

**The Handheld Newsletter**

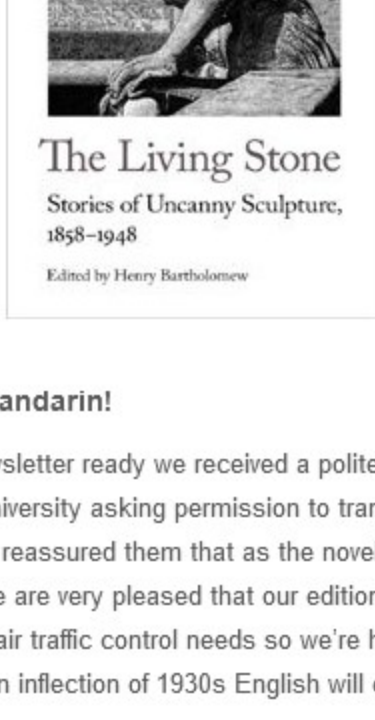
November 2023

**The Living Stone: a browsing enigma**

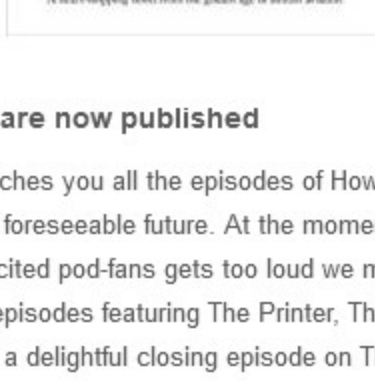
We don't know why this didn't occur to us before, but our October title, *The Living Stone*, edited by Henry Bartholomew, is proving rather difficult to search for when we look for reviews. Books about David Livingstone? A novel called *The Living Stone* by someone else? Episodes of *Dr Who*? Verified reviews (203 of them) the Living Stone Aparthotel in Athens? It's easy enough to find our book to buy online, just not very easy to find a review.

But we did have one definite result: the monthly magazine *Current Archaeology* (who were excited about our somewhat similar anthology of classic supernatural short stories, *Strange Relics*, from 2022) also like *The Living Stone* a lot.

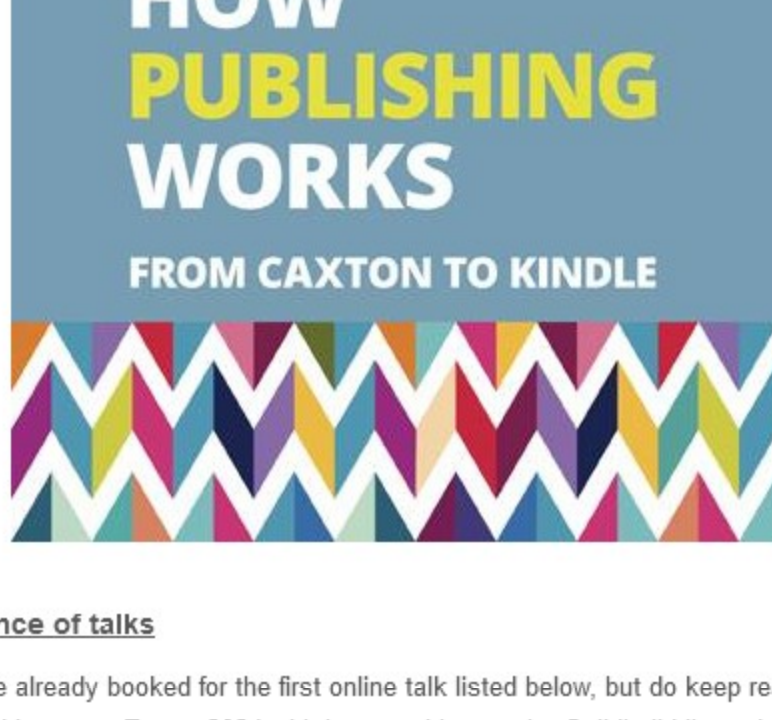
Kate and Henry had an enjoyable time talking lithic horror for the Guildhall Library, London, on *The Living Stone's* launch day, with over a hundred people attending online.


**The Flying Shadow ... in Mandarin!**

While we were getting this newsletter ready we received a polite email from a student at the Chinese Civil Aviation Flight University asking permission to translate *The Flying Shadow* as part of their thesis project. We reassured them that as the novel is out of copyright they are free to do this, and naturally we are very pleased that our edition has reached China. All pilots have to have basic English for air traffic control needs so we're hoping that a new generation of Chinese pilots speaking with an inflection of 1930s English will emerge from this endeavour.

