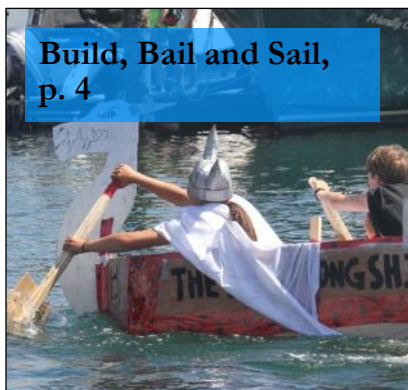




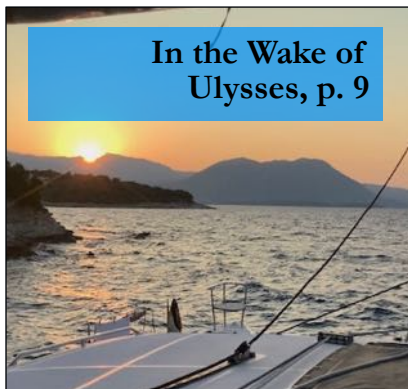
Signals from TARSUS & North Pole News

September 2025

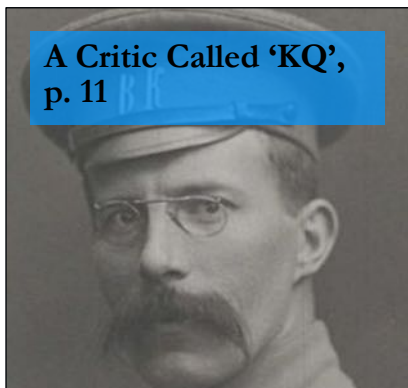
Build, Bail and Sail,
p. 4



In the Wake of
Ulysses, p. 9



A Critic Called 'KQ',
p. 11



Contents

Ship's Papers

A Note from the Editor — Simon Horn	2
Greetings from the US Coordinator — Mark Purtill, US Coordinator	3
Greetings from the North — Ian Sacré, TARS Canada Coordinator	3

Captain Flint's Trunk

Build, Bail and Sail — Ian Sacré	4
Charcoal in America Today — Molly McGinnis	7

Kanchenjunga's Cairn

In the Wake of Ulysses — Alistair Bryden	9
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Dipping our Hands

A Critic Called 'K.Q.' — Martin Beech	11
Extraverts and Introverts — Andrew Fisher	15
On Listening to Ransome — Ross Cossar	17

Ship's Library

Ransome the Artist, compiled by Roger Wardale — Simon Horn	19
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Sketch for "Peter Duck spins his yarn", from
Ransome the Artist

Ship's Papers — Important information for the Crew



A Note from the Editor

By Simon Horn, sjhorn@gmail.com

Thanks as always to our contributors, here is the September issue of *Signals from TARSUS/North Pole News*.

Our pool of contributors remains small, however, and as usual I urge all of you to consider what you

might present to our members.

My travels through Amazon Publications, both new and old, cannot go on forever. Surely you have read something that other TARS would like to hear about. Share it with us.

In this issue

In *Captain Flint's Trunk*, **Ian Sacré** reports on the annual "Build, Bail and Sail" event in Comox Harbour near his home, where 16 pairs of contestants have to build a "boat" in two and a half hours, using an identical selection of material, and then must sail their construction around a preset course. As the photographs show, much wetness and general hilarity seem to follow.

Molly McGinnis then presents "Charcoal in America Today". If you thought barbecuing was the only thing charcoal is used for think again. Read Molly's article to learn all about the ways charcoal continues to be used today. Or ask your goldfish.

In *Kanchenjunga's Cairn*, **Alistair Bryden** sails "In the Wake of Ulysses" in a catamaran tour of Greece's Ionian Sea. Such a trip inevitably touches history, and Alistair talks about the many historical sites they were lucky enough to see.

He also fondly remembers Tim Severin's book, *The Ulysses Voyage*, which describes a trip from Troy to Ithaca in a replica Greek galley.

In *Dipping Our Hands*, **Martin Beech**'s "A Critic Called K.Q." takes a comprehensive look at the many pennames that Arthur Ransome used in the course of his writing, from "AR" to "KQ" to "William Blunt" and many more. Beech looks at how these pseudonyms changed over the course of Ransome's career, often depending on his current location and situation.

Andrew Fisher then takes another look at Ransome's characters in "Extraverts and Introverts, Different Characters in Different Ransome Books", where he traces the different ways individual characters behaved and acted in the books, sometimes even changing from to extravert to introvert, or even the opposite.

Next, **Ross Cossar** considers another way to enjoy the stories in "On Listening to Ransome". He explains how, although he has read the twelve "more times than I can remember", now he is increasingly using audiobooks to listen to the stories "while doing activities such as driving, walking or doing light, otherwise quiet work."

Lastly, in *The Ship's Library* I take a look at the Amazon Publication for 1998, *Ransome the Artist*. We all know that Ransome illustrated his own stories, and Part 1 of this small book explains how that happened, showing some of Ransome's sketches for each of the Swallows and Amazons stories. It also shows, in Part 2, that Ransome also drew simply for the pleasure of it

This issue is about as long as the average, and is still largely dependent on its regular writers.

Think about how you might help out. Short articles, questions and comments, and pictures are always welcome.

The next issue will appear in January 2026. It will mark 10 years since I became editor of *Signals from TARSUS/North Pole News*. I have enjoyed the process and hope to continue for some time. But I cannot do it without you.

Start thinking about a contribution now. I will send out my usual reminder for the January issue on December 1.

I hope everyone has had a good summer.

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





Greetings from your US Coordinator

By Mark Purtil, TARSUS Coordinator
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purtil@alum.mit.edu

I hope many of you managed to do some Ransome-ish things over the summer. For various reasons, I

didn't manage to do much more than a few local hikes. Of course we have the fall and winter (holidays) to look forward to. I don't think any of the books are set in the fall (as the children would have been in school), but that doesn't prevent us for doing Ransome-y things.

At this point, it seems like the new arthur-ransome.org web site is functioning okay, and I'm glad to see some additional renewals. It's not too late, so if you haven't renewed, please do give it a try.

One recent problem with the website is the usa@arthur-ransome.org address for me, which seems to have stopped forwarding at some point. This has been fixed, but if you contacted me recently and didn't hear back, try emailing me again. (You can also try the alternate email tars@pigsandtoasters.com). Likewise if you have any other issues I might be able to help with, please let me know.

Swallows and Amazons forever!

All the best,
Mark



Greetings from the North

By Ian Sacré, TARS Canada Coordinator
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gallivanterthree@shaw.ca

Greetings Canadian TARS Members,

As I write this September message the grey skies of

late summer are overhead, replacing the heraldry blue firmament we have enjoyed here nearly all summer long. There have been days when the wild-fire smoke has lain over us but a change of wind direction frequently takes care of that. Sadly I know other parts of the country have not been as lucky as us here on the coast...

There is little to report regarding TARS. The latest Canadian TARS membership list recently received shows our paid-up numbers have

dwindled to 16 and the downward trend continues. I do not know what the average age of TARS members is now but when one looks at the pictures contained in HQ's Signals one does not see many 'spring chickens' smiling back at us in the photos. My own grandchildren, five in number and all grown up now, never showed much interest in 'messing about in boats', though their two mothers were keen sailors in their teenage years. Society has changed so much since the invention of the computer

chip and everything which evolved from it. Our children seem to spend much of their time 'hanging out' on social media rather than planning and carrying out Tom Sawyer- and Arthur Ransome-type adventures. Thankfully there are some notable exceptions.

