



SIGNALS FROM T•A•R•S•U•S

November 2003

This is the Autumn 2003 issue of *Signals from TARSUS*. It is intended to accompany *Ship's Log*, *Mixed Moss* and *Outlaw*. In the U.K. *Ship's Log* was distributed in late November and the other two will mail in early December, here in the U.S. we will combine everything into a single mailing to our members once we have all three publications. In this issue we have the first of what I hope will be an on-going series of articles on "namesake animals" from Molly McGinnis in addition to our regular column from Mary Wessel Walker and some other items.

Strong Plea for Feedback: While I need contributions and regularly whine (that's whinge for U.K. and other non-US readers) about needing more articles, I really need feedback about what I do print. Do you like the quizzes from TARS Canada? The Ransome Readers Recommend column (unfortunately absent this time)? What would you like to see (and would you be willing to help – obligatory advert.)? So drop me an e-mail or a note, or give me a call. Please. If you can send something, even better.

–Dave Thewlis, Editor

Welcome

A warm welcome to Joan Blum; Ben Burwell; Lucius Kirst; and Erik Skagestad.

Exchange Rate

The value of the U.S. dollar against foreign currencies has continued to drop, and we have been forced to adjust the exchange rate we are using so the U.K. doesn't lose money on TARSUS. Effective 1 October, the new exchange rate for TARSUS is **\$1.70 = £1.00**.

This applies for everything TARSUS members pay for through the Coordinator, including membership application and renewal, TARS Stall items, etc.

Membership Renewals

Renewals are due as of 1 January 2004. If your membership is up for renewal, you will find a Membership Renewal Form in this packet along with this newsletter. (If you joined after 1 October 2003, pay by Direct Banker's Order in the U.K., or have already paid, you won't get a form and don't have to do anything.) The new rates are:

Junior:	\$8.50	Adult:	\$34.00
Student:	\$17.00	Family:	\$42.50
Pensioner:	\$25.50	Corporation:	\$68.00

I encourage you to send in your renewal form and dues **now** rather than waiting and possibly forgetting. Every year a few people lose their forms or forget, and wind up missing one or more publications as a result.

Résumés

If you haven't sent one please do so; it is always fascinating to learn about fellow Ransome enthusiasts.

Amazon Publications

The 2003 Amazon Publication, "Jibbooms and Bobstays: A Miscellany for Readers of the Twelve Children's Books of Arthur Ransome" is out, and those who subscribed and received it have been very pleased. The book is now available from the TARS Stall as long as copies last.

The 2004 Amazon Publication does not yet have a title, but the advance information says "we hope to bring together all the available correspondence concerning the Swallows and Amazons series" (including correspondence between Ransome and the Altounyans, Ransome and his publisher, Ransome and advisors, some fan letters from children and Ransome's responses), illustrated by contemporary photographs, sketches and facsimiles.

If you wish to subscribe prior to publication, please send \$30 to cover the book plus air post to the United States to the Coordinator (information at the end of this newsletter) and indicate on your check that it is for the 2004 Amazon Publication. I've already received several subscriptions; I anticipate you will be able to subscribe until late spring or early summer of next year.

Feature Column: Ransome Readers Recommend

I didn't have a contribution for this newsletter, and am sufficiently rushed at this time that I can't write another one myself. Here is a place where you can really contribute to your fellow members, especially Juniors, by writing a brief (2-3 paragraph) review of a book that you really liked and which you think other TARS members will enjoy..

It's time for new books, new readers, and new reviews.

Containers for Audio Tapes

Like many of us, I've have acquired the audio tapes of the Swallows and Amazons books read by Gabriel Woolf, as they are offered by the TARS Stall. They are really wonderful; however, they come in double-cassette "jewel boxes" which are fairly fragile, worse even than regular cassette tape boxes, and are very prone to cracking or having the pins on the lids break off.

I recently found a very attractive alternative on the internet – "industrial strength" commercial cassette tape "albums.". These "albums" are the size and shape of a rental VCR tape box, and open the say way. Inside they are molded to have slots for multiple cassette tapes. You can get them for different capacities; I purchased boxes set up for 4 cassette tapes, which gave me one box per book.

