

Swallows and Amazons

UK : 1974 : dir. Claude Whatham : EMI : 92 min
 prod: : scr: David Wood : dir.ph.:
Simon West; Stephen Grendon; Sophie Neville; Zanna Hamilton
 Ronald Fraser; Virginia McKenna; Brenda Bruce; Jack Woolgar; John Franklyn-Robbins

Ref:	Pages	Sources	Stills	Words	Ω 8 € M ♂	Copy on VHS	Last Viewed
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Speelfilm Encyclopedie review:

"From Arthur Ransome's classic novel. The thirties sequel became children's literature. The original is untouched by Watham. Four children and their mother go holidaymaking in the "Lake District" and a meeting takes place with two characters who own the boat "Amazon". A friendly "war" develops between the two groups, with the promise to meet each other again next year. A nice children's film. **1/2 "

Halliwell's Film Guide review:

"In the twenties four children have adventures in the Lake District. Mild family film, great to look at but lacking in real excitement or style. Scr: David Wood, from the novel by Arthur Ransome."

The Sunday Times Guide to Movies on Television review:

"Old-fashioned children's story may please an uncritical young audience with six of themselves against unsympathetic adults, and plenty of fights and fun, but it makes a dispiriting movie for parents forced to watch. Perhaps middle class children were as prissy and naughty-nice as this in 1929, when Arthur Ransome's novel was set. But adults (Ronald Fraser, Virginia McKenna) never were. Claude Whatham directed in 1974. 7"

The Time Out Film Guide review:

"Claude Whatham continues his love affair with the past, moving back from working class youth of the '50s in **"THAT'LL BE THE DAY"** to middle class children of the '20s in this adaptation of Arthur Ransome's story, which used to be required reading for all well brought up kids. Dealing with the adventures of six children one suitably idyllic summer holiday spent messing about in boats in the Lake District, it comes over as a labour of love rather than a commercial proposition. Period detail is strong, and the children gain in confidence as the story develops, but it's probably too slight to hold the attention of either children or accompanying adults, though individual scenes work, like the meeting with the charcoal-burners, and Sophie Neville is very good as one of the kids. It's pleasant/innocuous, depending on your frame of mind."

TV Times Film & Video Guide 1995 review:

"The Lake District looks lovely in this delightful, traditional children's adventure yarn adapted from Arthur Ransome's novel and involving boats, an island, a cross uncle and a burglary. There's rather a lot of obvious scene-setting, but the island sequences are great fun and the film is attractively acted by all the children involved. There are also personable performances from Virginia McKenna, Ronald Fraser and Brenda Bruce as the adults. *** "

Variety Movie Guide 1993 review:

"This charming, delightful, beautifully-made film for both adults and children is

faithfully based on the 1929 children's classic by Arthur Ransome. In the deft screenplay by David Wood, the essential plot involving four children (the Swallows) on holiday in the Lake District, and their friendly rivalry with two tomboy girls (the Amazons) is simple but absorbing, and captures the spirit of the period. Their activities take place on and around the water, with the picturesque landscape caught in pastel shades by Denis Lewiston. Virginia McKenna and Ronald Fraser are seen briefly but register well, especially Fraser as the peppery but sympathetic uncle, living on a houseboat. The main burden is carried by the child actors, who all enter into the spirit of the proceedings with naturalness and enthusiasm. "

See attached lengthy background article "Home Truths About the Swallows and Amazons" (Sunday Times - March 6th '97) on the book "Signalling From Mars: The Letters of Arthur Ransome"

[no listing in "Leonard Maltin's Movie and Video Guide 1996", "Video Movie Guide 1993" or "The Virgin Film Guide"]

Radio Times notes:

"Adventure story set in the Lake District based on the popular children's book by Arthur Ransome. "

"Children's Lake District sailing adventure. "

"Family adventure. *** "

TV Quick (?) note:

"Adventure. Six young children spend an idyllic summer messing about in boats in the Lake District. "

What's On TV review:

"Virginia McKenna and her four children enjoy a holiday in the 1929 Lake District. The pleasant scenery and well-scrubbed junior performances are the biggest assets

of this undemanding kiddies' adventure. **
"

"Children's adventure. The Walker children's holiday turns into something special when they discover a sailing dinghy. "

Daily Mirror note:

"Insidious children's adventure with Virginia McKenna and Ronald Fraser as the grown-ups, four very polite little people, and attractive location work in the Lake District. ** "

No further information currently available. It's a ginger beery sort of a film, but then doubtless it was a ginger beery sort of a book, a very close cousin of the Enid Blyton spiffing adventures (which also showed a predilection for "tomboy" girls). It will bore the majority of kids to distraction, but delight many a maiden aunt. Fraser hams it up, of course, as the old sea pirate uncle, but it is his character that abides longest in the memory.

Nothing further is known about Simon West, Stephen Grendon, Sophie Neville or Zanna Hamilton.

See the TV serial "Swallows and Amazons Forever!", and subject index under BOATS & BOATING / ANGLING, FOLLOW THE LEADER (children's gangs) and PASTORALS / HOLIDAYS IN THE COUNTRY.

[no listing in "Halliwell's Film Guide", "Leonard Maltin's Movie and Video Guide 2001", "Speelfilm Encyclopedie", "Bloomsbury Foreign Film Guide", "The Critics' Film Guide", "The Good Film and Video Guide", "Movies on TV and Videocassette 1988-89", "Rating the Movies (1990)", "The Sunday Times Guide to Movies on Television", "The Time Out Film Guide", "TV Times Film & Video Guide 1995", "Variety Movie Guide 1993", "Video Movie Guide 1993" or "The Virgin Film Guide"]

No further information currently available

See also "**BADKONAK-E SEFID**" and "**BASHU**" - both recent Iranian films, and subject index under **ARAB WORLD / MIDDLE EAST**.