I have not heard from any of our members since the last newsletter so I suppose no news is indeed good news. Krysia Clack continues to keep us well informed of TARS actions and of course the TARS website is available to keep us informed of regional goings on, and so on.

Wishing everyone calm seas and fair winds.

Ian Sacré
Canadian TARS Coordinator



Captain Flint's Trunk — News from around the world

Build, Bail and Sail

by Ian Sacre (Royston, British Columbia)

Arthur Ransome nearly always placed his stories in or near well-known towns, villages or hamlets in England. In some stories he might change the place names but in others he left the names alone. Bowness on Windermere became Rio, for example, in *Swallows and Amazons* and *Swallowdale*. But other places kept their real names. Wroxham kept its name. So did Horning and Potter Heigham in *The Big Six*. With Arthur Ransome setting his tales of adventure in such far-away places, with either real or fictitious names, might leave us believing that real adventures always happen somewhere else. Nothing could be further from the truth, for they often can be found in or close to our own backyard! Such was the case near my backyard.

I live on Vancouver Island, British Columbia, in what is known as the Comox Valley Regional District. There are two moderately sized twin towns, Courtenay and Comox, which sit side by side on the banks of Comox Harbour. The harbour is fed by



three rivers, the Puntledge, the Tsolum and the Courtenay. The estuary is heavily tidal and at low tide the beautiful flats stretch for miles in all directions. This attracts birds of all stripes: eagles, herons and numerous shore birds. Incidentally, the Courtenay River is the shortest navigable river in Canada.

Every year in early August the communities hold a summer festival, some of which takes place in Comox

Harbour. One of our leading businesses in Courtenay is Central Builders (Home Hardware), which has been here since 1924. For the past 36 years it has sponsored the annual hilarious Build, Bail and Sail event. In a nutshell the event consists of sixteen two-person teams who have applied to take part in the competition. The teams are made up of family members or friends of all genders, and may consist of mothers and daughters, or sons and fathers, daughters or sons, siblings, friends and colleagues, you name it!

Central Builders supplies all the materials for the boats, and the list of materials is identical for all teams. The list may vary a bit from one year to the next, but usually consists of a 4 x 8 ft. sheet of 3mm door skin plywood, a piece of 2 x 4 ft 10mm plywood, and four pieces of 2 x 2 inch x 8 ft lumber. A few screws and nails (they are minimal and counted!), a piece of corrugated plastic board, a big roll of duct tape, a roll of red builder's tape, and a large piece of





plastic sheeting complete the list.

No boat plans or drawings are provided. Designs are the sole responsibility of the on-site participating team of “naval architects”. After personally observing the efforts of the teams, I think a considerable degree of poetic license has been used!

Over the years Central Builders’ has developed a comprehensive set of rules for the contestants to follow in their endeavours. Some of the important ones are listed here:

1. There will be a maximum of 16 teams. Each team will have two people. The teams will be provided with material on race day and must build a boat out of the material.

2. No prefabrication will be allowed.

3. Each team will supply their own sawhorses and tools. No power tools are allowed, this includes cordless battery tools.

4. Construction must be completed within 3-1/2 hours (9:00 to 12:30). Assistance from any other person other than the two team members will result in disqualification.

5. Boats must carry the two team members at the same time.

6. Boats are to be rowed or paddled during the first leg of the race. The crew members must then change places and paddle back to the starting place.



7. Each race will consist of 4 heats of 4 boats. The winners of these heats will then race again for the first, second and third prizes.

The construction ‘boat yard’ is adjacent to the launch area and the viewing public is free to wander along and watch the frenzied.

When the start foghorn blows at 9:00 a.m. some builders dive enthusiastically right into their project while others stand looking a bit puzzled, staring at the small pile of building materials in front of them, and wondering what they have got themselves into. Three and a half hours later, at 12:30 sharp, the second blast of the foghorn echos across the



builders yard, signalling the teams to stop work and lay down their tools. It’s a welcomed pause in the competition and provides time for the boat builders to meta-morph into sailors!

Some of the boats are finished while others are nearly so and still others still need a significant amount of work. But no matter, the building stage is over, and this is enforced vigorously by the stern and fierce (or they try to be) Central Builders’ marshals. Personal cuts and bruises are dealt with, life-jackets are donned and with knocked together oars and paddles the craft are carried down to the launch ramp by their crews.

By now, hundreds if not thousands of onlookers have occupied every possible viewing spot on both sides of the concrete launch ramp. The teams are interviewed briefly by the master of ceremonies, who is dressed as a swashbuckling pirate. (I was told he was retired from Central Builders because of his piratical ways!)

The first four boats are carried to the water, the foghorn blasts again and the eager crews leap into their craft and start paddling as if possessed by Davy Jones. Indeed one crew might have been, as their craft slowly filled with water and sank beneath them 15 feet from the start! The stalwart search and rescue teams hovered nearby, but the valiant mariners did not give up. Clutching their swamped craft, they swam their wreck around the race turning buoy a hundred metres out and, puffing and blowing, swam it back to the ramp. A demonstration of the courage, fortitude and determination always present in the annual Build, Bail and Sail Regatta. The *Swallows and Amazons* crews would have felt right at home.



Charcoal in America Today

by Molly McGinnis (Manteca, California)

Did you immediately think “barbecue?” Of course. Charcoal in bags. Charcoal pressed into briquettes—but wait a minute. Here’s what’s in a popular brand of briquette: “wood char, mineral char, limestone, starch (as a binder), and borax.” No wonder my father’s briquettes made such dud sidewalk chalk.

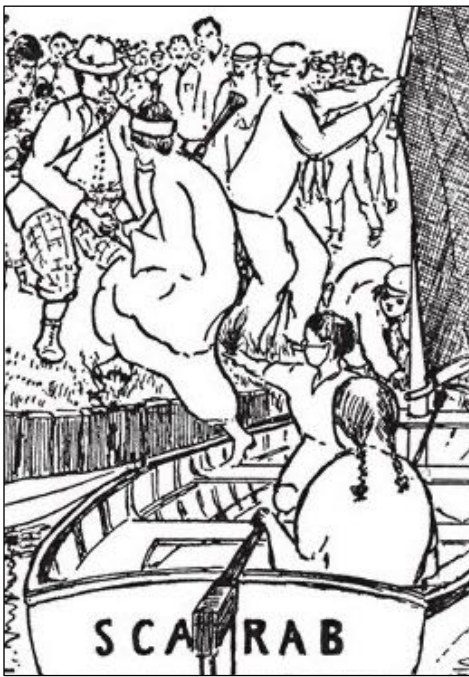
Are there people like the Billies making charcoal in the USA? Yes... and no. People rather in the Billies’ style, yes. Improvising large and small charcoal kilns, yes. Here Durham Wildlife Trust volunteers are making charcoal for the trust to sell to fund conservation projects – a commercial operation like the Billies! There are more photos of Durham Trust charcoal production here: [Charcoal In The Park](#)



Charcoal isn’t just for cooking. Drawing charcoals are more popular than ever. The photo shows sticks off the vine, hard, sharp-pointed charcoal pencils, charcoal and wax ‘crayons’, and fine powder for blowing on. The tools rub, smudge, and dab.

