

Burnt Rain by Roc Sandford, Hazel Press

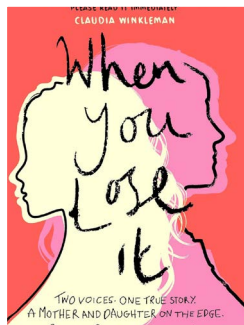
I first learned of Roc Sandford and his Hebridean island on an episode of *Stacey Dooley Sleeps Over*, and my curiosity was piqued. Here was someone living at the

edge of the world, one of the most remote places, who was driven to travel to far-away London to join Extinction Rebellion protests. The two worlds are in stark contrast, and *Burnt Rain* is a beautiful, honest and poetic exploration of this journey and the author's deep concern for our environment.

“**nothing is alright, yet everything is, and meanwhile drink the bliss**

Each chapter takes us through a new month of the year, immersing the reader in the extreme weather of the island, Gometra, and how the changing climate is impacting life there. The book completely transported me; I felt I was walking alongside Sandford in the biting wind and rain. I enjoyed the human details about daily life on the island, and, in London, the experience of being chained under a lorry in the Waterloo Bridge protest. I also like the way the author addresses our human choices. When talking about flying in the context of how this can lead to climate-related deaths, he writes: “Many people have difficulty with the concept of ‘more’ and ‘less’. It’s not nothing to kill *fewer* people, on the way to killing *none*.”

I’m heartened by the dedication and hope that Sandford and his family have for the future of our planet. The book speaks directly to the heart and makes it impossible not to reflect more deeply on our own connections to the environment. It’s a thought-provoking read for any who seek inspiration and a sense of kinship in these challenging times. One line in particular stays with me, after a poignant encounter with a minke whale: “Nothing is alright, yet everything is, and meanwhile drink the bliss.” **JH**



When You Lose It: Two Voices. One True Story. A Mother and Daughter on the Edge by Roxy and Gay Longworth, Welbeck

In this book, Roxy

and Gay Longworth give their separate accounts of how Roxy came to experience a psychotic breakdown following the dangerous mishandling of events after she sent naked images of herself to a sixth-form boy, which were then spread around the school. She was 13.

In telling their stories, each addresses the other. Their writing is powerful, and both accusatory and self-critical. Neither holds back in their assessments of the other’s actions and behaviours. They go right back to when Roxy had night terrors at a young age and the toll this took on their relationship. It’s an interesting portrayal of the way a parent–child relationship is experienced from the different standpoints, and there are moments throughout the book when both mother and daughter acknowledge the subjective lens through which each views the other. Their love and hate is intense and sometimes hard to witness. Yet their tenacity and resolve to get Roxy better is staggering and relentless. When they are at their lowest, acts of kindness by friends and strangers lift them just enough to allow them to go on. It’s a moving read.

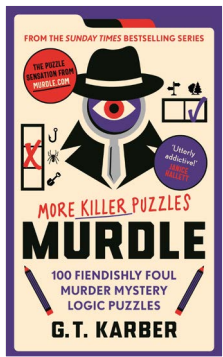
In dealing with the initial ‘incident’, the school failed to recognise the crime that was committed. It’s only when Roxy runs away and is found, in the dark, hiding under a tree in the middle of nowhere, that Gay is told by a police officer that “what [the boys] are doing is distributing illegal images of children and, as a result, face being placed on the sex offenders’ register”. Perhaps if this had been understood from the start, Roxy wouldn’t have experienced the same degree of shame and self-loathing which preceded her self-harm and psychosis.

The book is important in helping us understand the social pressures children can feel and arming us with the knowledge we need to protect them, or to support them when things go wrong. Children want to keep things from the adults who care for them. The thing I took away from the book is the need to foster openness with our children, and to withhold judgement when they trust us to hear something. **AE**



Intelligent Hands: Why Making is a Skill for Life by Charlotte Abrahams and Katy Bevan, Quickthorn

This is a beautiful and inspiring book. I love how it grounds us in what is important – practical and creative skills – but also how these skills, or just pure creativity, can be healing and inspiring. The book is a mix of information, reflections and stories, interspersed with photos. I found the stories particularly uplifting – from those who have discovered the value of a creative career, to teachers explaining how art GCSE was a salve for ‘difficult’ pupils and the lesson in which they learned to focus, engage and persevere. There is purpose in our craft – our hands are active; our brains are active but resting; we are inspired by what we make, by the touch and by the human connection. I loved the story of craftivist Sarah Corbett, who hand stitched a handkerchief with a message as a bespoke gift for her MP. Through this they developed a positive relationship, “listening to each other better where we differed”. This has stayed with me – how craft and making can create so much more than simply the product. In sharing skills, making for someone, reaching out in a creative, non-aggressive way, we can find a way to listen and collaborate. That truly is value coming from our hands, which this book inspires and celebrates in so many ways. **SF**

