

The Handheld Newsletter

May 2020

Wilfrid Littleboy's Prison Letters, 1917-1919

That's the subtitle of *A Quaker Conscientious Objector*, which we publish on 18 May. It's a very absorbing collection of prison letters written by a man kept separate from his family and friends and the rest of the world, describing how his days pass with his very limited resources and the birds and plants he spots in his daily outing for exercise, or through his window.

Kate co-wrote an article with its editors, Ben Pink Dandelion and Rebecca Wynter, about this book and our previous book about conscientious objectors, *The Conscientious Objector's Wife*, which is going viral in a small way in Quaker publications and websites, including that of [Bath Meeting](#). We have also [made a video](#) of Rebecca and Ben reading and talking about the letters. Do have a look, and send the link to people you think might be interested. Some of the royalties from sales of *A Quaker Conscientious Objector* go to a UK literacy charity.



The book trade is staggering

The effects of Covid-19 on the book trade have been startling, but not unexpected. One of the big UK wholesalers, Bertrams, has gone into administration, owing us, and many other small and large publishers a LOT of money. Our sales to bookshops have plummeted since lockdown began (49 days at the time of writing), but have not disappeared: we are still selling them books, but nothing like as many as they used to buy because they can't open their shops. But, astonishingly, sales directly to our website have quadrupled, so Kate is cycling to the post office every day with a pannier of nicely wrapped books. This doesn't mean that we are doing well, but direct sales certainly help to offset the damage that the slump in bookshop sales has caused. We've also had more interest from online retailers: both [Belfast Books](#) and [The Paperback Shop](#) have begun to stock our books. We are staggering on.

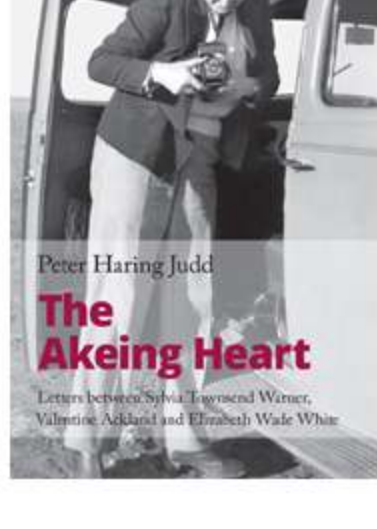
Changes in publication dates

Due to the staggering, we are moving back the publication dates of three of our forthcoming titles. While the UK publication dates for Rose Macaulay's *Non-Combatants and Others* and *Potterism* remain the same (24 August), these will not be published in North America until 17 November. This is due to how our cash flow affects printing bills, and when we can ship stock across the Atlantic. Also, our January title, Inez Holden's *There's No Story There* will now be published in March 2021, alongside Margaret Kennedy's *Where Stands A Winged Sentry*, which will make an excellent pair of Second World War novels.



Our first discount for May

On 20 May, her birthday, Valentine Ackland would be ... really quite old. Please enjoy a discount on *The Akeing Heart*, and read about her scandalous life with Sylvia Townsend Warner and Elizabeth Wade Wright, and many other women in Dorset. Visit our shop and use coupon code **AKEING01** to squeeze £5 off this elegant hardback, normally sold at £24.99. This offer is valid until 31 May.



Our second discount for May

On 30th May *Blitz Writing* will have been published for a year! It's been very popular since the lockdown began in the UK. We think it must be because we're living restricted lives, and want to see what it was like in the war. For 30th May only, we're offering *Blitz Writing* at £10: use the coupon code **HOLDEN01** when shopping at our site.



Something special for June

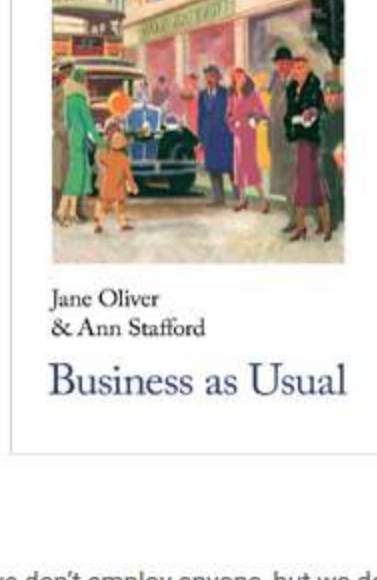
On 9th June, Handheld Press will be three years old! We will officially be a toddler, and there will be presents to celebrate (but no tantrums). Keep an eye on our Twitter feed (@KateHandheld) and on our [Facebook page](#) to see what we are offering.