I happened to find "Cassette House" via a search on the Internet; they charged me \$17.50 for a "10 Pack Audio Cassette Album (white)" – even with shipping, the total came to about \$2.75 per album, which holds all four tapes securely and safely. And the albums have an external transparent sleeve, so you can slip in a title or picture.

TARSUS Events in 2004?

No, I'm not announcing any, but I encourage everyone to think about it next year. Although we have several areas in the U.S. with groupings of TARSUS (see the map in the May 2003 Signals from TARSUS) we haven't gotten very far with actually getting together with one another. Possibly this is because we keep reading of the wonderful sailing, camping, etc. events the U.K. regions have, but it doesn't have to be that complicated.

Why not contact other local TARSUS and invite folks over for an evening of Ransome Reminiscences. With luck someone will have the *Swallows and Amazons* movie, and maybe *Coot Club* and *The Big Six* as well, to keep the Juniors occupied (and adults also, to tell the truth).

Namesake Animals from the Swallows & Amazons Books

Molly McGinnis

Swallow: Barn Swallow (*Hirundo rustica*)

The Walkers' Swallow burgee (flag) sails the world --if you count the "made-up" stories *Peter Duck & Missee Lee*. The Swallows' crew has a big part in every book (even when they're not there --where does the final big excitement in *The Picts and the Martyrs* come from?). But where is the living bird? The nearest I can find to a living swallow is when Roger thinks "like swallows sitting on a telephone wire". The only way I can explain it is that maybe when Ransome started writing the books he wasn't nearly as bird-conscious as he became later.

The picture Ransome designed for the Swallows' burgee is clearly a Barn Swallow (*Hirundo rustica*). You can tell by the long "coat-tails" that are so clearly shown in the flag drawings. On the real bird, the "tails" are very thin and not as easy to see as you might think. The Barn Swallow it is the most abundant swallow in the world. In Britain and Europe it is very white on its underside, just like the Swallows' swallow. In North America, Barn Swallows' bellies are bright orangey-pink (adult males) or pinkish cream (in females), but otherwise they're just the same as the Barn Swallow you would see in Britain or Europe. When Barn and Cliff Swallows fly you'll see the blackish back flashing brilliant steely blue-black as the bird swoops and tilts in the sun. The dark red around the cheeks and throat is hard to see even when the bird sits and lets you stare at it through binoculars.

In North America you have to look closely to tell a Barn Swallow from the Cliff Swallow. A Cliff Swallow doesn't have the long "coat-tails" -- just a shallow fork or dent in the tail. They are a little chunkier and a little paler beneath, and they often flock with and sit with Barn Swallows. There's no worry about telling Barnies and Cliffies apart in Europe as a sighting of a Cliff Swallow would be very unusual, a "vagrant" bird perhaps blown far east of its range by a spring storm.

Swallows come to North America, the British Isles and Europe only in summer. They nest, raise their young on our summer insects, and return to South Africa (in the case of the Eurasian Barn Swallow) or South America (American Barn Swallows). Even though the colors of the Eurasian and American Barn Swallows are so different, they are considered the same species.

One of the swallow's favorite foods is mosquitoes and an average swallow can wipe out 6000 mosquitoes a day. The other reason you see big flocks of swallows near water is that they gather mud pellets for their nests from the edges of puddles, ponds, and riverbanks. If you look under bridges or freeway overpasses that are near water you may see the great clusters of lumpy round nests. Swallows aren't bothered by having people around but people may be bothered by large numbers of Barn and Cliff Swallows messily making their mud nests under the eaves of their houses and barns! Luckily, North American swallows are protected by the Migratory Bird Treaty Act of 1918 and fussy housekeepers can't legally destroy their nests.

