



Signals from TARSUS & North Pole News

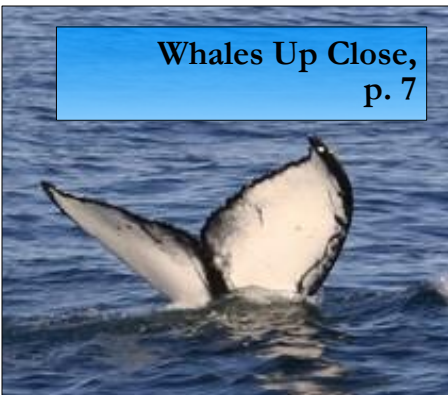
September 2022

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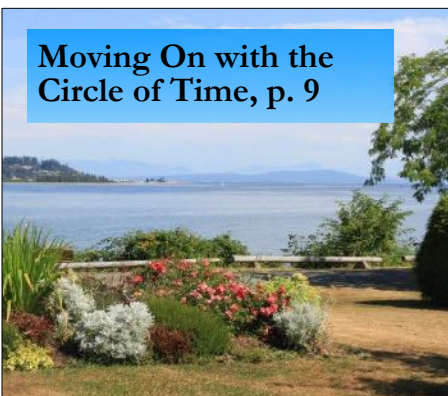
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Ship's Papers — Important information for the Crew



A View from the US Helm

By Robin Marshall
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Once more we are about to say goodbye to summer. I hope you and your family found some interesting, exciting, enjoyable things to do at this sunny time of the

year. I am preparing to say goodbye to TARSUS, as mentioned in the last newsletter. Owing to aging and other personal problems I feel unable to continue as coordinator.

Simon suggested this was a good time for a recap of my time as US coordinator.

So a little history. As a child on a dull day in late 1940s England, I complained of nothing to do. My elder brother suggested I read the Swallows and Amazons series of books. I had always been an avid reader of most children's fiction but had not yet found this series.

I went to our local library and there they were, and like many others I was immediately hooked.

Another boy at my school was also a fan and we became great friends, trying to make our own versions of the adventures.

Time passed, and as an adolescent I moved on to other fascinations, motorbikes and later cars, plus the inevitable attraction of girls.

Eventually I married my present wife and had two lovely children. I regret

that I never passed on to my children my love of Arthur's books, as I had forgotten them.

But on a visit to Windermere with some friends many years later I insisted on visiting the boat museum, and it all came back to me, thanks to the exhibits and, outside, *Esperance*. I purchased a copy of *S and A* and *Winter Holiday*.

Thus my enthusiasm returned. Thanks to the internet I now discovered TARS, which I joined. Dave Thewlis was then TARSUS coordinator and Debra Alderman was editor of the newsletter. After a while I read in an issue of that publication that Dave wanted to retire, needed someone to take his place and hoped some volunteer would apply. This went on for some time with no takers, so I decided to apply. This was immediately accepted, as no one else was mad enough to take it on.

Once I got settled in a blow fell on my parade: Debra felt she could no longer continue as editor of *Signals from TARSUS*. I pleaded for a replacement but no luck, so the only thing was to take on the task myself. I stumbled along, doing a few issues, until Elizabeth Jol-

ley could no longer stand my feeble attempts and took on the task of editor, for which I am eternally grateful.

With Elizabeth's help we tried various ways to encourage more members and also suggested ways to make the US public aware of AR. With the help of some keen juniors we added a junior page.

I regret not having had much success in spreading the word in the US. I attended several sail boat events and even had a stand at one, but the interest was slim.

Finally Elizabeth also had to quit due to health problems. Thankfully Simon Horn came on board to edit and produce what is now a joint Canada and US publication.

The coordinator duties have become less and less, mainly handling dues from members who would rather send checks than use Paypal, but those numbers are becoming fewer and most new applications or renewals are now done online and handled in the UK.

I have generally enjoyed my time as coordinator, but with the changes in the UK I have felt somewhat out of the loop. Plus I now face more pressing problems here at home.

Please welcome new member John Paul Czarnowski in Illinois. I wish you all smooth sailing and fair winds.

Farewell and adieu.

Robin



Greetings from the North

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

Time has quickly rolled by. Here we are almost at the end of summer and I must answer Simon's clarion call for material!

TARS Headquarters is still working to remove the few remaining bugs which remain in the new data collecting and recording system. David Middleton mentioned to me that some 'overwriting' had occurred with his list of Canadian members which somehow or other had been mixed with the Japanese contingent. I am confident that all will be sorted out before long. I only had two or three requests for help from members using the system to renew their memberships on line.

Covid 19 is still with us but perhaps to a lesser degree than a year ago. It seems to me that the plague is being used as an excuse for much delays and inaction by numerous organizations and businesses etc.

I think it would be nice to hear one or two of them admit once in a while that "we screwed up badly due a lack of planning on that one"!

But human nature being what it is I do not expect to hear it.

Krysia Clack, the hardworking Overseas Coordinator at Headquarters, kindly sent along the link to a recent real estate listing for Lowick Hall in Cumbria where Arthur Ransome lived for a number of years. The property is listed for 2.0 million pounds so if anyone has loose change amounting to two mil. lying about you could buy a piece of Ransome history and own a beautiful property at the same time. The property is simply gorgeous! The link is given below.

Lowick Hall - H&H Land & Estates

<https://hhlandestates.co.uk/property/lowick-hall-lowick-bridge-ulverston-cumbria-la12-8ed/KEN220061/>



On a personal note. I have sold my house here in North Vancouver and am moving over to Vancouver Island. I bought a house in Royston, BC a village just south of Courtenay/Comox.

My new address is 3965 Marine Drive, Royston, BC V0R 2V0. Phone: 250 871 2695

Wishing everyone fair winds and calm seas.

Sincerely,
Ian Sacré



A Note from the Editor

By Simon Horn, sjhorn@gmail.com

Welcome to *Signals from TARSUS/North Pole News* for September 2022.

Thanks to everyone who has contributed an article.

We have a respectable 22 pages this issue. But you will soon see that almost half is thanks to the Blue family in England, who have set us a long report on their very

busy AR year, and to Molly McGinnis with her detailed recipe for apple pie.

In this issue

In *The Ship's Library*, I take a look at

Evgenia Ransome's diaries in "*No Holds Barred – Really?*"

But it is *Kanchenjunga's Cairn* makes up the bulk of the issue.

In "Under the Stars Aboard Sea Bear", **Ross Cossar** describes an idyllic sailing voyage in Ontario's Georgian Bay area.

Maida Follini describes her first encounter with real whales in the Bay of Fundy in "Whales Up Close".

Ian Sacré has been too busy to work on his new yacht, and in "Moving On with the Circle of Time" describes the complex adventure of moving house after 33 years in the same place.

In "An Inspired yeAR", **Jules Blue**

describes the Blue family's remarkable year of visiting, hiking, climbing and artistic creation.

Molly McGinnis is still overseeing *Beckfoot Kitchen* and in "Great-Aunt Cookery" shows us how to make the apple pie that Great Aunt Maria wanted more of in *The Picts and the Martyrs*.

