



Signals from TARSUS & North Pole News

May 2019

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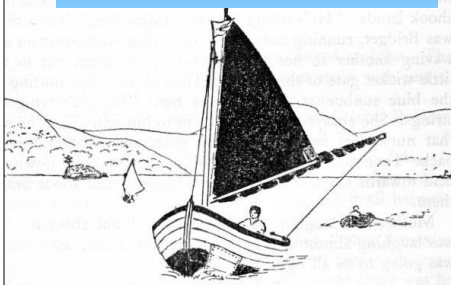
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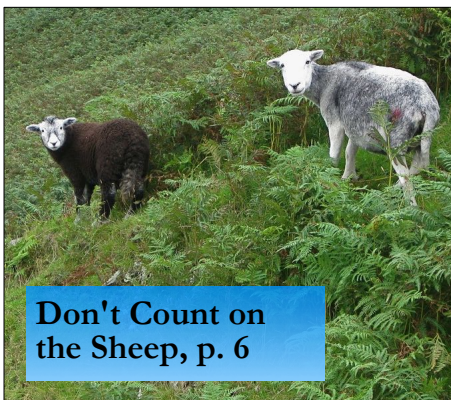
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Ship's Papers — Important information for the Crew



A View from the US Helm

By Robin Marshall
TARSUS Coordinator
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Summer is here once again, and we can look forward to brighter days and maybe adventurous activities for those that are able. I have not heard of any members heading to the UK this year but if you do be sure to give

a thought to an article of your time there.

Currently the PayPal payment method for renewals is not functioning, so any members that have not renewed please note. Checks sent to me for The Arthur Ransome Society is the only option whilst this is down, unless you have an account in the UK. This also affects the TARS stall, I

think. Our treasurer is working with PayPal to fix this.

Hoopla — <https://www.hoopladigital.com> — is a “digital media service” that works with your local public library to let you borrow ebooks, audiobooks, music, etc. I found out recently that it has all the Ransome series plus other works by and about him in ebook form. These are avail-

able free with your local library membership. Useful for those with grandchildren.

Thomas Grimes informed me he has two Penguin paperbacks, *Secret Water* and *Pigeon Post*, he no longer needs. Let me know if you want them. I had a request via TARS from a non member asking if we had any copies of the books free; if anyone has any perhaps we could pass them on.

Otherwise I have nothing further to report except to wish you all a good summer.

Robin.

Ed. Note: What is available on Hoopla depends on your local library, which you can choose on the Hoopla website.



Greetings from the North

By Ian Sacré, TARS Canada Coordinator
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Greetings Canadian TARS Members.

Avalanches in the western mountains, snow melt, torrential rains, swollen rivers, floods and accompanying sandbagging in the east, our Canadian Spring has not

exactly sauntered in like a lamb. It has arrived in force and it is to be hoped that better conditions lie ahead.

At the present time the Canadian TARS paid membership sits at 26 to which must be added 13 listed family members. Sadly we have not recruited any new members. Ted Evans, TARS energetic ‘keeper and chronicler of records’ also reports that the overall membership is down.

The question is why is the Society los-

ing members every year while other literary societies are often seen to be thriving? For example, Sherlock Holmes associations and societies are flourishing world wide and have numerous groups sharing the common interest. Perhaps in this example it is because AR’s books were/are aimed at children who eventually grow up, and the stories eventually are left to fade and gather dust in the corners of our memories, while Conan Doyle’s Sherlock Holmes stories were/are

aimed at adults. Who can say? It does leave one wondering about the downstream future of our society.

Of serious concern to our society is the continually climbing cost of postage for the various publications we receive from the UK. As you know we were asked to voice our views on this subject and all of which were sent in to HQ. But as yet I have not heard if any decisions have been taken in regard to an acceptable solution to the problem.

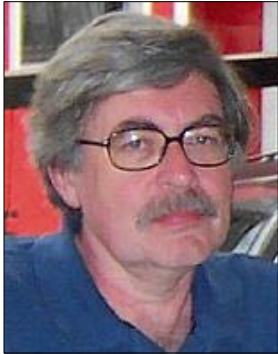
I would like to thank everyone for keeping me up to date of changes to their email and postal addresses. These are sent in to Ted Evans as soon as I receive them, who in turn immediately updates the regional directory, etc. This ensures the information is kept current.

I hope the coming summer is good to

everyone and that you all manage to have exciting adventures in the best of Swallows and Amazons tradition! Do think about sending in an account

of them to Simon Horn so we can all read about them in the next issue of *North Pole News*. Wishing all fair winds and calm seas.

Warm regards,
Ian Sacré
TARS Canada Coordinator



A Note from the Editor

By Simon Horn, sjhorn@gmail.com

Welcome to *Signals from TARSUS/North Pole News* for May 2019.

Thanks to everyone who contributed. Although for a while it looked like you would be getting a six-page issue, as you can see people came through as always.

In this issue

Ian Sacré starts us off with *The Professor's Laboratory*, explaining how *Swallow* was jury rigged after crashing into Pike Rock in *Swallowdale*, and wondering if duct tape might have helped.

In *Captain Flint's Trunk*, **David Rawcliffe's** Don't Count On the Sheep explains the ancient language used to count sheep in Cumbria, while **Robert Dilley** shares aerial photos of Secret Water he took years ago.

In *Dipping Our Hands*, **Molly McGinnis** tells us about her *First Fish*, won at a carnival when she was five.

Alistair Bryden's adds his experience to *Kanchenjunga's Cairn* with *Reflections of a Gear Junkie*. Although gear has changed a lot over the years, old or new, is it the most important thing?

The Ship's Library gives us reviews of two books: **Molly McGinnis** looks at new children's book *Extraordinary Birds*, while **David Elms** recommends *Swallows, Amazons and Coots*.

Finally, we have a bumper *Pieces of Eight*, with three items: **Elizabeth Jolley** gives us a Ransome-series quo-

tation quiz, **Martha Blue** tells us what she does between TARS activities, and **Molly McGinnis** provides a further look at Captain Flint's memorabilia with *No Moss on Uncle Jim! Part 2*.

Once again, thanks to all who sent in

material, and a special thanks to Molly McGinnis, who again outdid herself.

* * *

As noted by Robin in his editorial, the Society's PayPal account is not working, so payments will have to go through your national coordinator.

The next issue will appear in September... if you send in your contributions. Items short or long, photographs, drawings, comments: all are welcome. How about "What I did on my summer vacation"?

I hope you enjoy the newsletter.
Simon

For Sale:

Copies of *The Far-Distant Oxus* and its sequels

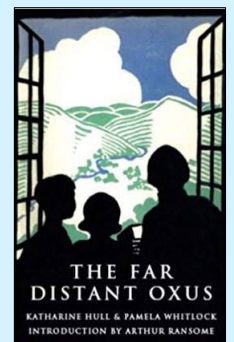
In 1937, Jonathan Cape published *The Far-Distant Oxus*, a novel written by high school girls Katherine Hull and Pamela Whitlock. An homage to Ransome's work, the book was centred around riding, rather than sailing.