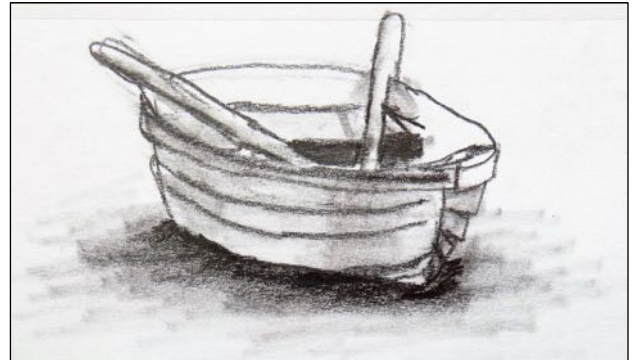
Could this be Mary Swainson’s woodman, bringing a horse back from its day’s work hauling logs? John Skeaping’s sketch was finished with a few fine ink lines after rubbing, dabbing and smudging.





Did Ransome ever make a charcoal drawing? I haven't found one for sure. Ransome's cross-hatch shading is an ink or pencil technique and that's how almost every drawing is done. Here, the Scarab's sail is cross-hatched and the retaining wall the GA is climbing is darkened with lines.

The artist who sketched this rowboat shaded the waves and shadows by smudging, and the lines are much softer.



Charcoal isn't always used so peacefully. Charcoal made the gunpowder for Uncle Jim's cannon and for the eelman's bird guns – and many a war.

Chinese alchemists accidentally made a kind of black powder in about 800 AD while trying to make an elixir of life. Only 400 years later are there accounts of explosives used in warfare.

But explosives needn't be just for weaponry – charcoal powder put the spark in the sparkle for these fireworks, as well as making them go up in the air.



“Activated” charcoal – roasted with inert gas to make it absorbent – filters air and water, neutralizes poison, brushes your teeth and makes you beautiful – an astonishing number of fashionable cosmetics use charcoal.

These goldfish are happy with plants for oxygen and an activated charcoal filter removing ammonia and other impurities from their water.



Men and women can treat their skins to a whole collection of charcoal creams, soaps, scrubs, masks and makeup.

*All that notwithstanding...
Yum!*



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

In the Wake of Ulysses

by Alistair Bryden (Calgary, Alberta)

In June we were lucky enough to be invited to join a boating trip around the Ionian Sea near Corfu. We were eight guests and two crew aboard a very comfortable chartered catamaran. Each couple had a small cabin; there were two cabins in each of the hulls. The trip was billed as a sailing holiday but sadly we didn't have much wind, so we did a lot of motor-ing. We started our trip with a tour around the Peloponnese (Southern Greece) and then joined our party in Corfu. From Corfu we sailed down as far as Kefalonia and Ithaca.

In Greece it's impossible to avoid history. You are sailing and walking through history and I emphasize sailing because, when travelling around Greece, you realize a) how mountainous it is and b) how relatively easy it is to get around by sea.

The Greeks were (and are) great sailors. We saw loads of historic sites

but picking just some of the sailing sites alone:

- We stopped at Corinth where the isthmus joining the Peloponnese to the rest of Greece is only 7 kilometres wide. In the 6th century BC, the rulers of Corinth built a roadway called the Diolkis over the Isthmus to haul cargo and sometimes whole ships over the Isthmus as a short cut avoiding the long sail or row around the Peloponnese. Parts of



this roadway are still there!! beside the modern Corinth Canal.

who won the battle and became Caesar Augustus, the first Roman Emperor.

- We visited Mycenae, where Agamemnon marshalled the Greek fleet that sailed across the Aegean sea and besieged Troy for ten years.
- We looked out over the Gulf of Patras just south of Actium where a Christian fleet fought and won the last great galley battle in history. Cervantes, who wrote Don Quixote, was a soldier in that battle.
- On dozens of islands and headlands, we saw the castles and strongholds that were built and fought over for thousands of years

by Greeks, Romans, Turks, Italians, Venetians, British, Albanians and many more. It was common to see a modern fortification that was garrisoned in WW2, built in the same location and sometimes using the same foundations as a Bronze Age fort.

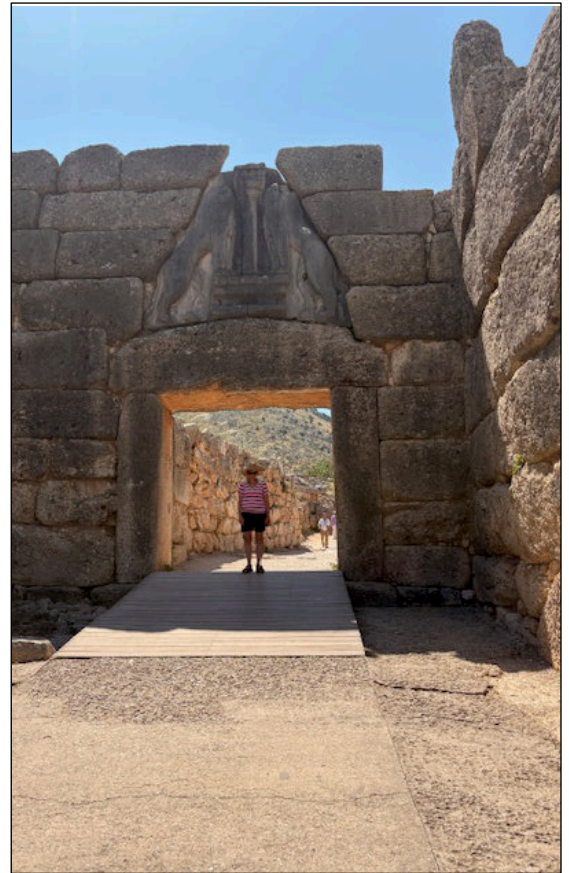
But for me, one of the most fascinating experiences was based on a book I'd read before but was able to read again. It is called *The Ulysses Voyage*, by Tim Severin. From the 1970s to 1990s, Severin became a specialist at building historic vessels in the ancient style, and then recreating legendary voyages. Among many other adventures, he sailed the Atlantic in a leather boat, following the legend of Brendan the mariner, relived the voyages of Sinbad the Sailor, sailing from Oman to China in a recreated Arab dhow, and sailed up the Bosphorus to the Black Sea in a recreated Greek galley, reliving the voyage of Jason and the Argonauts.

After the Jason voyage he had a spare Greek galley, and he decided to use it on another voyage, sailing from Troy in Asia Minor and back to Ithaca, south of Corfu. He followed the path of Ulysses, or Odysseus, whose voyage was recounted by Homer in

The Odyssey, the earliest and some would say the greatest European heroic poem ever written. It wasn't written down till 800 years after the events of the poem, but previously it was transmitted orally.

Severin's great insight was that many or most of the mythic voyages he recreated were based on real events and places, which had then been vastly expanded into glorious myths by generations of storytellers. Most analyses of these tales have been made by generations of academics writing from their desks. But Severin set himself the task of extracting the true core of the stories from the perspective of a sailor experiencing the same places, winds and hardships as the heroes, using vessels built according to the same ancient techniques, techniques that would have been familiar to Sinbad, Jason, Ulysses and the rest. He makes a convincing case.

To my great delight, we sailed/motored to some of the sites identified



by Severin as the origin of some of the stories in *The Odyssey* including anchoring in the lee of Ithaca itself. I can strongly recommend all of Severin's books to anyone with an interest in sailing and history but *The Ulysses Voyage* is a special favourite,



Dipping our Hands — Personal relationships with the books

A Critic Called ‘K.Q.’

by Martin Beech (Courtenay, B.C.)