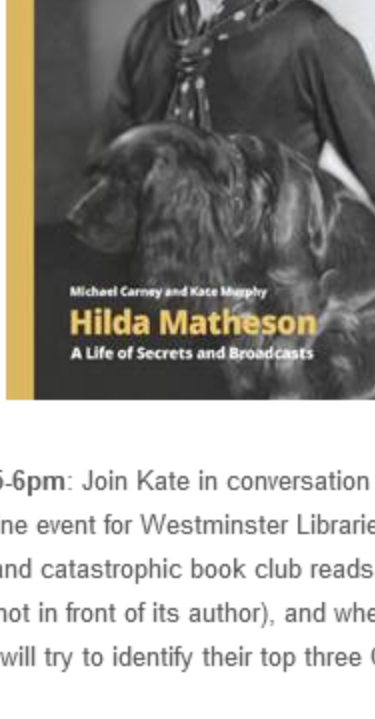

**All our podcast episodes are now published**

By the time this newsletter reaches you all the episodes of How Publishing Works will be released and browsable for the foreseeable future. At the moment we're not planning a second series, but if the clamour of excited pod-fans gets too loud we may reconsider. Since the last newsletter we've released the episodes featuring The Printer, The Distributor, The Audiobook Producer and (most jolly of all) a delightful closing episode on The Booksellers (our friends at the Corsham Bookshop).


**An abundance of talks**

You may have already booked for the first online talk listed below, but do keep reading. Kate has been booking up to Easter 2024 with her usual hosts, the Guildhall Library London and Westminster Libraries, and she's developing a new line of talks called Kate's Bookshelf. This is a thin excuse for a joyful thematic wander along the bookshelves, picking out some interesting and related titles. The links for registering for the free tickets are up yet but you can put the dates and times in your diaries now: recordings are not guaranteed.

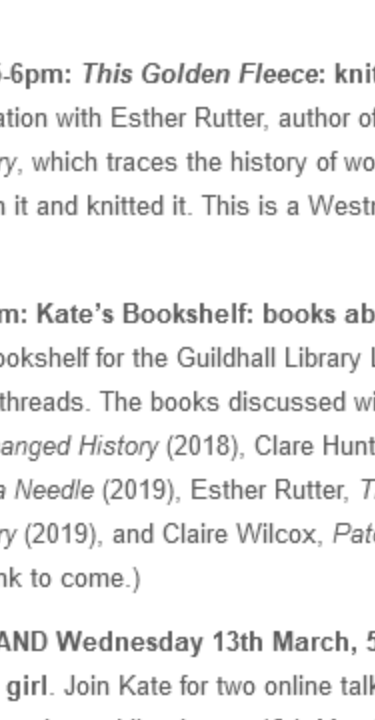
**Tuesday 28th November (7-8pm):** Neglected Books Publisher Spotlight on *Hilda Matheson*. Kate will be in conversation with Brad Bigelow of the eminent and extraordinarily knowledgeable website [Neglected Books](#), and also of Bollerhouse Press, to discuss our *Hilda Matheson*. You can register for [this free online talk here](#).



**Wednesday 6th December, 5-6pm:** Join Kate in conversation with Kate Slotover of the Book Club Review Podcast in an online event for Westminster Libraries. They'll be talking about book clubs, how to run them, great and catastrophic book club reads, basic points of etiquette when tearing a book to pieces (like, not in front of its author), and whether those questions at the back are any good. The Kates will try to identify their top three Can't Fail Book Club book choices: do tell them yours!

**Tuesday 12th December, 2-3pm:** Our changing tastes in reading. A journey along the library shelves. Join Kate for an illustrated talk for the Guildhall Library London, unpicking the mysteries of changing literary taste in twentieth-century British fiction, and hear some unfortunate truths about the publishing industry. The collapse of the three-decker novel, the rise of the cheap series, and the passion for escapism all affected what and how our grandparents and great-grandparents read for pleasure. (This is a repeat of her talk earlier this year for the Bath Royal Literary and Scientific Institution.) [Register for your free ticket here](#).

**Wednesday 17th January, 5-6pm AND Tuesday 23rd January, 2-3pm:** London ambulance volunteers in the Blitz, and *Army Without Banners*. Kate will be giving two online talks, for Westminster Libraries on 17th January, and for the Guildhall Library London on 23rd January, about Ann Stafford's 1942 novel *Army Without Banners*, to be republished by Handheld for the first time in eighty years. This autobiographical novel about the volunteer ambulance drivers in the Second World War, and the wider volunteer force in London during the Blitz is illustrated with sketches by the author that come straight from the bomb site and the night shelter. (Registration link to come.)



