

## The Handheld Newsletter

April 2023

### New catalogue!

Our latest catalogue is now out and includes tempting details and thumbnail cover images of all our books up to August 2024. We'll be releasing the preorder pages for the 2024 titles in the next few months, but for now here is a brief preview:

16th January 2024: *The Living Stone* (see below)

12th March 2024: a new edition of famed British author Rosemary Sutcliffe's memoir of her childhood, *Blue Remembered Hills*, with an introduction by disability campaigner and social scientist Tom Shakespeare, discussing Sutcliffe's writing and how she lived with Still's Disease.

14th May 2024: a new anthology of the ghost stories of another much-loved British writer best known for her children's fiction, E Nesbit. *The House of Silence* will be edited by our regular and treasured contributor Melissa Edmundson.

9th July 2024: a new discovery! Sylvia Thompson's glorious novel of the 1930s, *The Gulls Fly Inland*, about a Franco-American love affair amid the growing storm clouds that preceded the Second World War. *The Gulls Fly Inland* includes an introduction by Faye Hammill, who wrote the introduction for our edition of Margaret Kennedy's *Where Stands A Winged Sentry*.

27th August 2024: another new discovery! *Tatting*, the last novel by Faith Compton Mackenzie, a respected biographer and historical novelist and the wife of Sir Compton Mackenzie, is set in the Edwardian period in which a young married couple retreat to a Cornish parish and try to navigate the social perplexities of a disappearing vicar, some quite difficult women and a large and riotous black dog.

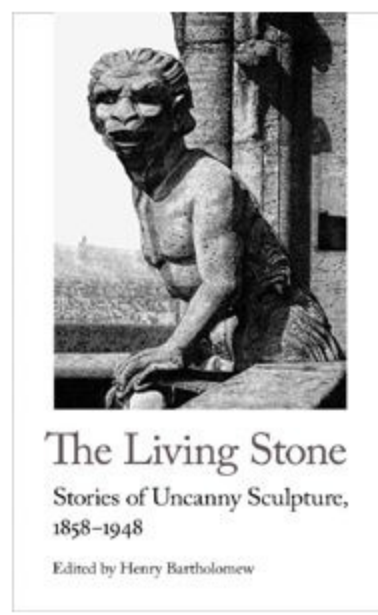
If you'd like a catalogue please [email us](#) with the address we should send it to.



### *The Living Stone*

While we were assembling our Algernon Blackwood anthology *The Unknown* (published last month and doing very nicely thank you) its editor, Henry Bartholomew, asked if we'd be interested in a collection of classic supernatural short stories about stones. Obviously, we were. Shifting boulders, standing stones, the sound of something heavy scraping its way up the stairs, the infinite possibilities of gargoyles – what could be more delightful? The final list of authors includes Eleanor Scott, H P Lovecraft, Arthur Machen and Edith Wharton, and a host of much less well-known writers publishing from 1858 to 1948. This will be a fine collection of unsettling lithic horror.

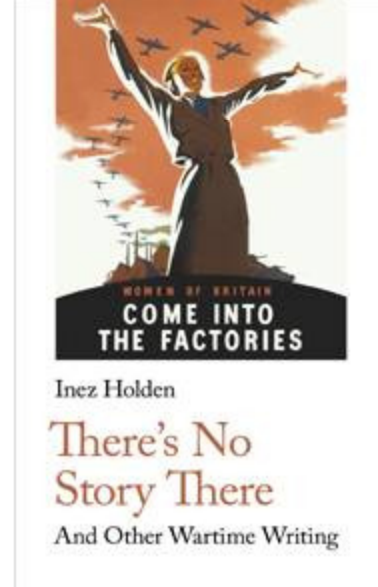
[The Living Stone is available for preorder now](#), and preordered copies will be posted in early December.



### Women in journalism: a talk for Westminster Libraries, 26th April, 5-6pm

Join Kate in conversation with journalist and author Sarah Lonsdale of City University about the novels that women journalists wrote about their working lives. From well-known favourites like Monica Dickens' *My Turn To Make the Tea* to Handheld's own Inez Holden and her wartime writing, and some new discoveries that Kate and Sarah have made, discover the records in fiction of what life was like for women in British journalism.

You can [register for this free online event here](#).



### Betty Bendell, *My Life And I*

We have a launch event arranged to celebrate the publication of Betty Bendell's delightful and unexpected columns about British domestic life in the 1970s, *My Life And I*. Cultural critic (and Handheld author) Sarah LeFanu will be in conversation with Kate, and our special guest Betty's daughter Anna, to discuss the importance of women's magazines in the late 1960s and 1970s.

