

The Handheld Newsletter

December 2022

Catch up on our aviation conversation

If you missed the Westminster Libraries talk by Kate and Luke Seaber of University College London, on [John Llewelyn Rhys](#) and aviation in literature in the 1930s, [you can now watch it on YouTube](#). Make a cup of tea first ...



Catch up on Jane's Country Year

As we type these words it is snowing again, and is pretty and crunchy underfoot. The view from the window reminds us so strongly of our cover for [Jane's Country Year](#), the little girl sitting on a tree stump on the side of a hill with her spaniel, looking out over the snowy farming landscape, that we thought we'd offer you a nice seasonal discount of £3.99 on this wonderful book. Valid until the end of December, [use code SNOW in our webshop](#).



Catch up on our social media

If you don't use social media, do skip this bit. If you do, or are thinking of dipping a toe in the water, here's a catch-up in which social media channels Handheld is currently flourishing.

Twitter: we have never yet experienced the kind of trouble on Twitter that has caused many people to leave. And we really like Twitter. We have about 3400 followers to entertain in this vibrant online space. It's an excellent place for us to tell a diverse and often interested public about our books. It hosts a very active book publishing and reading community which we enjoy being part of, and the limited number of characters we have to use in tweets stimulates our (Kate's) creativity with words and images. Staying on Twitter to promote civilised behaviour and values is a positive action. If the toxic elements become actively aggressive then of course we'll go elsewhere, but so far, we're staying, because Twitter is worth protecting.

Facebook: an old and comfortable slipper of a channel, with only a tenth of the reach that Twitter gives us, but it's easy to use, with only mildly irritating ways we can easily ignore. And many people use Facebook who don't want to bother with Twitter, so we keep our place warm here, because it is so relaxing, if a bit overrun with cat pictures.

YouTube: not so much of a social media channel as an old-school video rental shop down the road. Our YouTube channel holds all our videos, edited and curated by Amy.

Instagram: Instagram has been a very successful for us under Emer's care and imaginative attention, but now that she has moved to the National Gallery of Ireland (we hope they know how lucky they are!) we have drafted in Amy to take on Instagram duties as well, to see how she likes it. Instagram is all about the pictures, so our covers do nicely there: it's our shop window.

TikTok: we and Emer thought TikTok was worth exploring, and rather to our surprise we now have followers in three figures, but during the Emer-to-Amy transition we're not doing much with this. If you don't watch videos a lot then TikTok is not for you. It's like walking into a TV showroom where all the screens are showing different films and every single thing is arresting and addictive and it's very hard to tear yourself away. Some folk will run screaming for the exit, but a LOT of folk like it ...

Mastodon: Kate gained about 350 followers for Handheld's account in its first week on Mastodon. Those were heady days when Twitter's troubles encouraged the Twexit population to explore new ways to chat online without harassment, but things have calmed down a bit since then. Mastodon is social, it's about the conversations and not about checking how many followers you've gained since yesterday. It carries no adverts, which is a bit strange at first, then simply nice. It's also astonishingly polite, a feather-bed and comfy chair of a channel.

Would you like to record a story for us?

Apropos our YouTube channel, we'd like to increase our library of stories being read aloud, as these are regularly in our top five viewing figures each month. If you fancy recording yourself on your phone, reading a story or a chapter from a novel aloud (we will supply the book for you to read from, which you can of course keep), and are happy for the video to be housed on our YouTube channel, please get in touch! Only out of copyright material can be recorded, as we don't have dramatic or theatrical rights for any of the books we publish. But that still leaves a lot of stories

What Not now available in German

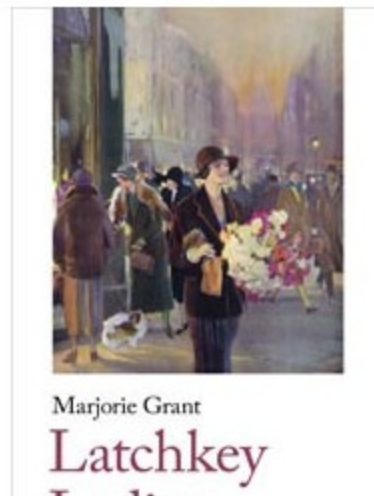
Years and years ago, in March 2019, we published a totally forgotten novel by Rose Macaulay which garnered a lot of attention because the [Guardian](#) featured it in an article the preceding December, noting that Aldous Huxley had pinched elements from it, unacknowledged, for his *Brave New World*. That story didn't quite break the internet but we had to reprint the book twice before publication, and hire some student packers for a day, such was the volume of preorders from a very interested world.

Now, [What Not](#) has appeared in German translation, and the kind publishers sent us a copy. We are very proud to have helped to bring *What Not* to the German-reading public.