Many authors adopt and use pen-names, or pseudonyms. The reasons behind this subterfuge are manifold, but mostly it is a way to hide the author's true identity. Although, as often as not, the adopted *nom de plume* and the real identity of an author become well known to the reading public. Harry Potter author J. K. Rowling is known to write under the penname Robert Galbraith.

J. K. Rowling itself is the penname of Joanna Rowling, with the K standing for Kathleen, the first name of her grandmother. The Brontë sisters Anne, Charlotte, and Emily wrote under the names of Acton, Currer, and Ellis Bell; Charles Dickens was Boz; Charles Dodgson was Lewis Carroll; Oscar Wilde was C33 (for cell 3 on floor 3 of Reading Gaol), while famed fisherman and author of the 1653 *The Complete Angler* Izaak Walton, wrote under the penname of John Chalkhill.

Arthur Quiller-Couch, editor of the monumental collection of poems, *The Oxford Book of Verse, 1250-1900*, published stories under the highly reduced pseudonym of Q.

Some authors have used multiple pennames, adopting and designing a specific pseudonym for the immediate work in hand. Scientist and diplomat Benjamin Franklin, for example, used at least 10 pennames, including Anthony Afterwit, Busy Body, Alice Addertongue, Martha Careful, and Silence Dogwood. A whole (closed, non-infinite) set of mathematicians have written under the penname of Nicolas Bourbaki. Some writers have

adopted pennames that speak to the topic about which they are writing. For example, anti-apartheid activist Stephen Biko wrote under the penname of Frank Talk.

And, finally, Arthur Ransome is known to have used at least eight pennames, the most well-known of these being: ‘R’, ‘A.R.’, ‘K.Q.’, and William Blunt. The first two of these pennames are obvious, but the other two are obscure, and they (along with the other four) beg the question as to their origin and meaning.

In his prose writing, Ransome interestingly applied a penname to his literary alter ego James Turner, a.k.a. Captain Flint. Not only is Ransome personified in the role of Captain Flint, but his imagined persona adopted the penname of “A Rolling Stone” when writing his *Mixed Moss* memoir.

Ransome is, of course, having fun with this title and pseudonym, it being a play on words, and a jibe at the well-known proverb, “a rolling stone gathers no moss”. Indeed, this aphorism (or equivalent versions of it) has an ancient heritage dating back to at least the 11th century A.D. In its typical proverbial form, the implication is that someone who is not settled, or keeps moving from one thing to another (a rolling stone) is shirking their responsibilities and will acquire little wealth and comfort.

Indeed, in its usage in Scotland, moss gathering can be directly linked to the gathering of peat (that is sphagnum) moss. The gathering of peat

being a summer's task, and its storage ahead of time being vital for surviving the cold winter months, when it is burnt for warmth. Ransome's title, however, suggests a collection of stories (mixed moss) gathered over a lifetime of worldly exploration and adventure.

In contrast to his personification as Captain Flint, Ransome's quintessential romance writer, Dorothea Calum, showed no signs of wanting to shelter behind a *nom de plume*. Indeed, *The Outlaw of the Broads*, *The Outcasts*, *Ten Thousand Years Ago*, and the *Romance of the Hebrides* are unequivocally attributed to the pen of Dorothea. While sometimes considered a minor character, Dorothea occasionally plays a vital role in the development of important storylines. She provides, for example, the Scotland Yard inspiration in *The Big Six*, and she presents the defendants ‘legal’ case to Mr. Farland in the story's denouement. She is also central to the successful outcome of events in *The Picts and the Martyrs*.

She represents an interesting cross between the imaginative romanticism of Titty, and the motherly, semi-native, organizing force of Susan. She worries about how her brother is perceived, but most of all, she has a clear sense of justice, and a definite soft spot for the misunderstood villain.

It would be difficult to see Dorothea, however, write a gothic romance similar in style to Ransome's *The Elixir of Life*, despite the fact that the literal (even childish) romance

scenes between Rose Killigrew and Richard Stanborough could have been directly dictated by Dorothea to Ransome. There is a total honesty and innocence about Dorothea Calum that needs no protection nor concealment behind a penname. One could easily see Dorothea writing a story similar to *The Far Distant Oxus* [1], but never a dystopian romance such as *Ransome Revisited* [2].

Wayne Hammond, in his wonderfully detailed book, *Arthur Ransome: a bibliography* [3], was forced to address the issue of Ransome's pennames and abbreviations in his efforts to track-down the more obscure of the numerous works published by Ransome. In this manner a detailed examination and cross-referencing, between various bibliographies, Ransome's diaries, biographical notes, and journal indexes, had to be made. Accordingly, in some cases, unsigned published works could be attributed to Ransome. In other cases, Ransome's works were simply attributed to 'R', or 'A.R', and in a very few cases as 'A.M.R'.

Given the detailed nature of Hammond's bibliography, we can attempt to trace the usage of these attributions, and it is clear that different attributions were used at distinct and different times. The first article that was attributed to 'R', and was definitely by Ransome, was a review of three fishing books, one being Isaak Walton's *The Complete Angler*, for the *Manchester Guardian* newspaper in June 1925. The last article using the 'R' attribution was another book review, this time of Hubert Griffith's *European Encounters* for the *Manchester Guardian* in April, 1931.

At other times, between 1925 and 1930, however, in newspaper columns such as *Rod and Line*, and

Drawn at a Venture, both produced for the *Manchester Guardian*, Ransome's full name attribution was given.

When Ransome was reporting on world politics for the *Daily News* and *Manchester Guardian*, between 1915 and 1928, he was on occasion simply referred to as "our special correspondent".

The 'A.R.' attribute was first use in an article about the Royal Cruising Club for the *Eye-Witness* weekly journal in 1912. It was not apparently used again until 1923, when Ransome wrote an article on "Sailing in the Eastern Baltic" for the *Cruising Association Bulletin*. In addition to his 'R' signature, Ransome also user 'A.R' for articles published in the *Manchester Guardian* from 1925 to 1935. He also used the 'A.R.' attribute in one 1949 book review that appeared in the *Observer* newspaper. With respect to the attribution of 'A.M.R' this has only been found in Ransome's very earliest of published works between 1901-02. The M in this attribution is, of course, for Ransome's middle name, Mitchell.

Ransome only used the pen name William Blunt for a short series of reviews that were published in the *Observer* newspaper in the year 1939. As pennames go, William Blunt is a wonderful choice for a critic's moniker, specifically when they are looking, as Ransome then was, at crime stories. Such a critic can freely live up to their name, and be as blunt as they wish in their remarks. Indeed, one would feel great pity towards any author whose review was delivered with blunt-force trauma.

There have been historical William Blunts, but none appear aspirational enough for Ransome to want any as-

sociation with thrm. It is seemingly a name of his own design. Perhaps, however, he was channeling the history behind the Blunt Baronetcy, created in 1720 for John Blunt. It was John Blunt (along with others) that perpetrated the notorious South Sea Bubble fiasco in the early 18th century.

Two additional pennames that can be attributed to Ransome are Svidatel and Anglichanin. The former he used twice, the second just once. Hammond [3] identified these pennames by cross-referencing journal titles against accounts in Ransome's diary. The two pennames correspond to the Russian words *Witness* (Svidatel) and *Englishman* (Anglichanin), and they were used only briefly, between December 1913 and November 1914. The penname Svidatel was used in two articles published in the *New Witness* journal (for 25 December, 1913, and 7 May, 1914), while Anglichanin was used in the journal *Contemporary Review* for November 1914. All three articles concerned reviews relating to books on Russian politics, the state of the Russian nation, and Russia's potential entry into First World War hostilities.

