

The Handheld Newsletter

February 2022

We are a runner-up!

As mentioned last year, our 2019 novel *Adrift in the Middle Kingdom*, as translated by David McKay, was shortlisted for the 2021 Vondel Prize for Translation. On 17 February it was announced as the runner-up, which is a silver medal in Olympic terms, and we could not be more proud. Many congratulations to David, and to the shade of Jan Jacob Slauerhoff, whose imagination created this marvellous novel.



News about *Jane's Country Year*

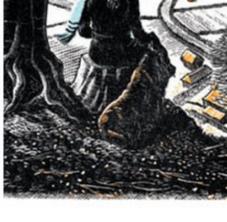
The book launch for *Jane's Country Year* was so much fun! We had Saville Society stalwarts to discuss the book in its Savillian context, contributions from Saville and Bowerman family members, and Hazel Sheeky Bird, who wrote our introduction. You can view the video of the recording here.



The model for Jane

Our edition of *Jane's Country Year* is selling vertically, ie its sales figures going from 1 to 1000 copies in a little under two weeks, and still going strong. We are now reprinting it for the second time and receiving delighted reports from readers about how much they are enjoying it. (And repeat orders for their friends and family.)

We placed an ad for *Jane* in the *London Review of Books*, and one of its subscribers saw this and wrote to us. Charmian Farmer, now in her 80s, was Bernard Bowerman's seven-year-old model for the artwork as Jane. The Bowerman family knew that there had been a model, since Graeme Bowerman has been going through the recently discovered scrapbooks that his mother kept after Bernard's death, but no-one knew who she was. Charmian will be contributing her memories of the sittings and working with Bernard, for a forthcoming feature in the Malcolm Saville Society Journal. We are pleased to be the communications hub bringing together lost scraps of the backstory behind this novel.



Catching authors at the ends of their lives

Long-term readers of the Newsletter will recall that sometimes we lose one of our authors to old age and ill health. It's happened twice now, just after signing a contract with an author, or in one case getting her happy verbal agreement while in hospital for the last time, they are not able to see the new edition of their work in print. This is terribly sad, for us as well as, obviously, for their families. It's part of the deal when you specialise in publishing older works, but it never gets any less of a blow to hear the news of the death of one of 'our' authors. So when we are talking to elderly authors, or their elderly children, we work hard to give them as much as their work will give Handheld while they can still enjoy it. The 90-something author whose work we'll be republishing in September 2023 (title not yet revealed) told us this month that his recent brain scan makes it unlikely that he'll be able to participate in any marketing nearer the publication date, but he does hope to see the book in print. So do we. But he is very pleased that his work will be back in print, a labour of love for him as well as for us.

The Handheld Diaries

We're doing a new thing. Ever since Kate started working on Handheld, which is nearly five years ago now, good grief, she has kept a daily record of the things she has done in a Word file on her laptop, called Handheld Diaries. But they aren't a diary because it's not at all reflective. Nor a journal, because the notes are terse and for record-keeping only. Here's a sample from a day in 2021:

Asked Jess about LL ebook instead of proof as DRC

Worked through the metadata anomalies replies: **to check** JCY in amazon for the alien Collection subtitle; **to check** LL in Kobo

Asked Ceara again about Braille and Daisy format distribution. Asked Agustina about Daisy / Braille

Sent Guildhall the updated blurbs for Jan and March talks, added to site

Asked Nadja for a new postcard for 2022 titles

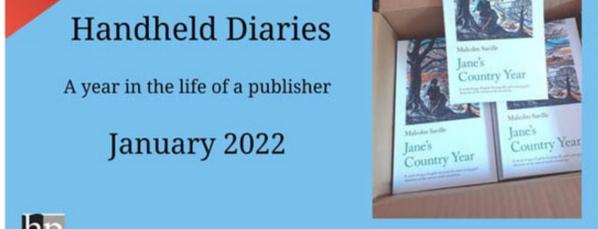
Asked Ceara to chase JCY colour spreads as they're not in Edelweiss yet

Sent audiobook email to D to consider

Magnum order finally to be sent; asked how many cartons. Told **Magnum**

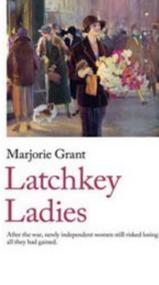
Emer sent Aug and Sept bills, **D to pay**

As you can see, this is not very informative for the uninvolved. But it's become obvious what an invaluable record these files are, as well as an essential working tool for Kate to keep up with the multitasking that is her life: vol 18 was begun this year. Amy, our new YouTube manager, decided we needed to update our 'what we are' videos, and asked Kate to record a summary of what she did in January. At 6.30am on a day at the end of January, unbrushed and still in her dressing-gown, Kate did this, using the Handheld Diaries, and we released the first episode of the Handheld Diaries on YouTube last week. Further monthly episodes will appear to give continuing snapshots of the complexities and fascinations of a publisher's life. But next time Kate will be brushed and properly dressed.