The girls had sent the entire hand-written manuscript to Ransome, with a letter saying: "We should like to send it to Jonathan Cape, but if you do not think that it is good enough we will think of something else to do with it..."

Deeply impressed with the girls's effort, Ransome did think it was "good enough". Arriving in Cape's office he said, "I've got this year's best children's book under my arm." Cape agreed to publish, and it appeared in the fall of 1937 with an introduction by Ransome. Hull and Whitlock went on to write two more Oxus books: *Escape to Persia* and *Oxus in Summer*.

Former TARS member Alan Contreras recently contacted me to say that he has copies of all three of the books that he would like to sell, and he wondered if any TARS members would be interested in buying them.

The books are relatively rare, and any reader who is interested should contact Mr. Contreras at acontrer56@gmail.com



The Professor's Laboratory — Ideas, instructions & fixes

Swallowdale & the Salvage of Swallow

By Ian Sacré

It will be recalled that in Arthur Ran-some's *Swallowdale*, *Swallow* unexpectedly gybed as she approached Horse-shoe Cove and, while temporally out of control, ran up on Pike Rock, sus-tained serious below the waterline damage and promptly sank in nine or ten feet of water.

The shipwrecked sailors struggled ashore safe and sound and then went on to salvage poor *Swallow*. They suc-ceeded in hauling the damaged hull out of the water and onto the beach, patched the hole and then sailed her under escort to Rio.

Of particular interest to me was AR's description of the temporary repair carried out on *Swallow* by Captain John and Captain Flint using a piece of 'tarpaulin' cut from a groundsheet. I wondered if AR might have used a wee bit of poetic license with the ma-terial he chose to be used for the patch. The idea was to provide a very readable solution to *Swallow*'s dilem-ma of being holed below the water-line, and how to repair her to get her to Rio for permanent repairs. The question is, would such light canvas have worked in real life?

In the 1930s, groundsheets were of-ten made of very light weight cotton canvas with perhaps a rubberised backing. Alternatively, the canvas might have been treated with a water-proofing mixture made of equal parts of beeswax, turpentine and boiled lin-seed oil, which would have been ap-plied to the cotton canvas hot. Such a ground sheet would have made for a

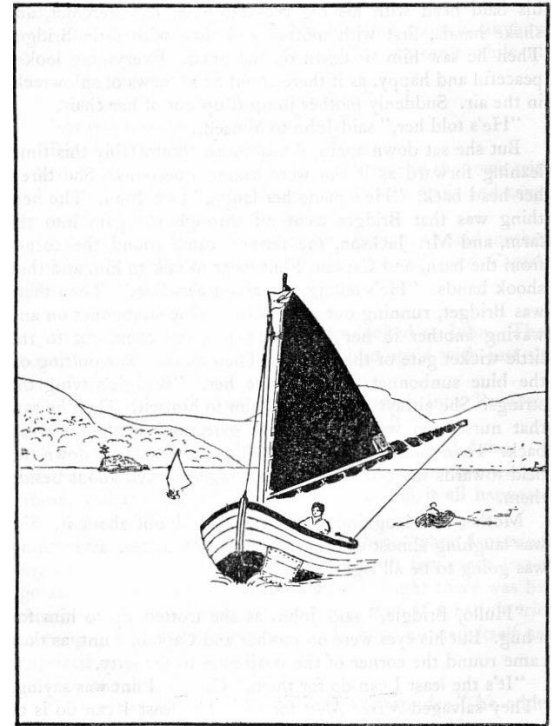
very thin and flimsy patch but as the story revealed, it served the purpose.

However, a real marine tarpaulin was made from either flax, jute, cotton or hemp, usually in cloths 24 inches wide and graded from 0 to 7 with 0 being the heaviest, making it, in cold weather, as stiff as a board. The canvas was originally dressed with tar or a substitute for tar but in later years it would have been treated with other waterproofing and preservative dressings. Heavy tarpaulins were spread over car-go hatches and, on winter voy-ages, as many as four tarps, placed one on top of the other, were often used. The tarpaulins would then have been 'battened down', literally secured with battens. Such tarpaulin material would be much too heavy and smelly for a groundsheet but perfect for a patch or 'tingle' for *Swallow* if it had been read-ily available.

AR also described how quickly *Swal-low* sank after being stove in and holed on Pike Rock.

.... "The water's coming in, Roger" he said. It was not so much of an exclamation as a plain statement of fact. *Swallow* was badly holed below the waterline in the bows. The water was spouting in and she was filling fast. The water was nearly up to the thwarts.

This description of the events is so beautifully factual and uncannily ac-curate that one wonders if AR was



UNDER JURY RIG

basing the description on a personal seagoing experience. Interestingly, if the hole was a foot below the water-line and was approximately six inches square, water would enter the hull at a velocity of very roughly two feet per second. So in one single minute 120 cubic feet of water would have poured in or, put another way, 750 gallons! Virtually nothing could have been done to save *Swallow* from sinking with that kind of damage.

(For those who are interested, the velocity of water through a small hole in feet per second is approximately 8 times the square root of the depth of the hole (in feet) below the surface. The volume of water in cubic feet passing through the same hole per second is the prod-uct of the velocity multiplied by the area of the

hole in square feet. There are of course many other factors which influence the water flow and volume as the scientist, Mr Bertinelli would have been quick to point out. But for the seaman dealing 'hands on' with an emergency situation aboard his vessel, fine tuning of formulae would just waste time in what would be a very scary and urgent situation.)

Back in the day, the best repair patches or 'tingles' consisted of a heavy piece of canvas which had been oiled or coated with tallow. The canvas was then covered with a piece of lead or copper sheet if available. All nailed into place. If lead or copper sheet was not available, anything that was suitable would do, a plank or board, locker door etc. A lapstrake boat is particularly hard to patch using canvas alone because of the overlapping planks. The canvas just does not lie completely flat around the edges.

"Fothering" is another technique used in wooden or steel vessels when a caulked plank seam below the water line loses its' caulking and starts to leak, or a steel shell plate is cracked. But *Swallow's* damage was a hole not just a leak so fothering could not have been used, though I am sure AR

would have been familiar with the technique where handfuls of oakum or other suitable material are quickly attached to the tarpaulin or a spare sail with rough stitching, lines are then secured to the corners of the canvas which is then worked under the ship with the lines until it covered the leaking seam. The oakum is then hopefully sucked into the offending leak as the water enters the hull through the leaking seam thus stopping the leak.

I have personally used fothering in the Canadian Arctic when the steel hull of my ship sustained a small crack about a foot long below the waterline due to ice pressure. In this particular case, once we had the leak temporarily stopped with a fothering tarp, we built a small box inside the hull in way of the leak and filled it with concrete. *(Yes, we always carried about twenty bags of ready mixed but dry concrete for just such damage control.)* Once the concrete hardened, we removed the fothering tarpaulin and resumed our voyage. In this case, the method was so effective that we continued operations for another two months until we could dry dock for permanent repairs. The concrete had hardened to the point that a

pneumatic jack hammer had to be employed to remove it!

