

## The Handheld Newsletter

July 2022

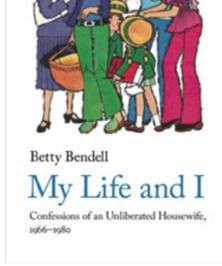
Well, where to start?

### Belinda Lyon found!

The first good news is that we've tracked down the estate of Belinda Lyon, via the work ten years ago of Stella Collins, who researched Belinda for her sister's Instagram account @ruralretro. The Collins sisters currently have the most information about Belinda available online, but couldn't give us much help when we first started digging. At least one reader of this newsletter got in touch after our plea in June for information and sent us the link to an artist's agency in south London. But as Belinda wasn't mentioned on their website, we figured that that was a dead end. But Stella persuaded the agent to get in touch with us, and they have confirmed that they do represent Belinda and we have agreed the price for the use of her art on our Betty Bendell book cover. So that's a win. Thank you to all who got in touch.

### Betty Bendell is now available

The second good news is that once we'd agreed the cover terms, we could make the book available for preorder on our website. So now [Betty Bendell is now available](#), to be published on 16th May 2023. We post the preordered copies at least a month ahead of the publication date. Kate spent a very cheerful month working on the text and Notes, often chortling out loud. Betty's writing is huge fun, and will be a delightful summer read in 2023. If you can imagine that far ahead!



### The scramble to reorganise 2023

We had a little setback for our 2023 planning, as we discovered that one of the artists we had planned to republish a book around in July 23 was not actually out of copyright at all. Protracted negotiations with their agent and estate ensued. At least one person in the chain of communication was horribly overworked, so we had plenty of time while waiting for replies to consider the options. And so we decided to abandon that project completely, for a collection of reasons.

But that meant we now had a hole in July 23. At our monthly marketing meeting the whole team unanimously agreed to move our Nov 23 book up into the July 23 vacancy, as it's such a funny, warm and enjoyable book, also highly suitable for summer reading following Betty Bendell. Our Jan 24 title was then moved up to fill the new Nov 23 hole, to ensure that 2023 was complete. (March 24 is staying put, however, so now we have a Jan 24-shaped hole, oh dear.)

All this means that we have to get the cover for Nov 23 done really, really fast, as we have had a review copy request already for our Jan 23 book, and we need the 2023 postcard with all the 2023 covers on it, like, yesterday.

So Kate is madly working on the Nov 23 cover, and we hope to reveal all the 2023 covers to you in the next newsletter.

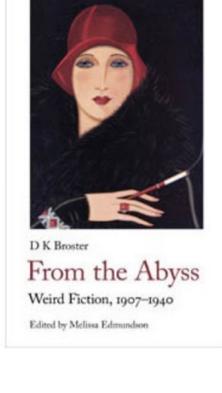
### The run up to Broster

Our marvellous collection of D K Broster's supernatural short stories is [listed in the John Sandoe catalogue](#), which we are very pleased about. John Sandoe is a distinguished bookshop on the King's Road in Chelsea, and is also an excellent place to get lost in. Its stock is [always](#) interesting.

Kate and Melissa Edmundson had an excellent time talking about women and supernatural fiction on 13 July for Westminster Libraries and an audience of around 100 people from around the world. The link to the recording will be posted in the August newsletter.

And on 8th August we'll be holding an online book launch with Melissa talking to Kate about these chilling but elegant stories. [The link for free registration is here.](#)

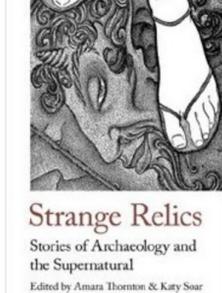
*From the Abyss* comes out on 9th August.



### The launch events for *Strange Relics*

Hard on the heels of Broster we will be publishing *Strange Relics* on 20th September. We've got two events lined up for this: the in-person book launch in London is currently in planning, and will be on Friday 16 September, 5.30-7.30pm, at Senate House, University of London. The free registration link will be posted in the August newsletter.

On Wednesday 21st September Kate, Amara and Katy will be doing an online talk for Westminster Libraries about the book and supernatural in archaeology. The link for free registration will be posted soon.



