



SIGNALS FROM T•A•R•S•U•S

August 2003

Summer Greetings

This is the Summer 2003 issue of *Signals from TARSUS*, and accompanies *Signals*. (The 2003 *Ship's Log*, recounting the AGM just past, has been delayed and will be part of the next mailing in November/December.) In this issue, we have an account by Ike Stephenson of a voyage from Bermuda to Florida, a response from Des Kelsall of New Zealand about our last issue, information about a new Ransome-related book called *Wings of the Wind* by Roger Seccombe, an Australian TARS, a quiz about *Winter Holiday*, and more.

Speaking of the quizzes, I haven't gotten any responses to my query in the last Sft as to whether you were enjoying them and wanted them to continue. Lacking any feedback I decided to continue at least for this issue, but I'm very interested in your reactions.

—Dave Thewlis, Editor

Welcome

Welcome to new members Clinton Crawford (CA); Dr. Jane Garfield (ME); Katie Harrison (NH); Charles Stevenson (MA); and Simon Tucker (DC). Welcome back to Nina Crocker and Josie, Maya and Stephen Gillett (WA); and to Christine Poff, Tom Webster, and Charlie and William Webster-Poff (MA).

TARSUS Membership List

The 2003 Membership List for TARS in the U.S. is included with this mailing. As always, if there is anything wrong or missing for your entry, please let me know. If you would like information or the entire entry removed from the list, let me know that as well. Contact info at the end of this newsletter.

And remember, this list is for the use of TARSUS members **only** and is not to be copied or distributed to non-TARSUS members or used for any commercial purposes.

Résumés

No new ones this time. As always, if you haven't sent one please do so; it is always fascinating to learn about fellow Ransome enthusiasts.

2003 Literary Weekend (repeat)

The 2003 Literary Weekend will be held on 5-7 September at the Royal Naval Academy, Greenwich. The planning information and booking information may be accessed directly from the Arthur Ransome website at: <http://www.arthur-ransome.org/ar/litweekendinfo.html>.

If you plan to attend, you can pay for your booking via the TARSUS Coordinator by sending me a copy of your completed booking form(s) plus a check for the required amount in U.S. Dollars. Please calculate the amount as £1.00 = \$1.65. See <http://www.arthur-ransome.org/ar/tarsus/bookinglimitedevents.html> for more information.

Ransome Library Update

In the last issue of *Signals from TARSUS*, Margaret Ratcliffe, who runs the Ransome Library, reported on her attempts to obtain a copy of the recent BBC film on the making of the 1974 S&A film. The library has acquired the tape, and we are currently arranging to have a NTSC (North American format) version of the tape available from the library to North American and Japanese TARS who wish to borrow it.

To borrow books and tapes members need to become Library subscribers. There are Library subscribers in Canada, the U.S., Japan, and Australia. To join the Library please contact Margaret:

Mrs. Margaret Ratcliffe
24 Wynford Terrace,
Leeds, LS16 6HY,
United Kingdom
+44 113 2673986
jmandcratcliffe@btinternet.com

(The catalog alone is more than worth the price of membership - Ed.)

Ransome Items for the Blind and Physically Handicapped

TARSUS member Frank Kurt Cylke has passed on to me a copy of a bibliography on Arthur Ransome items available for blind or physically handicapped residents of the U.S. or citizens living abroad, distributed by the Library of Congress National Library Service for the Blind and Physically Handicapped. This four-page flyer lists cassette recordings and braille editions of Ransome books, Ransome's autobiography, and other Ransome-related writings.

I will be happy to send a copy of the flyer to any TARS who wishes a copy, or you can contact the National Library Service for the Blind and Physically Handicapped, 1291 Taylor Street NW, Washington DC 20542, 202-707-5100, or e-mail nls@loc.gov.

TARSUS In The North?

Ike Stephenson (see "What I Did This Winter..." later in this newsletter) writes: "Just north of Muskegon (Michigan) you can take a coal-fired, steam-powered ferry across the lake to Mantiwoc Wisconsin. It's a 4-hour trip. Mantiwoc has a pretty fair maritime museum. Groups of 25 or more can get a discount; more information is available online at www.ssbadger.com. Do you think this is something that would attract TARS types?"

