping pad is definitely worth its weight, both for cushioning and for insulation. We use light, cheap closed cell foam pads. There are more compact and comfortable options, but they tend to be heavier and more expensive.

We packed flashlights on that first unsuccessful trip to Picture Rocks, but flashlights are no longer necessary. We now have very light LED headlamps. They leave the hands free and the batteries seem to last forever. We can cook and eat by their light, find our way around camp after dark, and could use them to stay on the trail if we were ever overtaken by nightfall. It is not possible to travel through the woods at night without a light. We did cut it pretty close once, when we missed a junction. Mary and Margaret were young and we were not carrying any lights at all. We loped, carrying Margaret.

A trail map in a waterproof bag is obviously needed, but we also carry a compass and individual whistles. I have sometimes succumbed to the temptation to take a short cut, have quickly become lost, and have needed the compass to get back to the trail. Why would a hiker who has the good sense to stay on the trail need a compass? It is easy to miss a turn or junction on a trail not clearly marked. When in doubt, I check the direction of the path I am following against the direction of the trail on my map. We use our whistles to find one another when we become separated.



Mary and Jim in a milecastle on Hadrian's Wall. Rainflies on the packs, rain parkas and pants on the people.

For cooking I use a Coleman Exponent Xpert Stove. It weighs less than a pound, folds up for packing, but is sturdy and stable when unfolded. It puts out lots of heat, but the flame is easy to control. On the other hand, it uses a proprietary Coleman fuel cartridge, Powermax, that is not available everywhere and can not be ordered by mail. Locate your source of fuel before buying one of these stoves. An aluminum billy can, a large plastic mug, and a Lexan spoon meet my needs for breakfast and dinner. For breakfast I eat instant oatmeal washed down with tea and Tang. For dinner I favor one pot, quick-cooking soups and stews from Enertia. Dr. Bronner's soap is used for washing the dishes. It is biodegradable and can also be used for a bath or shampoo. I have not yet tried it as toothpaste, although that is one of the applications Dr. Bronner advertises. Carry a small bottle. A little Dr. Bronner's goes a long way.

I enjoy Scandinavian crisp bread with summer sausage and a hard, dry Italian cheese for lunch, served on a plastic plate that doubles as cutting board. I use waterless hand sanitizer to wash before eating. Trail munchies are power bars, fruit leathers, and trail mix. Two Nalgene quart water bottles will get me through a day on the trail or a night in camp, including dinner, breakfast, dish-washing, and tooth-brushing. I do need to camp near water, though. Two quarts of water are about all I can carry. Nearly all natural water needs to be purified. A Pur Guide filter pump works well for us, but equipment in this area is changing fast and there may now be better choices. Many through-hikers on the Appalachian Trail carry chlorine tablets to use if their pumps fail, but I have heard that they leave the water with an unpleasant taste.

It is easy to shop online for the gear that does not need to be tried on. The REI site provides useful guidance. Campmor is relatively inexpensive.

Train before embarking on an ambitious trip. Try short day hikes with a loaded pack to see how it feels. Travel light and have fun on the trail. Swallows and Amazons forever!

TARSUS HAS NEW 'SKIPPER' AT HELM

By Robin Marshall
Bradenton, Florida

Dave Thewlis has been a guiding hand to TARUS for many years so it was with some trepidation that I volunteered to fill his shoes. I hope to continue his good work and have some ideas towards the future.

Most of all I would like to hear from the members on what they would like to see happen within TARUS, if anything. We are scattered throughout what is a vast country and it is very difficult to have any sort of gatherings as is done in the UK. I feel however we should be able to interact in some way, maybe a virtual meeting of some kind with a website and forum so we could get to know one another and exchange ideas and experiences, this would have a junior section as well. Please write or email me with any ideas or feelings you may have as a member.



Robin Marshall with S&A burgee

I was born in London during the period of the Blitz. For the first 36 years of my life I resided on the south coast of England. In 1977 I emigrated to the US with my wife and two children. After living in northern Virginia for seven years we moved to the west coast of Florida where we have been ever since.