Hammond [3] indicates that Ransome's *Contemporary Review* article, "Russia and the War", was republished in the American periodical *The Century Magazine* (for December, 1914) under the authorship of "anonymous", and in which it was stated that, "for personal reasons the author's name cannot be disclosed". Here we find the most likely reason behind Ransome's choice of cryptic Russian pennames, since he was probably concerned about future visits to Russia, not wanting to jeopardize his visa applications.

Ransome's first trip to Russia took

place between May and September of 1913, at which time he began to learn the language, and started to collect folktales. He was back in Russia between May and August of 1914. On Christmas Day, 1914 he once again set out for Russia, this time under contract to write a tour guide of Petrograd (St. Petersburg), not returning to England again until mid-September 1915. On 27 October, 1915 he returned to Russia as the official correspondent for the *Daily News* newspaper.

While William Blunt has resonance with the critical job being performed, that is the review of newly published crime stories, why Ransome chose to use the penname 'K.Q.' is not, at first glance, clear. This penname was first used in 1904 for an article called "Two Tramps", published in the *Week's Survey*. This same article appeared in Ransome's *The Souls of the Street and Other Little Papers* (also published in 1904). Ransome, apparently, didn't use the 'K.Q.' attribution again until 1912, when he reviewed *Essentials of Poetry* by William Neilson, for the *Eye-Witness* journal.

After this, Ransome used 'K.Q.' to designate authorship in several more reviews for the *Week's Survey*, the *Eye-Witness* and the *New Witness*, but abandoned it from January 1914 onwards. Kirsty Findlay, in her *Arthur Ransome's Long-Lost Study of Robert Louis Stevenson* [4], suggests that Ransome also used 'K' as a pseudonym, but Hammond presents no corroborative evidence for this single-letter penname. The specific review highlighted by Findlay concerns G. Balfour's biographical account of the *Life of Robert Louis Stevenson*, and appeared in *The Eye-Witness* for 28 September 1911.

Certainly, Ransome would have read this work, since Stevenson was one of his literary heroes, and certainly Ransome wrote reviews for *The Eye-Witness*, but if the review was by Ransome he did not record it in his diary of publications. Furthermore, the Balfour review is the only known situation in which Ransome (apparently) used 'K' as a pseudonym – it could, of course, be a typo for 'K.Q.', but this does not explain why Ransome made no record of the review in his diary.

The 'K.Q.' penname, in contrast to 'K', was used at least 8 times. Interestingly, Findlay [4, p.201] suggest that the 'K' (if actually used) and 'K.Q.' pennames might be related to the game of chess, with, presumably, K for King (or Knight), and Q for Queen. While this would certainly tally with Ransome's enthusiasm for the game of chess, given way that Ransome carefully chose the name for his first custom-built boat, *Racundra* [5, 6], one feels that he would have had a deeper, more thought-out, more symbolic reason behind the pen-names that he chose to use.

Unlike, 'R', 'A.R.', and 'A.M.R.', the letter 'K', and 'K.Q.' cannot be readily extracted from the name Arthur Mitchell Ransome, or any of his friends or family members. Indeed, Hammond only found the connection 'K.Q.' by carefully cross-referencing article titles with information contained within Ransome's personal diary.

A near miss, so-to-speak, to 'K.Q.' and 'A.M.R.' is provided by the initials 'A.K.R.' corresponding to Ransome's stylized Russian name. We learn of this stylization from Lola Kinel in her book, *Under Five Eagles*



Arthur Ransome in his Press Corps uniform. The initials on his cap are the Cyrillic letters 'B K'. Ransome was required to wear this uniform in order to visit the Russian (that is, eastern) front in 1916. The cap initials are conspicuous by their absence, however, in another portrait of Ransome in Press Corp uniform published in the 23 February, 1918 issue of *The Sphere*. (Image from the special collections, The University of Leeds. <https://digital.library.leeds.ac.uk/663/>.)

[7]. Indeed, Kinel describes meeting, and then playing chess with, Ransome on a train journeying from Finland to Petrograd (Saint Petersburg) in 1916. He was, we learn, “dressed immaculately after the English fashion, anemic and pale, with very white, carefully manicured hands and a snobbish manner”. On this same journey, Ransome presented Kinel’s father with his card. Of this, Kinel writes, the card read, “Artur Kirrilovich Ransom [sic], Correspondent *Daily News*. And below, in tiny English: Arthur Ransome” [7. p.6].

The stylization Artur Kirrilovich translates as ‘Arthur son of Cyril’, with Cyril, of course, being the Christian name of Ransome’s father. It has been suggested by Christina Hardyment [8. p. 54] that Ransome displayed the initials ‘A.K.’ (for Artur Kirrilovich) on his dress-cap while visiting the Russian front in 1916 (figure 1). This, however, is unlikely the case, since the letters displayed are actually the Cyrillic letters ‘B K’ (to be read in English translation as ‘Ve Ka’). Indeed, it seems far more likely that the dress-cap symbols are to be read in terms of Ransome’s role as a Press Corps correspondent, rather than as representing his stylized Russian name. These initials possibly stand for ‘BKОНТАКТЕ’, literally meaning ‘in contact’. In the modern era, the Cyrillic letters ‘BK’ are used by a major Russian social networking platform.

As far as I can determine, Ransome never used the signature ‘A.K.’ or ‘A.K.R’ in any of his published works. And, certainly, they would not have been used prior to 1913, and Ransome’s first visit to Russia. Nonetheless, while drawing a blank with ‘A.K.’, a plausible association between Ransome, and his choice of ‘K.Q.’ as a penname can still be

made. I would argue, in fact, that the intended meaning of ‘K.Q.’ is not greatly dissimilar to that implied in the literal interpretation of William Blunt.

Indeed, Ransome is having fun with his readers, and, to mix metaphors, is putting his reviewed books to the acid test. For, indeed, ‘K.Q.’ is symbolically linked, I suggest, to Ransome’s days as a chemistry student at The Yorkshire College of Science (now, Leeds University).

Ransome’s stay at the College was brief, amounting to just two terms, from September 1901 to March 1902, but it was an important transitional time in his life. Ransome would have, no doubt, taken at least a few introductory classes in chemistry, laboratory work, and general science. As is well known, Ransome used some of this knowledge in the storylines behind *Pigeon Post* (1936), and in *The Picts and the Martyrs* (1943).

It is thanks to this chemistry background that Ransome possibly adopted the pen name ‘K.Q.’. Indeed, they are the symbols used for the equilibrium constant (K) and the reaction quotient (Q) respectively. The numerical value associated with each of these two terms informs the chemist about the rate and direction in which a specific set of chemical reactions will move in order to achieve an equilibrium state. So, in a literary, and symbolist sense the ‘K’ and ‘K.Q.’ terms can be thought of as proxies that describe how a book’s impression flowed or equilibrated in the reviewer’s mind, and whether the book produced some new and exciting mixture of ideas, or whether it barely produced a reaction at all.