I immediately asked him if he would coordinate such an event, and he said yes. So if you are interested, please contact Ike at 2153 Philo Avewnue, Muskegon, MI 49441, phone 231-755-2396, or e-mail him at Ike@ikestephenson.com.

Feature Column: Ransome Readers Recommend

Call It Courage by Armstrong Sperry

"It happened many years ago, before the traders and missionaries first came into the South Seas, while the Polynesians were still great in numbers and fierce of heart..."

So begins the story of Matafu, The Boy Who Was Afraid. Matafu, which means "Stout Heart," is the son of the Great Chief of Hikueru, an island in the South Pacific. Matafu is terrified of the sea, so his people scorn him as a coward. By the time he is fifteen years old he cannot bear being an outcast any longer, and leaves on a solitary voyage to conquer his fear of the sea and find his courage – even if it means dying in the attempt.

I loved this book when I first read it at about the age of 10. I recently found a new paperback edition of it with the original illustrations, and find that I love it as much now as I did then, fifty years ago. Like Ransome, the book reflects the culture and attitudes of its time (it was written in 1940), and also like Ransome the writing is simple, direct, and powerful. Heartily recommended!

– Reviewed by Dave Thewlis

Wings of the Wind

The inspiration of Arthur Ransome

By Roger Seccombe

As AUSTARS member Roger Seccombe explains in the preface to the book, Arthur Ransome has been a constant inspiration, especially his *Swallows and Amazons* books. As for so many other TARS, for Roger the stories' themes and spirit have underpinned so many of his interests from childhood: from adventure and exploration to natural history, photography and art. In eight thematic chapters in *Wings of the Wind* the author looks at aspects of Ransome's work that have intrigued him over the years: Ransome the explorer, the child psychologist, the historian, the sociologist, naturalist, artist and more. A writer who was inspired by so many interests and could, in turn, inspire so much in readers of all ages. Roger Seccombe is a professional cinematographer and also a script writer.

Wings of the Wind is printed on art paper with many black and white and colour illustrations. In addition to photographs, through original artwork Roger has illustrated the range of themes and inspiration Ransome offers the reader.

Wings of the Wind is now into its second printing. It is already on sale to members of TARS in the United Kingdom and is now available in a strictly limited printing if any TARS in either the U.S. or Canada would like to purchase a copy.

As this book comes from Australia, to avoid double shipping it is not available to U.S. TARS directly from the TARS Stall. However, it is available directly from Roger for \$29 U.S. including shipping: Coora Films Pty Ltd., PO Box 79, Mitcham, Victoria 3132 Australia.

*To avoid heavy currency conversion costs, I'm taking orders from TARSUS members to submit a combined order and pay one exchange. Let me know **prior to 1 November** if you would like a copy, and I'll tell you the final price when we know how many ways we can split the cost of exchanging U.S. to Australian Dollars! – Dave Thewlis*

A Letter from New Zealand

Des Kelsall is the TARS New Zealand Coordinator. As a boy he lived at Barkbooth across the Winster Valley from the Ransomes at Low Ludderburn. Ransome would come and read Des and his brother Dick the latest sections of Swallows and Amazons. Their father devised the "shape signalling system" to communicate with AR concerning fishing trips, and which Ransome later incorporated in Winter Holiday. Des was also one of the children who posed for photographs from which Ransome later made his drawings. Des recently remarried and moved to New Zealand, where he read the last issue of Signals from TARSUS and sent this letter in response.

Dear Dave,

Although we don't often correspond, it is always a pleasure to receive your Newsletter and a couple of things in your May 2003 (*Signals from TARSUS*) struck a chord with me.

1. Tom Napier's thoughts on John and the kedge. (By the way, Napier is a small city and busy port only some 25 Kms. North of here!) I cannot help feeling that Tom is, perhaps, squeezing a little more out of the exchange between John and Captain Flint than AR ever intended. My own interpretation of the remarks would be that Captain Flint, an experienced mariner, might well be remembering **his own** "clanger" with the unattached anchor cable, rather than John's ditto. Of all people, Captain Flint might have been expected to make sure that the inboard end of the cable was securely attached and he would surely be concerned to ensure that such a mishap should never occur again – to him or to anyone else.
2. I felt a great sympathy with Mary Wessel Walker and her thoughts on "Home." As many of us must have, I too have in my mind's eye many homes. These range from the Winster valley, AR's and my own homes for many years, to the Troutbeck valley and the lovely hills at its head, to the infinite, grassy expanse of the Serengeti Plains in Tanzania, to where I now live, far from the centre of TARS affairs, at the foot of Te Mata Peak in New Zealand. Each of these places, projected in colour on to my mental screen, conjures up in my mind a beloved spot which, for me, is "Home." Is it, perhaps, events which have taken place somewhere, rather than the actual spot itself, which tie us to so many "Homes"?