There are other swallows in Britain and Europe, but they must be seen only infrequently. I searched the Web on species names and turned up descriptions and pictures only for the Barn Swallow and Sand Martin (Bank Swallow in the US: *Riparia riparia*). I hope that Dick someday came to California and drifted down a river where he could see all six of the starred (*) swallow species below in a few summer hours! Here are the British and American names of some species:

UK = United Kingdom

NA= North America

* Swallows you could see along a California river

***Swallow** (UK); **Barn Swallow** (NA) *Hirundo rustica*

***Cliff Swallow** (NA; very rarely seen in UK) *Hirundo pyrrhonota* (now *Petrochelidon pyrrhonota*)

***Sand Martin** (UK); **Bank Swallow** (NA) *Riparia riparia*

***Tree Swallow** (both) *Tachycineta bicolor*

***Violet-green Swallow** (Western NA only) *Tachycineta thalassina*

***Northern Rough-winged Swallow** (NA only) *Stelgidopteryx serripennis*

Crag Martin (UK & Europe only) *Ptyonoprogne rupestris*

Red-rumped Swallow (UK & Europe only) *Hirundo daurica*

House Martin (UK & Europe only) *Delichon urbica*

Purple Martin (*Progne subis*) (NA): different genera but House & Purple Martin behave much alike

Cave Swallow (*Petrochelidon fulva*) occurs in South Texas and in a few spots in the southwest; **Bahama Swallow** (*Tachycineta cyaneoviridis*) is occasional in the far south of Florida. All other American swallows are widespread over the United States, except the Purple Martin, which is more abundant in the Midwest and East.



From TARS Canada

Here are the answers for the quiz on *Winter Holiday* from our August issue, along with the fifth quiz, on *Coot Club*. Three million more cheers for TARS Canada for allowing us to crib off their newsletter!

WINTER HOLIDAY - Answers to the Questions

ONE POINT

1.1 Twelve; 1.2 Upside-down on trestles near the shore; 1.3 Nancy and Peggy; 1.4 Nancy; 1.5 A sheet of roofing iron; 1.6 Dick; 1.7 Squares of black and yellow; 1.8 Play with dolls; 1.9 Seals; 1.10 Buzzards; 1.11 "A bit of strengthening chocolate taken from his own share"; 1.12 Titty; 1.13 A Dutchman; 1.14 A mitten; 1.15 Their food; 1.16 Nancy.

TWO POINTS

2.1 Silas; 2.2 Three flashes with the lantern; 2.3 Waved a stick with a white handkerchief attached to signal peace; 2.4 Gone to Malta to see Captain Walker; 2.5 Mrs Blackett; 2.6 Dick; 2.7 Titty; 2.8 By the red patch on its left shoulder; 2.9 Nansen; 2.10 Titty; 2.11 "Wolves"; 2.12 Locusts; 2.13 On the beams under the roof of the boathouse; 2.14 Hot meat pies; 2.15 She saw their Morse signal NP; 2.15 To hoist the quarantine flag on the flagpole.

THREE POINTS

3.1 Roy; 3.2 She was baking pork pies; 3.3 The dust jacket from Dick's astronomy book; 3.4 In Egypt, digging up remains; 3.5 North cone over diamond; 3.6 Deduced that the doctor had not passed from study of the tire tracks in the snow; 3.7 Geography; 3.8 "It's lucky it's not the football term.... A month might make just the difference about getting into the fifteen"; 3.9 *The Riddle of the Sands* [Erskine Childers]; 3.10 Loganberry; 3.11 Fram : Igloo :: 10,000 : 1; 3.12 "Who is sleeping in the Fram?"; 3.13 Ringman; 3.14 Bears; 3.15 "Trespassers will be hanged, like the last"; 3.16 Nancy split a plank from the packing case for firewood.

COOT CLUB

ONE POINT

1.1 How did Dick, Dorothea and Mrs Barrable get from Wroxham to the *Teasel* the day of the Callums' arrival?

1.2 Where was Mrs Barrable born?

1.3 What breed of dog was William?

1.4 What was the name of Tom's punt?

1.5 What was the name of the Farlands' housekeeper?

1.6 When Tom hid his punt by *Teasel*, where was William?

1.7 Port and Starboard call their father "A.P." What did the initials stand for?

1.8 What was William's favourite treat?

1.9 What was the name of the long pole used for pushing boats along on the Broads?

1.10 What was the name of the little motor tug that took Port and Starboard down Breydon Water?

1.11 What colours were the channel marker posts on Breydon Water?

1.12 What was the Norfolk name for the type of sudden squall that hit the *Teasel* between Beccles and Oulton?

1.13 Who sent the telegram that caught them up at Oulton, asking whether the twins were with them on *Teasel*?

- 1.14 What was William given to fend off a chill after the storm on Oulton Broad and again after crossing the mud on Breydon Water?
- 1.15 Why did the *Margoletta's* engine race like that of an airplane after the boat crashed into the post on Breydon Water?
- 1.16 What happened to the *Margoletta's* dinghy immediately after the wreck on Breydon Water?