Finally, in *Pieces of Eight* your editor takes a look at the **All Things Ransome** web page that presents possible inspirations behind many of Arthur Ransome's characters.

The next issue is due in January 2022, and only your contributions will make it possible.

I hope you were lucky enough to take part in Ransome-inspired activities this past summer. If so, please tell the rest of us about them.

I will send a first reminder at the beginning of December, but you should start thinking about contributing right away.

Finally, I would like to send out a sincere thank you to **Robin Marshall**,

who will be stepping down as TARSUS coordinator at the end of 2022 after 14 years.

Robin's "View from the US Helm" reminisces about his time as coordinator and explains how it came to be.

TARS is a volunteer organization, and without people like Robin it quite simply could not function.

Thanks, Robin, for everything.

All the best from me, to all of you.
Simon

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

No Holds Barred – Really?

By Simon Horn (Montreal, Quebec)

Those of you who remember my reviews of the two volumes of *The Twilight Years*, Arthur Ransome's diaries for 1950 through 1965, may recall that I said, "I can't help wondering what Genia's life was like, and what she did with her time while Arthur visited his clubs".

Now Amazon Publications has produced a volume of Evgenia Ransome's diaries, covering 1927 to 1933, called *No Holds Barred*.

I was looking forward to it, but I am afraid I was a bit disappointed. I was hoping to get a picture of what Evgenia thought about their life together, and especially of her opinions of Arthur's work and how these may have contributed to the books.

The diaries, however, are generally pretty similar to Arthur's later ones: a fairly uninspiring succession of, first this happened, then that happened, with little commentary.

There are important exceptions, though. Evgenia's daily accounts of two trips to the Norfolk Broads, a trip to Ireland, and their visit to the Altounyans in Syria all give welcome detail and even some commentary.

However, titling the book *No Holds Barred* seems to me to be a bit exaggerated. While the Introduction characterizes

Evgenia as "opinionated and abrasive" (p.6), I don't actually find much evidence of that.

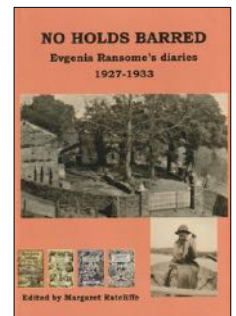
She was obviously annoyed with the postman. (p.9ff.) She complains about being unable to shop: "Blast! Early closing day." (p.10) She doesn't like Clifton Webb: "I never met a man duller or more conceited." (p.61) She often seems annoyed when visitors come, and after one visit by Henry Nevinson says "The great and the famous are too greedy of praise and admiration, they make me very tired." (p.133) She doesn't like "talkies": "My first experience. I can't understand how people can waste two or three solid hours looking at and listening to that sort of rubbish." (p. 70)

I suppose all that is "abrasive and opinionated", and she probably was. I just wish the diaries revealed more of it.

But do read the book. Reading about the two Broads holidays especially was great fun; it made me want to reread *Coot Club*.

Unfortunately, though, I do not think *No Holds Barred* sheds much light on their relationship or on her appreciation of his work, not to mention her view of her own life.

Of course, I fear I may be expecting too much of diaries.



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

Under the Stars Aboard *Sea Bear*

By Ross Cossar (Penetanguishene, Ontario)

The stars were reflected in the bay where we sat anchored in the still blackness of a mid-August night. And it was dark, particularly as one looked at the rocks and trees of the Canadian Shield that surrounded us. On this night it was difficult to perceive the difference in these two ubiquitous elements, until one looked upwards to identify the sky. A sky which, while only slightly less dark, was filled with countless stars that enrobed our narrow view of the horizon. We stood out on the deck, identifying constellations and imagining the vastness of the Milky Way. This was an adventure, inspired by Ransome. It was sailing, exploration and adventure all rolled together.

Appropriately we were in a place known as Shot Gun Bay, where the stars reflecting in the water around us appeared like a heavenly blast of silver pellets. Shot Gun Bay, in the heart of the Moon River area of Massassauga Provincial Park. Massassauga Park, in the 30,000 Islands freshwater archipelago of Georgian Bay. Georgian Bay, a part of Lake Huron and the Great Lakes of North America. The Great Lakes, more aptly known as the Sweet Water Seas. What an opportunity to explore and enjoy these waters! This

particular evening was our third that week anchored in solitary bliss, recharging our personal batteries, keeping our lives well balanced.

We had sailed our 32-foot, cutter-rigged vessel *Sea Bear* (towing our little dinghy *Sea Cub*) some 40 nautical miles north from our home harbor in Penetanguishene, Ontario. We were planning to cross Georgian Bay to explore the western shores, had the winds been different, but as they were not it seemed best to explore this provincially designated park on the eastern shore. Different from most of Ontario's parks, the area is mainly undeveloped back country. Canoes and kayaks conveying their adventurous paddlers abound through the islands and across the portages to the isolated campsites sprinkled within the interi-

or. The rocky channels weave between endless windswept pine trees that are clinging to rocks and islands with a 1.1 billion year geological history.

The Small Craft Channel, stretching north through the 30,000 Islands, is like a major arterial highway that might take one to any destination. While not without its own beauty, it can be crowded with other boats, and reaching areas of secondary and tertiary routes is always for me more pleasant. I'm a back roads, back channel sort of guy and I know from experience that the farther one gets from the main routes, the fewer other vessels you will encounter. Not coincidentally, one has to also accept that these areas will have fewer resources and information. One can navigate



the Small Craft Channel with confidence as the depths and rocks are published on reliable government charts. On the secondary channels one should be more cautious, accepting that slower is better, as it allows for a continuous awareness of the potential hazards. This is an area where one might have 100 feet of water under the keel but rocks awash just 20 feet to port and/or starboard.

Eventually, as we pushed deeper into the park, we entered an area where the navigational information on our charts simply ended. The charts indicated where there was water and land, but the water's depth — that we so needed to know will accommodate our 3'9" draft — was no longer available. As in Chapter One of *Great Northern?* we had to feel our way in. It becomes a little disconcerting when the only boats one is encountering are canoes and smaller motorized runabouts. Official channel navigation buoys are replaced by floating empty plastic white bottles that someone has kindly anchored to the bottom with a rock. Local knowledge, a euphemism for having already bent a propeller on that rock, is likely the best guide in such waters. Still, our entering this area was not done entirely blind and the risks were somewhat mitigated. We did have a guide book that spoke of the area in fair detail. Instructions such as “stay north of this island” or “avoid that bay” were most helpful as we watched our depth sounder and scanned the waters ahead.

With both confidence and trepidation we also followed the hand-drawn yellow highlighted routes of our friend Bent Rasmussen, who had at some time in recent decades brought a simi-

lar-sized sailing vessel into these waters. His charts, which he kindly gave to me when we left our berth on the edges of Lake Ontario three years ago, have become antiquities. They have seen some weather over the years and the folds are often worn through. Still, although Bent's highlighted route occasionally traced its way right over small islands instead of indicating a preferred way to get around (I had images of Bent and his wife Sonja dragging their boat over top of these islands), we travelled safely through some incredibly narrow channels that eventually linked to other, safer waters.

