

A short account of Daphne du Maurier's life and works 1907-1989



Daphne as a young woman at about the time she wrote *The Loving Spirit*

Daphne du Maurier was born on 13th May 1907 at 24 Cumberland Terrace, Regents Park, London. Her father Gerald du Maurier, though largely forgotten now, was in his day a famous actor-manager, who was treated as something of a matinee idol by his adoring audiences. Daphne's mother Muriel Beaumont was an actress, and she and Gerald had met and married while both were acting in the play *The Admirable Crichton*, written by J. M. Barrie, himself a hugely successful writer and playwright and a close friend to several members of the du Maurier family.

Daphne was the middle one of three sisters, her older sister Angela also became a writer, and her younger sister Jeanne was to become an artist. The three girls grew up in the very beautiful Cannon Hall in Hampstead and enjoyed an idyllic life full of visits to the theatre, to restaurants and on holidays, while home life was a round of parties and huge luncheon gatherings at weekends with the theatrical celebrities of that era constantly within their sphere. This life suited the outgoing and confident Angela, and young Jeanne could rely on her Mother to be on hand should she become overwhelmed by all this society. But Daphne was a more solitary girl and found all the constant entertaining too much. She was very much her Father's favourite daughter, and she spent her childhood behaving as her Father would want but privately dreaming of other things.

The three sisters had a somewhat sporadic education with a variety of schools and governesses. But the greatest influence on Daphne was Maud Waddell, always known as a Tod, who encouraged the breadth of Daphne's reading, really listened to her, understood her and became a lifelong friend, even coming to Daphne's aid many years later when she needed a governess for her own three children at Menabilly.

When she was eighteen, Daphne went to a small finishing school at the Villa Camposenea, in Meudon, just outside Paris. Here she quickly found that the way to a more comfortable life was to be part of the 'elite' first class. This group was taught by Yvon Fernande, ate meals at the table with the Head Mistress and senior staff and enjoyed the seclusion of spending evenings in the 'backroom', a space reserved for the chosen few to spend time with Mlle Yvon. Much has been written about the relationship which developed between Daphne and Mlle Yvon but suffice to say that Daphne loved Yvon deeply for a while and spent time with her on holidays in Paris, and other

parts of Northern France, where Daphne began to write some of her earliest poetry and short stories.

During Daphne's late teens and very early twenties, she was enthusiastic about her writing but often distracted by offers of holidays abroad or family commitments. She loved the fact that her grandfather, the illustrator and novelist, George du Maurier was half French and, although he had died before she was born, she enjoyed hearing her father talking about him and other members of her French ancestry. It is entirely possible that with such a strong family link and the relationship with Yvon Fernande she could have made her second home in France and that her writing could have taken a very different direction under those influences. However, the turning point came when her mother decided to take the three girls on an excursion to Cornwall in search of a holiday home.

After a false start in Looe, the du Maurier party drove on to Bodinnick to cross the river on the car ferry to Fowey. They stopped at the Old Ferry Inn at Bodinnick for lunch and discovered that a former shipyard, called Swiss Cottage, was up for sale just across the road. Muriel could see the potential of this property, and its beautiful location, just by the ferry slip, nestled beside the River Fowey, and the girls were all enchanted by the possibilities of holidaying in such a property. Muriel had an eye for creating an attractive home and soon Swiss Cottage had been renamed Ferryside and transformed into a holiday home for family and friends. When Gerald holidayed at Ferryside plenty of other guests, often from the world of theatre, were invited to help to keep him entertained, but to Daphne's joy, when the holidays were over, she was often allowed to stay on at Ferryside by herself to pursue her writing. Sometimes she stayed in the house, but often she stayed just across the road with Miss Roberts, a local woman, and let herself into Ferryside each day to sit at her desk and write, in her bedroom overlooking the river.

Her early writing often included poetry, possibly as a way of getting ideas down on paper and she continued to write short stories. At about this time her Mother's brother Comyns Beaumont, known as Uncle Willie, who edited *The Bystander* magazine, agreed to publish a number of her short stories, poems and essays, which gave her a feel of what it could be like to earn a living, and a level of independence, as a writer. She was often called back home to Hampstead to join in family commitments, and she continued to visit Yvon Fernande in France but would escape back to Fowey whenever she could.

