



## Signals from TARSUS & North Pole News--Sept. 2012

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**Until next issue**

By Elizabeth Jolley

## Ship's Papers--Important Information for the crew



### A View from the Helm

By Robin Marshall, TARSUS Coordinator

Another summer has passed us by. I hope you all had an enjoyable one, and in locations that have been very hot, were able to keep reasonably cool. I hope to hear of your travels and vacations either in this issue or future ones. Myself down here in Florida I am now looking forward to cooler less humid days, usually the most delightful time of the year.

As I am sure you aware from the current edition of Signals, at the last IAGM it was decided an increase in subscriptions had to be made. The Society was suffering losses, which could not continue; we are all noticing the increase in the cost of things in the past few years particularly in mailing and printing. I am sorry if this causes hardship in these times when things are not easy, especially for those on fixed incomes. Below are the dollar amounts for paying directly to me by check. I should point out a small amount can be saved by paying direct via PayPal, on which you can also use a credit card. The actual cost will vary with exchange rate of that day:

**Junior \$17.50**  
**Adult \$52.50**

**Student \$35.00**  
**Family \$67.25**

**Senior \$35.00**  
**Corporate \$105.00**

**NOTE: These prices will take effect January 1st, 2013**

I would like to point out: the Society operates on a purely volunteer basis. No salaries are paid. It is the dedicated work by a few that keeps the Society going. We appreciate your support in this matter.

Please welcome the following new members:  
Jozi Gullickson, Nevada City, CA

Lewis Wolcott, Mount Vernon, WA  
Charles Sullivan, San Francisco, CA

Welcome aboard to you all!

Have a fine Fall, Robin



### Greetings from the North

By Harry Miller, TARSCanada Coordinator

Other than a tree falling and damaging our house and a bout of the flu (I wasn't tested but a nearby community had many people tested for West Nile antibodies and 97% were positive) we've had a good summer.

Canadian Tar Ross McKee and his daughter Ana attended the

IAGM and the team that Ross joined was the winner of The Dick Callum Cup. Ross modestly states that his contribution was to stay out of the way of everyone else. When he brought the cup home to Canada (Toronto) he emailed me and on short notice I was able to collect the motley crew seen in the picture.

As Adam was making a trip to The UK quite soon he volunteered to return the cup to the next member of the team. His account of this trip follows. He no doubt thinks that he is now absolved from writing about Swallowdale for the next issue of Signals from Tarsus. He isn't.



*Harry Miller, Ross McKee, Clive Oakes, Adam Quinan*

Cheers, Harry

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## Membership Information:

### **Member Benefits**

The descriptions below apply to **TARSUS** and **TARS Canada\*\*** only. Members in other countries receive the publications listed, with the exception of Signals from TARSUS, and pay their local equivalent of the UK prices. **Subscription prices will change to the higher amount listed under each category as of January 1, 2013:**

**FAMILY Member:                 \$44.00 (2012)                 \$62.75 (2013)**

Family Members receive the following publications:

Mixed Moss, the yearly Literary Magazine

Signals, the news from UK Regions and headquarters, and some overseas groups, three times per year

Outlaw, the newsletter for Junior members

Signals from TARSUS, the quarterly newsletter of TARSUS & TARS Canada.

With a Family Membership, it is necessary to register the names of all members of the family.

**ADULT Member:                 \$35.00 (2012)                 \$52.50 (2013)**

Adult Members receive Mixed Moss, Signals and Signals from TARSUS.

**SENIOR Member:                 \$26.50 (2012)                 \$35.00 (2013)**

Over 65 years of age you are eligible for Senior Membership & receive the same publications as Adult Members.

**STUDENT Member:                 \$17.50 (2012)                 \$35.00 (2013)**

Student members must be engaged in full-time study. They receive the same publications as Adult Members.

**JUNIOR Member:                 \$9.00 (2012)                 \$17.50 (2013)**

Junior members, under 17 years of age, receive Signals and Signals from TARSUS, plus Outlaw.

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**To apply for TARSUS membership, please complete the Application Form (next page).**

**Send it with your remittance to:**

**Robin Marshall 210 18th St NW Bradenton FL 34205-6845**

[robin@arthur-ransome.org](mailto:robin@arthur-ransome.org)

or join online at: <http://arthur-ransome.org/join/index>

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**To apply for TARS Canada membership, contact:**

**Harry Miller 284 Kingswood Road, Toronto, ONT M4E 3N7**

[harryandmarymiller@rogers.com](mailto:harryandmarymiller@rogers.com)

or join online at: <http://arthur-ransome.org/join/index>

**THE ARTHUR RANSOME SOCIETY in the USA**

***-APPLICATION FOR MEMBERSHIP-***

Surname (Mr. / Mrs. / Miss / Ms / Dr): \_\_\_\_\_

First Name(s): \_\_\_\_\_

Birth date (**Mandatory if applying for Junior Membership**): \_\_\_\_\_

Names and birth dates of junior Family Members (if you wish to receive birthday cards!):  
\_\_\_\_\_

Postal Address: \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

Postcode: \_\_\_\_\_

Telephone: \_\_\_\_\_

E- Mail address: \_\_\_\_\_

Subscription amounts are current as of January 2011 for US residents and based on an average exchange rate with UK.