Business as Usual

We heard this week that *Business as Usual* will be featured in *WI Life* in June. This is a glossy magazine sent to all members of the [Women's Institute](#), so isn't known at all outside the membership. They feature three or four titles each month on the books page, and we are thrilled to be included, as *Business as Usual* is absolutely perfect for WI members. Kate happens to be a WI member so she should know ...

This novel has been taken to the hearts of so many readers, and is going viral in a very satisfying word-of-mouth way since we published it in March. The pattern seems to be: X orders a copy, and then, as soon as she's finished reading it, she orders a copy for her mother-in-law Y. Y reads it, then orders a copy for her friend Z. It's a book that women are giving to each other, and long may this continue, because it is an absolute joy to read, and particularly satisfying as a novel written by women about women's lives.



Staff News

We don't have staff, because we don't employ anyone, but we do have a very good network of trusted freelance experts who help Handheld be the Press it is. And now we have two new ones! In addition to Nadja (design & layout), Judith (UK publicity), Mike and Sharon (website & data), Kath (Instagram & YouTube), Monica (accounts, once a year), Sarah (all the boring text typing, she's a saint) and Tom (rights, as and when), we now have Michelle (metadata: THANK GOODNESS says Kate), and now Jay (US publicity advice). What a team!

The sale box

Our sale box is still active, as we can't sell the slightly bashed books at book fairs for the present. So in lieu of the book fairs that we can't attend, please rummage in the sale box. The photo below is purely illustrative: current stock includes.

Business as Usual x 1

Desire x 4

What Might Have Been x 1

After the Death of Ellen Keldberg x 1

The Caravaners x 1

Women's Weird in a print on demand paperback (a sample copy we don't like) x 1

Women's Weird in a print on demand hardback, but with a really terrible cover (again a sample copy we have rejected) x 1

All books are £10 each, p&p included for the UK, £6 for the rest of the world. Email us at enquiries@handheldpress.co.uk to secure your copy, and we'll discuss payment then. First come, first served!



Our catalogue leaflet

If you'd like a copy of our plum-coloured Handheld Press catalogue leaflet, email us at enquiries@handheldpress.co.uk and we will post it to you (free, obviously).



Our pre-ordering bonus

Remember, all books that you pre-order through our website will be posted as soon as the books have arrived from the printer. This applies to all existing pre-orders, and the books could be sent up to three or even four months ahead of publication. This helps our cash flow no end, and you receive a much desired book sooner than all your friends!

News from the garden

We are all well in Handheld Towers, and we hope that you are all well, and managing to live the lockdown life with calmness and ingenuity. In the month since our last newsletter, David has planted potatoes and beans (the latter are a bit slow, the former are flourishing), and bought a roll of green chicken wire to protect all our plants from the ravages of deer action, including the hedges which were looking very nibbled. (Successful so far.) We have blue irises coming up in all the places we put them last year and had forgotten about. David has also bought axe-axe, and is beginning some very labour-intensive work to transform an utterly pointless and ugly piece of inherited decking that covers a pile of builders' rubble half way up the garden, into two raised beds for veg and fruit. Kate has been sewing scrubs for the local NHS sewing group, and is about to move onto surgical gowns, and perhaps a little light face-mask making for the future.

And finally, [here's a short film about Bath in lockdown](#), sent to Kate by a WI friend, made by Jack Fisher. It's tremendous, and also shows how beautiful Bath is. Though we'd all like the people back in its streets again.



Hoping for better times to come soon,

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.

Please rest assured that your details will never be passed on to any third parties nor used for any other purpose.

Should you wish to not receive any further email newsletters from us then we'll be disappointed, but we'll understand.