

## The Handheld Newsletter

February 2020

Well, we don't know where the time goes either. Every day at Handheld Towers is a rush and tumble to forge through the To Do list, sort out covers, sort out text files, sort out publicity and marketing, leap on unexpected opportunities and trail hopelessly after the dreary jobs that never end. (To that end we've just hired a freelancer to deal with the book metadata, which was doing Kate's head in.) Here are some highlights from the past month.

### ***Of Cats and Elvins* is launched and published**

The trouble with publishing is that by the time a book actually makes it out into the world, our attention is on books still in production many months further down the line, and our attention has to be dragged back to our new baby's first faltering steps. *Of Cats and Elvins* had a lovely launch at The Second Shelf, with surprise guests, and someone who had actually known Sylvia who happened to be passing and was transfixed by the marvellous widow display. Since then the [Guardian](#) has reviewed the book kindly, and sales have rocketed. We are very proud of our republication of the rest of her fantasy short fiction, because if we didn't do it, we don't know of anyone else who would.



### **A new title for 2021: Margaret Kennedy's *Where Stands a Wingèd Sentry* (1941)**

The literary agents Curtis, Brown approached us last summer to invite us to go shopping in their 'heritage' back catalogue. On realising that they administer the Margaret Kennedy literary estate Kate, our literary historian, became alert. Margaret Kennedy was a British novelist, most famous for her novel *The Constant Nymph* (1924, 1926 stage play, 1928 and 1943 films). In the Second World War she published an astonishingly good memoir of her life in the Home Counties and in Cornwall during the war, *Where Stands a Wingèd Sentry*. It was published in the US in 1941, but was never published in Britain, due (we assume) to paper shortages, and thus disappeared from sight and memory, despite Kennedy's subsequent long career. Kate knew, as soon as she had galloped through the pdf that Curtis, Brown supplied, that we had to republish this book.

It's a rural wartime memoir that reads like *Mrs Miniver* with the gloves off, compiled from Kennedy's war diaries: elegant, fiercely intelligent, unafraid and furious about bombardment, rationing and essential but ridiculous wartime tasks carried out with stoicism. We found the perfect expert to write the introduction, Professor Faye Hammill from the University of Glasgow, who has written the most recent critical study of some of Kennedy's writing. She emailed us to say: 'I do want to thank you for drawing my attention to the book. I was aware of the title but knew nothing about it, and it is indeed superb. I really look forward to working with it.' We also found the perfect cover for it, 'My Favourite Model' by the 'glamour' war artist David Wright (the model was his wife). We will be republishing *Where Stands a Wingèd Sentry* in March 2021.

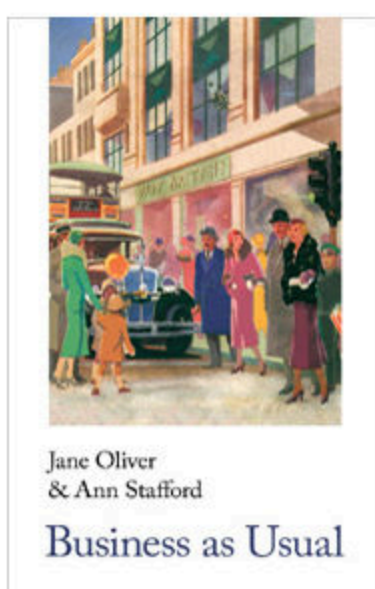


### **Literary events coming up**

- Kate will be moderating a panel of four distinguished writers and critics to discuss women in science fiction on 25th February at Foyles, Cabot Circus, Bristol. Apparently [this event is now sold out](#), but there is a waiting list.
- Handheld will be running a book stall at the States of Independence small press fair at Clephan Hall at De Montfort University in Leicester on 21st March.
- Kate will also be running a workshop on How To Find The Perfect Book. A Workshop For The Uncertain Reader, at the [Hawkesbury Upton Literary Festival](#) in Gloucestershire, on Saturday 25th April.
- Our science fiction and fantasy writing retreat in Malvern on 1-4 July is also now sold out, but we are planning a second retreat in January 2021. [Register your interest here](#).

### **Book launch for *Business as Usual***

We are delighted to announce that we will be launching *Business as Usual* at Hatchards Piccadilly, a venerable 18th-century landmark bookshop in central London that Kate used to wander about in for spiritual comfort when she was a struggling PhD student. She and Lucinda Gosling of the Mary Evans Picture Library will be quizzed gently by Lucy Scholes about 1930s retail history, women in libraries and finding the perfect book cover. [Tickets are available at the Hatchards website](#).



### **Revised covers for our August Macaulays**

Now that we're working with our North American sales and distribution people Two Rivers, we are spending a lot of time listening to what the Americans want. It's extremely helpful, because they are usually the first to give the external reaction to projects that we have been nurturing but haven't actually talked to anyone else about (much). Larger publishers have entire departments to talk projects over with: we just have each other. While Kate (literary expert) has to persuade David (Devil's advocate focused on sales) of the merits of publishing a book, two single opinions do not a sales conference make.

At the most recent Two Rivers sales conference Kate was blithely presenting our August republication of Rose Macaulay's fine novel *Potterism*, when a sales rep's voice came from the back, 'What IS Potterism?'. So we've rejigged the cover, to make it plain to readers who don't have the encyclopaedic knowledge of Rose Macaulay's work that Kate does, why this novel is so darn good. (We hope.) We did the same with our collection of all her anti-war writing as well, by simply adding the dates that these essays and fictions cover.



### **Between the Waves: British Women Writers 1930 to 1960: Redux.**

This is a conference at the University of Hull on 12th June 2020, the fourth in a series of conferences on [undervalued British women writers](#). Kate will be giving a keynote paper (probably on [women writing science fiction](#) in this period), as will the literary journalist Lucy Scholes. The call for papers with instructions on [how to submit an abstract](#) is [here](#), but you can also attend as an interested reader.

Not much wildlife news this month, it's all about the invasion of our mossy but extensive lawn (south-facing, but sloping upwards into the wood) by several different species of snowdrops (deer don't like them). Also, the tulips and daffs that Kate planted in the lawn that got eaten last year, have so far survived! However, the deer [are](#) eating the ceanothus and the camellia, so we're going to have to get serious about fences to protect all the shrubs for a few months. We wonder whether the previous owner threw weed-killer about promiscuously, because we're seeing more and more flowers each year by simply doing nothing.

Kate & David

Handheld Press

The Handheld newsletter is only sent to readers who have expressed an interest in receiving news from us. Our aim is to be informative and useful, and to keep you in the picture about what we're up to, offers and promotions.

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