Please clearly mark below the type of membership desired:

- |   |   |
|---|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> JUNIOR (up to 16 <sup>th</sup> birthday), \$9.00 | <input type="checkbox"/> SENIOR (Over 65 Years of age), \$26.50 |
| <input type="checkbox"/> STUDENT (In full-time education), \$17.50        | <input type="checkbox"/> ADULT, \$35.00                         |
| <input type="checkbox"/> FAMILY, \$44.00                                  |   |

Signature: \_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_ / \_\_\_ / \_\_\_

Do you wish to be included on a membership list that is sent to other members? Circle: **YES** **NO**

Optional details: your age, occupation and a brief profile that we can publish in our newsletter: \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

If you have any qualifications, experience, skills or interests you might like to contribute to TARS, please mention them here:

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

For renewals please add your membership number: \_\_\_\_\_  Cheque/Money Order enclosed

When complete, send this form with your remittance to:

**Robin Marshall 210 18th St NW Bradenton FL 34205-6845 [robin@arthur-ransome.org](mailto:robin@arthur-ransome.org)**

**-or- You may join online and pay with Pay Pal at <http://arthur-ransome.org/join/index>**

## **TARSUS, TARS Canada & TARS Leadership Information**

TARSUS Coordinator: **Robin Marshall** [robin@arthur-ransome.org](mailto:robin@arthur-ransome.org)  
210 18th Street Bradenton, FL 34205

*US Members, please contact Robin Marshall with your questions, concerns or ideas--he will forward your e-mail or letter to the appropriate board member.*

TARS Canada Coordinator: **Harry Miller** [harryandmarymiller@rogers.com](mailto:harryandmarymiller@rogers.com)  
234 Kingswood Rd. Toronto, ON M4E 3N7

*Canada Members, please contact Harry Miller with your questions, concerns or ideas--he will forward your e-mail or letter to the appropriate board member.*

Signals from TARSUS Editor: **Elizabeth Jolley** [erjolley8@gmail.com](mailto:erjolley8@gmail.com)  
675 NW 114th Ave. Portland, OR 97229

*All Members--Please send your articles & ideas for articles for Signals from TARSUS to Elizabeth any time--she will publish articles when there is space.*

### **TARS--The Arthur Ransome Society:**

President: Gabriel Woolf  
Chairperson: Elizabeth Haworth  
Vice Chairperson: Bill Johnson  
Company Secretary: Mike Glover  
Treasurer: Ted Evans  
Trustee: Nick Hancox  
Membership Secretary: David Middleton  
Asst. Membership Secretary: Philip Ragan  
TARS Library: Winifred Wilson  
Amazon Publications: Alan Hakim  
TARS Stall: Linden Burke  
Signals Editor: David Middleton  
Mixed Moss Editor: Robert Thompson  
Outlaw Editor: Peter Aitchison

### **Other Overseas Coordinators:**

Australia: David Bamford  
New Zealand: Dr. Peter Summers  
Japan: Mikako Tarashima

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

### **THE TARS Stall--An online store for TARS members**

The Stall website is <http://arthur-ransome.org/tars-stall>. A nice feature it now has is a pull-down menu in the top left hand corner, which allows one to select prices in dollars, and will give you a total of the final cart, including shipping, in dollars.

Please note they no longer ship by surface mail via sea. All purchases go by air. For those of you who do not have the internet, Robin can carry out the transaction for you.



## Dipping Our Hands--personal relationships with the books

### How I (Sort of) Sailed *Swallow*

By Dave Thewlis

The three dinghies which feature in Ransome's Lake District books are all based on real boats: *Swallow* and *Amazon* were the dinghies Earnest Altounyan bought for his children to learn to sail, while *Scarab* was based on *Coch-y-bondhu*, which Ransome had built years later. Ransome ultimately sold *Swallow*, and the last record of her is recounted in a letter preserved on All Things Ransome from Roger Fothergill. *Mavis*, the real *Amazon*, stayed in the Lake District and was ultimately restored by what became TARS, renamed *Amazon*, and is still on display in Coniston. *Coch-y-bondhu* was also restored, was sailed at some TARS events, and is now also on display in the Lake District (although neither *Cochy* nor *Amazon* are sailed any more).

When the 1973 movie of *Swallows & Amazons* was made, *Swallow* was recreated from a rowing dinghy. After the movie was made, the movie *Swallow* dropped from view, to be rescued a few years ago by Rob Boden and Magnus Smith, as recounted on the *Sailing Swallow* website. Most of us probably remember the appeal to save the movie *Swallow* and many of us contributed to the fund; she was restored and sails once more, moving around England to be at TARS events and other places where people can enjoy and sail her.

Last year I wanted to spend a few days in the U.K. on my way to a conference in Prague, and through discussions with Rob and Magnus it turned out that *Swallow* was going to be at a boating centre on Ullswater at the end of September as her last availability that year. Rob invited me to visit, so I flew into Heathrow, and went by train to Strickland Junction (Oxenholme) with three days to stay before I had to take the train to Manchester and fly to Prague.

Rob and Joyce were wonderful hosts, and Rob was able to spend much of the three days doing Ransome things with me, which was terrific. Among them was a climb of Kanchenjunga, which I had never managed before, and which became more interesting when fog rolled in while we were at the cairn on top and we had to "feel" our way some of the hike down. We talked about taking a different route down, but Rob had never been that way and under the circumstances it sounded too much like a chance to sprain an ankle or worse, and with no helpful charcoal makers around.