Having been introduced to Swallows and Amazons by my brother when I was eleven I read and re-read the series until my early teens. I then forgot about the books until a visit to the Lake District ten years ago re-kindled my interest.

GEOCACHING FOR TREASURE

(Continued from Page 1)

What you are looking for is generally something like an ammunition box—sans bullets—or a plastic coffee can. The area where it is hidden can add to the difficulty of finding a cache. A well placed screen of sticks or a good snow fall can make the last six inches take some time. You are also responsible for putting the cache back into its hidden location.

Find the cache and open it and you'll find a log book that you can sign to let people know you were there. There will also be things like little plastic dinosaurs, playing cards or other tiny treasures. Geocaching etiquette requires that if you remove and keep a prize from the cache, you replace it with something of your own for another cacher to discover. None of these treasures is meant to be expensive or valuable. But these little fun items do make a nice motivational reward for any junior geocachers you might have along with you.

In my case, my three dogs generally accompany me. So I bring dog biscuits to feed them as we celebrate at the found cache. We usually leave a few treats so other cacher's dogs can be similarly rewarded. For our own treasures, we have taken a few small plastic toys from the cache, which now line shelves and add to the memories.

Trying geocaching is a good way to get some modern-day AR type activities in. You can practice your navigation, do some trekking, hunt for treasure and even camp if you want to. Certainly you can also sail to some, perhaps anchor out and row the dinghy towards a cache? You may ask if there are water-borne nautical caches reachable only by boat? That I can't say, but maybe there should be!

Although by no means a veteran geocacher, I do have some good memories and stories already. There was the cache right at the fence of our airport. This was the one I couldn't find but then later recognized the fault was mine (incorrect coordinates were entered). Then there was the cache near my house that introduced me to a secluded area good for hiking in a local park. Another memorable hunt involved a cache near a local beach restaurant where my cattle dog climbed a snow bank, fell over a fence thus necessitating a fence climb for me so I could boost him back over the fence. In fact each cache I have found has given me opportunities to take pictures from new points of view and to learn new areas and aspects of my community.

As a GPS can be a tool for navigation, whether on water or land, geocaching can be used for fitness or a family outing and a way to do some things like the Swallows and Amazons did albeit with higher tech gear... cattle dog optional.

FIRST LAUNCH ADVENTURES

By Ben Zartman

It wasn't until several months after putting the finishing touches on my latest dinghy that we finally got to launch it. I had finished building it in the late fall, and things were too cold for a test-launch then. All winter long it's shiny bronze bow eye had winked at me every time I walked past, and I'd wondered 'how will it float?' and, 'how will it row?' At last it was time to find out.

It was a day very early in the spring—the car had frost on it every morning still—when I lashed the dinghy upside-down to the roof of the car, bungeed the oars next to it, and we all piled in for the drive to our nearest real city, Fresno. On the way there is an irrigation lake on whose shores we had camped last summer and sailed about in another dinghy I had built. Today we would have to be quick—just time enough for a test row and a picnic—before continuing to the city for our weekly grog and pemmican shopping.

"I just want to see if she floats trim, and how she rows," I explained to Danielle, who always wants to know what's going on so she can prepare the girls for any eventuality. "We won't be long at all."

The level of the lake was low—it hadn't quite recovered from a couple of dry-ish years, but the receding water had left bare several rocky outcrops that normally would be merely reefs or shoal spots. As the boat bobbed at the end of her painter next to the pier, I had a sudden idea.

"What if we have our sandwiches on one of those little islands?" I suggested. "The girls will get a kick out of it."

"So will you, I think," Danielle smiled. My wife seems to know me rather well by now.

The dinghy is small: six-foot-three with a pram bow, but we all crammed into it anyway. Danielle took Emily, who is only 18 months old, and sat in the sternsheets. I occupied the rowing thwart (the 'native' work of rowing always falls upon me), and Antigone crouched in the bows with the important job of holding the painter, just like Roger.