In this modern day and age with small craft being invariably built using fibre-glass, nailing on a tingle would of course not be possible. In a sailing vessel a spare sail drawn under the vessel may work as long as the damage is not too close to the keel. On a fibre-glass vessel under water damage is certainly going to require all the ingenuity that can be brought to bear by the skipper and crew if the craft cannot be quickly beached.

In small craft, a roll or two of duct tape should be in every boat's emergency kit in my view. Some years ago, when a group of us were on a weeklong canoe expedition down the Kootenay River, one of our party's canoes capsized and the cedar strip craft was swept down the fast flowing river and reached up hard on a rocky bar, upside down, splitting her stem on the rocks. After we had recovered the crew, the canoe and most of the gear, we dug out a roll of duct tape and patched up the bow split. Then the canoe was paddled down river another ten miles or so until we came to a suitable haul out place and the canoe could be loaded onto a car and taken to a boat builder for permanent repairs. The boat's crew reported that the duct tape patching job did not leak a drop! I bet Captains' Flint and John would have wished for a roll of duct tape had it been invented back then!

(While paper backed sticky masking tape was invented in 1920, duct tape was not invented until 1942, originally for use by the military.)

If a supply of duct tape and cardboard had been available the Swallows could have jury-rigged a whole boat!.



Captain Flint's Trunk — News from abroad

Don't Count On the Sheep ... Yan, Tan, Tethera

By David Rawcliffe

The Lake District... where else can “We are hiking in the Lakes” be a sensible statement to make?

Sheep... where else may hikers see the fell-hardy Herdwick sheep?

Counting sheep... where else has a language of 1500 years ago survived to the present day for counting sheep?

In Ransome's five ‘Lakes stories’, there are several farms which keep, or may keep, sheep. Dixon's farm is probably the best known because of the cragfast sheep; this was most likely a Herdwick sheep, from the rugged terrain in which it lived all year round. Then there are the Warriners (Jacky) who also run a sheep farm and the Swainsons and Tysons who are good candidates for owning sheep, given their location.

However, what interested me about these farms was the counting of the sheep. What counting system did Mr Dixon and Silas use when it came time to take stock of the flock? Did it begin Yan, Tan, Tethera?

First there should be a little bit of history. Around 1500 years ago, it is reckoned that the dwellers of the island of Great Britain spoke a language which is now referred to as Brythonic. As an aside, the dwellers of the island of Ireland spoke a language which is referred to as Goidelic. (Welsh is a modern version of Brythonic; Gaelic is a modern version of Goidelic.)

It is from that Brythonic language that the system of counting sheep in the



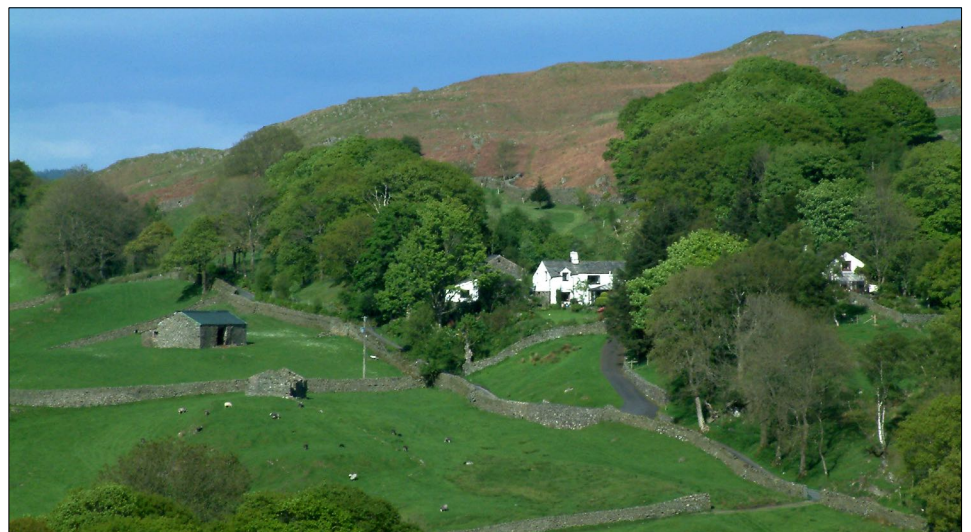
Lake District evolved, and but much has happened since then: in the 500s & 600s the Anglo-Saxons (English) arrived, and in the 800s to 1000 the Norse settled. While place names in the Lakes reveal Brythonic, Anglo-Saxon and Norse influences, the spoken language has been English, with albeit some Norse influence (beck, dale, fell), for a long time. However, not so with the counting of sheep... those Brythonic numbers clung on

through cultural changes and time, until universal education and communication finally whittled away at them.

While there are several variations over the North and in some other areas of England, the most commonly known is given below. Recently a man, whom I have known for a number of years here in Canada, rhymed it off to me. He was born in the 1930s and raised on a sheep farm near Keswick in the Lake District but still knew the counting which he had learnt as a child.

yan, tan, tethera, methera, pimp,
sethera, lethera, hovera, dovera,
dick
yanadick, tanadick, tetheradick,
petheradick, bumfit
yanabumfit, tanabumfit, tether-
abumfit, petherabumfit, jiggit

I wonder if Ransome knew this old counting system? Having read about his love of the Lakes, I am sure that he did... but just left it out of his S, A & D stories.



Secret Water from Above

By Robert Dilley

I have a considerable stock of Ransome-related pictures – Wild Cat, Rio, Holly Howe, the Dog's Home and more. These are a few I took back in 1988 when I spent 8 months as a Visiting Research Fellow at the University of Exeter, living with my family (wife and four daughters then 7, 5, 3 and 1) on the edge of Exmoor. The older girls were already steeped in AR as I read to them virtually every day (also Paddington, Winnie-the-Pooh, etc.) so when we did a family trip to Eastern England we spent a week on a Margoletta cruising the Broads and explored what we could from land of Secret Water. Then, one afternoon, I left the girls on the beach with their mother and hired a small two-seater Cessna to fly me over Secret Water so I could take pictures.

The pictures were taken on 35mm slides with a SLR camera (this was 1988) leaning out of the cockpit. The pilot was very cooperative, and at



Swallow Island

times flew lower than he was supposed to. (When we landed he congratulated me for being so calm throughout; I said I was far too fascinated by the view to be worried.) When I mentioned this exploit in a letter to Roger Wardale he pleaded for

copies of the slides, and in return sent me a signed copy of his book on AR in East Anglia.

Of the five pictures I have positively identified three. Two, so long after the event, simply baffle me. I have com-



Flint Island

pared them to the map in SW and to the Ordnance Survey 1:50 000 map, but to no avail.

Perhaps one of our members can puzzle them out?

Mastodon Island



First unidentified island.
Do you know which one it is?

What about this one?



If you think you know what these last two pictures show, please tell the editor.

Dipping our Hands — Personal relationships with the books

First Fish

By Molly McGinnis

Do you remember catching your first fish? What kind of fish was it? Where did you catch it – a stream, a pond, a lake, an ocean? Maybe even a pay-to-fish pond. Were you on the bank, on a pier, in a boat? How did you catch it – with a worm, a minnow, a spinning lure? Did you bait the hook yourself? Did your mom cook it for your lunch?