*Proof that Dave climbed Kanchenjunga!*

The following day, I was invited to sail on Windermere with Geraint and Helen Lewis. Their dinghy, *Peggy Blackett*, is actually a copy of *Coch-y-bondhu* (*Scarab*), and sailing in her was a real thrill, since I've seen *Cochy* before but never sailed in her. *Peggy* is a beautiful little boat and we had a lovely time.

The day after was Saturday, my last day in the Lake District, and my last chance to sail *Swallow* --under very special circumstances. *Swallow* had been at the boat

center on Ullswater, available for interested parties to sail, and that Saturday Rob was to pick her up in preparation for winter storage. He had one person, Eileen, who had booked a sail on her that morning, after which we were to sail on Ullswater, and then take her to Coniston, where we planned to launch her at Brown Howe and sail to Wildcat Island (Peel Island), her first return to the island since the movie was made in 1973.



*Dave sailing Peggy Blackett*

And that's more or less how the day went... When we got to the boat centre, Rob found he had an additional family who wanted a sail in *Swallow*. Meanwhile Eileen turned out to be a local journalist who had been a Ransome fan as a child and was absolutely thrilled at the chance to sail *Swallow*, even if she wasn't quite the 'real' *Swallow* (well, so was I thrilled!)

So Rob gave Eileen & the additional family their sails, while I went out with Barry Healas, who was I believe manager of the boat centre, and also the local head of the Old Gaffers Association (devoted to gaff-rigged boats), to see if we could get some good pictures of *Swallow*. Rob and his crew had an adventure when some of *Swallow's* tackle carried away under strong winds, and they had to come back to shore under jury-rig (but without an intermediate sinking). With the added complications, I never did get a chance to sail her on Ullswater, which Rob felt was a pity - as after all, I'm 1/87th owner (I think that's the right number; his point was that I was one of the supporters of the appeal to buy her).



*Swallow on Ullswater*

This is where the "sort of" of the title comes in -- because, although the wind had been very strong on Ullswater, there was essentially no wind at all on Coniston, and no amount of whistling helped. As a result, we sort of drifted (under sail) to Wildcat Island -- but we did get there! And as you might expect, met a couple of families whose children were Ransome enthusiasts and who wanted a chance to sit in *Swallow* and pretend they were sailing (which was all they were going to do with no wind) while we clambered over the island.



*Dave helps Swallow drift to the island*



*Ransome fans enjoy sitting in Swallow*

Peel Island was very much as it was the last time I was there, twelve years before, although that time I'd gotten there by inflatable raft from the nearby shore -- this was much more elegant. When we finally left, we decided to row, so even if I only sort-of sailed *Swallow*, I have certainly rowed her a good part of the way back to Brown Howe, where we said good-bye to Eileen, and put *Swallow* back on her trailer. Then back to Rob's home in Kendal, with of course a stop for a pint on the way.

*Swallow* was due to go into winter storage, and as for me, the following morning it was the train to Manchester (crammed with football fans, it turned out) and a flight to Prague.

I've been very fortunate with respect to Ransome's boats, both real and feigned. In 1994 at the TARS AGM in Ambleside, *Amazon* was available for short sails (for passengers) and I got to ride in her. I've had a short sail in *Nancy Blackett*, and now a sail in *Peggy Blackett*, and I've even had a chance to pretend-fire the cannon on *Esperance*, part of the basis of Captain Flint's houseboat. But sailing the movie *Swallow*, as close as we can ever get to the original *Swallow*, was absolutely special! My thanks to Rob and Joyce, and to Magnus, for helping this happen. And to all TARSUS members, if you make it to the UK, check with Rob and Magnus about *Swallow* - if you can be where she is, you'll have a chance for the sail of a lifetime - even if you have to row!



*Wildcat Island--Ahoy!*

## Scotland Yard--Members' explanations of the books



### **Great Northern?: A Matter of Perspective**

By Alistair Bryden

Quite recently, I read some of the debate as to whether *Great Northern?* was a 'real' adventure like most of the books or a 'metafictional' adventure along the lines of *Peter Duck* or *Missee Lee*. This position seems to have taken root in some of the background material, even finding its way into the Wikipedia description of *Great Northern?*:

"Some have classified this book as one of the metafictional stories in the series: a fantasy tale made up by the children themselves."

--attributed to Christina Hardyment

I wonder whether a lot of this debate is a matter of perspective, and with the greatest of respect to some eminent Ransome researchers, I wonder whether a different perspective would have led to another conclusion.

When I was growing up, our family holidays were always in Northern Scotland or in the Hebrides. We actually sailed Hebridean waters, stayed upon the islands, saw the castles and the fishing towns, walked up to brochs and vitrified forts and caught trout in the lochs. Many of the older folk still spoke Gaelic and there were gamekeepers carrying shotguns, dressed in tweed, looking very much like some of the drawings of the Dogmudgeon. We stayed in a holiday cottage on Mull and made friends with the sons of the owner, who himself held one of the oldest and most noble titles in Scotland, but listed his occupation in *Who's Who* as "lobster fisherman." Incidentally, this gentleman could also have been the model for the Dogmudgeon, down to the hat pictured in the book, (with the addition of oilskins). I later worked as a grouse beater, marching across the heather with a line of others scaring up grouse for the "guns" to shoot, and met the heir to a clan chieftom, whose title was very similar to the McGinty of McGinty.