Within these lovely channels we found places such as Wreck Island, Woods Bay, Port Rawson Bay and the above-mentioned Shot Gun Bay. Places that were logging camps back into the 1800s and some with quaint cottages that are grandfathered into the history of the park. We found trails to hike, a spot to watch a rainbow sweep across the lake, places to explore with our dinghy and even opportunities to comfortably skinny dip

(amazingly, there are 36 million Canadians and we were the only two anchored in that bay). We found places to read our books, time to nap and to have the nearly unimaginable cover of starry nights shrouding us in our sleep.

I have a sort of love and hate relationship with *Sea Bear*. She is, after, all a temperamental 42-year-old fiberglass sailboat with an iron sail (donkey) that can test my patience. My love for sailing adventure started as a youth when my mother read me the *Swallows & Amazons* stories by Arthur Ransome. Through forty years I have maintained an association with boats that I share with my wife. Lisa and I have had such soul-satisfying times when we are out on the waters and these far outweigh the challenges we have experienced (we have our own local knowledge in some places).

I have now updated Bent's old charts and if you are heading for adventure I'm happy to share them. May you have fair winds, following seas and star-speckled quiet anchorages.

* * *



Whales Up Close

By Maida Barton Follini (Halifax, Nova Scotia)

Have you ever seen a whale up close? Until this summer, the only whale I had ever seen was the model of the blue whale hanging in the Hall of Ocean Life in the Museum of Natural History, New York City.

Blue whales are the largest animal that has ever existed on earth, larger even than the dinosaurs. They were hunted almost to extinction, but since the international ban on whale hunting, the blue whale has recovered somewhat. It is now thought that between 5000 and 15,000 survive in the oceans. They are rarely seen, however, and I had never seen a live blue whale, or any other kind of whale other than the porpoise.

I am used to seeing porpoises in Penobscot Bay, Maine, where my family go for summer vacations. As we motor back and forth from the Mainland to our family island, we see the porpoises rise up, their backs curving out of the water like wagon-wheels, before they go down under



Model of a blue whale, Museum of Natural History, New York City

again. Porpoises are cetaceans, the same order as whales, but they are not often called whales, because they are much smaller – about 6 to 12 feet long, and the term “whale” is usually reserved for very large cetaceans. But being of the same order, they are, biologically, whales.

However I had never had a chance to see a really large whale until, on a recent excursion, I had the opportunity to go on a whale-watching cruise. I jumped at the chance. With my daughter Beth, grandson Sam, nephew Hugh, and niece and nephew Susan and Carl, I went to the Fundy Shore, and boarded a vessel run by Petite Passage Whale Watch.

The boat was substantial and carried

about 50 passengers. This was reassuring, as I had seen photos of small inflatable dinghies running the risk of being capsized by whales rising suddenly under them!



A whale spouting

The Bay of Fundy is a good place to see whales, as they cruise in following schools of fish that come in with the tide. The Bay of Fundy has the highest tides in the world, rising to as high as 50 feet. As schools of small fish are carried in on the tide, along with krill (small crustaceans), the whales follow



Maida in her Tilley sun-hat on the substantial whale-watching vessel



A whale near the boat

head for that area. Sometimes two or three other whale-watching boats would be focused on a single whale!

Where once whale hunters reduced the whale population with harpoons to gather the oil

as horses and cows help fertilize the fields. The natural manure of these animals helps the soil maintain its vitality. Whales, being very large, and eating tons of food to keep themselves alive, help fertilize the ocean with their natural manure. This fertilizer allows the seaweed to flourish in a way it could not without the help of the whales.

The seaweed near the ocean's surface takes carbon dioxide out of the atmosphere into its leaves and branches. Later, when the sea-plant dies, it sinks to the ocean's floor, carrying its load of carbon dioxide with it. The carbon dioxide stays on the sea-floor, sequestered, without going back into the atmosphere.

with open mouths.

The photos show only a few of the sightings we made. The ship's captain kept a lookout for whales spouting and other signs. When he saw any signs, he would turn his vessel and

and bone, now whale watchers gather to snap pictures and be amazed at the size of these creatures. But the captains are warned by fish and wildlife officials not to go too near, so as not to risk collisions or harming the whales. I asked the guide on our vessel whether we were interfering with the whales' feeding. He answered

that the watchers are only there for a few hours per day, and the whales have plenty of time to feed in privacy, when the boats were in dock.

The guide also told me how whales are useful in reducing greenhouse gases and helping the environment. It is a complex chain of connections: Whales help fertilize the oceans, just



Harbour porpoise

As we headed back towards the dock near Digby, Nova Scotia, we were accompanied by dozens of harbour porpoises. They did not seem to be afraid of the vessel, and in fact seemed to have a curiosity about boats. The porpoises rose and dived, circling around the boat and seeming to be willing partners in our cruise.

* * *



A whale shows his flukes as he dives

Moving On with the Circle of Time (or, Now Where Did I Pack that Address Book?!)

By Ian Sacré (Royston, B.C.)

In the late fall of 2021 my number one daughter advised me that they would be retiring in a year or two. With this in mind they had decided to sell their house in North Vancouver and find a new place to live on Vancouver Island, where it was quieter and ‘the living was easy’.

In due time, my daughter informed me that they had found a suitable home in Courtenay, British Columbia, a small city on the eastern shore of Vancouver Island about an hour’s drive north of Nanaimo. An offer had been made and apparently accepted, and they were now wrestling with the problem of carrying two mortgages until their home in North Vancouver sold. Their professions were such that amid the Covid crisis they could work from home for the most part, with occasional trips into their offices to make sure they were still remembered!

Number two daughter already had property on Hornby Island, a scant



ten miles by water from Courtenay, where she and her family spent much of their free time.

All of this family activity started my aged brain churning in a most alarming fashion and I found myself frequently asking the question, “If all the family are moving on to or close to Vancouver Island, why am I staying in North Vancouver?”

Looking around me I was daunted by all the stuff I had accumulated during my 33-year sojourn in my North Vancouver home. That in itself was rea-

son enough not to move. But surely that was just an excuse. What would Arthur Ransome have done I asked myself. He would have moved anyway, I answered.

I shared my thoughts with my close, long suffering Australian friend and companion, Jill, and her reply was, “What a great idea, I’ll help you pack up and move! By the way, where to?”

“I thought the Courtenay-Comox area” I said weakly.

“Super!” said Jill, “I hear the sailing is great there and we would be close to Hornby Island”.

So I phoned my numbers one and two daughters and told the girls I had decided to sell up and move to Vancouver Island as soon as possible. Both my daughters were delighted with the news.

I contacted a recommended realtor and after some discussion we decided to get my house ready to go on the market in April 2022, three months down the road of time.

I started work by buying a hundred or



The destination

so boxes in which to stow my thousands of books, including sixty odd years of National Geographical Magazine. Book packing took days, largely because I kept discovering old friends I had not seen for years! Then came the marine paraphernalia I had collected and used over the years. My sextant, my wind-up chronometer, the small boat lead line I used in the Arctic on those long ago DEW line (Distant Early Warning) re-supply days.