Ransome describes the perfect place for perch in the first fishing expedition of the Swallows, according to my resident ichthyologist. “On either side of Swallow they could see the long green streamers of weeds under water... We ought to be just off the edge of them, and where it’s not too deep.” And this was exactly the sort of place where we caught a nice mess of perch – Heart Lake, Minnesota. Here’s a glimpse:



Little Heart lake had nice patches of eelgrass (and a pair of loons cruising with babies on their backs!).

But my first fish came to me from quite a different environment. When I was 5 or 6 years old, we lived just a few miles from Dayton, Ohio’s famous Lakeside Amusement Park.



My dad took me on its wonderful rumbling gravity-powered wooden roller coaster, and on a Ferris wheel like this one. I loved the carousel with its high-spirited hand-carved horses.



But best of all I loved the fishing booth. There was a long tank of constantly moving plastic fish on a low stand, and your ticket bought you a little fishing pole and a certain amount of time to catch a fish. I don’t remember how the fish were caught, but it wasn’t all that easy for a 5-year-old to catch one. (No grownups were al-

lowed to play this game, if I remember.) Finally, I caught one, or my limit, and won...

A goldfish in a glass bowl, to take home.



My goldfish kept me company in the sun room while I recuperated from having my tonsils out. I don’t know what happened to it after that. I hope my parents knew better than to release it into the nearest pond! Released goldfish have become a terrible plague in America. They eat the eggs of more desirable fish and carry diseases native fish are not resistant to.



(Roger was in no danger of finding a goldfish on his hook; released goldfish don’t seem to be a problem in the Lake Country, as far as I could find out.)

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

Reflections of a Gear Junkie

By Alistair Bryden

A few years ago, my daughter decided to go on an all-inclusive holiday to Mexico. She came back saying “Dad! Why did you never tell me there were holidays like this where you didn’t have to sleep in tents and go and be active every single day?” And she was right, since she was very young she was dragged along on multiple adventures, sea kayaking and canoeing, sleeping in tents, etc. She didn’t get exposed to many non-active holidays. Not unsurprisingly, for several years, outdoor adventures were not cool.

But the other day she came looking for tents, sleeping bags, rucksacks, etc. as this summer she is going on a four-day backpacking trip with her friends. Last year she took them all sea-kayaking. She has discovered that she has absorbed a lot of outdoor knowledge and skills, largely through osmosis, and she has access to a lot of equipment. Consequently, she has become the leader of her friends in these adventures; they all think this is pretty cool and fun and admire her abilities. But most importantly, she now has the enthusiasm and will to get out there. Go figure?



I have recently been doing lots of tidying and sorting in anticipation of a move. Part of this has involved pulling out and considering a large set of outdoor equipment for various sports. Inevitably, I have several generations of gear and need to decide what to keep and what to discard. But it also triggered some reflection. When I look at my current equipment, made of aluminum, titanium, plastic and nylon, it is an interesting comparison to the equipment that I started with; my first tent was cotton, my stove was a brass Optimus, burning paraffin/kerosene, my day sac was canvas and my boots were heavy leather. And yet we had fun and enjoyed ourselves. No, I don’t have

much of this original equipment left, though I bet my brother still has the tent, and I still mourn the day sac.

Looking back almost 100 years to the Swallows, they had tents sewed up by their mother, slung from trees and weighted out with stones from the beach. They slept on hay bags and cooked with heavy cast iron pans on open fires, carried their grog in a barrel, and likewise had immense fun.

Going back even further, there would be lots of leather and tin enamel plates. There is a wonderful book called the *Dangerous River* by R. M. Patterson which talks about adventuring into the Canadian Nahanni wilderness (and this really was unexplored wilderness) in the 1920s. He would spend an entire season equipped with only what he could carry in a small canoe, some tea, some salt, some flour, an axe, a tarp and a rifle.

So it’s not about the equipment, in fact one of the advantages of older materials such as wood, leather, and canvas were that, although heavier, they were tougher, and if they did





break they were easier to repair. Fixing a broken aluminum tent pole is a tricky job, while broken plastic gizmos are often unfixable (though it is amazing what can be repaired with some ingenuity.) It's partly about the set of skills and knowledge that you have, although I probably didn't have much of this when I started.

I think ultimately it's about the will, energy and enthusiasm to simply get out and do something... anything, and go from there and keep doing it. It's way too easy to decide that some trip or adventure is too difficult or challenging. Occasionally they are, but most of the time when you try

something, others have been there before you, paving the way. There may even be a guidebook (though it's fun when there isn't a guidebook or you leave it behind).

One of the many things I learned from Arthur Ransome by reading his books was that he made camping and outdoor activities seem totally normal and doable. The characters simply get on with camping, sailing and hiking as they pursue their adventures. His characters had the will, energy and enthusiasm to get out there. The equipment, although carefully described and essential, was only a means to an end.



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

Sailing on Wings — *Extraordinary Birds*

Reviewed by Molly McGinnis

“Why is a bird like a sailing dinghy?”
“Why do you ask?”

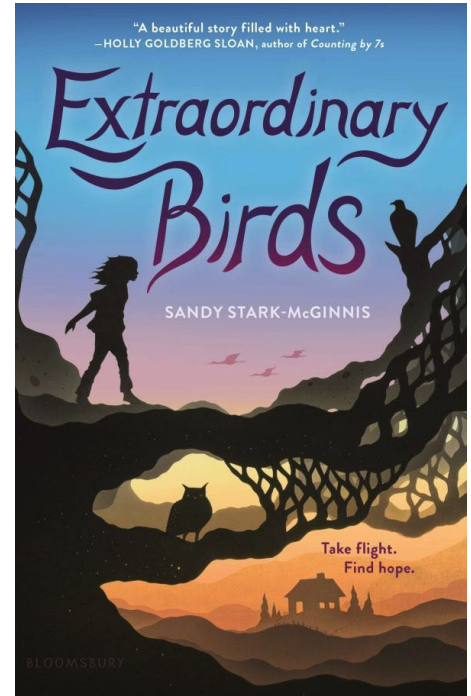
Because a lot of Sandy Stark-McGinnis's novel *Extraordinary Birds* is about how birds fly.

Eleven-year-old December wants to fly as birds fly, on her own wings, and she knows that it's the vacuum above the wings that keeps a bird aloft, just as it's the vacuum in front of a sail that keeps the water purling at the dinghy's heel.

Every human has wished to have wings and fly, all through history, usually with disastrous results. Dedalus's wings of feathers glued with wax fly him to freedom from the Minotaur's prison, but his son Icarus flies so high that the sun melts the wax on his wings and he falls and drowns. Leonardo da Vinci drew plans for wings to attach to a human — and

many humans have tried to fly or glide with wings like da Vinci's, usually with more comical than disastrous results. Maybe they should have tried sailing first, to get a feel for that vacuum pulling their sails — and wings.