Even the plot of *Great Northern?* seems very familiar and could be based on real events. As a child, I was taken several times to see the Osprey centre at Loch Garten, and told the story about how egg collectors tried to cut the tree down, requiring the tree to be reinforced with metal bands and surrounded by barbed wire. Just in case readers think that this is all ancient history, I found the following headline from May 2012 to be interesting evidence Mr. Jemmerling has his successors:

#### **Serial Egg Thief Matthew Gonshaw Jailed and Banned from Scotland**

A serial egg thief from London has been jailed and banned from entering Scotland for the rest of his life during the bird-breeding season. Matthew Gonshaw, 49, admitted stealing the eggs of several rare species on the Isle of Rum last year. Inverness Sheriff Court heard how he was spotted raiding nests in a bird colony on the island.

--More details available at:

[www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-scotland-18042109](http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-scotland-18042109)

With this background and context, it seems eminently feasible to me that the Swallows, Amazons & D's would sail in the Sea Bear and have their adventures, and that this was 'real'. *Great Northern?* seems to be a very natural progression of adventure from the quite tame, protected (and English) environs of the Lake District, the Broads and the marshes of Secret Water to the wilder landscapes of Northern Scotland, and I was delighted that a story was at last set in my familiar Scotland. In fact, in many ways *Great Northern?* seems more 'real' than some of the other settings. Here are some observations to support this view:



- Chartering a boat is easy. Captain Flint clearly had the funds from sales of *Mixed Moss* to finance a trip, and the skills to skipper a boat. Today the Hebrides are full of cruising sailors, and while it was less common in the 30's, it was by no means unusual. My father, for one, sailed extensively in the Hebrides at this time, and had pictures and stories to prove it.
- Captain Flint could not have asked for a better crew!
- The parents of the Swallows, Amazons & D's were old hands at seeing their children head off on adventures. A sailing holiday in the Hebrides in summer with adult supervision from a very capable adult was scarcely a big stretch.
- Mr. Jemmerling is an all too believable character, obsessive and driven. It is worthy of note that Mathew Gonshaw (referenced above) has been jailed three times previously, and police described Gonshaw's collection as an "obsession".
- It is totally believable that Jemmerling would be carrying a gun.
- Many lairds would employ a number of fit gamekeepers, and 80 years ago, behave in a very feudal manner. They would not take at all kindly to children disturbing 'their' deer. Even today, hill walkers are asked to take enormous care when walking in the mountains during the shooting season.
- It is quite feasible that a Scottish laird would have his own piper! Lord Lovat famously ordered his personal piper [Bill Millin](#), to pipe the commandos ashore, in defiance of specific orders not to allow such an action in battle. When Private Millin demurred, citing the regulations, he recalled later Lord Lovat replied: "Ah, but that's the *English* War Office. You and I are both Scottish, and that doesn't apply."
- The crowning piece of accuracy is Ransome's descriptions in *Great Northern?*; his research was impeccable. I now live in Canada, and every morning I drink my coffee from a mug with a modern drawing on it of three 'Great Northerns', which we call 'Common Loons'. While writing this piece, I pulled out the mug and compared it to the drawings in the book, and looked up photographs. Ransome (as Dick!) did an outstanding job; the drawing is perfect, right down to the small patch of stripes under the bird's chin. Ransome couldn't draw in colour, but in real life a loon is a study in black and white, except for vivid red eyes! Maybe the only failing in Ransome's description is how he describes the Great Northern's call. He calls it a "weird yelping call", which is accurate as far as it goes, but fails to capture the uncanny wildness of the loon's call, which is one of the sounds of the Canadian Wilderness and would sound equally unearthly on a Scottish loch. You can find a loon call online and play it on your computer to judge for yourself. However, Ransome does accurately capture one of the other loon vocalizations as "Heuch, Heuch, Heuch", which although it sounds Scottish, is a great description of the real call.

I won't enter into the obscure debates about timing of school holidays etc. Ransome himself notes that he has made efforts to obscure some of the details, but I would stand by my thesis that in all matters of substance, the story is 'real', and if you have the right perspective, certainly as believable as any of the other 'real' stories; perhaps more so. I have always had some private doubts about a mother who allows a seven-year-old who can't swim to sail away without a lifejacket in an overloaded small dinghy in the care of a twelve-year-old brother and an eleven-year-old sister, however wonderful the resultant adventures were. Everyone has their favorite books, and in my mind, *Great Northern?* is right up with the best in the series.

## Kanchenjunga's Cairn--places we've been & our adventures

### Dick Callum Cup goes on a tour of Ransome's Chelsea

By Adam Quinan



*1 Gunter Grove*

The Dick Callum Cup was won this year by a team called The Duffers, which included amongst others a Canadian, Ross McKee. He was able to bring the cup over for a brief stay in Toronto, and I was charged with returning it to the UK when I headed over for a family wedding in July. The Cup and I arranged to meet Peter Willis outside the Sloane Square tube station, and we set off by bus for the World's End. From the top of the bus we managed to glimpse one of Ransome's Chelsea homes as we passed.

The World's End is a pub on King's Road in Chelsea, which gave its name to the area where Arthur Ransome lived during his "Bohemia in London" period. Unfortunately, unlike Ransome, we could not get a drink there as it was closed for renovations, so we repaired to another pub for lunch.