TWO POINTS

- 2.1 What is the name of the river that runs past Wroxham and Horning?
- 2.2 What kind of fish did Dr Dudgeon have for a weathercock?
- 2.3 What was the name of the skipper of the wherry *Sir Garnet*?
- 2.4 What was the number of the nest of the special coot, the one with the white feather?
- 2.5 What did Tom tell the Death and Glories to do while he went to cast off the *Margoletta*?
- 2.6 What was the speed limit on the river through Horning village?
- 2.7 What were Port and Starboard's real names, and which was which?
- 2.8 How did Port distract the Hullabaloo from seeing *Teasel* when the boat was in Ranworth dyke?
- 2.9 Why did Tom take *Titmouse* on his own to Wroxham, before they all went off on the trial voyage?
- 2.10 What two things were done to disguise *Titmouse* before the voyage south?
- 2.11 When they were leaving Ranworth, why did Starboard insist that Dick or Dorothea, not Tom, should go ashore to get the bow anchor?
- 2.12 What was the name of the place where they stopped for breakfast after the *Teasel's* dawn flight from Potter Heigham?
- 2.13 What was the first name of Jim Wooddall's mate?
- 2.14 What was the name of the lonely inn at the south end of Breydon Water?
- 2.15 What was the name and home port of the sea-going barge that took Port and Starboard to Beccles?
- 2.16 What boatyard owned the *Margoletta*?

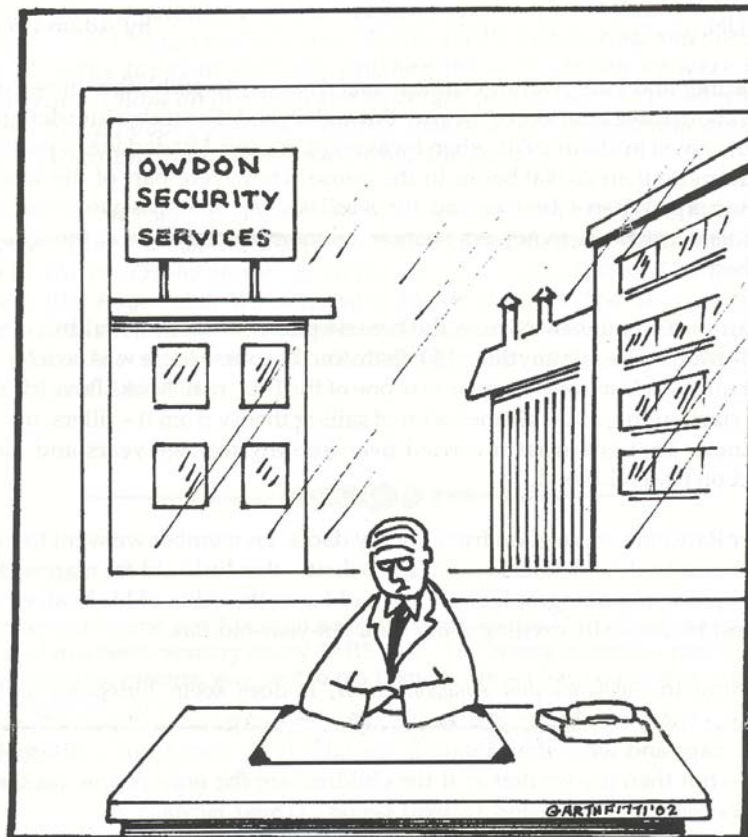
THREE POINTS

- 3.1 What was the name of the station in Norwich where Dick and Dorothea first met Tom?
- 3.2 When Dick and Dorothea were visiting Mrs Barrable, where were their parents?
- 3.3 What kind of bird was the first Dick saw from the train on the way to Wroxham, and what did Tom say it was doing?
- 3.4 What was Mrs Barrable's brother doing, that he could not be with the *Teasel*?
- 3.5 What did Mrs Barrable whisper to William to set him barking at the *Margoletta*?
- 3.6 What woke Dick and Dorothea, their first morning aboard *Teasel*?
- 3.7 The first day *Teasel* was lying low in Ranworth Broad, who came visiting?