If this penname interpretation is correct, then it makes for a wonderful

analogy. By using these symbols, Ransome appears to be setting up a relationship between the book being reviewed and the ‘chemistry’ at play in the reviewer’s consciousness. Indeed, the analogy fits the symbolist ideal, where suggestion is preferred over explanation. After all, when all is said and done, that ‘tingle’, and those experiences of ‘joy’, or ‘dislike’, as the case may be, that a book engenders within a reader’s mind is, physically speaking, nothing more than the outcome of chemical reactions, and electrical signals surging back and forth through the neural network of the human brain.

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- [5] Martin Beech. “Why Racundra?” *Mixed Moss*, 84 - 89, 1923.
- [6] Martin Beech. “Unraveling the Racundra Mystery”. *Signals from TARSUS & North Pole News*, September, 2024.
- [7] Lola Kinel. *Under Five Eagles: My life in Russia, Poland, Austria, Germany and America*. Putnam, London, 1937.
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Extraverts and Introverts

Different Characters in Different Ransome Books

by Andrew Fisher (Evanston, Illinois)

Most of you know the difference between an extrovert and an introvert. An extrovert is almost always talking and expressing themselves and taking the lead. An introvert very rarely speaks unless spoken to, and, for the most part, keeps to themselves.

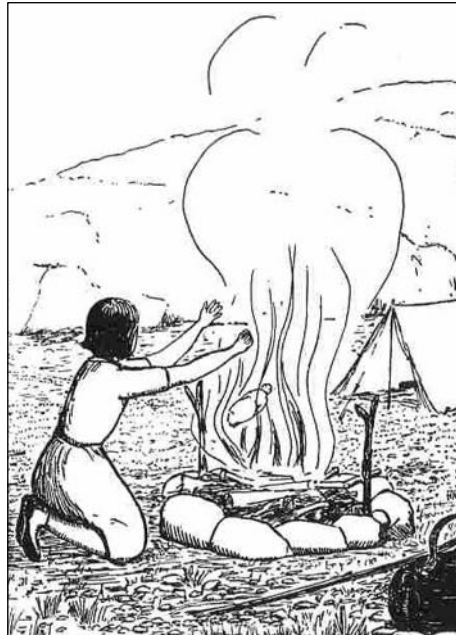
In the *Swallows and Amazons* books, characters are often one or the other. Among the Swallows, Titty and Roger, especially, were extroverts, wanting to talk, or play a penny whistle, while John and also Susan were more introverts, not talking that much.

In *Swallowdale* after the shipwreck, they visit Swainson's Farm and the old man loves to sing (an extrovert), Roger loves his singing, and they sing together a lot.

Of the Amazons, Peggy was definitely the extrovert, talking way too much, for example, when they first met: with Peggy saying that Nancy's true name was Ruth, but since Captain Flint said pirates were ruthless, she changed it to Nancy instead, until Nancy, ruthlessly, shut her up. In *Winter Holiday* it definitely paid off, as Peggy had to take Nancy's place and even used all of Nancy's exclamations – shiver my timbers, barbecued billygoats, jibbooms and bobstays... As Roger said, she even called some people galoots.

In *Peter Duck*, Peter Duck and young Bill were mostly introverts. Black Jake and his crew, while they lasted, were all extreme extraverts.

But in some of the stories, the roles may be switched.



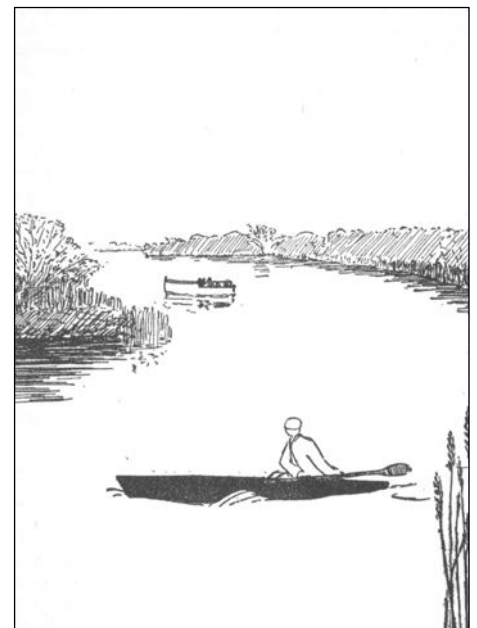
For Dick and Dorothea Callum, the D's, Dorothea was occasionally the extrovert, always coming up with phrases from parts of a story she was thinking of, but scientific Dick was mostly the introvert, not saying very much except when practical knowledge was required. But where his knowledge matters, he may take the lead. He demonstrated this at least three times in *Winter Holiday*: (1) Mrs. Blackett wanted them to catch the doctor and Dick pointed that there were tracks of a vehicle with chains going up the road but not coming back, (2) Dick found the way to rescue the cragfast sheep by sitting on the ledge and keeping his center of gravity on the right side, then (3) with Mr. Dixon's help making the mast and sail for his sledge, sailing to the north pole in the blizzard, then finding it.

Another Ransome character who was definitely very introverted was Mr. Dixon. He never spoke until he was spoken to. That is, until *Winter*

Holiday, after Dick rescued the cragfast sheep. Then Mr. Dixon, on his own, suggested to Dick that they get rails for the new sledge at the smithy.

Dick's practical scientific knowledge was demonstrated again at least twice in *Pigeon Post* when (1) he worked out the way to get the pigeons to ring the bell LOUDLY whenever they arrived, and (2) after they are buried alive in the old level, Dick calmly figures the way out – the way Squashy Hat came in.

In *Coot Club*, Tom Dudgeon, Mrs. Barrable – the "Admiral", George Owdon, and the Hullabaloes are all extraverts. Dick and Dorothea are mostly introverts. But in "William's Heroic Moment", Dick again displays practical knowledge by getting William to cross the mud when the two boats are stranded at low water on Breydon; William pulls a string tied to a rope to the Teasel. This is then attached masthead to masthead to transport the food across.



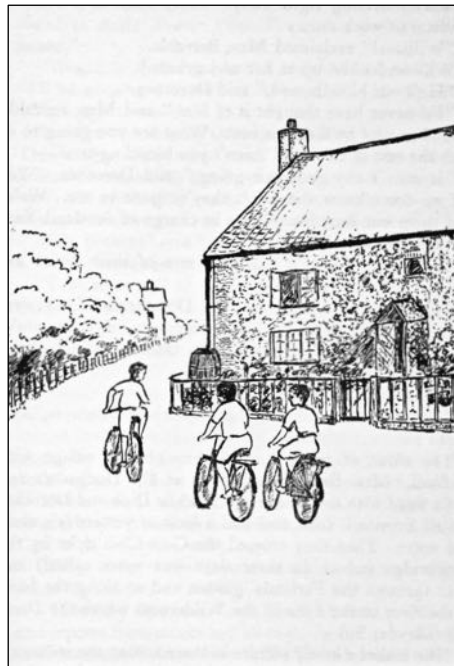


In *We Didn't Mean to Go to Sea*, it is Roger's playing of his penny whistle in the fog that tells the fishing boat coming into Harwich who this boat is and where they are. (This will reassure Mother the next day.) In the middle of the voyage, where John is the only crew awake steering the *Goblin*, he plays the extravert here. It is also Roger's whistle playing below when the pilot comes aboard in Holland that fools the pilot into thinking the adult natives are below, while John, in the cockpit, is only the boy.