*Editha Mansions, Adam & The Cup*

The Cup, Peter and I then visited several houses associated with

Ransome, starting with 1 Gunter Grove, Ransome's second home in the area. We then walked up Fulham Road to Hollywood Road where Ransome lived when he first moved into Chelsea. The house is no longer there, possibly redeveloped as a result of the London Blitz? We then went back towards the River Thames and passed Editha Mansions, where Ransome proposed to (and was rejected by) Barbara Collingwood. On down to the Embankment, where we walked along to 120 Cheyne Road, which has a Blue plaque celebrating a famous resident. Alas, not Arthur Ransome, but the suffragette leader Sylvia Pankhurst who lived there at one time.

*120 Cheyne Road, Peter & The Cup*

After a side  
Crafts house

trip to see an interesting example of an Arts & and where Erskine Childers (author of that great



yachting spy novel, "The Riddle of the Sands") had lived, we saw Rectory Chambers on Old Church Street, where Ransome and his wife Ivy lived for a while. Then it was back on the bus for a cup of tea and a piece of cake in the restaurant on top of Peter Jones department store by Sloane Square. The Cup, after its interesting afternoon walking tour, then headed off with Peter to its next port of call.

## Captain Flint's Trunk—news from abroad

### Our Teasel/ Goblin / Sea Bear Adventure

By the Spiers Family

We arrived in Metung after 10pm, well past the crew's bed time, and they were settled in the fo'c'sle. The final route planning was left until the next morning; David Stamp had provided some ideas at the *Dogs' Home* weekend. The next morning we decided to sail down to Paynesville (Rio) by sailing north, then west into Lake King. However, after rounding Metung Point, we were distracted by George the seal and friends, and headed west along Lake Victoria. A navigational error turned our vessel into *Teasel* as we gently ran aground. Fortunately Handy Billy was ready to get us off the mud and a quick examination of the chart showed us that we were south of Carstairs Bank on the wrong side of the channel markers (Breydon Posts). Handy Billy helped us sail close to the wind and pushed us into deeper water. This had taken quite some time and it was decided to give up on Paynesville (Rio); we altered our course for the first night's destination, Steamer Landing, which, after a brief look at the chart, the AB decided was like the channel to Witch's Quay. We heard the other vessel on charter inform the charter office over the two-way radio that they too intended heading for Witch's Quay. As we approached the pier a conspicuous home came into view, so the crew decided to head for Scrubber's Bay instead for some solitude. With a careful eye on the chart, we brought our vessel alongside the pier in Scrubber's Bay (Ocean Grange). Over the dunes was Ninety Mile Beach where, as on Flint Island, there was driftwood aplenty. Ninety Mile Beach was deserted with a lovely red sky, so we sailors were delighted!!

Our second day of sailing started as good as our first. We slipped our moorings and headed down channel; hoisted sail and at last made our way to Rio and Raymond Island to trek about looking for koalas. We followed this by a ferry ride and fish 'n' chips (and grog) for lunch. After a wonderful lunch, we set sail for Lake King. As we passed the motor boat club we spotted a big ancient black ship, but as we had a long way to sail, we didn't have time to stop. Despite the winds fluking and gusting we were making good progress. However, as we rounded the east end of Raymond Island to head west to Goblin Creek (Rotomah Channel) and Swallow (Rotomah) Island for the night, the wind was against us, and dropping. Our chosen destination was still a long way off and the light was fading fast. The channel wasn't well marked, so Handy Billy came to the rescue again.

We made our mooring in the fast fading light, the sun breaking through the clouds on the horizon just as we approached the jetty. Just as the *Welcome of Rochester* had been lucky with the wind, we'd been lucky with the light. We moored and went ashore to explore, surprising hinds (kangaroos) on our walk as night fell.

We insisted on returning to investigate the ancient-looking ship we'd seen the previous day. The next day we set sail for Paynesville again, as the junior members of our crew managed to carry sail well up the McMillan Strait with the wind on our beam. We swept up the Strait exceeding the speed limit (luckily we were so early, there was no traffic) only lowering sail to reduce speed and ensure manoeuvrability around the ferry chains. After finding a berth, the crew made friends with a young angler on the Staithe, who like young Pete, had a keep net full of not perch but bream. Bradley and Jessica both had a go at catching one. Along the shore next to the pier there were Black Swans (Great Southern?) nesting. We made our way to the motor boat club, where the strange vessel was moored.

The vessel was indeed strange, a replica Portuguese caravel *The Notorious*, handmade from recycled materials. Her home port is Geelong and she'll be visiting Hobart for the Wooden Boat Festival in February. We hope we might be able to see her down there next year. We made our way back to our ship and set off for the voyage back to Metung and Chinaman's Creek. The wind was still from the west and strengthening. We sailed before the wind and even tried goose-winging our jib, although without a jib-boom any deviation in wind or our course caused the jib to flap. As we passed Tambo Bluff on our port side the waves came at us from two



slightly different directions and the wind increased, causing a corkscrewing motion that didn't please certain crew members. We dropped the mainsail and started the engine, to make the motion more bearable. Once around Metung Point the wind was still strong but the water was quite calm so we shut down Billy and zoomed along under headsail alone. The weather, which had been perfect up until then, finally broke and a cold rain hammered down. The skipper (the only one to possess decent wet weather gear) stayed on the helm as the mate escaped below the join the crew. The rain eased off as the mate and skipper brought *Happy Hour* back home. We tied up back at the charter base and had lunch on board, then sent the crew for a run ashore as the mate tidied up.