I thought she (the boat, not Antigone) would be sluggish



Doing the 'native work' at the oars is the author (and boat builder) Ben Zartman. Ableseaman Antigone is in the stern.

with that much load, but she rowed very nicely, and Danielle steered me a somewhat wobbly course toward a promising islet several hundred yards out.

"It's just like Cormorant Island," said Danielle as we pulled the pram up on the tiny sandy patch.

"Except there are no cormorants and no treasure," I pointed out.

"Can we look for treasure?" piped up Antigone. She's only four just now.

"Lets!" said Danielle, and they went to the other side of the only boulder on the islet.

Well, there was no oak chest with manuscripts; there was no teakwood box of pearls; but Antigone found a treasure just as precious: a tiny purple flower, one of the very first of spring, growing from a crevice in the rock.

After eating our sandwiches on a sheet which, Susan-like, Danielle had pulled from the depths of her enormous picnic bag, Antigone and I left her and the ship's baby to snooze in the sun and went for a quick row-around and some sculling practice. This latter—propelling the dinghy by swishing a certain way with one oar off the stern—is very difficult, and my hat goes off to anyone

(Continued on page 9)

NEW UNSINKABLE DINGHY PASSES TEST!

(Continued from page 8)

who has managed to do it successfully—as I have not.

But time was short, so we soon packed up the expedition and rowed back to the pier. Only one thing left to do: the sinking test. All three models of dinghies I build in my mostly-as-hobby dinghy building business are unsinkable; the floor and seats are filled with enough foam to keep the boat from sinking should it be swamped. But every new model has to be tested to see whether the foam is enough.

After unloading everything onto the pier and taking out the thwarts, I stepped hard on the bow to dip it in the water. After no more would flow in, I took a rubber feed bucket and scooped water into the boat until it began to flow back out over the bow. Test passed! With all the water it would hold, the aft end still kept six inches of freeboard, and the bow floated just awash.

I was just pulling the dinghy out onto the pier when a lake warden's car came charging down the boat ramp and screeched to a halt.

“We got a call that there's a boat sinking!” his eyes searched the pier for the expected scene of general panic. Some well-intentioned fisherman on the bank had evidently gotten the wrong impression and called for a rescue.

“No sir,” I tried to keep my face grave. “What we have here is a boat that won't sink.”

I thought of recruiting him to help lift the dinghy back onto the car, but this one is so light the extra hand wasn't really necessary. In a few moments the dinghy was lashed fast, the girls in their car seats, and we were off to our favorite grog-and-pemmican store, all chattering happily about plans for our next expedition.



Mate Danielle and ableseaman (and treasure hunter) Antigone in the family's latest home-built dinghy. It passed the sinking test but caused some alarm!

IN SEARCH OF BECKFOOT

By Claire Barnett

Did Pull Wood House provide the inspiration for Beckfoot, or was it Lanehead or perhaps Tent Lodge or some still unknown house? Was the real house in a similar location to the one in the stories, or was the geography borrowed from elsewhere?

These are questions recently discussed on TarBoard, the online Arthur Ransome discussion group, provided by Ian Edmondson of the University of Lancaster, U.K..

If you haven't visited TarBoard on line yet, here is the link:

<http://the-stable.lancs.ac.uk/~esarie/tarboard/tarboard.html>

Beckfoot may be a composite house on a lake that we know is a composite. The location, garden and geography surrounding AR's Beckfoot may not be related to whatever house that he used for the model of Beckfoot. A good example of AR's mixed locations and geography is Bank Ground Farm, the model for Holly Howe. Bank Ground

(Continued on page 10)

WILL THE REAL BECKFOOT ...

(Continued from page 9)

with its attached barns and buildings, is far bigger than the way we think of Holly Howe. It does not have Friar's Craig, (the Peak in Darien), next to it, nor a well defined bay in front of it. It also is on Conniston Water, not on Windermere, the real lake with Rio and Long Island that most resembles Ransome's lake. But it is Holly Howe, and the Altounyans, the inspiration for the Swallows, stayed there.

