

The Handheld Newsletter

January 2021

Yikes, it's 2021.

A suspicious flurry

On 18 December there was an unusual flurry of online orders for our books. The titles being bought were a random selection, but the orders all started flooding in at around ten in the morning, UK time, and didn't stop for a couple of days. It was as if the Magical Orders tap had been turned on, and we didn't know where it was. Then one of these customers kindly told us why: the [Guardian's The Upside column](#) had been sent to its mailing list that week, and contained a link to our shop, in the little snippet that Kate had sent them about the extraordinary year Handheld has had. Never, ever underestimate the phenomenal marketing power of getting your website link published in an online newspaper article.

A smaller flurry

Something else happened online in December to drive a few more sales our way, but it might yet have bigger consequences. Our eagle-eyed Instagram manager Kat spotted that Emma Roberts (very famous US TV and film star) had posted a photo of our edition of *Zelda Fitzgerald's Save Me The Waltz* on her Instagram feed, sitting beside a healthy bowl of muesli and yoghurt. 1.2 million people had Liked this when we got to it, so we told our sales reps in the US. We also noted that we only had 47 copies in their warehouse. Our sales reps seemed quite excited by this news, and begged us to send 600 copies to the US immediately, as sales were already picking up. So we reprinted it. Sales have indeed picked up.

Emma Roberts co-runs the [Belletrist](#) online book recommendation site, with its own bookshop with [Bookshop.org](#), and they recommend books each month to their loyal followers. We hope they can hold off recommending *Save Me The Waltz* until the ship carrying our books docks in Baltimore and the lorry arrives at the Ingram warehouse in Jackson, Tennessee, hopefully by the end of January. But after that, please do recommend *Zelda, Emma!*



Zelda Fitzgerald

Save Me
The Waltz

We beam with pride

In September 2018 Kate discovered *Business as Usual* in a book sale, and bought it for £3. She loved it. She tracked down the estate. She fussed over reproducing all the drawings. We published it, despite qualms that no-one else would love it like she does. Nine months later, we are delighted that *Business as Usual* made it into six Best Books of 2020 lists, for [Captive Reader](#) (her actual Best Book of 2020!), [Stuck in a Book](#), [A Life In Books](#), [Reading Selfishly](#), [Desperate Reader](#) and [Jacqui Wine](#).

Millennial women love it. Older women love it. Mothers and sisters and aunts get bought it. Fans of retail history & 1930s London love it. And the drawings! Everyone loves the drawings. It's now our official best-seller, outselling *What Not* (which had a 15-month start), in only nine months.

So thank you for that.



Jane Oliver
& Ann Stafford

Business as Usual

The January Handheld Book Club: *British Weird*

We hosted the Handheld Book Club for *British Weird* on Tuesday 12 January, with Tim Jarvis of the University of Bedfordshire in discussion with James Machin about all things British and Weird. We managed to sell out unexpectedly, so we ordered another virtual auditorium to be built and hired more ice-cream sellers. In the end only around half of those who had registered for the free tickets attended, so we ate the extra ice-cream afterwards. But 35 is a good number for an audience, and it was a fascinating hour of discussion. The video will be available for view in the next fortnight.



British Weird

Edited by James Machin

The February Handheld Book Club: *The Caravaners*

The February Handheld Book Club will be on *The Caravaners*, on Tuesday 2 February at ten in the morning, UK time, to accommodate Juliane Roemhild, the editor of our edition, as she lives in Melbourne, Australia. Isobel Maddison of Lucy Cavendish College Cambridge will be discussing Elizabeth von Arnim and the feminine art of vicious Edwardian satire with Juliane. Tickets are free, and can be [booked here](#).



Elizabeth von Arnim

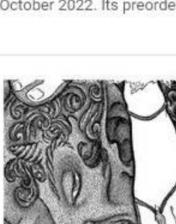
The
Caravaners

A new cover: *Strange Relics*

We've been planning this book for some time, and had also been looking for the cover for some time. Amara Thornton of University College London and Katy Soar of Winchester University both have an interest in archaeology and the supernatural. They have collected an impressive roster of classic supernatural stories that need to be republished to showcase the influence of archaeology and the study of the past on writing ghoulishly.

In line with our usual practice, they have disinterred some writers from the past whose stories are absolute gems of frightening writing, and one of these is the author Dorothy Quick. Her story 'The Cracks of Time' was published in the US pulp magazine *Weird Tales* in 1948, and illustrated with a header image by a grand old man of pulp illustration, Boris Dolgov. But what an illustration! We had to have it for the cover. The version we had seen online had too low a resolution, for publication, and libraries are difficult to get to right now. But *Weird Tales* is also a pulp magazine, for devotees only, and is probably too lowly to have been collected in a research library. When Kate had the bright idea of buying it. A dealer in California had a pristine copy which we bought for about £20, including postage. David photographed it, and it makes a magnificent cover. (Notice that we've changed our usual house style to allow the image to bleed off to the right, rather than the top, to be able to accommodate the square shape of the original. It was too good to crop.)

Strange Relics will be published in October 2022. Its preorder page will go live this autumn.



Strange Relics

Stories of Archaeology and
the Supernatural

Edited by Amara Thornton & Katy Soar

Reading Independent Publishers Month: February 2021

Karen of [Kaggsy's Bookish Ramblings](#) and Lizzy of [Lizzy's Literary Life](#) encourage you to read independent publishers in February 2021, and have selected 32 to try, including us. Just look at our name, nestling under the eaves of the mighty Little Toller! For more information on their recommended list, do follow their blogs and receive more updates.



News from the garden

It's been bloomin' cold, but only to heavy frost levels. We've not (yet) had snow because we are in the soft and effete south-west of England. However, the garden has not enticed us out for pleasure, but more from a Calvinistic sense of duty.

Kate cut back the ceanothus tree at the front to finally give it some shape, and moved the last of the rhubarb from the front garden to the veg beds at the back that David created last spring as his lockdown project. The rhubarb had been content and productive at the front, but it was being harassed by invasive crocosmia, and we wanted its space to put the last of the summer sale fuchsias in, which will grow tall above the crocosmia with serene indifference. We also moved a worried-looking syringa, also being bothered by the crocosmia bullies, into a nice big pot so it can supervise the front garden from a position of independence.

At the same time, David moved our baby oak tree, donated from a Berkshire garden by our friend Caroline, up to the wood. The garden climbs the hill steeply for its last ten feet, and ends on an edge of flattish ridge, just past a fine stand of ash trees. The remains of a tumbledown drystone wall lie there, which we assume marks our boundary. Now – just to be sure – the oak tree now marks the corner, with attendant foxgloves donated by a friend in the village. David made it a protective corral of wire netting, to keep the deer off, which has now intensified the animal traffic going up and down those garden steps. Modern (ie those acorned since 1900) oak trees can no longer tolerate thick leaf canopies, according to Oliver Rackham, and only do well in open land or hedgerows. We're hoping that the light will be strong enough at the edge of this thin strip of woodland to allow our oak to flourish.

Stay safe in January, and take your vaccine when you can get it!

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.