Bradley the AB justified his rating, spending only slightly less time on the helm than the skipper. Jessica, the Ship's Brat, not taking the job seriously, tried doing cart-wheels with the wheel when she took a turn on the helm. The AB had to take over to get us back on course. The mate spent most of her time keeping the ship's crew fed in the very best Susan-ish manner, with a constant supply of grub, with many thanks from the crew!

From **Furthest South** Volume 14, Number 3, August, 2012

*Newsletter for AusTARS and TARSNZ,*

*The Arthur Ransome Society in Australia and New Zealand*

<http://home.vicnet.net.au/~ransome/>

*Editor's Note: Unfortunately I couldn't copy the photos from Furthest South, but do go to their website to see them and to read more interesting articles!*

## **The Professor's Laboratory--ideas, instructions & fixes**

### **Make a Ransome Illustration Diorama**

By Jane Rondthaler and Elizabeth Jolley (mother & daughter :-)

Check this out:





It's a diorama of the drawing Ransome drew for *Swallows & Amazons*, of the Swallows enjoying island life. My mother, who actually can draw faces (!), used watercolor paints to make this beautiful little scene for me as a birthday gift. Even if your hands and brain aren't connected quite as well as hers, you can make a diorama of an AR illustration, too. (Just use tracing paper, but don't tell!) My mother went to great pains to make this particularly nicely, which you can see, if you just ignore to unfortunate mildew spots--we live in a damp climate. She painted the hills into the box at the back & sides, the added four more layers:

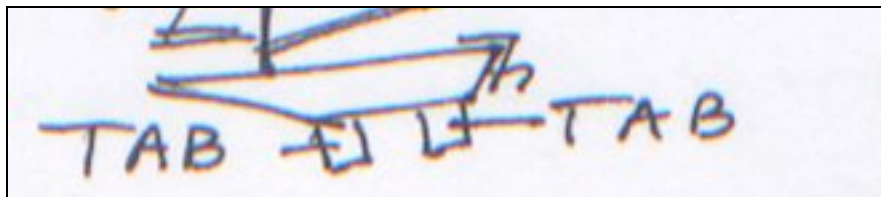
- 1) the lake & boat sailing past
- 2) the smaller hills on the island
- 3) the main scene (with Susan's head, Titty's upper body, Swallow with her mast still stepped, Roger, and John's arm & head all carefully cut out so they stand away from the scenery behind them.
- 4) the tent behind bushes on the left & the rocks on the right

However, as she writes below, you can make yours with fewer layers, and of course you can choose a scene that is less complex!

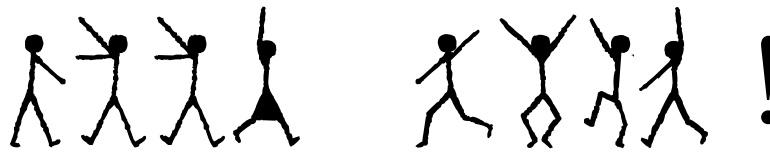
### **How to make your own Ransome illustration diorama:**

*Editor's Note: These instructions are written for teens & adults--younger people may need a little bit of help!*

1. Find a box. Shoeboxes work well.
2. Get some paper for the layers. Make sure it is heavy enough to stand up well, but not so heavy that you can't fold it easily. Sketchbook paper works well.
3. Choose an illustration from the books. It is easiest to work from one with good clear depth--across the lake, for instance, or one with hills in the background.
4. Decide how many layers of depth will work best--three or four can give good perspective. You may color or paint the inside of the box to look like the farthest away bits of the illustration you have chosen.
5. Be aware that "distance" is represented by relative size--the smaller a figure or shape is, the further away it appears to be.
6. You can make patterns of smaller and larger figures: for camping illustrations--people, trees, stones, boats, tents, campfires; for sailing illustrations--faraway hills, trees, rocks, shoreline, boats. Try them out in your box to get the perspective right.
7. Don't forget to include tabs on your figures. Fold these back to attach each figure to one of the side walls of the box:



Reminder: Your little people won't show much expression on their tiny faces. Do what AR did and have them facing inwards or a little bit sideways!

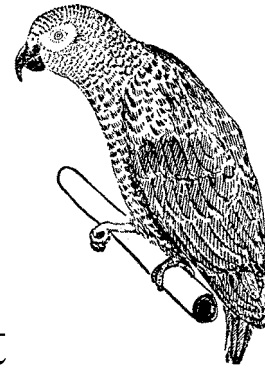
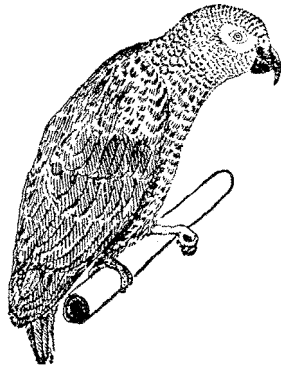


*Editor's Note: This lovely little drawing of Ransome children playing in, on & around a diorama was pencil-sketches by Jane Rondthaler, for your enjoyment!*

### **Prize-Winning Opportunity!--**

We have a copy of The Last Englishman, by Roland Chambers. This is a very well-written book detailing AR's experiences during the Russian Revolution. If you create a diorama box of an AR illustration, take a photo of it & send it to me, I will enter your name in a drawing to win the book!