Daphne got to know many people in the surrounding area and on the river, and always waved to the crew of the clay ships as they passed Ferryside on the way to and from the docks. The great literary man of Fowey and friend of J.M. Barrie was Sir Arthur Quiller-Couch, also known as Q. He lived with his wife Louisa and their daughter Foy at a house called *The Haven* on the Esplanade in Fowey. Soon Daphne was visiting them regularly for Sunday supper and enjoyed hearing stories about the local area and talking about literature and writing with Q. Daphne and Foy became close friends, a friendship which lasted for their lifetimes.

During her early days in Fowey Daphne learned about a mansion called *Menabilly*, owned by the Rashleigh family since Tudor times but now empty because the current owner did not wish to live there and had allowed the house to fall into disrepair. The house, around the headland from Fowey, but hidden in woodland laid back behind Polridmouth beach, was indeed sad and neglected, as Daphne discovered when she trespassed on the land in an attempt to find the house. She loved it on sight and vowed that one day she would live at *Menabilly*.

One of the people who talked to Daphne and told her lots of interesting facts about the area was Harry Adams, who taught her how to sail and to fish. He was married to a member of the Slade family, who owned the shipyard in the village of Polruan, just downriver. Daphne had found the hulk

of an old ship called the Jane Slade laid up in Pont Creek with her figurehead still intact. Harry told Daphne the story of the Slade family and in particular about Jane who was a remarkable woman having owned and run the shipyard, following her husband's death, and at the same time ran one of the inns in Polruan. He showed Daphne family letters and papers, and as he did so, the glimmer of a novel began to brew in Daphne's mind.

The novel she wrote was *The Loving Spirit* (1931), a family saga crossing four generations, based on the Slade family and the shipyard, with the family in the novel becoming the Coombes. Daphne wrote quickly and then had to edit her work down to a more realistic length, but she was successful in getting William Heineman to publish her, and her first novel sold well.

Daphne's second novel was *I'll Never Be Young Again* (1932). She began it once *The Loving Spirit* had been accepted for publication, but before it had gone into print. She wrote this during a time when she was happy to be back at the family home in Hampstead because she had started a relationship with the actor, and later film director, Carol Reed. This relationship seems to have been her first serious one with a man, and they enjoyed each other's company spending as much time together as possible. This relationship concerned Daphne's father, but it seems that he was suffering from jealousy because his dearest daughter was distracted by a handsome young man and had less time to spend with him. Daphne travelled into London every day to work on her book in a room that, her father's secretary and mother's sister, Aunt Billie loaned her, in Gerald's offices in Orange Street, off Leicester Square. Daphne wrote quickly and completed the book in two months.

I'll Never Be Young Again was different in style and content to her first book. It was a contemporary novel, and she drew on her own experiences and observations to write it. It was the first of five novels that she wrote in which the narrator, in the first person, was a man, a skill that she used to great effect. The book tells the story of a young man finding himself and learning about relationships. Its narrative is divided into two distinct parts; the first part is about the young man's passionate friendship with a man a few years older than himself and the second part is about his love affair with a young woman.

One of the people to read *The Loving Spirit* was a young army officer called Frederick Browning, known to his family as Tommy and his fellow army officers as Boy. Boy sailed, and he and a friend came down to Fowey with the specific intention of finding the pretty young woman who has written such a marvellous book.

It was to be Boy's second visit to Fowey before he met Daphne and they became close straight away. Daphne proposed to Boy, and they were married in the tiny church at Lanteglos, close to Ferryside three months later. They honeymooned on Boy's boat Ygdrasil, on the Helford River, and then life took a new turn as Daphne began married life as an army officer's wife.

Daphne had always been a fairly solitary girl, happiest with her own thoughts, her writing and the outdoor life she loved to lead, so marriage and the need to consider her husband and her role as his wife did not come easily to her. She also soon discovered that her handsome military husband suffered from night terrors as a result of the horrors he had encountered in WW1 and was a complex character, very much in need of her support.

The year following their marriage was an eventful one for Daphne, as she struggled to become a good army officer's wife and her third novel *The Progress of Julius* (1933), later renamed as *Julius*, was published. The idea for it formed when Daphne was in Paris in early 1931, and she continued it on her return to Ferryside in March of the same year. The book took nine months to write and was the last of her novels to be published by Heinemann. The plot and writing style that Daphne used

for this book were different again from her first two novels and told the life story of a French Jewish man called Julius Levy. It is a chilling story of a fascinating but intrinsically evil man who achieves wealth and status by using and discarding everyone in his path. Daphne researched the history of the 1870 war between France and Prussia and the siege of Paris for the early chapters of the book, but the main relationship between Julius and his daughter was drawn from Daphne's relationship with her father.