### June Diaries

The [June Handheld Diaries](#) are now out, another 9 minutes or so of Kate recapping the month at Handheld Towers. This month's highlights include fangirling at the Clevedon Literary festival and being interviewed by a Canadian journalist.

### Valentine in the *London Review of Books*

David Trotter the eminent Cambridge professor (not the former professional Australian rules footballer, in case you were heading mentally in that direction) spent five pages (five!) in the lead article in the 23 June *London Review of Books* discussing Sylvia Townsend Warner's novels, interspersed with remarks drawing on our very own Frances Bingham biography of [Valentine Ackland](#). We were proud, and pleased.

Handheld Press: Valentine Ackland

### White, unboxed

It's always exciting when a new book arrives from the printer. It's also a bit nerve-wracking, as Kate has never quite got over the stomach-sinking shock of opening a box to find that the cover had been printed wrongly. (The printer reprinted at their own expense, thank heavens.) But on the most recent unboxing occasion, as on almost all others, there was no mistake. T H White glared up at us irascibly from the cover of his biography by Sylvia Townsend Warner, which was exactly what we expected. [You can preorder White here.](#) to be published 17th January.



### We are now reading ...

Kate is barreling through one unsatisfactory book after another, but managed to read more than half of one, by the extraordinary American lesbian socialist novelist Florence Converse (1871-1967), who wrote novels about Fabian socialism and social equality. *The Children of Light* (1912), a novel about utopian settlements and trade union struggle, was fascinating because it depicts stout resistance to the values of the more familiar turn of the century Gilded Age fiction of the USA. But not, ultimately, worth actually wading through to the end.

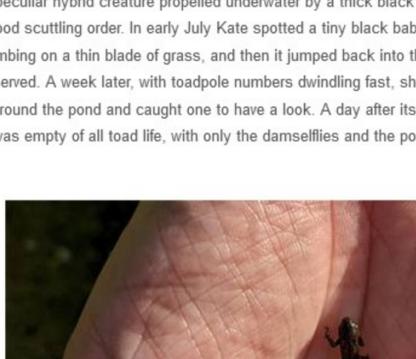
David has been reading *Death and the Penguin*, by Andrey Kurkov (1996, in an English translation by George Bird). This short novel has appeared on several reading lists for those wanting to know a bit more about Ukraine, and then turned up on our recent trip to Hay on Wye. It's a sadly, but not glumly, entertaining story of Viktor, an obituary writer, and the penguin he adopted when the zoo dispersed its flock. It is funny, as well as tragic, and about Ukraine as much as about Viktor. Though perhaps it's about where Ukraine has come from, rather than what it was like before the invasion.



### News from the garden

We had big blowy pink peonies this month, and the cardoons have reached spectacular heights, now standing well over six feet tall. Ladybirds are busy eating the blackfly covering the stems supporting each flowerhead, so that's useful. White clover has replaced buttercups on the grass, and the roses are doing nicely, now that Kate has remembered that they need feeding. Enormous spicy raspberries have taken the strawberries' place as breakfast fruit, coming from a fern plant donated by a friend in the village who had too many of them encroaching under their fences. We only have one marsh orchid in the meadow grass this year (we think we've had up to four in previous years); we also have one surviving fig. Apples are thudding to the ground (apparently this is called the June drop), so the roe deer have been coming to eat them. One young lady roe deer has taken to sleeping in the thick tall grass at the top of the garden, leaving in a hurry looking quite put out when David trudges up there first thing in the morning to hang up the laundry.

Our photos from July have been dominated by toadpoles. They have now left the pond, but we did spot them in all phases of their metamorphosing, from wriggling black dots, to muscular speedmeisters zipping round the pond in flotillas, to voracious mouths supporting stubby back legs, to a most peculiar hybrid creature propelled underwater by a thick black tail, but also with all four legs in good scuttling order. In early July Kate spotted a tiny black baby toad, sans tail, practicing its climbing on a thin blade of grass, and then it jumped back into the water, rather shy at being observed. A week later, with toadpole numbers dwindling fast, she saw four more babies scooting round the pond and caught one to have a look. A day after its return to the water the pond was empty of all toad life, with only the damselflies and the pond skaters in possession.



Do take care in the sun.

Kate & David  
Handheld Press