Elizabeth Jolley, Editor      erjolley8@gmail.com



# Pieces of Eight

The Junior Pages

Edited by Jessika Hodgson and Hannah Hodgson

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## Dot's Journal: Pigeon Post Summer

It has been a *Pigeon Post* summer. Here in CO we've been dealing with drought and wildfires for the past three months. We were breathing smoky air that had drifted all the way down from the Fort Collins fire for the last two weeks of June, and then, while Hannah and I were in New Hampshire tubing, swimming, visiting oceans and big lakes, sitting through downpours of rain, and generally enjoying an excess of water, back in Colorado the Waldo Canyon Fire was spreading into Colorado Springs. Our town, which is about 20 minutes north of the Springs, was on pre-evacuation notice. We received several calls asking what we wanted out of the house if the mandatory evacuation call came.

Two weeks later we were home again, and my dad and I drove our clunky Rattletrap suburban down to the section of the Springs that had burned. It was humbling. There would be beautiful house after beautiful house and then suddenly a black pile of ashes where a beautiful house once stood. I can't imagine how it would be to come home from evacuation and find my house still standing, and my neighbor's house... gone. I saw one that was burnt to the ground but in the midst of the ashes was a brick patio with metal garden chairs and flower pots. And another that had a garage built into the hill, and a car inside it, underneath the collapsed roof, completely burned until nothing but a shell was left. There were wooden fences knocked down everywhere, to keep the fire from spreading. And on almost every fence that was still standing, and on walls and signposts and telephone poles, a humble sign of gratitude: "Thank you, firefighters, police officers, and emergency responders." I read that some people came home to find footprints on their porch--footprints of the firefighters, standing there and fighting the flames as best they could, to keep the house from burning. There were still police officers and National Guard patrolling every street, in order to keep looters from the houses that hadn't yet got their owners back. And the hills were naked except for the black skeletons of trees. The air smelled like a burnt out firework.

Fourth of July celebrations were cancelled. The "best small-town fireworks display in America" that our town boasts of was nonexistent because the lake that gives the town its name (Palmer Lake) was (and is) nonexistent. The drought drained it to a stretch of mud and a few puddles to house breeding mosquitoes. You can walk on it and see the dead fish and pieces of trash that people threw in thinking that the water would cover up their laziness. Trails were closed, reservoir water was kept under watchful eye, and firefighters waited for yet another call.

I can understand Mrs. Tyson for the first time. I look at her and no longer see paranoia; rather, the burden of an overwhelming sense of fragility. Her life is at stake—her home, her orchard-dormitories, everything she owns and everything she has poured into her farm—and with one stray spark it could literally go up in flames. Why trust all that to a bunch of kids when a grown man will flick a cigarette out of his car and burn up the hills? It's hard to be wary and hospitable at the same time. And no matter how cautious you are, no matter how good your guard is, at some point you have to trust it to someone or something that is less than predictable. And that could be the hardest thing you ever do. "When fire's afoot a body can't think."

There's a lot that we spend lifetimes on building that, in the end, could burn down in one flame-filled

night. And it's a funny thing: when you're left standing in the ashes, maybe your perspective changes, maybe it doesn't. Maybe you leave all that and start something new. Or maybe you give in to despair. Or maybe you get up again and say, "Now then, Robin. Nowt to stare at. We've the cows to milk, fire or no fire. And late it is and all." One way or another, you have to look at everything in a different way. I, for one, am more grateful for the much we have, and more aware of how soon it will be taken away. What can I do but hold it with open hands?

And maybe you can think twice before you throw that cigarette out your car window. Just sayin'.

-Jessika

**Last Names Word Search**

N B J I B N B O O M S B O B S  
 O C R T A Y O L L A D O O W S  
 S A A A N F D E L B A R R A B  
 N L B A D R A B G F E S J R C  
 I L U E D I B R L D T I A E L  
 A U Y T R L N I L E U Y C N G  
 W M O T A E N G D A T D K R S  
 S W E E N T K D L L N D S U O  
 N E M K Y I I L H E A D O T R  
 T I E C S N G A A R A T N I O  
 N O F A G C H C O W T Y S O N  
 C O L L A T E A M D I X O N P  
 P L E B S A N D J A M A I C A  
 R U M A L L R O U N D N A N C  
 Y K C U D T T U V R Z I O N D

BARRABLE  
 DUCK  
 MCGINTY  
 WALKER

BLACKETT  
 DUDGEON  
 STEDDING  
 WOODALL

BRADING  
 FARLAND  
 SWAINSON

CALLUM  
 FLINT  
 TURNER

DIXON  
 JACKSON  
 TYSON

After you've found all of the names, a hidden message should appear! Fill in the blanks below. ☺

\_\_\_\_\_ , \_\_\_\_\_ , \_\_\_\_\_  
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## *The Nightfire Pirates*

A Continuous Story  
By Hannah Hodgson

Jeremiah woke to the clanging of a ship's bell, and he remembered with a jolt where he was. He was on board a ship, sailing off to who knew where...in a nutshell, he was exactly where he shouldn't be.

He threw his feet over the side of the bunk, then jerked back as Willy jumped recklessly off the top bunk. Willy threw on some clothes in a hurry, then looked blearily at Jeremiah, saying quickly, "You better get dressed. Meet me on deck."

Jeremiah jumped out of bed, but stayed in the clothes he was wearing, as he had no others. Someone had dragged Williams' bag down, assuming it was his. Jeremiah left it as it was, pulled on his shoes and stockings, and hurried out toward the ladder that led to the deck. Men were bustling all about him, laughing loudly with mugs of hot coffee in their hands. They were rowdy men, Jeremiah noticed, not at all like the clean-shaven, uniformed Williams. They stared at the small Jeremiah, but made no comment, and let him past.