Beckfoot may be similar, both for locations and buildings. Additionally, the three houses currently under discussion also have a connection with Beckfoot in that they had Amazon-like girls who stayed there. Four of the five possible sources for the Amazon Pirates have connections to these houses. (*A future article will discuss the Amazons themselves*).

Lanehead was associated with one of the happiest times in Ransome's life, when he had a room there and stayed with the Collingwoods and learned to sail with Dora and Barbara Collingwood. His autobiography has some information about the layout of Lanehead. Both *Pigeon Post* and *Picts and Martyrs* have clues to the inside and outside of Beckfoot that can be applied to any of the possible houses used to inspire Beckfoot.

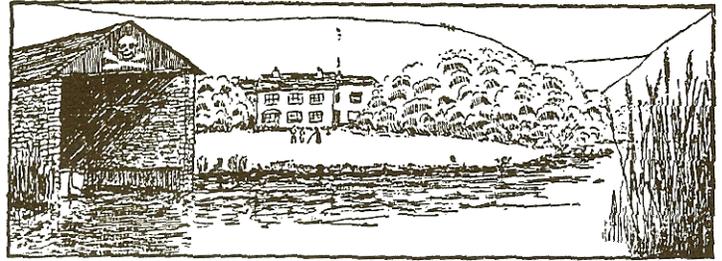
Tent Lodge is nearby and associated with Pauline and Georgie Rawdon-Smith. You may see the history of tent Lodge in the excellent article that Mike B recommended;

http://theconiston.typepad.com/theconiston/2005/09/the_picturesque.html

There are some inaccuracies and much speculation in that article, but it is another possibility. It looks rather large, but again, parts of it may have been the inspiration for Beckfoot. Here is a picture it from Lakeland Cam, a link provided by Owen Roberts;

http://www.localgibson.com/lakelandcam/photos/4070902tent_lodge.html

Pull Wood House is in a good location on Windermere, but it is too large. On the other hand, parts of it could have some resemblance to Beckfoot in the same way that parts of the larger Bank Ground Farm became the smaller Holly Howe. Also the Crossley girls, another possible inspiration for the Amazons, stayed there in



the summer and had a sailing dinghy. Their father also owned the *Esperance*, the primary model for Captain Flint's houseboat. Belle Grange, further south on the same western shore of the lake, has been suggested by Duncan Hall as another possible Beckfoot.

If we consider the landscape locations for Beckfoot separately from the house locations, there are two interesting possibilities:

The Pull Wyke Bay area, (including Pull Wood House, a.k.a. Huyton Hall), is in the right location on Windermere, and could be viewed from the Waterhead Hotel in Ambleside, a favorite dining place for the Ransomes. The Pull Beck is a bit small for the Amazon, but there is a marsh there that when flooded, is similar to Octopus Lagoon. Ian Hobbs is credited for noting these similarities, and I'll discuss his other ideas in a later article about the origins of the Amazons. The Amazon Promontory is not there in height, but the shape is about right on a map, especially reversed. So perhaps it was borrowed.

Oxen House is on Conniston Water and is opposite and somewhat north of Peel Island. It is near the mouth of Torver Beck, which although it is also too small to be the Amazon, it does go to similar areas on the east side of Conniston Old Man, (Kanchenjunga). If you relocated the beck closer to the head of the lake, it would flow west instead of north west. It would also be in the right position with regards to Conniston Old Man. Oxen House itself apparently has no relationship to the Beckfoot of the stories, but the surrounding Sunny Banks area has the right shape for the promontory at the mouth of the beck.

Consulting a map shows that the promontory isn't elevated, but the shape is familiar. When combined with the

(Continued on page 11)

PLEASE STAND UP!

