

The Handheld Newsletter

July 2021

Well, the last five weeks have been eventful.

The top three events of last month, in descending order of consternation

We unaccountably lost 1900 books sometime after the courier collected the boxes from the printer. We suspect they are a soggy mass on a forgotten pallet behind a warehouse now. It's no longer our problem: our excellent printers sorted the insurance in three days and then reprinted the books in ten days. Outstanding service all round. But it caused a lot of worry until we knew what had happened.

Our creative writing retreat at the [Dell House in Malvern](#) went extremely well ... for the six writers who attended. It did not go so well for Kate, who drove there (1.5 hours), gaily expecting a three-day change of working routine, only to be WhatsApped, just as she arrived, that the daughter of someone she had spent time with at the weekend had now, belatedly, tested positive for covid. So the doughty Kevin and Elizabeth of Dell House stepped to manage the retreat for her, and Kate drove straight home again, doing her bits of tutoring remotely. (Her test result was negative; she's perfectly OK; the daughter of the friend doesn't have many symptoms. It just shows you can never be too careful.)

A very fancy French publicist emailed us to say that an extremely fancy French couture house is going to feature our edition of Zelda Fitzgerald's *Save Me The Waltz* in their Summer Reads feature, as curated by a royally-connected French celebrity. We didn't even know Chanel HAD a Summer Reads section in their website, and try as we might, we can't find it online. Perhaps one has to be a Chanel customer? If you do see it, send us a photo!



Zelda Fitzgerald
*Save Me
The Waltz*

VAT: dull, but true

Due to recent changes in trading arrangements, selling our books from our website to individual customers in the European Union has become astoundingly difficult. Each EU country has its own VAT rating for books, and we simply cannot tweak our website to accommodate all 27 rates at the different price levels. Nor can we do the same for all other countries in the world without a great deal of expensive website adjustment. In addition, postage costs from the UK to Australia and New Zealand have rocketed.

So we have, with regret, decided that we can no longer post books outside the UK, except to Canada and North America. Those countries are easier to manage in our website, due to the way the software we bought to run our online bookshop was written. But fear not! All our books are available in bookshops worldwide. Please do ask your local independent bookshop to order our books from Two Rivers / Ingram.

We have had events!

Frances Bingham gave a lecture at the British Library in June about *Valentine Ackland*, and that was very absorbing.

Kate gave a talk to Westminster Libraries on 16 June about Handheld, [which you can see here](#).

On 7 July Kate had a very enjoyable discussion with critic and reviewer Lucy Scholes for Westminster Libraries about forgotten women's stories, [which you can see here](#).

We launched our latest book on 5 July, Sarah LeFanu's *Dreaming of Rose*, with Sian Norris of the Bristol Festival of Women's Literature interviewing Sarah about the art of biography. You can [see that video here](#).

And Kate and Luci Gosling of the Mary Evans Picture Library had a fascinating conversation about the Handheld cover art that Mary Evans has supplied. You can settle down with a biscuit and a cup of tea to [watch that video here](#).

We have had reviews!

Two of the most high profile:

A N Wilson in *The Oldie* described Frances Bingham as a doughty champion and a good biographer, when reviewing *Valentine Ackland*.

The *Daily Mail* produced an absolutely classic headline for its review of *Valentine*: "The cross-dressing Communist lesbian, her closet gay husband ... and a love story like no other" (they liked the book).

All our book reviews are on each book's own page in the website, and also in our handy [Reviews](#) page.

Coming up ...

Kate has four talks booked for the next few months. Do check [our Events page](#) to spot when the links for free tickets go live:

- Online for the book launch of Rose Macaulay's *Personal Pleasures*, in conversation with Sarah LeFanu: [free ticket registration is here](#).
- At Westminster Libraries online or in London, on LGBTQ+ fiction with Frances Bingham on 15 September.
- At Westminster Libraries online or in London, on disability in fiction with sociologist and bioethicist [Tom Shakespeare](#) on 13 October.
- At the Guildhall Library online or in London, on London through the decades through five of Handheld's titles, on 10 November.

Kate is also planning to attend a number of conferences and conventions with the Handheld book stall, if public health restrictions permit.