The air above deck was salty and fresh smelling, and Jeremiah looked around with wide eyes. They had left the port far behind, and all around him, all he could see was the glittering, blue sea.

Catching sight of Willy on the far side of the deck, Jeremiah hurried towards him, but was stopped in his tracks as a large man stepped in front of him. It was Captain Steel, looking even more fearsome in the light. The sun reflected off the golden earring in his left ear.

"So...the little stowaway."

Jeremiah started to protest but was stopped by the look on Captain Steel's face.

"You'll make yourself useful, won't you? If you're more hassle than help, we might have to throw you to the sharks. You understand?"

Jeremiah nodded, then, remembering how his brothers talked, snapped up to attention, saluted, and said smartly, "Aye, aye sir!"

Captain Steel hid a smile, nodded, and said, "Assist Willy with the decks, then."

Jeremiah ran off.

The day was spent in the most grueling work Jeremiah had ever done. He swabbed the decks, for the most part of the day, and tried to stay out of the way of the men always bustling back and forth. He also did a bit of rope knotting, impressing Willy at how many knots he knew simply from reading books. By the end of the day, his hands were blistered and his back was sore, but he was happy as he looked up at the bottom of the upper bunk, his hands under his head. He felt a bit of guilt at the fact that he was not at home, and his mother was probably worried, and Williams probably needed his bag, but he was always one to look at the bright side, and the bright side was that he was at sea.

The weeks passed so quickly that Jeremiah didn't even realize they had gone. His hands were now calloused and his skin had tanned most wonderfully. He wondered if his mother would even recognize him when he got back. *If I get back*. Jeremiah bit his tongue and thought of anything but that bitter thought that had been nagging at the back of his mind.

A shout broke him out of his thoughts thoroughly. "SHIP TO PORT SIDE! ALL HANDS ON DECK!"

Jeremiah ran up the steps, small against the tide of men rushing with him. They all had gleams in their eyes. When Jeremiah got to the deck, he was surprised to see the bustle. Men all knew what they were doing and where they were going, even at such short notice. Cannons were rolled out and powder was being brought. But what shocked Jeremiah the most was the colors that were raised on their own mast. The black-and-white skull and crossbones of the Jolly Roger. Jeremiah stood stock still, gaping at the flag that flapped menacingly in the wind. A pirate ship? He was on board a pirate ship?

"Surprised, eh lad?" said a voice in his ear. Jeremiah turned. It was the first mate, a grubby man by the name of Muskrat. Jeremiah hadn't liked him much from the start, but his leering grin now made him

suddenly afraid of the man. Muskrat laughed, then walked back toward the bustle, twirling a rapier in his hand.

“What are you doing standing around, boy?” another voice roared. It was Captain Steel, who was pacing the decks, overseeing the work. “Go down to the hold and bring up powder for the men.” He turned to the other men and shouted a few orders. Jeremiah ran down to the hold—though he didn’t run to the powder room. In every story Jeremiah had read, the pirates were the bad guys—or at the very least, they turned good in the end. His strong sense of moral was assaulted by the very thought of assisting in an attack on an innocent passing ship. He ran to his own room, wondering what to do and how on earth he’d get off this ship of thugs. It was amazing how quick his outlook could change, but he knew he was even less of a pirate than he was a sailor. And the thing was, he didn’t *want* to be a pirate. All his dreams were shattering in that instant, the Jolly Roger mocking him in his mind’s eye.



Shots began to rock the boat, and Jeremiah winced. The battle lasted for hours on end, as the other ship refused to surrender. Then, all was silent. Jeremiah sat up. He had been lying on his bunk with his hands over his ears until now. The silence was even more dreadful than the sound of shots, however, for Jeremiah knew that whoever had prevailed, a lot of men would be dead.

Jeremiah tiptoed up the steps to the deck. When he got up, the sight that was waiting for him was even more awful than he imagined. Bodies were strewn across the deck, and the remaining pirates were shoving the dead ones into the sea, and carrying the wounded into the infirmary. The other ship was nowhere to be seen, sunk under the sea.

Captain Steel was furious. “A ship full of arms and powder, and you have to sink her to the bottom? If there’s anything we need, it’s arms. Now all we have is the dead and wounded to take care of, with nothing gained?” In his wrath, he didn’t notice the small Jeremiah watching him.

Jeremiah had to get off this ship. Bits of a plan began to piece together in his mind.

*To Be Continued...*

Final Note-- "Farewell and adieu to you fair Spanish ladies" --until next issue!

Summer 2012 meant all sorts of climate oddities all over North America. Jessika Hodgson wrote evocatively about one effect of the drought throughout the middle of the US, fires near many towns and homes. In my neck of the woods, we waited through a very long, chilly spring (it felt more like our mild winter!) for warm weather to arrive.

I hope that your summer brought fun and relaxation for you. Now, as you head back into fall & winter, I wish for each of you enough time to read a good book....or eleven! I love to make a large mug of hot tea, add a little sugar and a splash of milk, and let myself travel into the world of the Swallows, Amazons & D's, Joe, Pete, Bill & Tom, Black Jake & Missee Lee!

Have a wonderful fall,  
*Elizabeth*