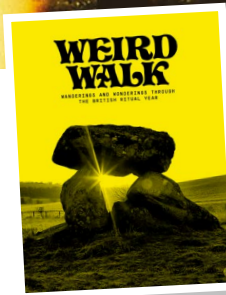
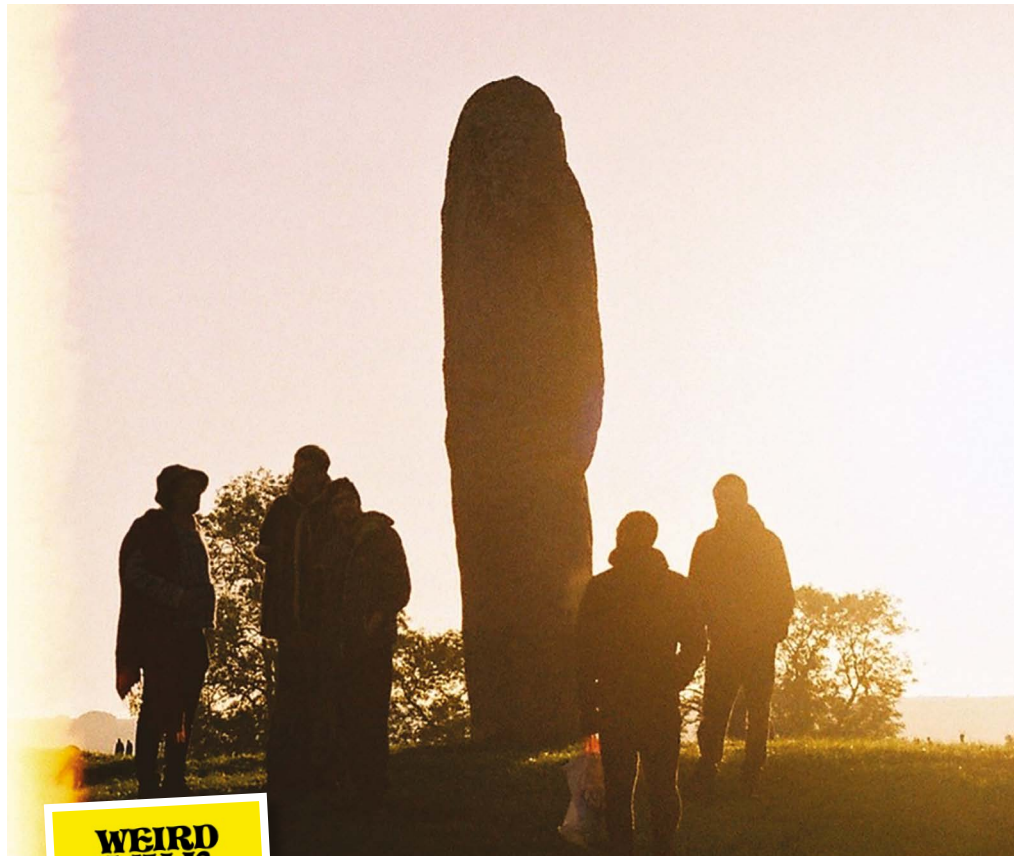


Murdle: More Killer Puzzles: 100 Fiendishly Foul Murder Mystery Logic Puzzles by G.T. Karber, Souvenir Press

I was first attracted to this book as *Murdle* rhymes with Wordle, and my day can't start before I've completed the Wordle. When I looked more closely at the book, I realised it was actually a logic puzzle book, and was instantly transported back to my childhood, when I'd spend my pocket money on puzzle books. If I was lucky, it would have one or two of these logic puzzles in it. Imagine my joy to find a whole book of them!

Step-by-step instructions were great to remind me how to complete the puzzles, as it must have been around 40 years since I'd last seen one. The extra hints are also helpful – and very much needed for the trickier levels. There are four levels of difficulty ranging from 'elementary' to 'impossible'. I'm currently struggling with the transition between level two and three, but I've roped in my husband and between us we're getting there.

I love the theme running through each puzzle, introducing new characters and telling a murderous story to link the puzzles together. This is the second book in the series, and I have already put the first one on my Christmas list. **NA**



Weird Walk: Wanderings and Wonderings Through the British Ritual Year, Watkins

I couldn't wait to get my hands on this book! Growing up, my sister and I were continually trailed around one stone circle or another by our parents, and this instilled a lifelong love of exploring our magical, ancient landscape. We're lucky in the UK to have so many places rich in history, folklore, and strange rituals to explore, and this book celebrates a great collection of them beautifully.

The content is set out according to the Wheel of the Year, with a list of 'selected observances' for each season, which I loved delving into. There are interesting write-ups for each place, which weave in modern culture, and how they fit into the wider landscape. I enjoyed learning about Thaxted, home of the Morris Ring, which hosts an annual gathering of morris sides from across the country, and to find out more about the stone circle at Avebury – somewhere I visit often. It was the filming location for the seventies TV serial *Children of the Stones*, and inspired other stories and shows

throughout the decade that I'd not heard of but look forward to exploring.

Each site has associated walking notes with some guidance for planning your ramble, and covers other locations close by that may be connected. The book includes places I've been to many times, and some I've never even heard of. I've no doubt this resource will inspire lots of future trips. Learning about the myth and magic of an ancient path or destination, for me, greatly enhances any wander. And the beautiful accompanying photographs give each place an irresistible lure.

A fantastic, weighty tome packed with ideas to help you and your own family to 'keep walking weird!' **JH**