We also want to hear YOUR memories. If you were a young woman in this period, with or without a family, we'd love to hear which magazines you read at the time, and which you recall with fondness and which drove you mad. Join us! Or write in so Kate can read out your recollections and perhaps ask any questions you may have.

The online book launch will be at 7.30pm on Tuesday 2nd May, and you can [register for this free event here](#).

Kate will also be talking about Betty and *My Life And I* in June, in a free online talk for the Guildhall Library London on Tuesday 20th June at 2pm. Celebrate the joys of the 1970s with the best of Betty Bendell's writing for *Good Housekeeping*, *Family Circle* and many other magazines. One of the leading women's magazine columnists of her day, Betty wrote the funniest and most perceptive accounts of her life each month, the highs and lows of family life, domestic drudgery, small town happenings and so many parties.

You will be able to register for this June event soon.



### Local Events in June

Kate will be doing two local events in June. On 10th June she and Handheld Daughter no. 1 will be running a book stall at the Clevedon Literary Festival, some miles south of Bristol, just off the M5. Kate will also be giving a talk about book covers and how to read them. You can [check the events listing here](#).

On 19th June Kate will be giving a talk to the Bath Royal Literary and Scientific Institution on how tastes in reading have changed since the 1890s. This will be illustrated with publishing arcana and the lore of copyright, as well as some very nice book covers. [Booking details will be up soon at the BRLSI website](#).

### What we've been reading this month

Kate has been reading Lucy Worsley's new biography of Agatha Christie, bought with glee in Waterstone's half-price hardback sale at Christmas. It's well researched, it's good on unpicking what happened during Agatha's famous 10-day disappearance in 1926, it's balanced and fair and makes some well-judged points about Agatha's treatment of her daughter. But Worsley's insistence on writing this biography as if it were a TV script for the Discovery Channel (byword for no-concentration viewing) is very annoying. After 1926 she does speed up and get a grip on herself (Worsley is a proper historian, after all) but her writing style is a problem.

David has been catching up with Becky Chambers and the *Psalm for the Wild-Built*. This is a gentle and warming story, set in a pleasant post-apocalyptic world, in which Sibling Dex heads into the wilderness with their tea-cart, and encounters a robot. It's science fiction but the story, as with all other Chambers' novels, is about the people.

### News from the garden

Days of glorious sunshine have swept away the memory of a sopping wet March with occasional snow dumps. The privet parts of the hedges are no longer bare twigs, the salvias are beginning to admit that they are alive, and the astrantias are showing good leaf effort. Primroses are doing very well, as are the lungworts with their pretty flowers. However the dahlias are definitely dead, utterly squishy, so if we're still here in the autumn and have planted new ones Kate must not forget to lift them. There is a new scattering of white violets on the over-mossy lawn (the squirrels are very bouncy when they scamper across this) and we have more daffodils in the actual grass than we've had before. In fact, we don't remember planting that many, or even those colour combinations, so we think some long-dormant bulbs are coming back to life. We've eaten the first rhubarb of the year (a crumble and a very good rhubarb and custard tart) and the apple trees are showing sprouts of fluffy grey-green leaf.

The deer are eating the dogwood. David took cuttings and planted them to replace some old privet further up under the fence by the upper lawn. Blacktip the fox emerged from the compost heap, marching past a roe deer who was eating in the upper lawn then paused to stare coldly back at her while having a scratch. They looked at each other for a bit, and then Blacktip marched on. That roe deer seems to think the upper lawn is her private space: we've seen her several times just lying up there, in sunshine, rain and snow, having a rest with no-one bothering her.

The sun is encouraging much water snail action on the submerged stones beside the flowering kingcups in the pond. Far too much of the lawn moss made itself at home in the water over the winter, so on a day when it wasn't raining Kate made a start at clearing it out. Once she had dumped clumps of sodden dark green sludge onto the grass at the pond's edge, we watched with interest as the inhabitants wriggled out to get back into the water. There were many long woodlice-like things that were probably dragonfly nymphs, and a lot of strange blobby bits of gel on single strands of moss. After some research Kate worked out that these were not toad spawn (no black dot, and too early), nor newt eggs (not wrapped in a grass stem) but snail eggs (laid singly in blobs on weed).

David is planning to do some engineering work on a rather desperate bit of border close to the dining room. The previous owner added a single-storey dining-room at the back, looking south and up the garden slope towards the wood. By cutting into the hill to make this extension he created two borders out of the otherwise untouched clay hillside, adding builders' rubble to the lumps of limestone already in the clay, throwing on a light covering of topsoil (he was not a gardener). David's plan is to dig out the sad woody shrubs from the border, do a bit of terracing, add a lot of decent soil, and make it a more hospitable garden bed.

Enjoy the sunshine,

Kate & David

Handheld Press