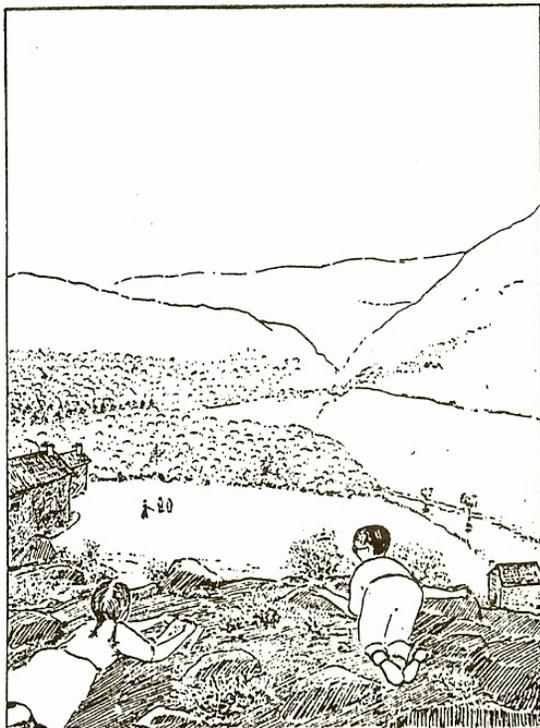
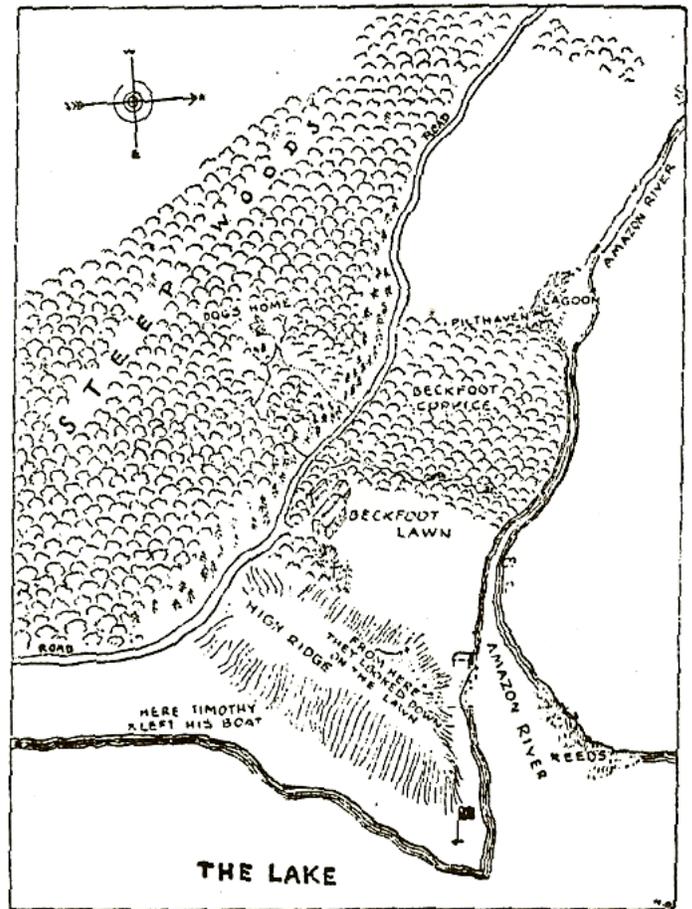
(Continued from page 10)

geography and location of Pull Wyke Bay, the resemblance to Beckfoot's location is striking.

It is easy to imagine Ransome looking at places on the maps of Conniston Water and Windermere and incorporating them into his composite lake map, changing elevations as needed. The possibility has also been brought up that sometimes the locations and his drawings may be mirror images, further disguising the original locations.

An example of this is Strickland Junction, the train station mentioned in Pigeon Post. Pictures and maps of Oxenholme Junction show its real inspiration, but due to later changes in tracks and other features, it really is difficult to say if AR's drawing is reversed or accurate for the era he wrote in.