My original plan was to sell my North Vancouver home first, before looking for a new house in the Comox Valley area. This would serve two purposes, the first being to free up the necessary funds to buy something, while the second was to provide me with plenty of un-pressured time to look for a house and property which I really liked.

To achieve these two requirements I decided to rent a “Big Steel Box” in which to load all the years of stuff I did not wish to immediately part with, such as wood and metal working hobby tools and equipment, garden furniture, etc., etc. This was done, and the container picked up and delivered to storage. The other thing I did was to rent a self-storage locker in Courtenay to store my more precious items, such as my books and boat equipment, dozens of charts and the like. Over the next two months we made several trips from North Vancouver to Courtenay with most



To be loaded

of the boxed books and other miscellaneous items.

This work had the effect of decluttering the house and thus making it more saleable. I was also in the enviable position in that I had a little cottage on Hornby Island which belonged to my number two daughter who had very kindly put it at my disposal for as long as I wanted.

The North Vancouver house went on the market early in April and a firm offer was made and accepted by the end of the month, with a completion

date in the second week of August. The preparation for sale was the worst part because an empty and disused furnace oil tank was buried on the property; this had to be removed before the listing could take place. It was somewhat disconcerting to see a large hole dug in my lawn, some ten feet deep, and the old tank hoisted out by the backhoe which dug the excavation! Top soil had then to be brought in and the whole area re seeded. Fortunately it was a wet spring and where the hole had been dug and filled the grass was soon green again.



One of the other necessary jobs was the removal of an old Lindsey upright piano. Now who in this day and age wants a piano weighing close to 600 pounds? The short answer is, nobody. After numerous phone calls, two enormous gentlemen arrived and



Some necessary preparation for selling

proceeded to manoeuvre the monster across the floors of two rooms and down a set of stairs. When the men arrived I asked them where their equipment was. I was informed they did not have any and then they proceeded to pick up one end of the instrument and rolled it end over end down the stairs then with more end over ending to their waiting truck at the end of the garden path. Where, with the piano standing on it's end and pretty well wrecked, one of the men started to play it! With a broad smile on his face, said, "Man, they sure built good pianos in those days"!

With the house sold and some time to go before the new owners took possession, plans changed a bit. We de-

Noisy traffic, polluted wells, properties in the forests in dark claustrophobic clearings.

Then finally, on a July trip to the Comox Valley, we were shown a house in Royston! A breathtaking view across Comox Bay, next to the sea, and a large lot with a garage and workshop. Just the place!

An offer was made and accepted, with possession occurring on August 11th.

The remaining weeks until moving

cided to use our trips with boxes to Courtenay to scout around and see what homes might be available to buy. We looked at some gorgeous homes but in every case something was unacceptable.

day were a flurry of activity. Accounts to be settled and accounts to be opened. Papers to sign.

There was the inevitable junk to be removed and for this we contracted with a personable, originally South African, father and son team. The father, Mathew, was delightfully philosophical. During a break I asked him about some of the interesting junk removal jobs they had handled. "Well, Ian", he said, "We do not do this for the intellectual stimulation it pro-



To be unloaded

vides, but we are very good at throwing things away and we are very well paid for doing it. What more can one ask for?"

The final move went smoothly and on August 11, my furniture arrived at the new house on schedule and the job of settling in commenced. Now, when I allow my imagination full rein I can see both *Swallow* and *Amazon* running into the bay before the fresh breeze and rounding up to anchor in the deep water just clear of the dried gravel bank in front of my house.

Now which box did I pack that address book in??



The result

An Inspired yeAR

By Jules Blue (Midland Region, UK)

This spring and summer has seen our family involved in creative and very Ransome-like adventurous pursuits. Some of us have been inspired by Mrs Barrable and have worked on a lot of art; all of us have enjoyed or endured some varied mountain trekking and scrambling. One stark motivator for these activities was to raise awareness and funds for *Medicins Sans Frontieres* (Doctors Without Borders) at whose heart is humanitarian aid and medical provision across the world where natural and otherwise disasters grip people in desperate need.

The bulk of the mountaineering took place in Wales and (fell rambling) in the English Lake District. In March we took a family holiday in Sawrey near to Lake Windermere in the south-eastern Lakes, former home and inspiring location of the writer of *Peter Rabbit*, Beatrix Potter.

Armitt Museum

A highlight of our tourist trip was a visit to the Armitt Museum in Ambleside, which contains a magnificent collection of Potter's mycological (fungus) drawings and paintings. The Armitt sisters were, we discovered, three 19th century polymaths: Sophia, Annie and Mary Louisa ("Louie"), all brought up by their father. Upon his sudden death they decided to open a school to support themselves. Sophia became headmistress, Annie taught general subjects and Louie, aged 15 and younger than the oldest pupil, taught basics and music. They enjoyed a large circle of distinguished friends, including the Rawnsley brothers, Charlotte Mason, Robert

Browning and John Ruskin. The nucleus of the museum is the library, formed of Sophia's book collection, (some from her worldly travels), gifts of books and an amalgamation with the old Ambleside Book Society and the Ruskin Library.

While visiting we were interested also in a temporary exhibition on mountaineering, with photographs galore showing various airy feats and artefacts that included examples of all of the kit used over time by mountain rescue. We discovered that the first-ever rock-climbing group in the Lake District, the Fell & Rock-Climbing Club (FRCC), was formed in 1907 and held their first meeting at The Sun Inn, Coniston at the foot of *The Old*



Aurora, Martha and Esme supporting Medicins Sans Frontieres

Man of Coniston (Kanchenjunga to AR; I wonder if he was present?). The Armitt holds and stores the FRCC Library, which contains hundreds of publications dating from the 1890s onwards on the history of rock climbing, geology, botany and travelogues. We took note of books on Ransome by Roger Wardale, R. Dingles and others. Copies of *Mixed Moss*, the Journal of TARS, were evident, as were copies of 'the 12'. The Constitution of TARS 1992 was on display, along with Russian folk tales, *Blue Treacle*, *Coots in the North*, *Bohemia in London*, and sundry papers and letters of AR, as well as *The Desert Island* and other works written or edited by AR.

Trekking

Our adventure couldn't have satisfied fully unless it involved some trekking up and across rugged terrain. We couldn't ignore the pull of the Lions of Langdale. Heading up Mill Gill from the Great Langdale valley we reached the dammed Stickle Tarn, whose waters were formerly impounded for the use of the gunpow-





der works at nearby Elterwater. Here, some hikers were braving the cold, dark waters. The route we were attempting was a circuitous six miles, taking in nine distinct summits and crags: Pavay Ark, Sergeant Man, High Raise, High White Stones, Thunacar Knott, Pike O' Stickle, Loft crag, Thorn Crag and Harrison Stickle, all above a reasonable 2000 feet in height.