December has a different strategy. She's going to fly away to freedom on the wings she knows are budding beneath the scar on her back. She's been passed from one foster home to another and keeps herself aloof and ready to leave each new home, but she knows a lot about birds — December has all but memorized the bird books her mother left when she ran away. In “Bird Girl,” December's novel of her other self, the girl who will fly on her own wings, she works out the math for how wide and long her wings will have to be, and records the ways she tries to make herself as bird-like as possible, light of bone and strong of



muscle. If she does it right, she can jump from a tree and make the scar on her back release the wings budding beneath it. So far, she hasn't gotten it right, and the bruises and sprains get her in a lot of trouble. She's already in quite a lot of trouble. She makes friends with the wrong person in her new school and becomes the target of a ring of bullying girls. Just as she starts to like Eleanor, her latest foster parent, a bird rehabilitator who gives December her first chance to become friends with a real bird...

But that would give too much of the plot away.

When I sat down to look at my advance copy of *Extraordinary Birds*, I stopped a few chapters in and decided to read a chapter or two every night, so

Here's Sandy at her first book signing.



I could savor all the details. The second night, I picked the book up as I sat on the edge of my bed with my pajamas half on, and next thing I knew it was two in the morning and I'd finished the book, shivering half with cold and half with emotion.

As I began to get well into the story, I thought, "This is going to be a book adults will cherish, like the Swallows and Amazons books." Evidently I'm not alone: *Extraordinary Birds* is my grown niece's book club's current book for study. I hope you'll give it a try.



Extraordinary Birds, Bloomsbury Press, May 1, 2019.

In the US the Amazon price is \$11.27 for the 8"x5" trade paperback, and \$11.72 for the beautiful hardback. The Canadian

prices are CDN\$8.24 for the paperback and \$22.99 for the hardcover.

At Amazon UK the price for the paperback is £4.78 and £16.99 for the hardback.

The e-edition is a little less or a little more than the paperback on all sites I looked at.

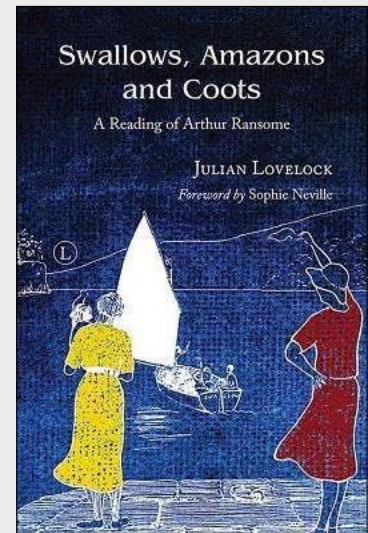
(Full disclosure: The author is my daughter-in-law.)

Swallows, Amazons and Coots

Reviewed by David R. Elms

Upon a recommendation from my Facebook friend Sophie Neville — president of TARS and star of the 1974 *Swallows and Amazons* movie — I downloaded onto my Kobo ereader an excellent book by Julian Lovelock entitled *Swallows, Amazons and Coots*. To anyone who has read or who is about to read the series, I would strongly recommend taking the time to read Lovelock's assess-

ment of Ransome's life and how it was woven into his stories. The historical influences described by Lovelock: the decline of the British Empire, revolution, class structure, gender stereotyping and the influence of the two great world wars, along with the growth of the characters portrayed in the series, can only enhance one's understanding of Ransome's writing skills.



Useful Links

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

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

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



Pieces of Eight — The Junior Pages



Swallows and Amazons Book Series QUIZ!

by Elizabeth Jolley

See if you can answer a series of questions based on quotations from each of the twelve books.

Be careful: the books are not in publication order.

The illustrations come from each of the books, usually from the same chapter as the quotation. But watch out! The picture may give you part of the answer but, just maybe, it might be misleading.

1. “A breath of cold air touched Dick’s face. He woke suddenly to find that Tom was no longer lying beside him, but had got up and turned back a flap of the awning.

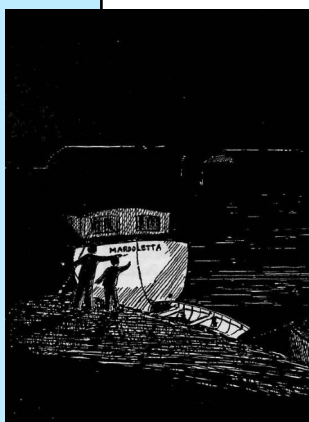
‘Tom.’

‘Keep quiet.’

‘What are you doing?’

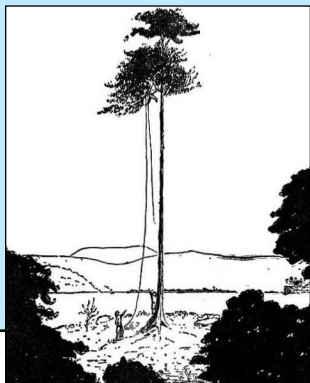
‘Going to see if it’s them or not.’ “

Q: Who is Tom looking for, where are Dick and Tom, and which book is this? from?



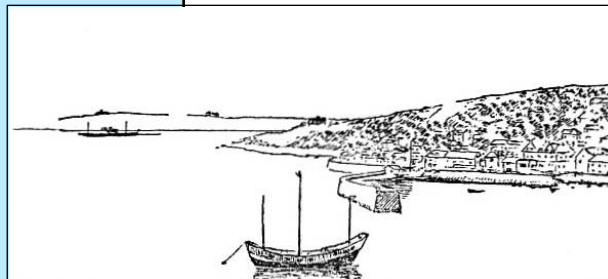
2. “Titty took hold of both parts of the rope, and paying out one and hauling on the other, she brought the _____ down. The rope slid easily over the bough.”

Q: Where is this scene set, what is Titty bringing down, and which book is this from?



3. “With the ancient chart that had belonged to _____’s father, two pocket compasses, the sextant and the nautical almanac, they found their way to _____. Here they sent off a telegram, carefully worded so as not to stir up mothers, just to say they were all well and had changed their ship for a new one.”

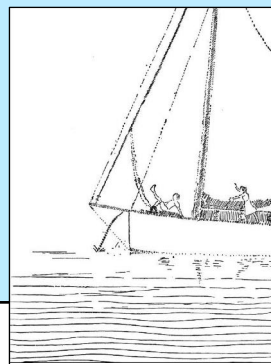
Q: To whose father had the chart belonged, where did they go to send a telegram, and which book is this from?



4. “ ‘What’s happened?’
‘What’s the matter?’

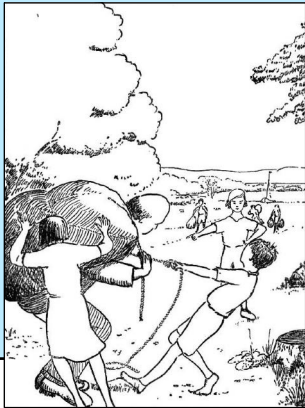
Titty and Roger dodged out of the way as John came tumbling up out of the cabin. John did not really know himself, not for certain. But that that jerk, and the then the queer feeling of something scraping, and then the jerk again had reminded him of a day out fishing long ago, when the _____ had dragged because the rope had not been long enough.”

Q: What's happening, which boat are they in, and which book is this from?



5. “‘It’s all wrong to sing that now,’ said Roger, as _____ got to his feet and they were able to stop pulling. ‘He isn’t a she.’
‘Never mind,’ said _____.
‘No more are anchors or bundles, if it comes to that.’ “

Q: What is it wrong to sing, whose name fits in both blanks, and which book is this from?



