



**Handheld
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The Handheld Newsletter

May 2019

Handheld on YouTube

The results of our marathon filming are now posted on the new [Handheld Press YouTube channel](#). In interviews with Kate we've covered all the books up to the end of this year, and in the autumn we'll do some more for the 2020 titles. Kate managed to wear every top or dress in her wardrobe for the videos, including some that are really not for formal public speaking occasions (but we were tired by then). Our marketing manager Fiona asked the questions, which was essential: it is so much easier talking about a book when you have a question to tackle.

Our next book launch: *Blitz Writing*

We'll be launching Inez Holden's *Blitz Writing* (also the Editor's Pick at [nb magazine](#)) at [The Second Shelf](#) in London on 31 May, the day after the book will be published, also the anniversary of Inez's death.

Her literary executor Ariane Bankes will be in conversation with Kate and the literary journalist Lucy Scholes to discuss Inez and her writing, and the Second World War in women's writing.

You can see Kate [talking about the book on our video](#), and you can get [a ticket for the launch](#) if you're in London on the 31st. Otherwise, you can [order the book from our site](#), and have it delivered before publication day!



Inez Holden

Our next book after that: *Adrift in the Middle Kingdom*

Freshly arrived today, we now have several boxes of Jan Jacob Slauerhoff's *Adrift in the Middle Kingdom*, which is the first English translation of his 1934 novel *Het leven op aarde*, translated by the winner of the 2018 Vondel Prize, David McKay. This will be published on 5th August, but because our new website is on the very point of going live we don't yet have a pre-ordering page for this title (but we will next month). This remarkable adventure set in a (slightly) reimagined 1920s China takes the reader from the opium dens of Shanghai to a secret city outside the Great Wall.



Our new Sylvia Townsend Warner title: *Of Cats and Elfin*

We hear that there is a new vogue for Sylvia Townsend Warner among larger publishers, perhaps spurred by the popularity of our edition of *Kingdoms of Elfin*? New editions of her novels are soon to appear, and new editions of her short story collections are being planned by Faber, and we also have another collection to offer you. It's our companion volume to *Kingdoms of Elfin*, bringing together her remaining four Elfin stories, a story about a dryad, and the entirety of her 1940 *The Cat's Cradle Book*.

This is a long-neglected collection of stories that Sylvia published in the USA during the war, and only published in the UK in 1960. Its stories are retellings and extensions of traditional fairy stories, often featuring cats, plus an extraordinary autobiographical long story about the house that Sylvia and Valentine lived in in Norfolk, Frankfort Manor.

We're calling it *Of Cats and Elfin: Short Tales and Fantasies*, and it will be with you in early January 2020. The cover, as for *Kingdoms of Elfin*, is by Arthur Rackham, featuring a person with whom you would not wish to be caught in a wood.



Sylvia Townsend Warner

Of Cats and Elfin

Short Tales and Fantasies

Selfridges in the 1930s: *Business as Usual*

In March 2020 we'll be republishing *Business As Usual* by Jane Oliver and Ann Stafford, a remarkable find from a book sale at the Angela Thirkell Society AGM.

It's a charming epistolary novel telling the adventures of Hilary Fane, a young woman from Edinburgh who is determined to find a job in London to support herself for a year before she marries. Her fiancée does not approve, but she goes ahead and does it anyway, starting in the typing pool at 'Everyman's, a large London department store at the Marble Arch end of Oxford Street (a very thin disguise for Selfridges). Through common sense and competence she ascends to work in the Everyman's library department, and becomes an agent of change and compassion, shaking up the hidebound systems that help nobody, and finds out more about her colleagues than she could ever have imagined.

The novel is also about social conditions in London in the 1930s, and the lives of single women. It is completely absorbing and a delightful read, and we are delighted to have tracked down the authors' literary executors with the help of a Hampshire local history society.





Jane Oliver
& Ann Stafford

Business as Usual

Do you use Amazon? Can you review our books?

Using Amazon is sometimes an ethically uncertain choice, and we ourselves use it for selling our Kindle ebooks (because they dominate that market). Amazon sells our print books too, ordering them from our distributor on demand. If you've read and enjoyed any of our books, please do consider leaving a review on its page in the Kindle store, or on your local Amazon store. This makes a significant difference to our sales, and we need sales. Thank you!

May bird life on the Handheld bird-table

We have seen not only the ubiquitous blue-tits, great-tits, robins and blackbirds, but also dunnocks in abundance, sometimes marsh tits and willow tits, occasionally a goldfinch, and very excitingly both the lesser-spotted and great spotted woodpecker every day for a week. We've lost the blackcaps and the long-tailed tits, but perhaps they've just gone to Africa for their holidays.

Kate & David

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