There is an exciting 'pre-history' here, evidenced by Neolithic stone-axe 'quarries'. Below Pike O' Stickle there is a scree gully — which we didn't attempt to explore, both because we were on a tight schedule and, due to many excited archaeologists over time creating a dangerous level of erosion, we regarded as out of bounds — where hundreds if not thousands of completed and unfinished stone-axe heads have been discovered. Durable, hard, volcanic rocks abound in this district, providing the perfect material from which to fashion a wealth of cutting tools. The most fascinating aspect of this, we thought, was that such an indistinct geological fault in such a lofty position was discovered so long

ago and that its value was recognised and taken advantage. Even more so, this discovery and industry remained undisturbed and unnoticed until relatively recently! On the high plateau of Troutenbeck we had fine distant views of Crinkle Crag, Great Gable, Blencathra, Scafell Pike and the ranges of Helvellyn, Fairfield and Kentmere, many of which we have previously scaled. We only crossed a dozen or so colourful specks on this day-long trapse — pairs of hikers, although on the high outcrop of Sergeant Man, our youngest was asked by one of a group of eight - 'How did you get here!?' — the obvious answer ensued! An exhilarating, though exhausting, trek. On the summit moor we came across a splodge of frog spawn on the boggy ground which we lifted and transported by flat stone to a small tarn.

In a spontaneous outburst of energy and enthusiasm, we returned to the Lakes in June to balance across the strikingly-named Striding Edge, the justifiably popular benchmark Lakeland arête, with high exposure, a rock chimney and a few other tricky 'bad

steps' to navigate along the narrow crest. Striding Edge took us to Helvellyn (3117ft, whose name is formed from two Cumbric terms: *hal*, meaning upland moorland, and *velin*, meaning yellow), the highest peak along the long ridge of mountains that runs north from Grasmere to Threlkeld Common, east of Keswick. Our trek took in several satellite tops, including Helvellyn Lower Man, Whiteside, Raise, Sticks Pass, Stybarrow Dodd, Watson's Dodd, Great Dodd, descending via Randerside on the eastern flank of Matterdale Common to be collected just away from the shore of Ullswater. This wander felt long. Apparently the pivoting Helvellyn range is the most extensive, continuous area of high fell country in England and its traverse is hugely popular, being climbed more often than any other mountain in Lakeland. It is highly accessible, and poems and leg-





stegosaurus! At its terminus stands the Gough Memorial, erected in 1890 to mark the fatal fall of Charles Gough, a local Kendal artist who, out with his dog Foxie, mysteriously fell from Striding Edge. His emaciated body was discovered three months later with his faithful dog still standing over him. Wordsworth and Scott wrote poems about the incident. Indeed, Wordsworth, his sister Dorothy and

ends are associated with it and its comprehensive panorama.

Striding Edge can and does strike fear into many intrepid scramblers but, helped by dry though humid weather conditions, for us stamina was the greatest challenge. Our basecamp was in the nearby valley at a campsite professing to be 'quiet' and 'family-oriented'. On arrival we had been met by the steady and unnerving growl of motorcycle engines, as the farm next door was hosting an off-road bike rally, featuring about a hundred boisterous competitors and their teams, many of whom were camping alongside us! Suffice to say, sleep was brief!

Traversing the succession of jagged, sharp fangs of shattered rock of Striding Edge seemed akin to walking along the back of a 300-yard-long

Samuel Coleridge Taylor would visit each other by traversing the mountain! A third memorial stands atop Helvellyn, that to Bert Hinkler who, in 1926, landed an aeroplane on the summit!

One summit we omitted was Catstycam (2917ft), also known as Catchedicam, meaning Wild Cat Hill, a deviation to which would have required us to cross the steep declivity of Swirral Edge which we found too eroded and slippery to include.

On all of these hikes we flew the MSF banner, hoping to make the attention of passers-by, though they were few in number. At one point we ditched our boots and walked with ease barefoot across the boggy morasses, gaining rather brown-tinged toes! Twelve miles later we could rest, although Au-

ror had properly 'galumphed' the final half-mile descent!

Wales

In April we headed to Snowdonia, Wales, where we hiked the steep side of Y Garn (3107 feet) up its back-burning northeast ridge on our way to reach the summit of Elidir Fawr, the classic end-point in the 'Welsh 3000-ers' collection, of which we have climbed half the fourteen peaks. This trek took in the pleasant, airy and occasionally-exposed Bwlch y Marchlyn ridge above the Marchlyn Mawr reservoir set in the high, hanging, glaciated col. Y Garn looked ever by far the most prominent of the two terminal peaks due no doubt to Elidir Fawr's summit dome being hidden by the foreshortening effect of its steep, craggy north face but also because Y Garn has such a distinct profile, elegant and angular, almost a pyramid.



Climbing along the spine of the lofty arêtes of Foel Goch and Mynydd Perfedd was a fine, arduous undertaking affording pleasant solitude and awesomely panoptic horizons, and an excuse to eat plenty of treats!

Art

These breath-taking outdoorsy ventures have inspired us to make much art, including some made from found objects or modelled on suchlike. Esme made 'The Music of the Woods' for her sculptured piece for the Derbyshire Open Art contest, which won her first prize in the under 21 category (she is 9); Martha sold her two entries, one a landscape abstract of a local geological feature known as Alport Castles, a cathedral-shaped, shale outcrop

sionist landscape featuring local peaks. Esme also took home first (two), second and third prizes for her photography and art at the local *Allotments and Gardeners* show! And we have two inaugural Cheshire Laureates for Literature in the home, too! Not forgetting Martha's poetry, which has been featured in the Guernsey International Poetry competition as a winning poet in the Poetry on the Move exhibition, wherein winning poems are featured



survivor of a major landslip; Aurora's art was aimed at highlighting an unfolding, man-made environmental disaster featuring a pool known as the Blue Lagoon which is, now, actually orange. This is a chemical run-off from the local quarry and cement works, responsibility for which is hotly debated. My art was pure expres-

sionist landscape featuring local peaks. Esme also took home first (two), second and third prizes for her photography and art at the local *Allotments and Gardeners* show! And we have two inaugural Cheshire Laureates for Literature in the home, too! Not forgetting Martha's poetry, which has been featured in the Guernsey International Poetry competition as a winning poet in the Poetry on the Move exhibition, wherein winning poems are featured

on local buses and at the airport for a year. The Japan Airlines and the Japan Society also are featuring Aurora's 3rd place Haiku, which will appear on video on board all Japan Airlines flights!

And so, inspired initially and continuously by readings of AR, we have felt motiva-

Our MSF challenge has concluded with the creation of our own self-published book of illustrated Haiku, which has been sold to friends and family and also in local art shops.

All in all, an inspired year!



Beckfoot Kitchen — Eating with the Swallows and Amazons

Great-Aunt Cookery

by Molly McGinnis (Manteca, California)

*Aye she's come...and trouble with her. Girt auld hen 'at wants to be cock o' t' midden.
Cook, The Picts and the Martyrs*

Native Trouble

Every time the Great Aunt comes to Beckfoot, she's all kinds of trouble--for everyone else. The Amazons have to do her bidding no matter what, whether shipwreck or long-planned summer visitors.

