

The Handheld Newsletter

March 2022

Women Writing War: Fundraiser for Ukrainian refugee relief

Kate will be giving an online talk on Wednesday 30th March by Zoom to raise money for Ukrainian refugee relief. *Women Writing War* will be about the wartime writing of some of the best British women writers, some of whose work we publish. These brave, funny, perceptive, stirring authors wrote about life during wartime, under bombardment, on the home front, tackling daily life and learning to live in an utterly changed world. The talk will be at 7.30pm UK time and will be recorded, so all ticketholders will receive the link, to watch later if that time isn't convenient for you. The recording won't be posted publicly on our YouTube channel, so you will be buying an exclusive product.

Authors to be covered include Margery Allingham, Stella Benson, Marjorie Grant, Inez Holden, Margaret Kennedy, Rose Macaulay, Angela Thirkell, Ann Stafford and Lucy Sunderland. (Actually Stella Benson might be a problem: Kate has just discovered she has been a bit too ruthless in book culling, so she'll need to find a second copy of Benson's WW1 novel *Living Alone*). All proceeds will go to the UK's Disasters Emergency Committee for the Ukraine Humanitarian Appeal, and Handheld will make a donation in lieu of the VAT portion of the ticket prices. Tickets cost £8: [you can buy yours here](#), and please tell your friends.

Women Writing War

a talk from Handheld Press to raise money for Ukrainian refugee relief



About the wartime writing of Margery Allingham, Stella Benson, Marjorie Grant, Inez Holden, Margaret Kennedy, Rose Macaulay, Angela Thirkell, Ann Stafford and Lucy Sunderland.

Latchkey Ladies is here!

By the time you read this, our lovely new edition (after a century in oblivion) of Marjorie Grant's novel of single women in wartime London, *Latchkey Ladies*, will be freshly published. A lot went on beforehand, like swans paddling madly underwater, and we can reveal the fruits of our marketing efforts here.

Friendly neighbourhood video blogger Lil, of Lil's Vintage World, loved her early copy of *Latchkey Ladies* so much that she recorded her review of it with a brief reading, [which you can see here](#).

On Thursday 10 March we had a very good [review of Latchkey Ladies in the Times Literary Supplement](#), by the highly regarded novelist Gwendoline Riley: 'a novel instinct with vitality ... bustling scenes ... vivid characters, all displaced to some extent, and its bracing vignettes of snatched enjoyment or stoically eked-out wartime life'.

Then Kate made a short video (her technique, and equipment, are improving) about discovering *Latchkey Ladies* and why we published it, [which you can see here](#).

And finally (do skip this para if you've already booked), on Tuesday 15 March Kate and Sarah LeFanu, who wrote our Introduction for *Latchkey Ladies*, will be in conversation live at the Guildhall Library, London, on Tuesday 15th March, for both an in-person audience and streaming for viewers online. This will be at 2pm, and will **not** be recorded.

Our second *Latchkey Ladies* 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](#).



Marjorie Grant
Latchkey Ladies
After the war, newly independent women still risked being all their best years.



New catalogue!

We have rejuvenated our catalogue, and its purple 2022 iteration is now available: do email us if you'd like a copy. The catalogue is designed to fit in a book parcel, and we think we have about three more redesigns before we will have to move to an A5 format rather than a D6. The books just keep coming!



Sylvia and Valentine return

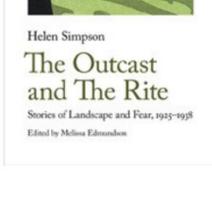
In February the *Times Literary Supplement* also published a long review article by Jan Montefiore (Chair of the Sylvia Townsend Warner Society), to discuss the new editions of STW novels from other publishers, and also [our biography of Valentine by Frances Bingham](#). You can read the article [here](#).

The [TLS Podcast](#) for 24 February also features Jan talking about *Valentine Ackland*.



Our book launch for The Outcast and The Rite

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](#).