Discussion on TarBoard moved on to other subjects as discussion groups do, but not before contributions by Jock, Duncan Hall, Owen Roberts, me and others.



LOOKOUT POST ON THE RIDGE

Lots of suggestions and theories were forthcoming. There were 98 posts on the Beckfoot question and the related Strickland Junction thread.

A short article like this can only skim the surface of what may be posted on TarBoard. I urge those of you with computers to tune in, and take part.

Two other tools for armchair explorers are maps of Conniston and Windermere, available at <http://www.ordnancesurvey.co.uk/oswebsite/getamap/>

or using Google Earth and zooming in on first the lakes and then specific locations.

TIDBITS FROM TARSUS

Signals needs you!

Thanks to the new and veteran *Signals* contributors for submitting their creative, thought-provoking and entertaining articles for this issue of *Signals from TARSUS*. **Fall 2008 issue deadline: August 25.**

Contact me for submission format and length guidelines.

Debra Alderman, *Signals* editor:
dalderman@antiochseattle.edu

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

I am ready to retire as the Sft editor and pass the torch to another TARS US member. My first love (sailing) and my native life (work) are taking up more and more of my time and I am finding it difficult to get these issues out according to planned production schedule. (By the way, sorry this issue is a bit late for spring!) I'll be happy to collect the material submitted for the fall issue and coach the new editor through the production the first time around. The printing, envelope stuffing and labeling could actually be done by another volunteer. Perhaps the lovely members in Maryland would be willing to help again? If you are interested, please contact me and we can discuss what's involved. THANKS! Debra

Welcome new members!

Robert Dean, Pensioner, DE
Harriet Reid, Junior, CT
Mackenzie Reid, Junior, CT
Samuel Warner, Junior, MN

TARSUS contact information

Robin Marshall is our new TARS US coordinator. Any membership renewals not yet taken care of by publication of this issue should be sent to Rob directly:

Robin Marshall
210 18th St NW
Bradenton, FL 34205-6845
Phone 941-746-1712
Email: robin@arthur-ransome.org

To read more about Robin, see article, page 7

FROM THE U.S. COORDINATOR

FARE WELL AND ADIEU!

After a number of years as TARS U.S. Coordinator, I am leaving the office as of May 1, 2008.

Rob Marshall, who has an introductory note in this same issue, is the new TARS U.S. Coordinator. Effective immediately, please send your membership renewals (if you still haven't, you've got the Black Spot on your mailing label!) and any other Coordinator matters to Rob. If I receive any tardy envelopes I'll simply send them on to him.

It has been a privilege, and a lot of fun, to be the U.S. Coordinator for TARS. I've made many friends, and even met a few of them (about as many at AGMs in the U.K. as I have in the U.S.). While I don't plan to hold an official position in TARS, at least for a while, I will still be involved in TARS and in Arthur Ransome matters in general.

All the best, and for now, I'll sing along with the Swallows, "Leave her, Johnny, leave her".

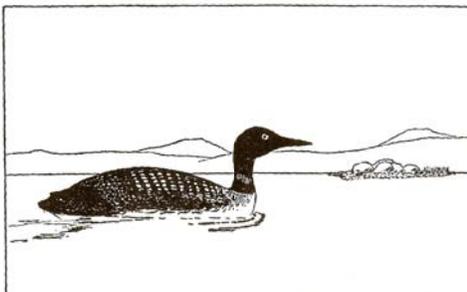
Swallows and Amazons For Ever!

Dave Thewlis

Are you a black spot recipient? Your membership has expired!

Membership Renewals were due as of January 1, 2008. If you have NOT YET SENT your membership renewal, you have received the Black Spot! (On the mailing label of this very newsletter.)

Be SURE to send it in NOW, or you will be dropped from the mailing list!



GREAT NORTHERN DIVER

GREAT NORTHERN?

Keep track of your wildlife sightings on your summer adventures and send them in to *Signals from TARS* to be included in the fall Issue!