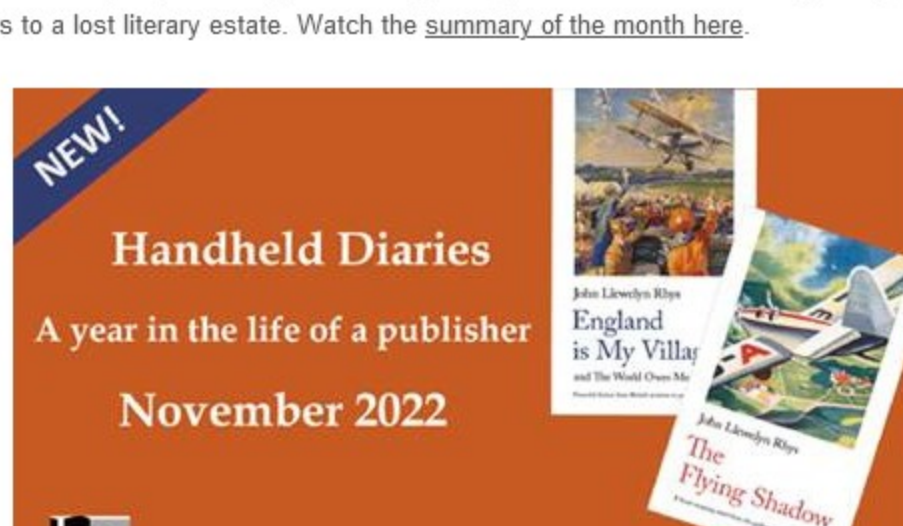
Latchkey Ladies in Canada

Way back in August Kate had a long conversation with a Canadian journalist about [Latchkey Ladies](#) and the books we publish. We'd almost given up hope of the story being published, but it arrived on 10 December, in the online Canadian magazine [Zoomer](#), and rather good it is too. There's lots there about what we publish and why, contrasted with how other publishers work who are in the same line of business.



The November Diaries are out!

In November we ploughed through the in-tray, mainly, and did a lot of sleuthing to help connect the heirs to a lost literary estate. Watch the [summary of the month here](#).



A Christmas gift from us

We're doing something a little special this Christmas, our fifth in the business. If you click on the link for the Christmas Gift [in the newsletter page in our website](#), you can download our pdf Christmas card with something nice to read.

What we've been reading this month

Kate has been giving up on one disappointing book after another, so in reaction she has begun to reread the detective novels of the immortal Ngaio Marsh, whose quality almost never fails.

[This time](#) she's reading them at random, starting with *Grave Mistake* from 1975, which according to her reading diary she last read in 2009. It's VERY good: grand houses, snarky gossip, Superintendent Alleyne at his most self-effacing, at least five male suspects of varying degrees of unpleasantness, and one female No, that's enough. Go read it.

David caught up with *Treacle Walker* by Alan Garner. It's a short, curious novel, full of expressive non-words (what is a 'word' BTW?). It's a comfortable, intriguing story about an independent, sociable and easy-going boy, Joe. A humanist story mostly populated by monsters, but with limited sense of danger.

News from the garden

'News' was nearly a typo for 'Newts', but no, no amphibians have been seen in this weather. The pond is full of leaves and frozen solid. The deer have only just begun to visit us again because all we have to offer is frozen apples and an unappetising compost heap. Just before the snow came we had a mysterious midnight visitor digging shallow holes in the lawn, much bigger than a deer's tracks or a hole that a squirrel might make, but it's not been since seen the snow came. We don't have any rabbits on this limestone hill, so we think it might have been a badger, which we have seen in the past on film from the night garden (now sadly defunct). However, we would be quite pleased if the lawn were not considered suitable for a new sett.

Bird traffic around the seed feeders is intense, and a pair of blackcaps have arrived to feed, bullying the other birds and chasing them away. The robins are worse, but only to each other, chasing each other around the lawn with much flapping of wings and sudden stabs with the beak at the other's feet. Our mealtimes and our weekly Handheld production meetings are routinely punctuated with remarks like 'Long-tail', 'Is that a female chaffinch?', 'Ooh, a jay!' and 'Goldfinch!'. Our usual visitors – the dunlocks, blackbirds, bluetits, great tits, marsh tits and coal tits – barely get a mention, except a fond comment on how sprightly they all are. We are pleased to see our resident wren, and the jackdaws, rooks and crows when they strut about the grass. We look at the fearsome beak of the woodpecker when she's on the spring, and think again about wrapping wire netting around the trunk of the apple tree in the seeds, so she can't get at the bluetits' nest again. We've had two new sightings: David finally saw the tawny owl sitting in a beech tree, brought to a low perch by the winter mist at dusk. And we've seen redwings for the first time, winter visitors from Norway feasting on our frozen apples.

We intend to take some time off soon, as all of Kate's far-flung family will be gathering in Bath for a week over Christmas: enjoy your break too.

Kate & David

Handheld Press