

The Handheld Newsletter

December 2020

We've made it to the end of the year, and we will try to not work in Christmas week. Obviously book orders will be attended to, but everything else will have to wait till 28th December. We hope you are slowing down a bit, or finding changes to make in your daily lives to make a difference and have a break, even if Christmas or Hanukkah isn't celebrated in the usual way this year.

Our January 2022 cover

We open this month's sackload of news with a new book cover, for our edition of Malcolm Saville's glorious 1946 nature classic *Jane's Country Year*. We'll be publishing this in January 2022, NOT next year. But enjoy the cover art now, by Bernard Bowerman.

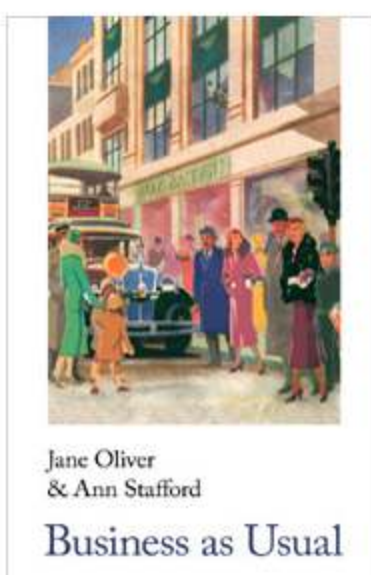
Kate has known this book all her life, because it was a favourite of her mother's from her own country childhood. On rereading it some time ago, Kate was struck again by how Saville's novel blends the nature observations of a young girl convalescing for a year with her uncle and aunt on their farm in Shropshire, layered over a story of post-war reconstruction, contrasting country spaces with enclosed urban living. It's a marvellous illustrated novel, and we will be reproducing all the Bowerman paintings for each chapter from the first edition in colour (if we can find a printer we can afford). The introduction will be written by Hazel Sheeky Bird of the University of Newcastle.



Reprinting mayhem

Last month you will remember that we had an unexpected leap in sales caused by reviews of two of our books, which caused us to panic about our supply chain.

This month we had to reprint two titles due to colossal demand caused by an advert we managed to get in the Booksellers' Association Christmas catalogue. This catalogue is displayed by indie booksellers on their counters for people to browse in. We hadn't quite taken in the scale of the catalogue's reach, and have now made a note in our diary for next autumn to massively reprint any titles in any ad we might place with them again. Orders for *Business as Usual* and *British Weird* this Christmas have simply gone bananas.



The December Handheld Book Club

We had a very convivial online gathering on 8 December for the Handheld Book Club, with Kate and Gayle Lazda from the London Review Bookshop discussing *Business as Usual*. You can view the video on our [YouTube channel](#).

The January Handheld Book Club

Our Book Club in the evening of 12 January will be on *British Weird*, with editor James Machin discussing the stories and gothic Weirdness with Tim Jarvis of the University of Bedfordshire. Tickets are free and already going fast. You can [order yours here](#).



The Book Club Review podcast

Kate was interviewed by the Book Club Review podcast in December, and you can [listen to the episode here](#). As usual she over-used the words 'fabulous' and 'amazing' for the books we publish, and she managed to gabble for the complete half hour of the interview. But it's entertaining stuff: do have a listen.



Creative Feminisms at the British Library

Kate will also be taking part in a panel discussion in the three-day Creative Feminisms mini-festival run by the British Library in January. You can [register here for the festival](#) (it's online and free), and listen to Kate and British Library Publishing discuss the practicalities of bringing lost feminist authors back into print.



We're going worldwide

We're changing our UK sales and distribution arrangements to fit under the single roof of the mighty Ingram, one of the world's biggest book distribution and management companies. We've been distributed by Combined Book Services in Tonbridge for three years, and have had a happy working relationship with them, but we need an integrated sales and distribution arrangement now, so we're moving over to Ingram for everything.

From 1st January 2021 Handheld books will be purchaseable through bookshops everywhere in the world. It might take a bit of time to stock the new Handheld shelf in the Ingram warehouse in Australia, but if you live outside the UK or North America, and want our books, start telling your bookshops that they can order our books through their usual [Two Rivers / Ingram](#) sales reps.

One year *Of Cats and Elfin's*

A year ago in January 2020 we published our second collection of Sylvia Townsend Warner's short fantasy fiction, *Of Cats and Elfin's*. As well as some tales of Elfin, this included Warner's long-forgotten fables of *The Cat's Cradle Book*, which hadn't been in print since 1960. And Neil Gaiman wrote us an endorsement. What more need we say? To enjoy a £2.99 discount on this fine book, please use code CATS in our shop, for 20th January only.



News from the garden

It's wet, soggy, damp, often misty, especially at the top of the garden at the wood edge, and the squirrels have never been busier. Bounce-bounce-bounce they come over the lawn, lifting their tails high to avoid trailing them in the dew, pausing to dig in the moss for stray seeds or nuts that might have been discarded by a bird from the feeder. Periodically a squirrel will try climbing up the pole to get at the feeding tubes, but they always seem baffled by the baffle.

The bird traffic is also busy. We live in an Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty on the southern edge of the Cotswolds, and on a good day in winter we see these species hurtling to and from the sunflower seeds: blue tit, great tit, robin, nuthatch, long-tailed tit, coal tit, dunnock (even the dunnock actually gets off the ground and flies up to grab a seed), one or possibly both of the spotted woodpeckers (we're never quite sure which), marsh tit (probably not the almost identical but rarer willow tit), black-cap, sometimes a greenfinch, and (a lot in the summer: less so now) the superb and gaudy goldfinches. Blackbirds, crows, jackdaws, collared doves and street pigeons hang about on the grass waiting for leftovers. However, because of all this high-protein traffic we also have regular sparrowhawk visits, which don't seem to upset the birds among which it predated. They hide in the hedges for five minutes, and then they're back as though the murderer had never been there.

We wish you a happy holiday season,

Kate & David

Handheld Press