Yours Sincerely,

J. D. Kelsall

What I Did This Winter ... By Ike Stephenson

Many TARS are eager to sail as the various publications show. Certainly we are fortunate to have access to many of the actual craft that may have inspired certain parts of AR's beloved books. Perhaps I am even more fortunate than most TARS members. Not only was I raised by a sailor, but we lived on the water, my Dad had a 33 foot sailing boat, and a replica of *Amazon!* I went through a period of serving a before the mast lookout as did Roger. Now I'm just a bit too big for that position!

After growing up with access to all that sailing, I eventually found my way into the marine industry. For 5+ years I have worked at Torresen Marine in Muskegon MI, a full service sailboat yard. We don't see many wooden boats like those of AR, but we service a pretty fair spectrum of fiberglass and composite boats. Essentially I've never had to give up sailing for a truly real job.

This past winter I had a job that allowed to branch out. A 72 foot racing sailboat needed to be sailed from Bermuda to Florida. The boat had been dismasted during a race. After several months of repair on island time, the boat was ready to sail. Myself and 5 others would serve as the crew. Two people were on the island as an advance party, 3 of us flew out and we added a Bermudian as a 6th.

While still at home I did various types of preparation. Bought some new safety gear, studied the expected weather and of course, read *Peter Duck* for any offshore tips!

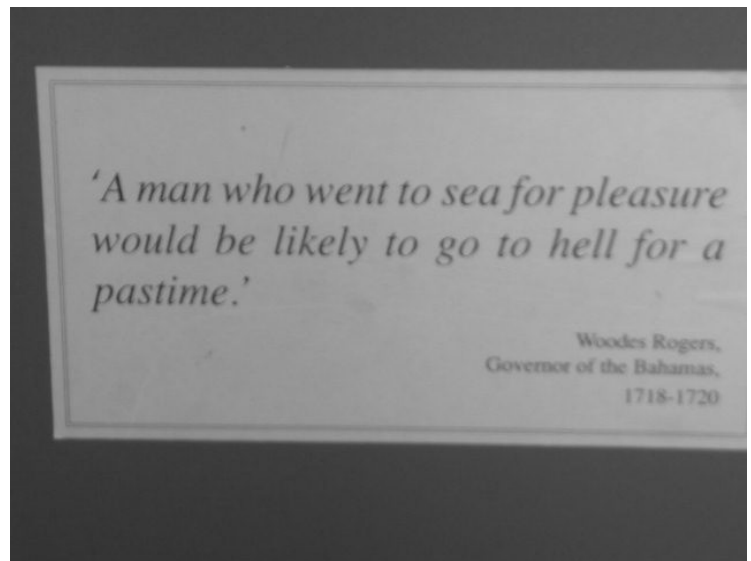
We spent a day or two on Bermuda in the old Royal Naval Dockyard. It has been converted into a multi faceted facility. It contains a Maritime Museum that Queen Elizabeth once visited.



Ike's bunk for the voyage ...

Although I will admit the first night while I heated soup for dinner, it seemed a race between the heating soup and my as yet not attuned stomach. Being me, the soup warmed, I was hungry and ate more than most! As a side note my stomach is stout, but would it stand up to Bill's bacon fat demo? I've never had to find out!

As night fell we decided we had to make a decision. Preserving boat and crew was the goal. Eventually I suggested that we turn and run with the wind, streaming warps over the stern to slow us. Although none of us had done this before we decided it was better than pounding into the seas. We turned the boat in seas that were at least 10 feet and probably higher. I am not good at eyeballing wave heights. With the wind at our back the threat was lessened. We streamed all



The motto for the voyage ...

After a day or two of last minute preparation, victualing and a memorable quiz night at the *Frog and Onion* we set off. As is the way of seafaring for a living Murphy's Law also was aboard. Soon after starting a rip in the luff of our just-repaired main appeared. It would prove fatal. Eventually we sailed in very light winds with a storm trysail in its place. We lacked diesel to motor the whole way, so had to sail eventually. At one point I was at the wheel as speeds held at 12-16 knots.

