

The Handheld Newsletter

November 2021

For the want of a nail ...

The printer ink was running out. We kept forgetting to buy new cartridges when we went to the post office. We had plenty in the cupboard.

No, we didn't. We didn't have a spare of the double-thickness black ink cartridge without which we now know the printer simply refuses to do anything. We discovered this on the day we needed to print a signed book contract so we could send a counter-signed version back to the author of a forthcoming introduction, and on the day we needed (quite urgently) to print an information sheet about a forthcoming book that the literary editor of the most famous British newspaper had just requested (eek). And on the day that Kate was to give a 40-minute talk about our books and needed to read her notes, without which ad libbing might rashly ensue.

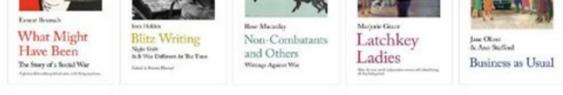
We've got the cartridges now and the printer works fine. But we're never letting that happen again.

The Guildhall Library

Kate's talk for the Guildhall Library was by Zoom, for an estimated 190 viewers from many parts of the world, on 'Five London novels from Handheld Press' (*What Might Have Been*, *Non-Combatants and Others*, *Latchkey Ladies*, *Business as Usual* and *Blitz Writing*). With a cunningly placed discount code in the last slide, we had a very pleasing flurry of orders afterwards. But the most enjoyable part was answering questions from the viewers, and hearing how much they like the books.

Kate's next talks for the Guildhall Library will be on Wednesday 26 January, and on Tuesday 15 March, both at 2-3pm. Both are live events, and will not be recorded, following Guildhall Library policy. The January talk will certainly be on Zoom; the March one might possibly be blended, live and in-person as well as on Zoom. We'll keep you informed.

Five London novels from Handheld Press

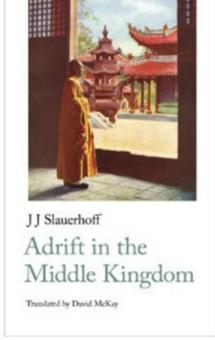


We've been longlisted-shortlisted!

Adrift in the Middle Kingdom, written by Jan Jacob Slauehoff and translated by David McKay, has now been shortlisted from the longlist for the [2022 Vondel Prize for Translation!](#)

The Vondel Translation Prize is a biennial prize for the best book translation into English of a Dutch literary or cultural-historical work. It was established in 1996 by the Society of Authors, and is funded by the Dutch Foundation for Literature. David McKay won the 2018 Prize. The Prize will be judged in spring 2022, so we will report back on the results then.

Adrift in the Middle Kingdom, first published in 1934 by one of The Netherlands' great twentieth-century writers, is a glorious novel, blending gritty social realism and romantic idealism, in an extraordinary adventure crossing the Chinese continent in a caravan of misfits, heading beyond the Great Wall. Translator David McKay has recorded [a video and an audio reading](#) if you want to have a taste.



Reviews!

We did well for reviews this month. As promised, the *Church Times* had a nice review of Rose Macaulay's *Personal Pleasures* with questions for reading groups to use. The *Sunday Express* published a long feature on John Buchan and whether he should be republished at all, and extensive quotes from Kate, who has published a lot about Buchan on her own account, as well as writing the Introduction for our new edition of Buchan's *The Gap in the Curtain*.

The Backlisted podcast surprised and pleased us in equal measure, with John Mitchinson's encomium on the stories in *Women's Weird*. 'Handheld Press, who have really nailed the market in these brilliant anthologies in the area of Weird writing ... this one in particular is revelatory. In this book there are so many women writers I've never heard of before, and they're so good.' You can listen to that episode, which is mainly about Elizabeth Jane Howard's novel *Something in Disguise*, [here](#).

Backlisted also praised *Women's Weird 2* ('An amazing collection'), and the academic journal *Women's Writing* reviewed *Women's Weird 2* with these pleasing words: 'Essential reading ... accessible ... hugely significant'.



BristolCon

Kate and elder Handheld daughter Kat had an enjoyable day running the Handheld stall at BristolCon on 30 October. This was one of the first science fiction & fantasy conventions to resume normal business in the UK since the pandemic began, and it was reassuringly well ventilated, sanitised and thoroughly masked. Kate also did a short talk and a reading from Elinor Mordaunt's *The Villa and The Vortex*, and took part in a panel discussion of 'Democracy in epic fantasy: is it possible?'. The panel thought that it certainly was possible, but that it might not sell very well. Our stall's top sellers were *The Villa and The Vortex*, *Women's Weird*, and *Women's Weird 2*. No surprises there!