- 3.8 Why didn't the Coot Club lookout at Acle warn that the *Margoletta* was coming up river?
- 3.9 When they found the fortune-telling weighing machine at Potter Heigham, what was William's fortune?
- 3.10 What did Mrs Barrable buy at the Acle Bridge Provision Boat to give to the Coot Club's inefficient sentinel there?
- 3.11 Where did Port and Starboard count on catching *Teasel* when chasing her in the wherry?
- 3.12 What were the names of the captain and mate of the sea-going barge that took Port and Starboard to Beccles?
- 3.13 Name three of the knots, ties and splices that Mr Hawkins demonstrated to the crew of the *Teasel*.
- 3.14 What was the first shipment sent by the aerial ropeway over the Breydon mud between from *Teasel* to *Titmouse*?
- 3.15 Who were the only three members of the *Margoletta's* crew to be named?
- 3.16 How much did the hot baths at Oulton cost?

And also from TARS Canada:

And now for something completely different.... Another wonderful Garth Hutton cartoon (how did we ever live without them)?



The people of Horning often wondered what had become of George

From our 10-Gong Contributing Editor Mary Wessel Walker:

How I was Introduced to Ransome

A resume, of sorts.

Most TARS have a good story about their first meeting with the Swallows and the Amazons. It's always fun to read the resumes submitted to TARSUS; it was such a good idea to collect them. It's strange what a profound impact such simple children's books have had on such a wide range of people. Now, I'm going to tell my own story.

Growing up, my sister Margaret and I were very fortunate to be surrounded by people reading to us. Mostly my mom read to us all the time, a great variety of classic children's books. She read us everything from Laura Ingalls Wilder to E. Nesbit to C. S. Lewis. I remember my dad reading us Peter Pan. My older sister, nine years older than me, read to us sometimes as well. We were also blessed to have Granny, my father's mother, living with us throughout my childhood. We went downstairs to "Granny's Place" to see her, and she would give us cheese crackers and ginger ale, and read to us. Mostly she read us Ransome. We'd never been sailing but we'd done a lot of camping, so Granny started by reading us Swallowdale because she thought we'd relate to it better because it had more camping in it. I remember being a bit confused by the opening passages, but we were soon swept away in the story. We read right through all of the books twice, and afterwards we repeated favorites long after we learned to read ourselves. I remember my mom coming downstairs to call us to dinner and my sister and I begging for just one more chapter.