In *Secret Water*, Bridget, a definite extravert, is for the first time is allowed to camp like the others. The Mastodon eyes chubby Bridget as a very good substitute for skinny Daisy as their human sacrifice, and Bridget wants to be one. Just about my favorite chapter in all Ransome books is "Eager Prisoner". Here Bridget meets Daisy in the grass, gives the proper passwords, talks about being a blood brother and asks if she can be the human sacrifice (not being a bit skinny). Daisy's jaw drops. They tell Bridget she can but has to be captured first. Bridget

walks along very happy because she will be a sacrifice after all. In the next chapter "Hot on the Trail", Nancy refers to Bridget as being "bound and gagged", but when they reach the Eel's camp, and call Bridget's name, Bridget herself walks out of the big tent, not bound or gagged at all and very happy because she will be a human sacrifice after all.

In *The Big Six*, Dorothea is definitely the extravert, leading the detectives to the exciting climax. Dick again demonstrates his practical knowledge designing the shield for the blinding flash that enables the camera to catch the villains in the act of pushing off the *Cachalot*. The Death and Glories and Tom appreciate Dorothea and Dick for their knowledge in getting them acquitted.



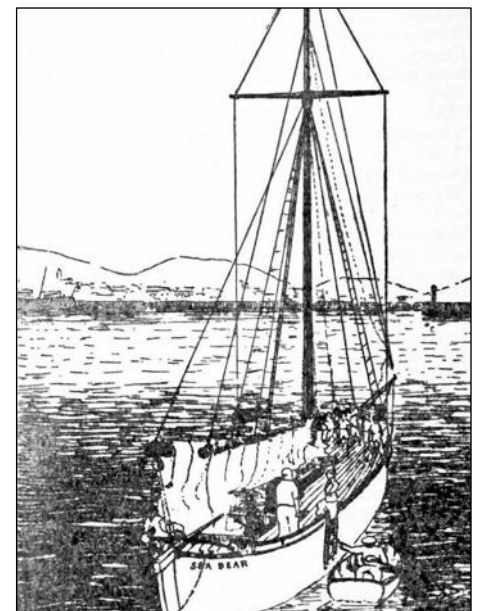
In *Missee Lee*, Miss Lee and Roger are clearly the extraverts here, though Taicoon Chang helps too. Captain Flint and John start catching up.

In *The Picts and the Martyrs*, it is clearly Great Aunt Maria who is the extreme extravert, though Nancy, Peggy,

Cook, the Doctor and Jackie are too. My favorite chapter is "Great Aunt Maria Faces Her Pursuers" where the GA is definitely an extrovert as she puts Colonel Jolies in his place.

In *Great Northern*, for much of the time, Dick is the extravert. He visits Mr. Jemmerling and learns that he is an egg collector. He leads the others in showing them the birds and declares that to properly photograph them, he must have a "hide" – netting with heather woven into it.

Nancy plays the extravert with her master plan to fool both the Gaels and the egg collector while Dick takes his photos. Roger has a secret plan to get even with the native who labeled him "The Sleeping Beauty". It is Roger who, after his "Dull Day", sees the Sea Bear's crew captured, as the egg collector goes toward the divers' loch with a gun, and warns the others in their jail of the situation. It is then clearly laird McGinty who takes the lead, opening the prison, but it is only after the egg collector's two failed shots at the birds that McGinty "Listens to Reason", hears their story and becomes an ally.



On Listening to Ransome

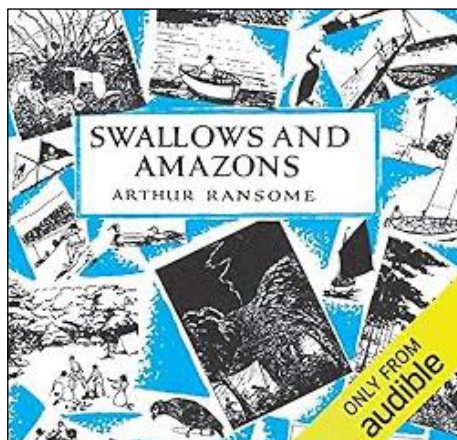
by Ross Cossar (Norwood, Ontario)

I consider myself one of the lucky ones, for I was raised on Ransome and I have remained a life-long fan of his *Swallows & Amazons* series of stories. As such, my life has been and continues to be shaped by the characters that he created. As an avid reader, raised in a home full of books, I have read and reread the twelve stories more times than I can remember now. Yet, despite the enjoyment I have found reading, I have more recently found that listening to others reading the stories is a pleasure unto itself.

Listening to Ransome started for me when my mother Audrie (Baldwin) Cossar started reading the series to me in order. I was the same age as Roger was when he tacked up the field to collect the dispatches. My mother had found these books in her local Toronto public library as a young teenager at the end of the Second World War. Her father was an avid fisherman and in the post-war years he had led his family into power cruising on Lake Simcoe in Ontario, Canada.

For her, the boating theme of Ransome's writings matched the boating adventures that she was living. She faithfully shared the stories, chapter by chapter, aloud with me. Most nights, I could hardly wait for story time, sitting on the chesterfield with her, my mind expanding the adventures as she read aloud.

Her reading the stories to me and, in her way, her promotion of all things Ransome (such as themed birthday parties as but one example) put Ransome's hook into me like the World's Whopper taking the Cachelot's bait in *The Big Six*.



In the year 2000, my son Fraser and I joined my parents for a trip to Britain to attend the 10th Annual General Meeting of The Arthur Ransome Society. BBC personality Gabriel Woolf was a guest host of the weekend, and during the opening ceremonies he read aloud the scene from *Swallows & Amazons* where Nancy's fireworks blackened the cabin top of Captain Flint's houseboat. I wish that he had read the whole story. He had obviously practiced the passage and grabbed the attention of the room.

Shortly after, I learned that Mr Woolf had recorded abridged versions of the whole series, and that they were available at the TARS Stall. I did buy the first book, recorded on an audio cassette, to listen to when in the car. While I did manage, with my typical young family limited budget, to buy a couple more of the stories on cassette, I stopped when the conversion to CDs was occurring, stumped by the changing technologies. Although I was not able to pursue the audio versions of the books at that time, I remained intrigued with the idea of being able to listen to my favourite set of stories.

While I read all of the books to my own children, and have been trying to do the same with my grandchildren, reading through the series aloud with my wife Lisa was a particular pleasure. In this case, I had about fifty percent of the stories read aloud to me, since we alternated most chapters. We often read aloud when we were sailing on our own cutter-rigged yacht, called *Sea Bear*. Listening to a Ransome story while standing at the helm of a sailboat was a terrific blend of passions.

Where can I get them?

Various editions of Ransome in audiobook format are available.

Audible (<https://www.audible.com>) has unabridged editions read by Gareth Armstrong (except for *Pigeon Post*, as Ross explains). With Audible you are purchasing streaming versions of the titles, that you can also download for permanent use. You are not getting a physical copy in any form.

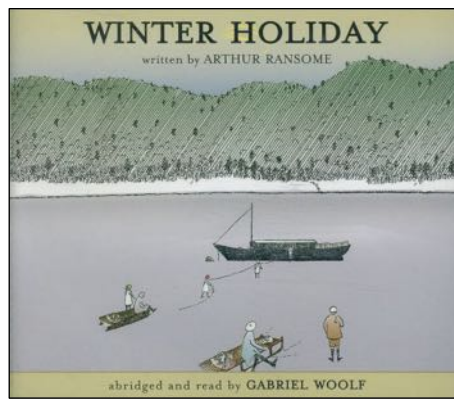
The TARS Stall (currently closed) and the Arthur Ransome Trust (<https://arthur-ransome-trust.org.uk/shop/Gabriel-Woolf-audiobooks-c29091321>) sells copies of the abridged versions read by Gabriel Woolf. These are in CD format, so you get a physical copy of the item.

