

The Handheld Newsletter

November 2020

We have Weirds

Our marvellous new anthologies of classic Weird short fiction, *British Weird* and *Women's Weird 2*, were both launched at a very well attended Zoom event on 27 October, with editors James Machin and Melissa Edmundson in conversation with Kate. We should have recorded it, it was brilliant. Twenty-five people listening, and asking questions about classic writers, supernatural fiction, discussing where we might be able to find early horror fiction that dealt with racism, why it's hard to find writers of colour from this period, and who we should be searching out.



Double review whammy shock

Before the launch we had a lovely surprise, an article by David Barnett in the *Guardian* about the recovery and rediscovery of women writers of ghost stories and other supernatural themes, featuring not just *Women's Weird 2* but also *Women's Weird*, which we published a year ago!

And then, on launch day itself, we had a totally unexpected review of both *British Weird* and *Women's Weird 2* in the *Washington Post*. This was out of the blue: James had asked Kate to send review copies to a friend, Michael Dirda, which was obediently done, but he forgot to mention that Michael reviewed for WaPo. Our US sales team are very happy about this.

Meanwhile, reviews from bloggers and book reviewers on smaller publications have been sending in their praises for both titles, which we have collected on our [Media page](#). Do have a read.

A perfect storm

While we were naturally delighted to see that the *Guardian* article had added links for both books to our website, we did not expect *Women's Weird* to wildly oversell *Women's Weird 2*.

We also had not seen the article beforehand, so we had no idea that we ought to have restocked on *Women's Weird*. We had eight copies in stock in the office and they were gone by lunchtime. Having orders tumbling in every five minutes for the book you do not physically have copies of on the premises is a problem. A nice problem, but definitely a problem.

We have hundreds of copies at our distributor's warehouse, 200 miles away, so we immediately put in an urgent order on Thursday afternoon, shortly after the article was published on the *Guardian* website. 'Urgent' got lost in translation, and the books didn't arrive till Tuesday morning in the following week.

So we packed and trolleyed over 100 parcels that afternoon and again on Wednesday for the post office staff to process for us in their Drop & Go service. But it was half term, and they were already understaffed due to the virus. The last parcels of book orders weren't actually in the post office bags until Saturday afternoon.

If one of those orders was yours, you can see, we hope, that many things conspired to delay it, and we apologise.

Bookshop.org

You might have seen something in the news about the arrival of Bookshop.org in the UK. This is an important new development in the ways we have to buy books, and it began in the USA in January this year. You can read the back story [here](#), but the essentials are:

- Bookshop.org is an alternative to Amazon for buying any book you want online.
- It was set up specifically to enable independent bookshops without an online shop to sell their books through a mini shop within bookshop.org.
- It returns profits to the bookshops.
- Publishers and other book-producing institutions can have their own shop as affiliates, from which they receive (eventually) 10% of the profit from the sale of a book, while indie bookshops receive most of the rest.

It's a good development; good for customers (more ways to buy the book you're looking for), good for indie bookshops (they sell books to more people for the same profit without expending money they don't have on a whole new website), and it's good for publishing (we sell more books). We think Amazon can cope with the competition.

So our message is, if you want to order a Handheld Press title online, please buy directly from us. If you want to support your local bookshop as well, do look at https://uk.bookshop.org/pages/store_locator and find the bookshop closest to you.

We have postcards

We've finally finished the adjustments needed to be able to sell our new and exciting postcards. Vast amounts of work were done by Sharon, who looks after the coding and inexplicable technical stuff on our website, and you can [view the postcards here](#). Notice that we're selling them at a very reasonable price in packs of five. You can mix and match the selection as you want with a note in the Notes box on the order page.

Suggested uses include:

- Send to friends to show them which Handheld title you've just enjoyed.
- Use as a bookmark (as the bookmarks run out, we will be using postcards instead).
- Pin on your noticeboard to give joy and pleasure at random moments.
- Leave in bookshops to give the sales staff inspiration.
- Leave on tables in cafes as a talking point for shy strangers.
- Send to arty friends and relations to show that you too appreciate fine vintage design in your book covers.
- Use as a handy checklist for those you've read, those you've bought but haven't read yet, and those you mean to order.
- Cut out and stick to the office doors of colleagues to give them a smile.
- Use for thank-you notes and secret messages.