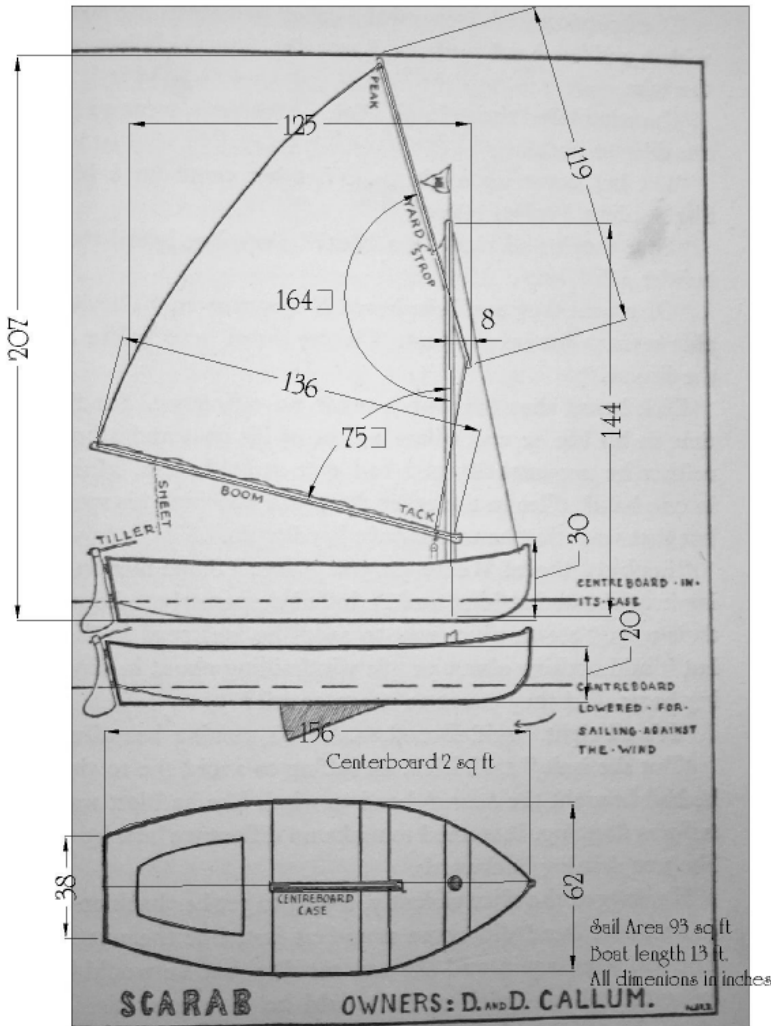
The books had been favorites of my dad's during his childhood, so frequently we'd come upstairs after hearing a chapter and tell him where we'd left off. He always seemed to remember the part we were at. When my parents went out in the evening, Granny was our babysitter, and we could make her read for the whole evening. Even when she said it was time for us to go to bed, she'd read as we took our baths and brushed our teeth. Other times, as we listened to the stories, we drew pictures of the characters and places we were hearing about. I think there's something very universal about Ransome's work.

Margaret and I had never gone sailing, but we still loved to play Ransome-related games, pretending to be the Amazons, or making up our own group of explorers. We made maps every time we went on vacation and in our own backyard. We talked about natives and pemmican. We pretended to make campfires. I still tell myself to "Buck up, you tame galoot!" when I need it. It wasn't until after Granny moved to a nursing home that we read through the Ransome books again as a whole family when I was in middle school. This time, my mom read aloud to my dad, Margaret, and I. After reading the books together, we decided to learn to sail, and began to think about buying a boat.

It's hard to exactly define the influence that Ransome's books have had on me. Obviously, they inspired my family to learn to sail and things like that, but I think that there are other ways in which they've had an influence on who I am. Ransome's stories have so many small things in them which one absorbs without noticing them: the way the children treat each other, their self-sufficiency, the respect all the characters pay one another, the values of honor, loyalty, and honesty and the standards to which the children hold themselves. I hope that I've taken these things to heart, because they are part of who I want to be.

About the Author: Mary Wessel Walker is a (very busy!) sophomore Philosophy major and Mathematics minor at Bryn Mawr College, just outside of Philadelphia.

And finally, one more item also from Canada. If you are familiar with the Arthur Ransome discussion site TARBOARD, you've read the debates between Ed Kiser in Florida and John Nichols in Texas about details in the books (especially the layout of Beckfoot). John is an Engineering Professor and has been using his skills and his computer to recreate some of the places and boats. Robert Dilley, the *North Pole News* editor, asked John to send him example, and herein is his reconstruction of *Scarab*, with his explanation.



"The procedure is as follows. Ed Kiser takes a photograph of the page; he has a great camera. I load it as an object in AutoCAD.

"Then the fun starts, you need at least one dimension. In this case the boat is 13 feet long. I can develop a scale for the drawing from the data that are entered into the dimstyle command in AutoCAD. The remaining dimensions are then calculated by AutoCAD to the accuracy requested.

"So within about 10 minutes I know the dimensions. I use this information as a cross check on the redesign of the *Swallow* because we do not have a sketch for the *Swallow* and I wish to build a copy of the *Swallow*.

"A similar technique works with picture sketches of Beckfoot, with the main difference that the dimensions are relative to the vanishing point and are equal on a plane at a set distance from the vanishing point. This is interesting to work out but with all the redundancy it is not impossible, just tedious."

- John Nichols



Fare Well until 2004! Remember to send in your membership renewals!

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