We are sponsoring

Handheld are delighted to announce that we are sponsoring a second series of the [Desert Island Discworld](#) podcast, in which guests discuss their most beloved Discworld novel by Terry Pratchett with Al Kennedy, host and Pratchett expert. Al is a seriously good podcast host, and is attracting guests of higher and higher calibre. In this series (the sixth) he's welcomed (up to the time of typing) SF author and activist Cory Doctorow, BBC Radio 1 film critic Ali Plumb and the marvellous stand-up comedian and comedy writer Eleanor Morton. We are proud to provide the cash for biscuits that fuel this excellent show.

Handheld are also sponsoring the inestimable [Encyclopaedia of Science Fiction](#), managed by John Clute and David Langford, which is one of the most useful online free resources for researching anything to do with science fiction and its history. Their contract with Gollancz, their former webhost, came to an end in September 2021, and we, with other supporters, have pitched in to ensure that the site remains online with its own server, hopefully in perpetuity.

Handheld Press: Desert Island Discworld

Come write with us

Our next writing retreat will be on [Fiction, Nature and Travel](#), 24 to 27 January 2022, which will offer (almost) fully catered protected writing time with no chores. Kate will be in attendance, running a workshop on 'How to Pitch Your Book, Or, I've Written It, Now What Do I Do With It?' Novelist and critic [Alice Jolly](#) will be giving an interactive writing workshop, and Sabrin Hasbun of the University of Falmouth's creative writing department will offer optional feedback and a one-to-one tutorial on your writing.

Two months later we have organised a second retreat for 2022, on [Life Writing, Biography and Memoir](#), with biography and critic Sarah LeFanu as your tutor and speaker, and Kate repeating her January performance for the assistance of nervous writers.

For all details, [please look at the Dell House website](#).

We are hiring ...

Should any of our newsletter readers be interested, we are in need of someone to do a few hours a month (and it really is not likely to be more than this) managing our YouTube channel, editing any videos we may decide to make, and possibly helping us get some BookTok going. If you are interested in this paid freelance work, give us a buzz: enquiries@handheldpress.co.uk.

We are also looking for help from across the pond. We occasionally need advice from people familiar with the US book trade about where best to pitch a particular title to attract publicity, or how to get in touch with a particular reviewer or editor to place a review copy. If you're interested in offering (paid) advice on this basis for a few hours a month (we'd do all the pitching: we just need to be directed), please do get in touch: enquiries@handheldpress.co.uk

Your pre-Christmas treat

It would be no good giving you a Christmas discount code in the December newsletter, as you will have done all your Christmas shopping by then. To enjoy a £2.99 discount on any title in the Handheld webshop from now until 1 December, please use code JINGLE and shop with abandon!



News from the garden

David was vigorously clearing the leaves from underneath the ash tree as this was being typed, and the squirrels were trying to bury nuts in the geraniums. Kate spent a happy two hours at the weekend planting bulbs, and was pleased to find that the tulip bulbs given her by her mother months ago were actually meant to go into the ground in November anyway. Kat had donated a spargina that she rashly bought but didn't carve for Hallowe'en, so its catpaw carcass was placed at the top of the garden in case the badgers were interested. (They were not.) The windfall apples have been fewer this year, but also tastier: they were very good in a Kerry apple cake. Our friends from across the valley brought us their excess Jerusalem artichoke tubers, which apparently grow very, very tall. Kate is considering which aspect of the garden she needs screening most, and how to stop the squirrels from unburying the tubers once they go into the ground. To plant them at night?

In pond news, we were wondering what to do to help it through its first winter, but we have decided to do nothing, and let its fallen leaves create some nice sediment for next year's animal visitors to enjoy. The netting over the top has worked well keeping the leaves from trees from drifting in, so it seems a stable environment for now. The cardoons are the real success of the garden this month: magnificent silver-green spiky leaves cascading over the grass in the upper meadow, like vast thistles, completely deer-proof. We may decorate them for Christmas.

Enjoy the winter months

Kate & David

Handheld Press