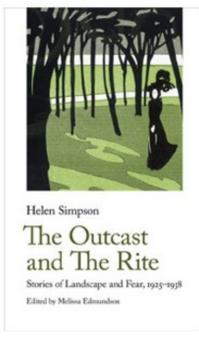
- On 18 September in Exeter at the [West of England Women's History Network](#) symposium on women's history of the 1920s, at which Frances Bingham will be talking about her book *Valentine Ackland*.
- On 2 October at the John Buchan Society AGM in Derby.
- On 16 October at the [West of England Women's History Network](#) conference in Bristol.
- On 30 October at [BristolCon](#), at which we will be launching a very secret and exciting project, as well as selling all our science fiction and fantasy titles.

Our Helen Simpson book is now available for preorder

Our May 2022 title (only nine months away) is now online and available for preorder! Melissa Edmundson has collected 12 of Helen Simpson's marvellous and unsettling stories of supernatural landscapes into her first collection in eighty years: *The Outcast and The Rite, Stories of Landscape and Fear, 1925-1938*.

For those of you who have read Margaret Kennedy's *Where Stands A Winged Sentry*, you'll remember that Kennedy was looking after 'Claire', a friend's daughter, during their evacuation to Cornwall as the friend was seriously ill in hospital. That friend was Helen Simpson, and she died in 1940, far too young. Her daughter Clemence is very happy that her mother's stories will be reprinted.

You can [preorder *The Outcast and The Rite* now](#).



The sale box overfloweth ...

It's that time of year again: if you want to buy a very slightly bashed copy at an attractively reduced price of £10 of pretty much any of our books, we have them. Email us at enquiries@handheldpress.co.uk to secure the title that you want.



Kate's birthday offer

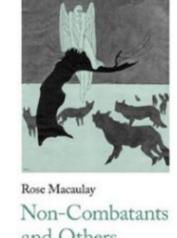
Kate has her birthday on 22 July, and we are offering a £2.99 discount for that day only for three titles she has a special affection for:

Zelda Fitzgerald's *Save Me the Waltz*, because Kate also used to do ballet, at a young age.

Rose Macaulay's *Non-Combatants and Others*, because Kate singlehandedly researched all Macaulay's journalism and commentary, and still thinks she is a brilliant writer.

Inez Holden's *Blitz Writing*, because Holden was a great writer, and this novella and WW2 memoir are absolutely remarkable.

Use code **CAKE** in our online shop to buy any or all of these titles at the birthday discount, on 22 July only.



News from the garden

We have a pond. It's not quite as deep as we had wanted (and is certainly not the six-foot depth mistakenly reported last month). But it's finished, it's full of plants which are proliferating, and our neighbour Jude has offered us some spare newts, if she can find them. Dragonflies like it, as does a young male roe deer who visits in the early morning. And it has changed the way we use the garden. We go up there (it's halfway up the hill) to see what has blossomed since yesterday, we sit on the bench (needs a bit of propping) to contemplate the aerial wildlife, and we fuss over the pond's health. A leaf-grabber has been ordered as Jude's copper beech is shedding its leaves, and our ash will be doing the same.

We have one fig still on the tree (the other three fell off last month). The new apple tree was surviving on its own with aphids and their ant attendants, so although there are possibly two surviving apples, they don't look healthy. The new cherry tree did extremely well but we forgot to net it, so the bullfinches ate all the fruit. The damson is now thoroughly netted. The pear tree has given up fruiting completely. Both our baby oak trees are looking leafy.

In vegetable land the mangetout are cropping madly, and we are cautiously optimistic that the broad beans. The kale plants and our hand-raised borlotti bean plants have all been eaten, bar one, so we're going to collect its beans and use them next year in a different plot, to conserve its survivability gene. The brussels sprouts are, so far, growing very well, but the raspberries and gooseberries are just sticks in the ground. We ordered them, in good time, but the order was forgotten and only by repeat nagging did the canes actually arrive, far too late in the season. We won't be ordering from that nursery again, hmpfh.



Don't forget your sunhats,

Kate & David

Handheld Press