6. “ ‘Ever caught a _____ before?’

‘No,’ said _____.

‘You take him,’ said _____, looking over his shoulder.

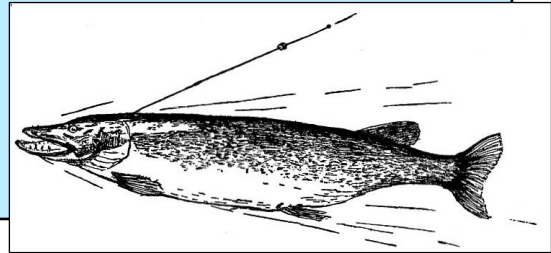
‘How long have you had him on?’ asked the _____.

‘Year or two,’ said _____ shortly.

‘Carry on for another month then,’ said the _____.

‘You’re doing very well.’ ”

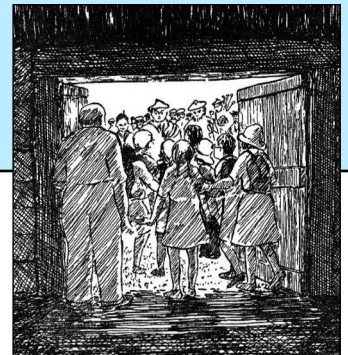
Q: What did they catch, who are the three people talking, and which book is this from?



7. “ ‘There’s nothing we can do,’ said Captain Flint.

‘Yes, there is, and we’ll do it. We can make such a row that they hear us in the house. We aren’t gagged. We’ve got to make the _____ listen to reason. Start yelling. Go on, Uncle Jim. Let yourself go. Go on. You’re hailing a ship in a storm. Ahoy! AHOY!’ ”

Q: Where are they, why are they there, who needs to listen to reason, and which book is this from?



8. “ ‘All hands!’ said _____, as they sat down to breakfast.

‘Wait till they’ve had their porridge,’ said Mother.

‘Oh do tell us now,’ said Titty.

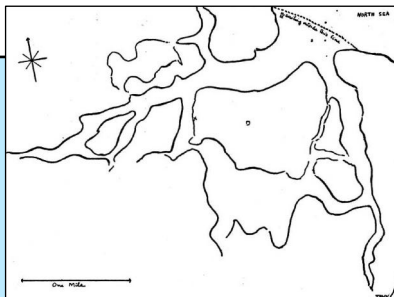
‘You heard what your Mother said.’

‘Oh Mother!’

‘You get your porridge down,’ said Mother. ‘But don’t go and eat it too quickly.’

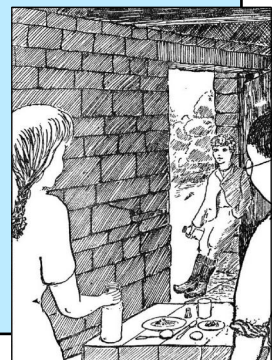
‘Or too slowly,’ said Roger, swallowing fast. ‘Slop it in, _____. _____ doesn’t know how to eat porridge. When you’ve got a mouthful in, don’t just wave the spoon about. Get it filled while you’re swallowing.’ ”

Q: Who said, ‘All hands’, who doesn’t know how to eat porridge, where are they, and which book is this from?



9. “ ‘Bit of a row last night. She told Cook she was being extravagant with milk. Cook held her peace though nearly busting. Yours is to come separately. Give him yesterday’s bottle. Now listen. Orders for the day. Be where I said at two o’clock sharp.’ ”

Q: Who wrote this note, who told Cook she was being extravagant with milk, whose is to come separately, and which book is this from?



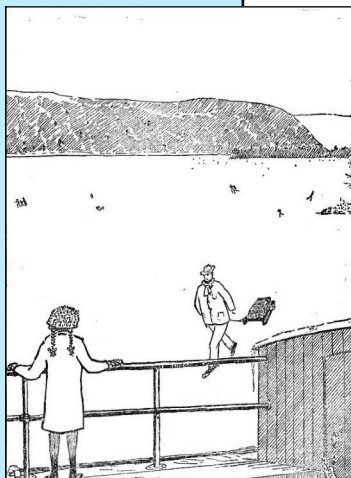
10. “They took the kettle and a jug, and climbed down by the accommodation-ladder.

_____ pushed the ladder back up on deck.

‘Why?’ said _____. ‘We’re just coming back.’

‘Let’s come back as if we had never been here with the others.’ ”

Q: Who pushed the ladder back up, who wondered why, where are they, and which book is this from?



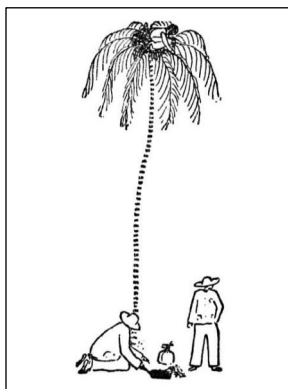
12. “Well, tomorrow, perhaps, the hedgehog would not have to come so far for his evening drink. She lit her torch and hurried down the path.”

Q: Who hurried down the path, what was s/he doing just before this, where did s/he do it, and which book is this from?



11. “ ‘Pearls,’ said the old man. ‘Pearls. Pearls’ll keep till morning. What I wants now is sleep.’ ”

Q: Who is the old man, what ship are they in, what trouble did the pearls bring to the ship, and which book is this from?



Quiz Answers

1. The Hulloboos; Potter

Heigham; *Coot Club*.

2. Lighthouse Tree; the lantern;

Swallows & Amazons.

3. Missie Lee; Singapore; *Missie*

Lee.

4. The anchor started dragging as

the tide came in; they are in

Goblin; *We Didn't Mean to Go to Sea*.

Secret Water.

6. A pike; Bill, Joe and the fisherman; *The Big Six*.

5. “Way, Hay and Up She Rises”; Captain Flint; *Swallowdale*.

7. Locked up in a hut; the natives think they were chasing the deer; the McGinty; *Great Northern?*

8. Daddy; Bridget; Alma Cottage;

Pigeon Post.

12. Titty; dowsing for water; near the campsite next to High Tops;

11. Peter Duck; Wild Cat; Black Jake chasing after them; *Peter Duck*.

Winter Holiday.

10. Dorothea; Dick; the Fram;

Martyrs.

9. Nancy; Great Aunt Maria; Dick & Dorothea's; *The Picts and the*



What do Junior Tars do when they are not joining in TARS events?

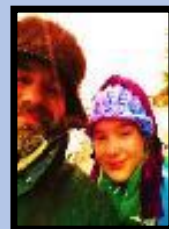
I, for one, have been very busy: studying forest management and how it generally seems that the overriding policy is to extract as much resource from woodland without completely destroying it – but only for purely economic benefit, instead of caring for trees in their own right; I have been practising my French (not unlike Titty in Swallowdale) and Italian language studies; algebra has preoccupied me – a lot!; so have English grammar, punctuation and spelling!; the English monarchy from 1000 A.D. to the present; writing poetry (Highly Commended prize for the 2019 Shepton Mallet Snowdrop Festival; publication in the Stratford upon Avon Literature Festival, April 2019) AND more and more and more and in-between I have been: making art for our own art-exhibition in March, which was a three-week long family ‘artibition,’ for which I made over a dozen works (out of our total of 92); planting things and making ready for planting things at our allotment; camping in the garden; climbing around the Dark Peak of Edale and Kinder Scout in the English Peak District (twice, between 8 and 14 miles) and of course reading more books– and waiting patiently for the next TARS event!