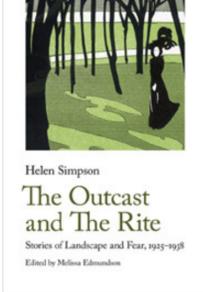
Latchkey Ladies in March

Our March title is Marjorie Grant's tremendous novel about single women living and working in London just after the First World War, and we have two book-launch-type events for it. On publication day Kate and Sarah LeFanu, who rediscovered the novel and wrote our Introduction, will be in conversation live at the Guildhall Library, London, on Tuesday 15th March, in a hybrid event (at the time of typing), with both an in-person audience and streaming for viewers online. This will be at 2pm, and will **not** be recorded. The second event will be at 5pm on Wednesday 16th March for Westminster Libraries, an online Zoom conversation between Kate and Sarah about the book, which will also be recorded. You can register for your free tickets for both events by following the links here.



Our May title: *The Outcast and The Rite*, by Helen de Guerry Simpson

Another book launch event! We'll be celebrating the launch of Helen de Guerry Simpson's shivering stories, *The Outcast and The Rite. Stories of Landscape and Fear, 1925-1938*, with a Zoom launch, completely online, on Tuesday 10 May at 7.30pm, UK time. Melissa Edmundson, who curated the collection and wrote the Introduction, will be in conversation with Kate. You can register for your free ticket here.



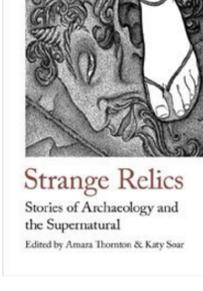
New title for September 2022: *Strange Relics*

Nearly two years ago, Kate started discussions with two archaeologists about an anthology of classic supernatural stories and archaeological finds. Kate used to be an academic editor for English Heritage and archaeology is still a strong interest. Amara Thornton and Katy Soar had been collecting stories that combined archaeology and the supernatural, and for the next eight months the three of them read all the twentieth-century supernatural stories they could find that contained even the faintest hint of archaeology, to build a collection.

This will be published as *Strange Relics. Stories of Archaeology and the Supernatural, 1895-1954*, on 10 September 2022, and it will be amazing. Authors include well-known names like M R James (haunted binoculars), Algernon Blackwood (bestial rites in Wales), Conan Doyle (Roman ghosts); names less known for this genre, such as John Buchan (a haunted medieval manor), Rose Macaulay (the death caves of the Emperor Tiberius); well-known names to the connoisseur, but presenting lesser-known stories, like Arthur Machen (prehistoric survival), Eleanor Scott (Viking possession), Margery Lawrence (Egyptian death rites); and unknown authors: the professional archaeologist Alan Wace (Macedonian treasure), and the most prolific female contributor to *Weird Tales*, Dorothy Quick (the tiles are possessed).

The editor of *British Archaeology*, Mike Pitts, he of the most recent book on Stonehenge, and editor of *British Archaeology*, as well as BBC and other TV and radio appearances, enjoyed reading an early proof, and has written a rousing endorsement for us: 'An entertaining selection that will take you closer to the past – not always in ways you might have wanted – than mere archaeology could ever achieve. The book opens up whole new areas for research.'

The book cover has already caused a lot of excitement in the Twittersphere. It uses the image created by Boris Dolgov for Dorothy Quick's story, in its original publication in a 1948 edition of the wildly popular US pulp magazine *Weird Tales*. Kate found an original copy on sale online and bought for \$20, so we could scan it at high resolution for the cover. You can preorder *Strange Relics* now, to receive your copy a month ahead of publication in early August.



We are Tiktoking

(Much of this paragraph may make no sense to many of you.) There is a newish super-hip-froody-trendy social media channel called Tiktok, and we are now on it. Or in it. We're on it because a subset of the Tiktok universe, called Booktok by its fandom, posts videos by folks enthusing madly about discoveries they've made in old books, which means anything published before they were born. All of this is delightful, and we are clambering onto that bandwagon because Booktok shifts shedloads of books to a whole new market and our books are so good we feel strongly that we ought to be in that marketplace too. Come see us!

News from the garden

The garden flowers are mostly snowdrops at the moment, small dots of them up and down the west-facing hedge, while the eastern-facing hedge population will come out in a few weeks. Worm action has moved quite a few of their bulbs into the lawn proper. The hellebores are now in their full pinkish glory at front and back, but we aspire to the fabulous display in Sydney Gardens down the hill in Bath, which must have a National Collection of hellebores in its gardens. The leaf harvest from autumn, now in its big wired container, has mysteriously reduced in height by a third. The daffodils at the top of the garden are nearly out, and green spikes are poking out of the earth, indicating that as usual the crocosmia will be rampant in the front garden. The little bronze hazel at the front has not flowered at all, unlike its yellow-flowering friend at the back, so it must have died. But the pulmonaria is showing a healthy purple crop of buds, the primroses won't be far behind.

More deer have appeared in the garden to eat whatever they can find (but not snowdrops), and the Maine Coon kitten from several doors up has taken to drinking from the pond. It's an enormous beast, fully the size of a dog, and sits elegantly on the bench admiring the racketing bird life it is too carefully poised to chase. All the birds are getting territorial, and when we have meetings in the dining-room discussions of print runs and stock figures are punctuated with remarks about whether that's a male or a female blackcap, or whether the big black birds are rooks or crows (usually rooks).

Have a warm spring,

Kate & David

Handheld Press