Our sale box is getting out of control

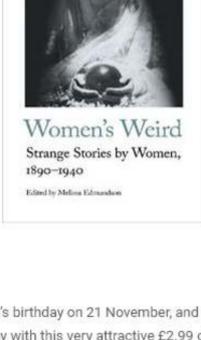
We have a sale box for the books that get a little bumped at the corners, or whose covers got bent in the packing. Current titles available at £10 each include one or more copies of *Business as Usual*, *The Caravans*, *Women's Weird 2*, *What Not*, *The Runagates Club* (£8 sale price), *Desire*, and *A Quaker Conscientious Objector*.

If you'd like to buy one or more of these, email Kate at enquiries@handheldpress.co.uk to reserve your copy, and we'll discuss what payment method you'd like to use.



Women's Weird is one year old

We already mentioned this above, so we decided to celebrate. From 18 November, you can enjoy a £1.99 discount on orders of this book from our site until the end of November. Use code WEIRD at our [online shop](#).



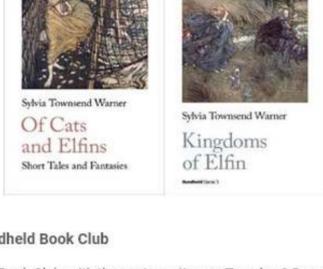
Inez's birthday!

It would have been Inez Holden's birthday on 21 November, and we feel there would have been cocktails. Celebrate her birthday with this very attractive £2.99 discount on *Blitz Writing*, her novel and diaries about factory work in the Blitz. Use code SHELTER in our [shop](#), for 21 November only.



Sylvia Townsend Warner birthday treat

On 6 December it will be Sylvia Townsend Warner's birthday, so please enjoy a £2.99 discount on either of her books, *Kingdoms of Elfin* and *Of Cats and Elfin*. Use code SYLVIA in our shop to order, from 6 to 12 December inclusive.



The December Handheld Book Club

We have a Handheld Book Club, with the next meeting on Tuesday 8 December at 19.30 UK time, when Kate will be talking to Gayle Lazda of the [London Review Bookshop](#) about *Business as Usual*, our delightful republication of a 1933 classic of department store life and love among the stacks, about bookshops and booksellers, and romance in retail history.

Tickets are free! Register for yours [here](#).

Are you a bookseller?

Would you like to talk about our books in our Book Club? Get in touch at enquiries@handheldpress.co.uk to claim your seat on the panel. See our scheduled Book Clubs [here](https://www.handheldpress.co.uk/the-handheld-book-club/): <https://www.handheldpress.co.uk/the-handheld-book-club/>

News from the garden

The garden is producing mainly apples, and leaves. The leaves are in bags, mulching away behind the shed. The apples are collected daily and inspected, the slugs are flicked off and the good apples not likely to go mouldy are washed, wrapped in paper or bubble wrap, and stored in a large box formerly used for childrens' toys in the useful room/cupboard under the stairs. The room now smells very like the verandah at the back of Kate's grandparents' house, over the border in Wiltshire, which looked onto a small orchard. Now we know why.

We could do with some variety in apple recipes: if you have one you swear by, please send it to us!

After several months of deliberately not refilling the bird feeders, because they can jolly well search for their own food in the fine weather, we decided to get the peanuts out again. But on opening the metal bin which houses all the bird food we found a revolting green powdery mush at its base, where the water had seeped in during the incessant gales. The bird food in the sacks and packets was fine: it was the escaped stuff that had been rotting for weeks. The bin is now scoured, the feeders are refilled, and the nuthatches are back. A buzzard flapped through the garden slowly on Saturday morning, looking for a roost in the fog. The first lesser-spotted woodpecker we've seen for months arrived this morning. There's probably a correlation between cause and effect there.

Next door have two spaniels who visit once a week for dog-sitting purposes. During the recent rain, a young female roe deer was resting on the grass at the top of our garden, when a spaniel scented her, and all hell broke loose. The dog hurtled through our hedge and went straight for the doe, barking loudly. The doe got up in a hurry, and barked crossly back at the dog. The dog chased her three times round the shed and then the doe went through the opposite hedge to seek a calmer garden elsewhere. The dog followed, then came back looking disconsolate.

David went up to inspect the damage caused in the newly inaugurated dog/deer race track, and met the doe, now back in the lower part of the garden as he was walking down from the top. They circled past each other warily, and the doe trotted off into the wood at the top of the garden. Cue much barking as the dog scented her again and tore off in pursuit. The grass is a MESS.

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.