**Wednesday 14th February, 5-6pm:** *This Golden Fleece*: knitting and yarning with Esther Rutter. Kate will be in conversation with Esther Rutter, author of *This Golden Fleece: A Journey Through Britain's Knitted History*, which traces the history of wool in the British Isles and how we've grown it, sheared it, spun it and knitted it. This is a Westminster Libraries talk. (Registration link to come.)

**Tuesday 20th February, 2-3pm:** Kate's Bookshelf: books about textiles. Join Kate for an online excursion through her bookshelf for the Guildhall Library London. This month she will be looking at textiles, fabrics and threads. The books discussed will be: Kassia St Clair, *The Golden Thread: How Fabric Changed History* (2018), Clare Hunter, *Threads of Life: A History of the World Through the Eye of a Needle* (2019), Esther Rutter, *The Golden Fleece: A Journey Through Britain's Knitted History* (2019), and Claire Wilcox, *Patchwork: A Life Through Clothes* (2020). (Registration link to come.)

**Tuesday 12th March, 2-3pm AND Wednesday 13th March, 5-6pm:** Rosemary Sutcliffe: *Royal Navy baby and lonely girl*. Join Kate for two online talks, for the Guildhall Library London on 12th March and Westminster Libraries on 13th March, about the new Handheld Press edition of Rosemary Sutcliffe's beloved memoir of her childhood in naval dockyards, early disability, the family dogs and falling shatteringly in love. *Blue Remembered Hills* was first published forty years ago, and seventy years after Sutcliffe's most well-known novel *The Eagle of the Ninth*. As one of the most influential historical novelists in British children's literature she formed the imaginations of generations of children with her stories of Roman and Saxon Britain. Hear where it all came from. (Registration link to come.)



**Tuesday 16th April, 2-3pm:** Kate's Bookshelf: fashion histories. Join Kate for another online excursion through her bookshelf for the Guildhall Library London. This month we are looking at Kate's favourite books in her fashion history reference shelf: Catherine Horwood, *Keeping Up Appearances: Fashion and Class Between the Wars*, Claire Wilcox (ed.), *The Golden Age of Couture: Paris and London, 1947-57* (2007), Nicholas Storey, *History of Men's Fashion: What The Well-Dressed Man Is Wearing* (2008), and Linda Grant, *The Thoughtful Dresser* (2009). (Registration link to come.)

**Dressed up for Christmas**

For anyone in the environs of west Wiltshire on 27th and 28th November, Handheld will have a stall at the very swish Bowood Festive Food and Gift Fair and the Bowood Hotel, Spa and Golf Resort. We have new gift bags bought specially for the occasion, and as they arrived in a minimum order of 250 we hope very much that we will have occasion to use at least half of that quantity up. [Tickets can be bought here](#): do come and see us!

**Bowood Festive Food & Gift Fair 2023**

**Monday 27th November 4pm – 8pm**  
 £15 per ticket  
Pre-Book Evening: glass of wine & canapes included, tickets to be bought in advance

**Tuesday 28th November 9am-3pm**  
 £5 per ticket  
Special offer: buy 1 ticket get 1 free for tickets bought in advance

For further details and to buy tickets go to: <https://events.livest.jonkew-wiltshire-bobby-van-trust/bowood-festive-food-and-gift-fair-2023/>

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**Christmas Gift Guide**

We thought we'd do something a little different in the run-up to Christmas this year. Behold: the Handheld Christmas Gift Guide! We offer here suggestions for some of the difficult present-buying decisions you may have to make in the next few weeks.

**Books for men:** *The Flying Shadow* and *England is my Village*, both by J L Rhys. 1930s aviation, sensitive chaps and utterly thrilling adventures in the air with only strips of canvas between you and the ground.

**Books for awkward Goth teens:** Sylvia Townsend Warner's *Kingdoms of Elfin*, and *Of Cats and Elfins*, for stories of moody, amoral and selfish Elfin. They have no understanding of how to clean up their own rooms and expect all the housework to be done for them.

**Books for lively independent women:** Marjorie Grant's *Latchkey Ladies* and Zelda Fitzgerald's *Save Me The Waltz*. Guaranteed to produce feminist impulses.

**Books of simple joy:** Jane Oliver and Ann Stafford's *Business as Usual*, obviously, and also Betty Bendell's *My Life and I*, for glorious, heartwarming stories that will incite smiling as your default expression throughout Christmas Day.