Of course this is the North Atlantic in winter, not always a pleasant place! About the 3rd night our wind and seas increased. Again thanks to Murphy we had winds right on the snotta. The aged, fragile racing boat pounded into ferocious head seas. This gale was the end of our main as it was blown to tatters. We had an all hands event on the foredeck downing the small # 4 head sail.

Some of the crew became ill. Fortunately my genetic heritage includes a so far – knock on wood – cast iron stomach.



Jury rig – storm trysail and #3 jib

available cordage, in a U-shaped bight, using the transom cleats as anchor points. This brought our speed down a couple of knots, and lessened the discomfort of boat and crew.

Eventually the wind calmed, we took in warps and resumed course. We sailed many miles under our unique rig of storm trysail and # 3 jib. Just as America ratcheted the threat level to orange we sailed into West Palm Beach Florida.

I hope this piece gives you an insight into the reality of modern day sailing, as compared to AR's older more idealized version. In the near future I hope to do a short piece about the 'Captain John/Swallowdale' moment my Dad and myself had in the summer of 2002!

If you have comments, questions, or suggestions please email me: ike@ikestephenson.com



From TARS Canada

Here are the answers for the quiz on *Peter Duck* from our May issue, along with the fourth quiz, on *Winter Holiday*. Three million more cheers for TARS Canada for allowing us to crib off their newsletter!

PETER DUCK - Answers to the Questions

ONE POINT

1.1 "Pieces of Eight"; 1.2 Water; 1.3 By the hair; 1.4 Sank when the *Wild Cat's* anchor crashed through it; 1.5 Nancy; 1.6 Ices; 1.7 A spade; 1.8 He had meant to pick up a decent spade there; 1.9 He/she was to be the first to land, and to have the landing place named after him/her; 1.10 Bill; 1.11 Take soundings with the lead; 1.12 Sharks; 1.13 Mount Gibber; 1.14 Nancy; 1.15 Sardines; 1.16 John and Nancy.

TWO POINTS

2.1 Lowestoft; 2.2 A hospital; 2.3 Three ducks swimming; 2.4 Two: Main and Fore; 2.5 He made as if to sail in to Folkestone, and the *Viper* followed; 2.6 To find out how fast the ship was sailing through the water; 2.7 A mug of cocoa; 2.8 His game of Patience (Solitaire) came out three times running; 2.9 Gave them some chewing tobacco; 2.10 On the bowsprit end; 2.11 A ration of chocolate; 2.12 A line of copper-coloured cloud on the horizon; 2.13 The box with the chocolate in it; 2.14 Gibber had choked it with oil and grease; 2.15 Bill had his arm broken; 2.16 Bonies, Niggers, Mallies and Roses.

THREE POINTS

3.1 Davits; 3.2 The *Thermopylae*; 3.3 The *Arrow of Norwich*; 3.4 A knife; 3.5 It was wrecked on Ushant rocks; 3.6 Acle, Beccles and Potter Heigham; 3.7 By the large smudge of grease on his left cheek; 3.8 Captain's and Squashed Flies; 3.9 A long-drawn-out (4 seconds) hoot; 3.10 Black Jake's brother George, Simeon Boon, Mogandy, the bouncer from the *Ketch as Ketch Can*; 3.11 When first trying to spot his bedroom tree at Duckhaven; 3.12 Gibber became unaccountably frightened; 3.13 "Mount Gibber's disappeared"; 3.14 Bad luck or rheumatics; 3.15 He had sprained his ankle; 3.16 With Peter Duck's daughter and her husband at Beccles.

