

much. And Charles, too, as an engineer, knows all about the calculations of comparative weights, stresses, tensions, etc. that lie behind every job worth doing. So there you are. You see what the problem really is, and you are much more likely to spot a solution than I am, who have been in the cider press all this time, submitting to daily, even hourly extra turns of the infernal screw.

The data given above all stand as it were inside the framework of the job. There are a few outside ones which, of course, have to be so dealt with from inside that it is as if they had never existed.

Thus: concentrating the whole interest on ONE character, in the manner honoured by time and by almost all tellers of stories for boys, is easy, but doesn't meet my views. I must have a combination of collective interest and a fair share of the game for all the individuals, girls and boys. Sordid grasp at as wide an audience as possible.

Essential or all but essential to have one or more characters definitely younger than the rest. Otherwise the whole lot are themselves too conscious of infancy in comparison with the other group of characters who are grown up. Shove in a brat, and the rest gain independence at once.

Golly, what a lot of secrets I am giving away.

But, there it is. Now you know just what is wanted.

We are both, I think, wanting to get home.

We are both, I know, hugely looking forward to seeing you.

We both send you, William,² and other inhabitants of Turnfield,

Yours ever A.

Coch-y-bondthu? What about her sail? Have you been to Arnside? Or, are you letting them go on as they are? The sail is the *lost* job and it would not be too late if you put it off till we are back and can all go over to Arnside together. I'd like a word with Claude field about the angle of the yard in relation to the possible halyard and forestay combined. I think he can improve on *Swallow's*.

1 Claude Worth was an eminent yachtsman.

2 'The World's Largest Village Store' at Wroxham. Not named in *Coot Club*.

3 The Renolds' pug-dog, to be appropriated for *Coot Club*.

To Charles and Margaret Renold

March 6 1934

Low Ludderburn

Dear ?Margaret or ?Charles (whoever is the chief owner of the *Coch-y-bondthu*)

We very wrongly took the day off today and drove over to Arnside to see the *Coch-y-bondthu*.

She is all but finished planking, and we have to report that you are in very great luck. How the devil they do it, I don't know, but they have got hold of the most beautiful spruce for the planking, and a really lovely bit of wood for keel and stem and covering board. I think you have got a real bargain in her, and we were both full of envy.

She is too good to paint. You can paint her any time, but for the first few years let her have all the advantage of varnish. Terribly smart she's going to be. All four men were busy battling down first-rate large *copper* fastenings when we arrived. And there she was in the middle of the shop, looking almost ready to be put in the water.

They are producing a sketch for sail plan, and sending it to me, and I will at once get it ordered. I have already written to Andrews and Jeckells at Lowestoft for samples of stuff.

I have also seen Walker about a mooring. And charges for looking after her. He says £5 to cover taking care of her when afloat during the summer, bailing etc., and generally keeping an eye, hauling her up for the winter at the proper time, drying, and keeping her under cover throughout the winter.

Anything *done* to her in the way of painting, rigging etc. would be extra. But for actual looking after and wintering, the £5 would cover everything. It seems to me a lot, but I pay it myself, and I must say the Walkers do make it very pleasant to have a boat there, and I have never once gone down unexpectedly and not found *Swallow* in the pink, so to speak.

In addition to that, you will have to pay Lord Lonsdale half a crown a year.

And you will want some sort of actual mooring. I use an old motor car engine, which is sunk at the right place, and has a chain and hook attached to it with a little wooden floating buoy with *Swallow's* name on it.

I dare say that could be picked up here as easily as anywhere. While there at Arnside, I saw a very neat trailer, made from the back axle of a Ford. I should think Peter could produce something even better, with spring chocks to bear the little boat with proper tenderness.

My book is too elaborate, and too thrutched up. It won't go at all.

Love to both of you from us and kitten (Winkle),

A.

They propose to put her on the train to be delivered at Lakeside. You or we could meet her there and sail her to her mooring. Ready in plenty of time for Easter.

From G. Wren Howard

Thirty Bedford Square
London W.C.1.

September 4 1934

Dear Ransome,

You are all wrong of course – both of you. But if your mind is finally made up we can only accept your decision. It is a dangerous decision as you probably know, but I feel I ought to tell you why I consider it dangerous.