**Books full of life:** for biographies to sink into and emerge blinking from as if from a trip to a different time and place, try Sylvia Townsend Warner's marvellous life of *I H White* (he wrote *The Sword in the Stone*), or Sarah LeFanu's memoir of writing Rose Macaulay's life, *Dreaming of Rose*. Full immersion guaranteed.

**Books for dipping into:** Rose Macaulay's *Personal Pleasures*, for essays short, long, serious, frivolous, astonishing, erudite, sentimental and heartfelt. Elephants in Bloomsbury, anyone?

**Books for laying down like wine:** you could preorder (almost) all of our 2024 titles to be sent as presents during the year. Choose from Ann Stafford's *Army Without Banners* (WW2 ambulances), Rosemary Sutcliffe's *Blue Remembered Hills* (shattering love affairs and a Navy upbringing), E Nesbit's *The House of Silence* (ghost stories) and Sylvia Thompson's *The Gulls Fly Inland* (glorious surging WW2 romance).

**Books of simple nostalgia:** Malcolm Saville's *Jane's Country Year* is best present for Christmas because it begins on the cutting, waking up to the snow. And you might also like John Buchan's *The Gap in the Curtain*, which evokes the finer things in life in the late 1920s.

**And finally .... the Christmas sale!**

To encourage you to spend wisely and often, please enjoy a Christmas discount of £2.99 on any title (even those not yet published) by using code YULE in our webshop for our Christmas Sale. P&P still applies to North American orders (sorry ...); this offer runs from 15th to 20th November precisely. Enjoy!

**What we've been reading this month**

Kate has been reading Mary Renault's *The Last of the Wine* which she doesn't seem to have actually finished before. It's not quite up there with its personal Renault top three (*The Praise Singer*, *The Mask of Apollo* and *The Persian Boy*), but it is extremely readable. It's a novel of the ending of Classical Greece's golden age in the 5th century BC, packed with painful father-son dynamics, possibly more philosophy than was needed (Socrates, Phaedo and Plato are all secondary characters), but is terrific for the history and politics of the day. And of course the gorgeously reticent masculine love story, which is what Renault does best.

David has been reading *Traitor King*, Andrew Lowrie's biography of the Duke and Duchess of Windsor. He was open-mouthed at times with what was revealed, with little sympathy for the pair of them (entitled and greedy seem to have been their basic characteristics), but this is a book he was unable to stop reading.

**News from the garden**

Well, it's wet. It has been unseasonably warm, so the bulbs are already coming up, drat them, and Kate has not yet needed to tenderly uproot the remaining dahlia corms, but their time is coming. But now it's wet, the pond is full of ash and copper beech leaves, and there are some very angry dragonfly larva in the deeps, who resented very much David's earlier attempts to muck the pond out a bit. He put them back hastily. Earlier, in the warm bit of late October, he found a deer's jawbone when he was cutting back the nettles on the edge of the wood. It had been chewed, post mortem, by a fox, and we think it was a muntjac (our elderly nature identification book has a handy illustration of the jawbones of all the mammals likely to be found on a country walk).

The roe deer have begun to lounge in the grass at the top of the garden, looking mildly put out, like eye-rolling teenagers, when David goes up there to do some mowing. One of the local badgers has been systematically excavating at the turf steps that a previous owner installed at the top of the garden, to get up to the rise, looking for garbage, so they're going to need some refortification. Kate picked the apples from the little apple tree (seven surviving from the original 12, not bad), but they have remained stridently green, as green as the apple that the Wicked Queen gave to Snow White in the Ladybird edition, so naturally this does not make that crop inviting to eat. The old apple tree gave us a few windfalls, and only one apple undamaged enough to eat. Perhaps it's reached the end of its fruitful life, or perhaps the blossom got destroyed in the spring. In previous years it's been ludicrously bountiful, so to have almost no crop at all from that tree is odd.

The main success of the autumn flowering has been the fuchsia plant at the front. It was cramped in beside the low wall by the steps leading up to the house, and for a few years it was the weaker of the three plants we put in. But now it has exploded into luridly pink and purple fleshy flowers and a strong woody trunk, so we think it's here to stay, whereas its brothers have all died off. And next spring's yellowbells are beginning to put out their flower heads, a dim dusky purple lurking in the yellow leaves around them, almost as luminous in the dusk as the red-headed sedums.

Have a good autumn.

Kate & David

Handheld Press