WINTER HOLIDAY

ONE POINT

1 How many steps were there up to the bedrooms at Dixon's Farm?

- 2 Where was the Dixon's rowboat?
- 3 Who went through the ice on the tarn when the Swallows and the Amazons first went to meet the Ds?
- 4 "Dark at tea-time and sleeping indoors: nothing ever happens in the winter holidays." Who said that?
- 5 What did they have as a roof on the igloo to prevent leakages?
- 6 Who caught a crab when they were rowing across to Beckfoot?
- 7 What was the design of the plague flag made for Nancy?
- 8 What, according to Mrs. Dixon, did Mrs. Callum like to do as a child that Dorothea was not interested in?
- 9 What did the explorers call the crowds of people skating in Rio Bay?
- 10 What were the birds that fascinated Dick as they were crossing Greenland?
- 11 What did Roger offer the rescued sheep to tempt it to eat?
- 12 Who thought of the name "Polar Bear" for the rescued sheep?
- 13 When Dorothea was alone on the houseboat with Dick and saw the approaching figure of Captain Flint, what did she imagine him to be?
- 14 What did Dick lose as the sled began to sail on the way to the North Pole?
- 15 What had been in the knapsack that the Ds lost when their sled capsized at the North Pole?
- 16 Who arrived at the North Pole next after the Ds?

TWO POINTS

- 1 What was the name of the farm hand at Dixon's Farm?
- 2 What was the very first Signal to Mars?
- 3 What did Titty do as the Swallows and the Amazons approached the observatory to meet the Ds for the first time?
- 4 Where were Mrs. Walker and Bridget while the Swallows were staying at Holly Howe?
- 5 Which native came to visit the igloo on the day of the first snowfall?
- 6 Who was the first to spot the cragfast sheep?
- 7 When Dick was rescuing the cragfast sheep, who was in charge of the party with the rope on top of the cliff?
- 8 How did Dick know the cragfast sheep was one of Mr. Dixon's flock?
- 9 Whose ship was the original *Fram*, after which Nancy named the houseboat?
- 10 When Nancy sent her mystery message with the sled and the dancing figures, who was it who realised that the semaphore letters were to be read from right to left – the same direction as the signpost was pointing?
- 11 When the Holly Howe farm dog started howling as Titty and Roger set off at night for the houseboat after John, Susan and Peggy, what did Titty do?
- 12 When Captain Flint arrived at the houseboat and looked in his store cupboard he commented "Arctic explorers! ... More like [blank] it seems to me." What was the word in place of the [blank]?

- 13 Where had Captain Flint's small sled been, that Nancy and Peggy had been unable to find?
- 14 What did the Ds buy from the stall on the ice in Rio Bay as they headed for the North Pole?
- 15 How did Nancy come to be the first to know the Ds were at the North Pole?
- 16 When the Ds found the North Pole, why did Dick immediately go out again?

THREE POINTS

- 1 What was the name of the dog at Dixon's Farm?
- 2 Why was Mrs. Dixon in a hurry to get dinner over, the first day the Ds were at the farm?
- 3 What did Dorothea use to start the fire on their first night in the observatory?
- 4 Where were the Ds parents while the Ds were staying at Dixon's farm?
- 5 In the code developed using the square and triangle, what was the signal for "Come to North Pole"?
- 6 When Mrs. Blackett sent the explorers to stop the doctor on his way back to Rio, what did Dick do that impressed John?
- 7 When the doctor arrived at Beckfoot for his first look at Nancy, the rest of the explorers were put into the study. Titty and Dorothea went straight to the bookshelves, and found that the books were mostly about mining, chemistry and – what else?
- 8 When the explorers read their health certificates and confirmed that they could not go back to school for at least a month, what was John's immediate reaction?
- 9 What was the only story book that Dorothea found in the houseboat?
- 10 What kind of jam did the explorers open on their first visit to the houseboat?
- 11 What was the message Dick devised to send to Nancy comparing the houseboat with the igloo?
- 12 When Nancy's mystery message with the sled and the dancing figures was finally deciphered, what did it say?
- 13 What was the name of the Holly Howe farm dog?
- 14 When Titty and Roger were crossing the ice to the houseboat at night and saw what turned out to be John, Susan and Peggy in the distance, what did Roger first think they were?
- 15 What did the notice say that Captain Flint put on the houseboat the morning after his arrival?
- 16 What happened to wake everyone up, the morning after the arrival at the North Pole?



From our 10-Gong Contributing Editor Mary Wessel Walker:

Mary, our ten-gong contributing editor, is having a very Ransome-ish summer working at a summer camp. She is introducing many kids to the joys of the outdoors and many activities enjoyed by the Swallows and Amazons such as archery, swimming, and boating. Unfortunately, this does not allow her much time to write articles for *Signals from TARSUS!* Her column will be back in the next mailing.