But best of all was when dad and I and my sister Aurora (who joined in on 3 of the walks) started to walk the Gritstone Trail close to home! It would be too much to do it all in one day, being officially 35 and a half miles long (56km), using permissive footpaths but was actually 38 and a half so we planned for around seven walks, doing it in six.

The trail was very hilly but not quite mountainous, with several long (45 minute) ascents and descents, with varying walking surfaces, including boggy, very boggy and really oozing boggy. There is a guide published by our local council which gives route advice and direction details which, deeply frustrating, were not always correct or up to date as some way markers and fingerposts (those that have not deteriorated beyond recognition) have been relocated and some of the route, too. We had to use map and compass on several occasions. The trail is located on the edge of the Peak District.

We passed by old silk mills and dye works, following old railway lines, ridge walks and paths which go over the sandstone and mudstone of the Cheshire Plain. We saw red deer on the moor above Lyme Park, with its 18th-century hunting tower, called, ‘the cage’. The highest point on the trail was Sponds Hill (410m/1345 feet) with fine views to Kinder Scout. In an area called



Bakestonedale, whose name was taken from the bakestones used for baking cakes over an open fire which were quarried here, many quarries of which appeared along the trail, gritstone being used heavily in roadbuilding and housebuilding, some of which are still active. (We passed one which was being used as a firing range, which was a bit unnerving)

There was a bright white monument called White Nancy, a landmark built in 1820 by the Gaskell family to commemorate the Battle of Waterloo. We found patches of Speedwell growing nearby.

Local legends tell of ruthless highwaymen who stalked the lonely hill passes to rob weary travellers! Fortunately, we didn't come across any.

As we were to walk on Sunday mornings, mum would drop us off and pick us up at our destination, so that we didn't have to double our distance. We walked for four and a half miles along a canal until we reached Mow Cop and the Old Man of Mow (referred to as the home of Primitive Methodism), from where there were distant views. On the canal we were following two kingfishers for about half a mile, or they were leading us on! There was a very narrow part to the canal, and it didn't look like a very-narrow narrow boat could pass through, let alone a narrow boat! The next walk was from Mow Cop to a place

Me climbing a stile in
the middle of a field!



called Nick in the Hill or the Castle Inn. There were a lot of cyclists and the weather was very warm and sunny. We found a lovely village, peaceful and quiet, where we saw a twelve-inch-long feather from some sort of bird of prey! One Sunday trek from Bosley Cloud to Bosley Minn was done in a blinding blizzard! We walked down some very slippery hills (so slippery that dad nearly rolled down them, in fact he looked as comical as Laurel or Hardy might have looked in an old film, played at slightly faster speed than actual) to a very muddy track, which became muddier and wetter and stickier and oozier and deeper and closer to water! We then crossed some fields and a very busy road then onto the Cauldon Canal culvert or feeder. It was the muddiest place I had ever seen in my life! It was so thick that our wellies got stuck and the mud went all up our legs until we had completely brown legs! At one point a tree had fallen right across the path (if a mud swamp can

be called a path) and to get past we had to traverse along the edge of the feeder sliding along through until we came out on the other side of the fallen tree! We then walked to Sutton telecommunication mast! The next Sunday we walked to Rainow and through fields and along country lanes until we got to Teggs Nose Country Park where we walked through the former quarry and now open-air museum with giant cutter saw frameworks. From here we dropped down a long and steep edge of ravine and stole our way through several reservoirs. The section of walk between Disley, near to Lyme Park, to Pott Shrigley, near to Rainow, Bollington, a distance of 7 miles, where we saw a trapped calf and several relic, rusting farm vehicles! I would recommend this trail as it covers a fair distance, enough to be too

demanding to complete in one day; it takes in a number of steepes, all with panoramic viewpoints; you pass through a number of local history and heritage sites; the weather doesn't matter – wet just adds to the interest!; there is a further challenge beyond the physical – you have to take care with your map as in several locations the route has altered a little and the way markers are changing from yellow to white and stand now in revised locations! I think that any Tars member would enjoy it (if not too far away) as it is a definite adventure and especially gives you a great skill for finding way-markers and the mapped route shown on the map (with a little guesswork thrown in)! You will be guaranteed some wildlife, whether birds, rabbits, farm animals, mini-beasts, butterflies or even a hare! It might be useful (maybe a burden) to bring a tree-and-animal identification booklet and even some binoculars or a camera as you might be lucky enough to spot a woodpecker, a hare or some harebells, as we did. You might even get an unexpected photograph of a blizzard! It may be a long walk but it is definitely worth it when you reach the finish, wherever the finish may be as we walked some of it backwards; you will have been across all sorts of different terrain and will be an expert at recognising what different weather is coming over and what to pack and wear for a mud swamp! Did the Swallows and Amazons have to cope with so much in *Swallowdale* or *Pigeon Post*?

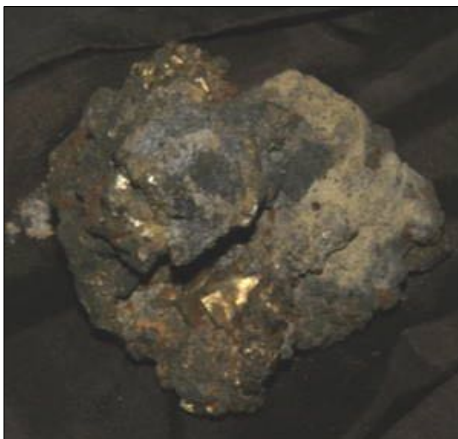


No Moss on Uncle Jim! – Part 2

By Molly McGinnis

Souvenirs in Uncle Jim's houseboat and his study in the Blackett house give clues to Uncle Jim's travels. The houseboat burglary gives the most clues. We investigated some of them in the last issue, but there are many more objects in the houseboat and study. Uncle Jim had quite a collection of weapons in the houseboat: assegais from Africa, tomahawks from North America, boomerangs from Australia. The houseboat must have been a wonderful place! There were shark's-tooth necklaces from New Zealand, a model catamaran from Ceylon (now Sri Lanka). I like to think that most of Uncle Jim's souvenirs came not from souvenir stalls but were given or bartered for – or won – from the peoples who made them.

First, the reason for it all: “dark stones with glitters of metal” in Uncle Jim's study.



This dark stone is copper ore, and its bits of metal are like the glitter in quartz that so disappointed the young prospectors – and turned out to be the copper that Uncle Jim and Timothy were hoping to find all along. Small amounts of ore were melted in ceram-

ic crucibles like these. “Take the lot,” Peggy says to Dick when the prospectors raid Uncle Jim's study.