Our two wonderful Welsh titles for November

We have two titles coming out in November, both by the same author. John Llewelyn Rhys (1911-1940) was born in Abergavenny and died in an RAF training accident just before the battle of Britain in 1940. His writing was routinely compared to Antoine de Saint-Exupéry, for his lyrical response to flight and his realistic depiction of its technology.

The Flying Shadow (1936) is a taut novel about an ex-RAF flying instructor teaching at a south coast flying club, who tries to keep his pupils from killing themselves and anyone else while they learn to control their planes made of canvas and strips of metal. *The World Owes Me A Living* (1939) is about the lives of pilots in a flying circus and their attempt to set a new long-distance flight record. *England Is My Village* (1941) is a collection of short stories about Second World War pilots and their lives before the war, assembled after Rhys's death by his widow, the novelist Jane Oliver (who co-wrote our smash best-seller *Business as Usual*).

England Is My Village won the prestigious Hawthornden Prize in 1942, of which previous winners included Grahame Greene, Evelyn Waugh, Robert Graves, James Hilton and Vita Sackville West. Yet Rhys has been completely forgotten as a novelist since then, and his books are hard to find. (Though we did stumble across a copy of *England Is My Village* in a Cornish antique shop devoted to golfing memorabilia last year.)

In 1942 Jane Oliver set up the John Llewelyn Rhys Prize in her late husband's memory: 'something to give young writers the extra chance he didn't get'. The Prize was awarded to writers until 2010.

We are publishing all three of Rhys's works in two volumes because they are stunning: unputdownable reads, powerful and evocative, and beautifully written, possibly the best literary works about aviation by a British writer.

[You can preorder both books now on our website](#), and orders will be sent in early October, well ahead of the publication date of 15th November. Kate worked with two aviation literature specialists, Luke Seaber and Dan Kilburn, both of University College London (also Kate's *alma mater*) on the introductions, and there are hopes that a book about *UCL in November*. We are also noting to arrange an event in Gwynedd, west Wales, where Rhys was buried by his father, the vicar of the parish of Arthog.



New episode of the Handheld Diaries

The [February episode of the Diaries is now available to view](#). Kate continues to hone her self-filming technique and has bought a tripod so she will be able to film directly onto her phone, which has a better camera and much better sound than her laptop. Onward!



News from the garden

Storm Eunice in the middle of February was extremely loud but didn't do any damage to the garden, mainly because Storm Dudley, two days earlier, had already stripped all the loose twigs and dangling foliage away. The house faces north on the side of a hill that takes the brunt of the weather from the west, so we were well protected. The winds were so strong that at one point in the afternoon, the clouds were tearing across the sun so fast that they created a heliograph. However it did snap the bird feeding pole in two so we have a new one now. Bird feed scattered all over the grass: the squirrels have never been so excited. And next door's fencing panels went flump, but they were barely standing up on their own in any case.

One advantage of a week of solid rain in the gales was that the ground, normally a mass of solid clay well mixed in with stones, was really soft, so the borders have been fenced off surprisingly easily. Kate had noticed that the fences were increasing their visits, and that all the plants were getting overgrazed. Now the deer are up we have iris, hyacinths, primroses and an occasional crocus moved by worms from heaven knows where. Daffodils are growing heartily in the old bonfire patch: ashes agree with them. We thought we'd killed the rhubarb because it more or less gave up fruiting in the middle of last summer, but now it's looking very healthy indeed. We found a young, thornless tree at the edge of the garden in the wood with its leaves and white five-petaled flowers out together at the same time: a cherry?

In wildlife news, Kate spotted a rat in our next-door neighbours' garden, drinking from their pond, but it's not been seen since. The birds are pairing up and competing in mating choirs in a very impressive way: robins try to outdo each other in song on the steps, all rippling throats and plumped up chests, while the female merely fluffs her feathers in an indifferent way. The bluets are nesting in the hollow apple tree again. A buzzard tried to land in the ash tree nearest the house. We think it was confused by the chainsaw nozzles from several gardens away where massive hedges are trimmed every Tuesday by appointment. It was huge.



More spring please!

Kate & David

Handheld Press