

**The Handheld Newsletter**

June 2022

**We are now five years old**

Our fifth birthday week went by very quickly, but it was so exhausting Kate is hoping for some calm weeks to catch up in. We made a short video of the highlights from the past five years, which [you can see here](#).

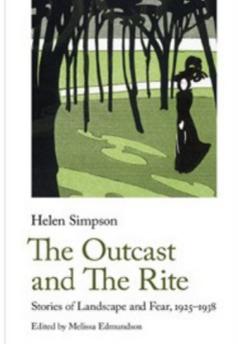
Our Three for Two offer was extremely popular, and many, many parcels of books were posted to happy customers. Kate's talk at Topping's bookshop in Bath about Handheld's first five years had the audience (mostly) enthralled, and there was a queue for questions after she'd finished. And her talk at the Clevedon Literary Festival, on Lost Authors and What To Do With Them, was well received as well. Kate will talk to anyone on most book-related subjects, so if you'd like her to talk to your book club, WI, WEA, civic society or Girl Guides, please do ask.

While Kate was talking, or attending other talks, books were flying off the table at the Handheld stall, staffed ably by Handheld daughter 1.


**More videos!**

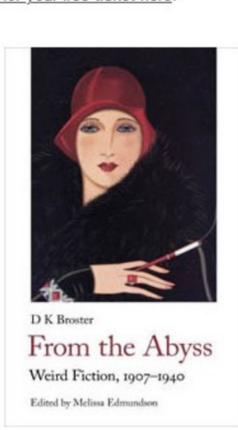
The [May Diaries video](#) is now available, in which I talk about deciding not to republish an author, more image hunting, gossiping with an agent and adding the numbers to an index. It's very interesting. Really.

And the video from our book launch back in May, for Helen de Guerry Simpson's [The Outcast and The Rite](#), is now live, so [you can watch it here](#).

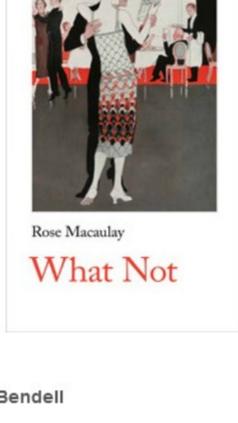

**Supernatural women**

On **13th July** Kate and Melissa Edmundson will be in conversation for Westminster Libraries with an online talk about women writers and supernatural short stories, focusing on *The Outcast and The Rite* and D K Broster's *From the Abyss*, which we'll be publishing in August. [You can register for your free ticket here](#).

On **8th August** at 7.30pm in the UK (2.30 pm EST) Kate and Melissa will launch the publication of *From the Abyss* with an online talk: 'Horror, but make it ladylike'. This too will be recorded, and you can [register for your free ticket here](#).


**Rose Macaulay is back**

But only in a podcast. Kate was interviewed by the Lost Ladies of Lit, and their podcast about Rose, *What Not* and many other lost women writers is now out, and [available to listen here](#).


**Our newest cover: Betty Bendell**

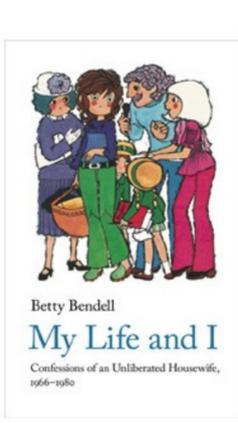
Once upon a time in the early 1970s a little girl lay on the living-room carpet reading her mother's *Good Housekeeping* and *Family Circle* magazines. Not for the recipes, or the fashion makeovers (though they were fascinating), or the top tips about food processors, but for the columns by Betty Bendell. Kate's appreciation for comic writing and delight in the continuing adventures of a hapless housewife trying to be just a little bit feminist came from Betty Bendell's writing, and in May 2023 we will be publishing the best of her work.

Betty was a former Wren who wrote columns for local magazines about family life, and in 1967 she was eventually asked to write six for *Good Housekeeping*. They didn't tell her to stop, and her last column for them was in 1980, after she had moved from the Home Counties to Canada. She was lured by the rival magazine *Family Circle* to write a monthly column for them, and at her peak of her career in the early 1970s she was held to be one of the top five women magazine writers in the UK.

When Kate began to look for Betty Bendell, an editor at GH sent her an email address for Betty's daughter Anna. Anna and her husband Richard were very pleased to hear about the project, but broke the sad news that Betty was now in hospital. A few weeks after being told about the forthcoming book of her columns, about which she was delighted, Betty died, and Kate helped Anna and Richard write Betty's obituary.

The book is now taking shape, with a cover by another forgotten woman, the artist and graphic designer Belinda Lyon, whose work you might well recognise as it's becoming very collectable. She illustrated most of Betty's columns for *Family Circle*, and it was a hard choice deciding which image to use for the cover. However we have no idea how to get in touch with Belinda, or her estate, to arrange a contract. She, like Betty, vanished into obscurity leaving a rich body of work behind her. If anyone can put us in touch, please do.

The book will be available for preorder on our website from mid-August, and will be published on 16th May 2023.


**We are now reading ...**

Kate is reading *Starlight Man: The Extraordinary Life of Algernon Blackwood*, by Mike Ashley (2001), prepping for the marketing of our March 2023 title, *The Unknown*, a collection of Blackwood's stories and essays. He is currently losing interest in the Hermetic Order of the Golden Dawn, and his intelligence work during the First World War approaches.

David is reading *River Kings: A New History of the Vikings, from Scandinavia to the Silk Road*, by Cat Jarman (2021). It starts with the discovery of a carnelian bead in an excavation near Repton on the River Trent, then our perspective on the Vikings changes again and again with successive revelations about who they were and what they did and believed.


**News from the garden**

Currently the cardoons are almost six feet tall, and it's difficult to get to the damsons to see how they're getting on. The first pink orchid was spotted while taking a break from writing this newsletter, growing safely away from the mown path beside the upper lawn, amongst swathes of interesting tall grasses, big oxeye daisies, cunning dock plants that evaded the strimmer last month and masses of buttercups. The two little oak trees are doing nicely, protected from strimmers and deer by wire netting, and we have one large fig on the fig tree. Very persistent ants are building black aphid farms on the cherries and the cardoons.

The strawberry bed is astonishing us, because it's not supposed to be there. When that bed was prepared a few years ago for broad beans and peas, we jammed in a few excess strawberry plants given to us by our gardener friend Caroline, and forgot about them because the beans hid them from view. The beans and peas came and went, and the strawberries proliferated quietly, from the plants are now filling the entire bed. We've covered them in netting and have been picking four strawberries a day, which is about right for breakfast cereal use. None of the beans have survived this year.

In March we told you about the toad. In May, too late for the newts, Kate was shrieking with excitement because she could see schools of forty or more wriggling tadpoles in the pond, from two successive hatchings. Now there are at least ten tadpoles still flicking their tails in the pond, fat and active, all with stumpy little back legs. They will probably have crawled out by the July newsletter, if they survive the newts that we presume have been eating their siblings.

Yes, we also have newts. About two days after the tadpoles arrived, Kate was lying beside the pond looking for her babies, and noticed strange swirling activity, much too big for tadpoles, in the deeper part of the pond. When she spotted eyes, she took photos, and close scrutiny confirmed that we had a pair of mating smooth newts. They probably came from the tiny pond next door. But a few days after that, after a night of heavy rain, Kate discovered another pair of much smaller smooth newts in a bucket, and put them in the pond too. We never expected our pond to be so exciting. We have bought a book about amphibians, which confirmed that our tadpoles will definitely be young toads, if they survive long enough.