Audible used to provide unabridged versions read by Allison Larkin. These may still be available in CD format on eBay or Amazon.

Ed.

Life improved when a couple of years ago I found that the series was available as audio files through Audible. These are versions read by Gareth Armstrong. With the combination of simply downloading the stories and my increased means, I quickly bought the series. While I have not yet listened to the books as many times as I have read them, I can imagine that this balance will tip over time.

In an audio format I can engage with the stories while doing activities such as driving, walking or doing light, otherwise quiet work. As I know the stories so well, I'm not fussed if something causes me to miss a sentence or two. As a reader, Mr Armstrong has developed voices for each of the characters that are quite superior to the voices I had assigned to them. While this gives depth to each of the children, he has also done a terrific job bringing the local Lake District and Norfolk Broads accents to life for all of the secondary characters. I find myself smiling as I remember the anecdotes and in particular as I recognize Ransome's character development. Each of the children have such recognizable traits, which grow throughout the series. Although for most of my reading time my go-to genre is military non-fiction books, I also read a lot on current events. To help maintain my bal-



ance, I turn to Arthur Ransome as a salve against the world. Quite simply, I find such comfort in these stories.

Although I was not considering the idea of listening to (watching) films, I have two young grandchildren who have as yet only watched the 1974 film of *Swallows and Amazons*. Even with only two viewings they are able to role play their favourite characters and hum the tunes such as *What Shall We Do With A Drunken Sailor*. Clearly audio formats are an important means to learn by.

My challenges so far are limited to two. First would be the fact that the audio versions don't have Ransome's drawings or endpaper maps. Of course there are many points in the stories where I can picture in my mind the original artwork of AR, but I know I'm not consistent at this. Additionally, I have always enjoyed the maps that he created. I occasion-

ally need to go to my All Books Ransome shelves to to reconnect with the places that he wrote about.

My second challenge is finding an audio copy of *Pigeon Post* by Gareth Armstrong. Here in Canada, Audible has eleven of the twelve books available. *Pigeon Post*, has for unknown reasons been left off the Canadian availability list. While I can easily imagine a mistake was made by an employee entering data, in answer to my inquiry, Audible indicated they might get to addressing this concern one day. It was clear however that my concerns were not a priority when compared to a customer request that could potentially sell thousands of books. Even Audible USA has a different reader for that particular book. As a temporary fix to this, I've recently been reading *Pigeon Post* as my bed time story.

My experiences with listening to Ransome have all been positive, and I highly recommend that you give it a try. The generally easy-to-use format of an audio recording has made it possible for me to "read the books" even more. More S. A. and D's! More lessons on sailing and fishing! More adventures! More Coot Club and the Eels! More secret codes! More chocolate rations! More smiles on my face.

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 Ransome-related 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/

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

Ransome the Artist, Selected and Introduced by Roger Wardale

Amazon Publications, 1998

Reviewed by Simon Horn (Montreal, Quebec)

This review is really a complement to my look at *The Best of Childhood* in the last issue of the newsletter, although *Ransome the Artist* was published several years earlier. At the time of writing, it is still available on the TARS Stall for £5 and shipping cost.

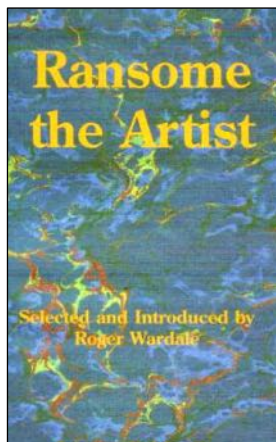
Ransome's illustrations for the twelve play an integral role in the books, although he did not start doing the illustrations for a couple of years after *Swallows and Amazons* was published in 1930. That first book had no illustrations, just the endpaper map and cover image, and the small map of Wild Cat Island, because Ransome disliked intensely the Steven Spurrier illustrations that his publisher, Jonathan Cape, had commissioned.

A "New Illustrated Edition" of S&A appeared in 1931, with pictures by Clifford Webb, who also illustrated *Swallowdale* when it was first published in 1931.

It was with *Peter Duck* that Ransome began the task of illustrating all his books, convinced that "an artist would be sure to get everything wrong" (p. iv).

Roger Wardale's Introduction to *Ransome the Artist* discusses Ransome's approach to the illustrations in detail, and explains the author's understanding of what was required:

"Ransome was looking for illustrations which would combine with his text to make a unified narrative. He demanded technical accuracy – par-



ticularly in respect of boats and places – and something more. He required people – particularly his Swallows and Amazons – to be simple representations within an accurate and often detailed setting. His own drawings intentionally tell us next-to-nothing about the Swallows and Amazons other than what they are doing" (pp. v-vi)

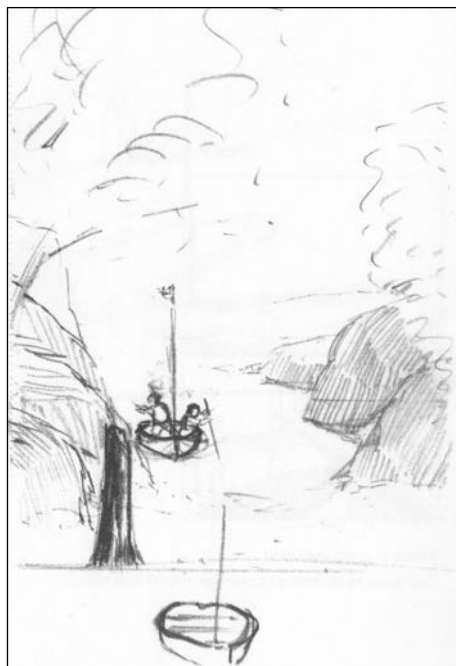
Ransome wanted his readers to be able to identify with his characters, and therefore did not want the illustrations of the children to be too

specific and detailed, unlike his desired accuracy when drawing boats or places.

Part One of *Ransome the Artist* is called "The Making of the Illustrations". It shows how Ransome illustrated all of the books, providing a chapter for each one but presented in the order in which Ransome did the pictures, so starting with *Peter Duck*, *Winter Holiday*, *Coot Club* and *Pigeon Post*, before discussing the first two books.

Ransome drew many sketches before arriving at any final illustration, and each chapter presents several of these sketches, often shown alongside the final published drawing.

In the same way that Ransome was always sure that his books weren't any good (see my review of *The Best*





not simply draw the illustrations of his books. Part Two presents a series of sketches in crayon, pencil or watercolour that show that, while Ransome considered himself a “bad artist”, he did some very nice work.

Ransome the Artist shows a side of Ransome’s work that you may not have thought about. I know I had



not. The illustrations indeed became an integral part of the books. Perhaps we should have realized that as soon as we saw the traditional dust jackets of the twelve, each of which is a montage of the book’s illustrations.



of *Childhood*), he was also convinced that he was a “bad artist” and that his drawings weren’t any good either, at least early on. Nonetheless he put in a lot of effort into getting the results he wanted, and clearly Jonathan Cape and Ransome’s readers were convinced it was worthwhile.

But *Ransome the Artist* has a Part Two, called “Drawing for Pleasure”, that covers the last 40 pages or so of the book. It turns out that Ransome came from a family of artists and did



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