Miss Turner takes over the menus and one of the things she likes best is sending food back to the kitchen. Mrs. Braithwaite is a superb cook and the GA's rejects tend to be to the benefit of hungry crews.

"one of her best cakes, one of the black and sticky ones. The sort the G.A. said was indigestible..." (Cook's basket for the Swallowdale camp, SD)

A meat pie for native dinner ends up in the shipwreck camp: *"the great-aunt said it was too salty, so cook said this morning we'd better have it and if the great-aunt wanted to see it again she'd have to do without. So we swiped it. It isn't a bit too salt really, we dipped our fingers in the juice and tried what it was like while we were sailing down."* (Peggy, SD)

The meat pie, the pemmican, a cake, bunloaf with marmalade, and "apples and chocolate to fill up with" fed four Swallows and two Amazons. Were they all so hungry or was it that the meat pie was so small?

And a year or two later...

Oh, dear. Just as the Amazons get Beckfoot decorated for the Picts' arrival, the Great Aunt invades. Nancy hustles Dot and Dick off to the Dogs' Home. The GA ousts Nancy from the head of the table and overrides all Nancy and Cook's meal plans. But it's not all bad – Cook colludes with the Amazons, so Picts get Great-Aunt rejects. She even "contributes" the wine for Scarab's christening:

"Ginger wine. The Great Aunt had some with her supper last night (I hope it mellowed the Aunt a bit!) and I swiped a drop afterwards. Beastly stuff, but Scarab won't mind." "Crash! The little bottle smashed to bits on Scarab's sharp prow. Brown wine trickled down into the water."



And then there's the near-disaster of the leftover apple pie that Cook sends to the Picts. "Yesterday, in the Beckfoot dining-room, the Great Aunt had opened it carefully with a knife, and served small slices from it for Nancy, Peggy and herself..." and Cook sends the rest to the Picts.

*"Where's that apple pie?"
"We've eaten it," said Dick.*

Oops. Aunt Maria remembers the partly eaten pie, and tells Cook to serve it for dinner. Poor Mrs. Braithwaite! She has to "make another quick

and cut it up and slosh it over with custard," so the Aunt won't know it isn't the same pie.

"the pie had been baked in a deep oval dish, with an egg-cup upside down in the middle of it to keep the pastry from sagging down."

Cook would have saved a chipped egg-cup for pastries, perhaps one like these.



Fruit pies were baked in glazed pottery dishes in the days of tin-lined steel baking pans, but use any pie or cake pan you have when you make the apple pie recipe below.



About Apples

"Seasonable from August to March; but the apples become flavourless after February." Mrs Beeton, *Dictionary of Everyday Cookery*

But Cook might have made a tasty pie using a mix of stored apples from the root cellar and tart green “June-drops”. Many apple trees self-prune by dropping some of the crop in early summer.

MacIntosh – the Canadian national apple – is one of the best pie apples.



In the 21st century, you’ll find several varieties of apple at any time of year, though the season for harvesting pie apples in North America is Septem-

ber through October and even later. Australia’s late fall Granny Smith apple has been grown all over North America for so long that it’s now as much an American apple as any Thomas Jefferson grew, and when Grannies are out of season here we import better ones from Australia. Grannies are tart and hard and cook up well, but make even better pies mixed with more flavorful varieties. A mix is often better than just one kind of apple no matter which apples are available. Australia and New

Zealand’s sprightly flavored red-over-orange striped apples --Honey-Crisp, Cameo, Braeburn, Gala, Jazz and more—would be good to try.

Still, outdoor farmers’ markets and fruit stands have the best of the American apples, and more kinds of the good American cooking varieties: Jonathon, Gravenstein, MacIntosh, Macoun, Rome, Winesap... and more. Many apple growers have tours and tastings in the fall, and you may not have to go far to find a grower.

Making the Pie

This is the order for making the pie:

1. Make the pastry and let the flattened dough chill.
2. Peel, cut, and season the apples. You’ll need at least 3 or 4 pounds of good tart cooking apples, enough to heap the cut pieces up above the top of the pie dish (they’ll shrink down as they cook).
3. If you want to flavor the pie or the pastry with citrus zest, grate the colored rind from the fruit before cutting it. You’ll use some juice to keep the apple slices from browning and to flavor the pie.

If you don’t have citrus, toss up to 4 tablespoons (1/4 c) of sugar with the slices. Don’t forget that the apples already have sugar added when you finish the filling!

4. Roll out the slightly chilled pastry to fit the pie dish or pan, fill and bake the pie

(5.) Make cinnamon sugar strips with the leftover pastry and bake them.

How Deep is Deep?

Your baking pan will hold more apple pieces than you might think.

There’s no hint as to how deep Cook’s “deep dish” was, but most kitchens have one of these pans. The volumes given are a guide, not an absolute, and based on a solid

filling (as for pumpkin pie) even with the rim. Fruit slices aren’t packed tightly and will shrink in cooking, so you’ll need to add at least two cups of apple slices to the volumes given here. A standard 9" wide by 1 1/4" deep pie pan holds about 6 cups; a 10" pan about 7 cups. Modern “deep dish” pie pans and most cake pans are 2" deep; a 9" pan should hold about 9 cups. Your baking dish may have the volume stamped into the bottom, and you can always measure by dumping cups of water into any dish you think would make an interesting presentation. Just don’t lose count!

Preparing the Filling

A three-pound bag of Granny Smith apples makes about 7 cups of chunks and slices. With this type of peeler, you can take all the peel in a long strip, and very quickly. Hold the sharp blade gently against the apple with one hand (right if you’re right-handed) and turn the apple with the other. Hacking pieces from a whole peeled apple was faster and easier than sectioning with my apple gadgets.



Light green streaks are part of the apple but stop slicing when you see curves or shapes that look like plastic around

the seeds. Cut any hard bits of core from the slices. Throw the apple pieces into a large bowl as you go, and toss with a bit of citrus juice or sugar if they start to brown.

Mix with the sliced apples

About 2/3 to 1 c sugar
sprinkle of cinnamon
1 T flour
the citrus zest
(see more flavorings below)

You have to guess a little about the sugar because apples vary so much in sweetness and the balance changes with baking so there's no use worrying too much. Start with 2/3 cup (total) for 7-8 cups of cut apples and taste a slice. If it's pleasantly sweet-tart the pie will probably taste good.

The Pastry

This recipe makes two crusts for a 10" by 2 1/2" dish or one of about that volume. Leftover dough freezes very well for a few weeks, if you have more than you want to use for strips.

All pastry recipes specify "cool room temperature," 60°F in the British recipe below. But this pastry must be fool-proof – the temperature in my kitchen was 88°F! "Cool room temperature" it wasn't, even at 11 pm! My crust was tender and tasty just the same. This type of pastry has surrounded fruit pies for at least a hundred years, and would have been one of Cook's choices for her fruit pies. The dough is soft and rather sticky, but it will take quite a bit of handling – important if you're cooking with children!

To measure flour:

Use a cup that holds exactly one or two cups of flour when the flour is leveled from the flat top. Open the flour container, fluff the flour with a fork, hold the measure over the fluffed flour and carefully heap flour into it from a smaller cup or scoop, one that you can dip into the flour without unfluffing it. Slide the flat of a table knife across the top of the cup to swish off excess flour. (Sift and measure if you'd rather...)