The book has already been announced, by means of our lists, and advertised in the trade papers and in letters to our agents all over the world. Orders have begun to come in as a result of this and of the efforts of our travellers. If we now have to say that the book cannot appear until Easter all these orders will be cancelled or reduced in size, and we shall have to start all over again. We cannot, I am sure, expect such large orders or such a big total sale in the Spring as in the Winter.

Think also of the increasing band of Ransome fans who have been carefully and laboriously coached to expect a book from you each Christmas. They are going to be, in the first place, disappointed and possibly annoyed, and then are going to buy up to have bought for them another book instead. Some fortunate ones will be able to afford *Coot Club* also in the Spring, but others will either not afford it or will not hear of it.

And do you hope to write another book for publication next

Autumn, or to appear always like a Swallow in the Spring, or to miss a year, or what?

When I last saw you I think I said that in my view you were over particular and Mrs. Ransome hypercritical. I did not believe then and I don't now that the book is unpublishable even as it stands. What you read me was damn good stuff. And I still maintain that it would be far less dangerous to let the book go to the printer now, even if it were not so highly polished as you both might wish.

My advice, therefore, is, once more, to send off immediately as much of the book as you can to Gray, and to tinker with the balance for another week when it too should go to Scotland.

IT WILL ALL LOOK MUCH BETTER IN TYPE.

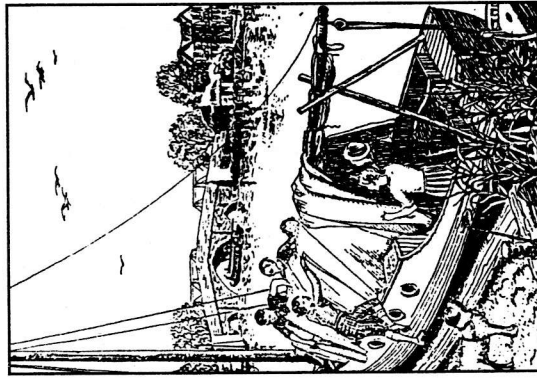
But I don't for a moment suppose that you will take this advice, so I have written gloomily to the unfortunate Gray, from whom I had a long letter this morning dealing with suggestions for your projected visit to Edinburgh, to say that it is all off until 1935.

The black edged envelope was indeed appropriate, though until I opened it, for one horrible moment I thought that something terrible had happened to the Chimp.

Yours sincerely,

G. Wren Howard.¹

In response to this masterly letter (which sufficiently illustrates why, according to Sir Rupert Hart-Davis, his publishers regarded Ransome as a 'difficult' author) AR wrote to Howard on 6 September, pleading that 'it is just possible that I have been too close at it all the summer that I don't see clear enough to mend it'. He promised to read through the book again. In the end *Coot Club* was published on schedule. The Helene Carter drawing of Peter Heigham appeared in the American edition.



giving me news about the three Bs and all that goes with them. Queer to think of you at Morecambe. As a small boy I spent a lot of time at Arnside, and I often was over there watching the Crossfields build boats in their shed by the shore, up to about 1935. They built one of the boats I have now.² One of the brothers is dead, and their business may have come to an end. They used to build in the old way using hardly any tool except an adze and doing grand work. Over 500 fishing boats they built. Good luck to you

Arthur Ransome

- 1 The date has been half-destroyed by a tear in the paper.
- 2 *Coch-y-bonddhu*. See letter to the Renolds, 6 March 1934.

To Pamela Whitlock

Telephone:

CONISTON 81

May 5 1943

The Herald

Dear Pamela,

You are a bit of a donkey. In your letter before the last you talked of the perfect public for which you wanted to write books. Now, do get it into your head that to think of your public is the way NOT TO BE ABLE TO WRITE BOOKS. Good books are not written FOR anyone. They are OVERHEARD. If you want to make sure of becoming just one of the many manufacturers of possible books you will choose a public and write books for it. But, surely you want to do better than that. You are a person in your own right and you are the only public you ought to consider. Never mind. It's not my business to give advice, so I won't

This is just to tell you that if, as may well happen, you are sent on a route lorry drive that brings you along the EAST side of Coniston lake, you must make your lorry break down just as you pass a one-storey stone building just above the road about half way up the lake. You can't miss it. There are actually two buildings, one being my workshop. We shall both be very glad to see you.

When you were at Kendal you were about 15 miles from