Uncle Jim has at least two assegais. Assegais are war and hunting spears used over most of Africa. Ours is from Kenya. It has an iron rod base with a very sharp point, a blade worked from the same iron, and a not very sturdy seeming stick in the middle. It will stand by itself pushed into even hard ground. The Zulus learned early on to hack at the trunks of the assegai tree – *Curtisia dentata*, a dogwood relative – so the tree would make long straight shoots for spear shafts.

The knobkerry (sounds Irish, doesn't it?) is another ancient



African weapon – its name is Afrikaans. A knobkerry can be thrown to bring down game (or people) or used as a club, to bonk an enemy. In some tribes, young boys took a knobkerry home with them after the long initiation trial: “Now I am a man!” A knobkerry is made from a very special branch, one that has grown out of a knot.

This assegai and knobkerry are at least 60 years old. My husband brought them home from Africa in 1970 and they were old then. The knobkerry is one piece of wood – the seam is where the branch came from the knot.



The angled boomerang that mysteriously returns to the thrower isn't the only kind – though it instantly became the tourist model and a symbol of Australia, decorating all sorts of products.

Boomerangs are as old as creation to a native Australian. The gods shaped the landscape by throwing boomerangs into the earth. They've been used by humans for 20,000 years, for war, for hunting, for toys, as percussion instruments, as digging sticks, as fire starting sticks. They can bring down large animals like kangaroos, birds, and even fish. I like to think that one of Uncle Jim's boomerangs was a

beautiful hunting boomerang, and he'd certainly have had one of the decorated kinds. This decorated boomerang in the National Museum of Australia is from the 19th century or earlier.



At least one of the sharks' tooth necklaces could also have come from Down Under. Sharks were important in the culture of the Maori people of New Zealand and they made necklace of the teeth of the biggest kinds. This Maori necklace would have been 60 years old in the time of the Swallows and Amazons – maybe Uncle Jim bargained for one like it when he was prospecting for gold and copper in New Zealand.



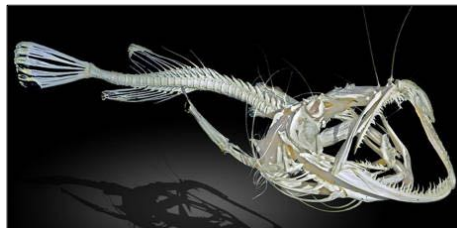
By the time Uncle Jim got to North America, the tomahawk of the Eastern Amerind tribes had spread across the United States and Canada. It was a tool and a throwing (or bashing) weapon, originally made by lashing a stone head to a wooden shaft. As soon as the Europeans brought iron, tomahawks got fancier and many included

a pipe bowl. A pipe would be shared in religious ceremonies or sometimes to seal a treaty, so Europeans knew the ceremonial pipes as “peace pipes,” and pipe tomahawks, with their contrasting peace and war sides, became popular presentation items.



The leopard skin shield is the most puzzling piece of weaponry Uncle Jim had. Leopard skins are thin and supple, not very suitable for war – tough heat-treated leather from a large hoofed animal were the normal shield covers. Was Uncle Jim's leopard skin shield for ceremonies only, or made for tourists, or did Ransome simply remember seeing this very unshield-like shield in the British Museum and consign it to the Fram?

When prospectors of *Pigeon Post* raid Uncle Jim's study for assaying equipment they see “spears, shields, a knoberry, and the jawbone of a big fish.”



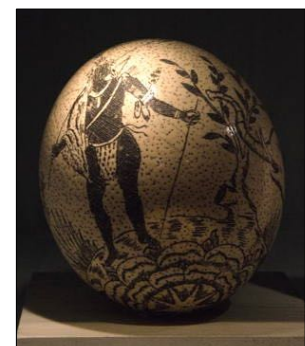
It must have been an interesting jaw, for Uncle Jim to go to the trouble of getting such a fragile thing home to the Lake. The largest fish don't have

very interesting jaws – they are filter-feeders on tiny plankton plants and animals, or crush shellfish, or suck up jellyfish. Some sharks (not as many as you'd think) have interesting teeth but sharks have cartilaginous skeletons – made of the same material as the ends of chicken bones, and I'm not sure how well a shark jaw would hold up in the damp air of the Lakes.

There's one large fish that has a very interesting head and jaw, though – *Lophia piscatorius*, the largest of the monkfish and anglerfish group.

Either jaw of this 6 1/2 footer would be about 2 feet each way, and if I found one on a beach I'd certainly want to take it home! Or it may have appeared in a bazaar somewhere, nicely cleaned and bleached.

There must have been an ostrich egg. No one comes back from Africa without an ostrich egg.



This decorated water-carrying ostrich egg from South Africa was a museum piece even in Uncle Jim's day, the Swedish museum date is 1799.

The warrior seems to be carrying an assegai and a knoberry! Evaporation

through the slightly porous shell kept the water cool, like the canvas water bags of my childhood.



No one dreamed of crossing the American deserts without a water bag, for filling the car radiator and to hang in the back windows of the car to cool and darken the child space. We sipped at the strange canvas-flavored water occasionally, too. I'm sure it tasted a lot better than water carried across a hot desert in the inside of an egg!

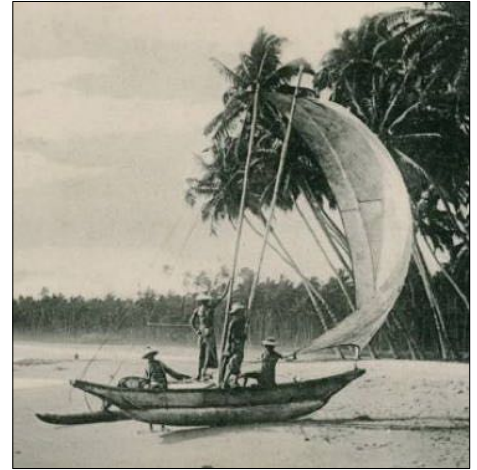
And we mustn't forget Timothy. "We've been looking through the natural history books, and we're pretty sure it must be an armadillo."



Mounted armadillos were popular in Victorian times, and I'm rather surprised that Uncle Jim didn't have one. This South American Giant Armadillo mount is from the early 19th century.

Armadillos are abundant throughout the southern parts of the United States. They are energetic diggers for worms and other invertebrates, but may be most familiar as roadkill. Getting in the way of motor vehicles is a major talent with armadillos. When my family traveled through the American South in the 1950's traffic was slower and armadillos perhaps less abundant, but we excitedly examined the first traffic casualty we saw and stared at dried and mounted armadillos in the roadside stores.

Uncle Jim must have brought some curios from the house by the time the houseboat became the Fram, in *Winter Holiday*. We've seen everything but



the "model catamaran from Ceylon." The catamarans of Sri Lanka were famous and the design was used for everything from houseboats to small and large fishing skiffs. Measured by the height of the men, this one looks to be about 18 feet.

Luckily, the most important souvenir of all was safely with the campers on Wildcat Island when the burglary happened.

The turquoise-fronted Amazon Parrot is one of the most popular for pets, and is common in much of South America. But I'm not sure it quite looks like the Amazons' parrot, though we do know that that one's green.



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