This dough needs to be rolled out between large plastic

bags, plastic wrap, or flexible plastic cutting sheets, and don't put away the flour yet. You'll need it for dusting the rolling surface and dough to keep it from sticking. (I chilled my dough in a thin gallon bag, the twist-tie type, and used that and another bag to cover the dough as I rolled it.)

Rich Short Crust

(from Georgina Horley: *Good Food on a Budget*)

Tools: Mixing bowl, measuring cups and spoons, table fork, rolling pin (I used a pastry pin but a standard rolling pin works just as well), plastic sheets or bags for rolling.

No rolling pin? Use a wine bottle. It's harder to get an even circle, but you can chill the bottle to keep the pastry cool. Keep any condensation on the plastic sheets and don't drink the wine until you have the pastry in the pie dish.

Use a large mixing bowl that will hold all the ingredients.



Left: Creaming the butter mixture. You can see that my butter's melting!

Center: Mixing in the flour.

Right: The flattened round.

Making the pastry

Cut

1 stick butter (1/2 c) into rough cubes

Sprinkle with

2-3 T sugar

If your butter isn't in sticks, pack it into a 1/2 c measuring cup, shake it out into the bowl, and let it come to room temperature. Let the butter and sugar sit at room temperature and when warm enough to combine easily, beat well with a fork, so that the mixture lightens and fluffs a bit. Add and beat in (it won't be completely smooth)

1 raw egg yolk mixed with 1 T water

Add all at once and toss in with the fork

2 c flour, well fluffed before measuring 1/4 tsp salt (sprinkle thinly over flour)

Toss and press with fingers when the mix becomes too stiff for the fork. When the flour is blended into the butter mix so you don't see it any more, press the dough into a ball and turn the ball out onto a flour-sprinkled surface and rock it a few times with a flat hand, turning between each rock, to consolidate the dough. Flatten to a rough circle (I pressed the warm (80°F) dough with my fingertips, but you may want to use a fist and a rolling pin), put it between two big plastic bags or sheets of plastic, and chill while you make the filling.

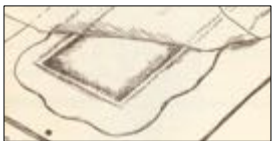
Prepare the bottom crust

When the filling is ready, roll the chilled dough into a large rectangle. If you have room, you can make the rectangle big enough for both crusts. Otherwise, you'll push the dough scraps together to roll out the top crust. Most recipes specify 1/8" thick for pastry, and that's thicker than you may suppose. Check with a ruler. This tender dough can be a bit thicker. Chill the dough for a few minutes any time it seems too soft to handle.



Peel off the plastic and gently mark the dough with the rim of the pie dish. The extra dough on the edge should be nearly as wide as the pan is deep, so the dough can ease into the pan

without stretching and tearing. Cut around the rest of the mark with a sharp knife. Dust the top of the cut-out very lightly with flour, put the rolling pin in the center of the circle, and fold the dough over it, so the plastic is on top. Unfold the pastry over the pan with the plastic side up and carefully peel off the plastic.



Now, lift the outside part of the dough with one hand and help it into the pan with the other. The artist cheated – the dough will fall

into big folds in a round pan. Just press the folds down with your fingers. Reinforce the rim – trim the overhanging dough about an inch from the outside of the rim with scissors. Fold this bit onto the rim.



Note: Patch tears and holes with bits of dough, especially in the bottom crust. You don't want pie juice welding the crust to the pan.

Add the top crust

Roll out a second circle, big enough to fit over the heaped filling with an inch or so left over.

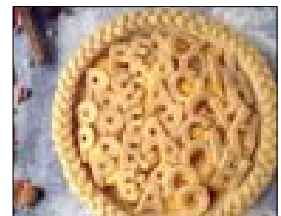
Gently scoop the filling into the bottom crust and unfold the top crust over it. If the top crust isn't big enough to cover the filling, don't worry. The pie won't be as pretty but the crust will more or less cover the top as the filling cooks and sinks.

To make a simple top crust rim, unfold the top crust over the filling, press the tines of a fork all around the pan, and slice the extra off. Or trim and fold the top crust as you did the



bottom crust and press the two folds together to make a thick pastry rim for decorating. This crimp is very easy to make. (The site the photo is from has several more nice finishes: [Pie Crust Edgings](http://www.thespruceeats.com/how-to-crimp-pie-crust-4123830) <www.thespruceeats.com/how-to-crimp-pie-crust-4123830>

Make slits in the crust with scissors for steam vents. Simple slashes, apple designs, anything you like. Or you can roll out the dough scraps and cut pieces to scatter over the top. Dust the board with flour so



the shapes won't distort too much when you pick them up on a spatula to put on the pie. The photo overdoes it more than a bit, but squares or diamonds cut with a knife are easy. So are rounds (use a water glass or doughnut cutter) and simple cookie-cutter shapes like stars or apples. Overlap the pieces as much as you like or not at all.

Baking the Pie

Have a piece of aluminum foil ready for covering the top crust if it starts to get too brown. A big deep dish pie may take as long as two hours. Start baking at 400°F (some recipes say 425 or 450°) to set the crust, and turn the oven to 375 after about 10 minutes. Peek at the pie every so often

and if the crust starts looking brown (this pastry is very light colored) cover it with the foil. A fruit pie is done when the juices start bubbling past the steam vents.

What About That Custard?

Even though this was the first time I ever made a “boiled” custard, it was easy and quick and turned out very well: smooth, light, and not too sweet, complementing the pie rather than overpowering it. If you don’t have a thick-walled (cast aluminum, for instance) pan you may need a heat spreader to keep the custard from curdling on the bottom of the pan.

Custard Sauce (Georgina Horley)

Mix the egg base in a bowl large enough to hold two or three cups—you’ll beat 1 1/4 cups of milk into the egg mixture.



Beat

1 egg

with

1 T sugar

Capful of vanilla extract

1/2 tsp cornstarch

heat

1 1/4 c (10 fluid oz) milk

Don’t let the milk boil – watch for tiny bubbles at the edge of the pan and take it off the heat. Pour the hot milk over the egg mixture in a thin stream, very slowly, stirring constantly. Return to the pan and thicken the sauce over the lowest heat. Keep stirring and pay attention to the corners.

Run a finger over the back of the spoon when the custard starts coating the spoon, and as soon as the cleaned strip stays, take the pan off the stove. Don’t stop stirring yet – the custard will keep cooking. I got my custard way too hot and thanks to the cornstarch it didn’t quite curdle at 190°F. If you have an instant-read thermometer stop at 170 to 180°F. You can’t rescue a curdled custard, so better a little thin than a batch of scrambled egg lumps! (Note: the Salmonella bacteria that sometimes infects eggs is killed at about 160°F so don’t worry.)

The Last Twist

There will always be some pastry scraps left. Get out a cookie sheet and line it with non-stick aluminum foil or butter it very lightly. Push the scraps together into a rough rectangle, dust the rolling surface with flour, and roll out to about 1/8". Sprinkle with sugar and cinnamon before the last few passes so the rolling pin can press the sugar mix in. Cut the dough sheet into strips about 1/2" wide. From here you can cut the strips into two-bite lengths, maybe 2 1/2" long. Peel the strips off the cutting surface, put them on a cookie sheet, and bake under the pie for 5 to 10 minutes.

If the dough has had enough flour rolled into it to toughen and strengthen it by now, you can make longer strips, put them on the baking sheet, twist a few times, join the ends, and bake the circles on an edge. (Test-bake a circle on a folded piece of aluminum foil to see if it will hold up.) I like Moebius strips with one twist, an edible math lesson. Mine collapsed this time, but if you’re working with children the dough probably has quite a lot of flour worked into it by now, and is tough enough to keep its shape.

Are You on Facebook?

Despite the many problems with Facebook, it does enable groups of like-minded people to share and exchange. (These are the groups I can find. Let me know if you find any others — Ed.)

The Arthur Ransome Society (TARS) Facebook Group: www.facebook.com/groups/762560473886537/
(This is a closed group, so you will have to ask to join.)

Arthur Ransome’s Swallows and Amazons in North America: www.facebook.com/groups/tarsfriends/

The Arthur Ransome Society in New Zealand & Australia: www.facebook.com/tarsnz/

The Arthur Ransome Group: www.facebook.com/groups/2612950856/



Pieces of Eight — The Junior Pages



Where Did Arthur Ransome Get the Inspiration for his Characters?!

by Simon Horn (Montreal, Quebec)

Have you ever wondered where Arthur Ransome got the ideas for his characters? The *All Things Ransome* website has one page that talks about just that: [Inspirations for Arthur Ransome's Characters](http://www.allthingsransome.net/inspirations) <www.allthingsransome.net/inspirations>.

Many of you have probably heard about the Altounyan family, whose four children — Taqui, Susan, Titty and Roger — are thought to be an inspiration for the four Swallows.

But have you ever heard of the Sumners, another family who camped on the western shore of Coniston Water for many years?



The Sumners

“The main family consisted of a father and mother and five children of whom the most relevant in 1928 were John (11), Nancy (9), Margaret called Peggy (4). The family had known Arthur Ransome for many years and knew all about the Swallows and Amazons books, but never thought they were models for any of the characters.” But just the names make you wonder, especially combined with those of the Altounyan children.

The Amazons are apparently harder to pinpoint, and the *All Things Ransome* page goes through some of the possibilities, including the sisters Pauline and Georgina Rawdon Smith. Pauline was apparently sure that they were the inspiration for the Amazons, but *All Things Ransome* is not convinced.



Altounyans and Ransomes



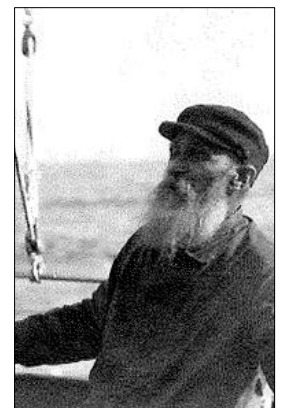
The Amazons?

The D's don't seem to be inspired by any real people, but, as the website says, “The D's seem to be products of Ransome's own development rather than modelled on children he knew or might have known. Hugh Brogan, Ransome's biographer, suggested

they are two facets of Ransomes personality, which could well be the case.”

The *All Things Ransome* page goes on to consider the inspirations for many more of Ransome's characters:

▪ Peter Duck (*Peter Duck*): Carl Sehmel, “the ancient mariner”, who was the Ransomes' experienced crew on *Racundra's First Cruise*.



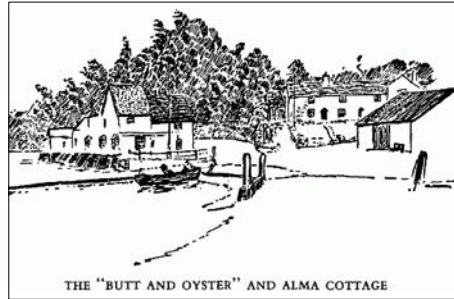
The 'ancient mariner'

▪ Squashy Hat (*Pigeon Post*): Oscar Gnosspeilus, who did prospect for copper in the Lake District.



Squashy Hat and the D's at work in the houseboat.

▪ Slater Bob (*Pigeon Post*): Willie Shaw, “who worked the original of Slater Bob’s mine (Penny Rigg Quarry) for Oscar Gnosspeilus, who owned the mining rights”.



Ransome's Alma Cottage was just like the real one, seen to the right.

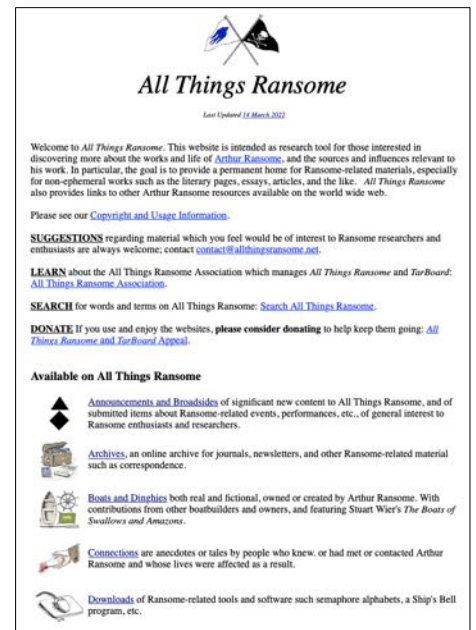
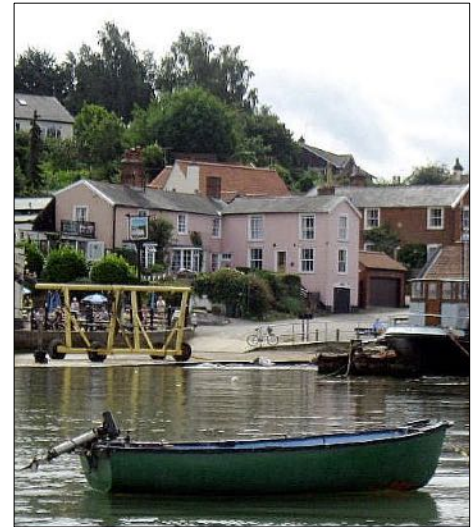
▪ Miss Powell (*We Didn't Mean to Go to Sea*): “Annie Powell really did run a tea room at Alma Cottage in Pin Mill”.

▪ The Eels (*Secret Water*): the three children of Major and Mrs. Busk, who owned a real yacht called *Lapwing*.

▪ Miss Lee (*Missee Lee*): based on a mixture of Madame Sun Yat Sen, whom Ransome met in China, and notorious woman pirate Lai Choi San.



Cambridge scholar or Chinese pirate?



The [All Things Ransome website](http://www.allthingsransome.net) <www.allthingsransome.net> has a host of other fascinating material for Ransome enthusiasts as well. Don't miss it!

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