1933 was also the year she gave birth to her first child, a little girl called Tessa. Daphne had been bought up in a household full of staff, and she too had people to carry out a lot of the work for her. In particular, she always had a nanny for her children and slightly distanced herself from their day to day care.

The following year brought sadness when Gerald died after a short illness and an operation for cancer from which he never really recovered. Very quickly after his death, Daphne felt that she needed to write his biography and set to work straight away. This book, *Gerald: A Portrait* (1934), was published by Victor Gollancz Ltd, who published all Daphne's work from then on, and it proved to be a candid view of Gerald's life. Some of Gerald's contemporaries were concerned and hoped their daughters would not be quite so frank when they died!

Daphne's next novel was *Jamaica Inn* (1936) most of which was written in Frimley, in Surrey, where Boy was based. The storyline itself brewed from an outing that had taken place some years previously when Daphne and her friend Foy Quiller-Couch went riding on Bodmin Moor. They were lost in bad weather conditions and sheltered for some time in a derelict cottage on the moor but were eventually led back to Jamaica Inn by their horses. During that stay at Jamaica Inn Daphne also met and talked to the vicar from the nearby church at Altarnun. Jamaica Inn was Daphne's most successful novel to date.

During 1936 Daphne started work on another biography, this time about her ancestors and called *The du Mauriers* (1937). From the early days of her marriage, she had found her role as the wife of a senior army officer difficult, and the role of wife to the commanding officer even more so. But when they were posted to Egypt in 1936, the heat, the different way of life and the responsibility she faced were very daunting. Daphne travelled to Egypt with little Tessa and her nanny Margaret in March 1936, and they moved into a house in Alexandria, which had an excellent housekeeper, who relieved Daphne of all domestic worries.

The letters that Daphne wrote to family and friends such as Foy Quiller-Couch indicate how unhappy she was in Egypt, but to the people that she associated with, during that time, she appeared calm and positive. Everyone knew she was a writer, and this allowed her to be a little separate from everyone else. She continued her work on *The du Mauriers* in the blistering summer heat of Egypt and by the time the book was completed, and on its way back to Victor Gollancz in England, she was quite unwell. A visit from the doctor confirmed that she was, in fact, not ill but pregnant again.

Daphne needed to get away from the heat of Egypt so a holiday in the mountains of Cyprus was arranged and the family set off in September. Information is a little sketchy as to whether Daphne had completed *The du Mauriers* before she went to Cyprus or whether she took her work with her and there is very little mention of Daphne's time in Cyprus in British biographies. However, it seems likely that she had completed that book before she went and was beginning to brew the story that was to become *Rebecca* while she was away. Certainly, *Rebecca* was developed from her longing for England and particularly the little part of Cornwall where she was happiest, and her stay in the cooler and more peaceful setting of Cyprus made her feel closer to her life in Cornwall again.



Daphne and Boy's entry in the Forest Park Hotel visitors book

The time in Cyprus was a great success and an idyllic interlude during which time Daphne could relax, read, walk and come to terms with her pregnancy, in the cool mountain air. There are several references locally to her visit including an entry in the visitors book at the Forest Park Hotel, in which Daphne and Boy said they had spent four and a half happy peaceful weeks at the hotel. There is no doubt that the holiday in Cyprus helped Daphne to cope with the remainder of her time in Egypt until she was able to return to England for the birth.

Daphne, Tessa and Margaret travelled back to the UK together, but then Daphne went down to Fowey alone for a while before returning to London for the birth of her second daughter Flavia. Boy also had leave due and was able to return to the UK for a few weeks to spend time with family and meet his new daughter. When they returned to Egypt Daphne and Boy decided that Margaret and the children should remain in England, with Boy's sister Grace acting as guardian.

Once back in Egypt, Daphne attempted to make serious inroads into her new novel. She said to Victor Gollancz that it was

... going to be about the influence of a first wife on the second, she is dead before the book opens. Little by little, I want to build up the character of the first in the mind of the second, until wife two is haunted day and night, a tragedy is looming very close and crash! bang! something happens, it's not a ghost story.

However, things did not go well, and for the first time in her career as a writer, Daphne took the first 15,000 words, tore them up and started again, although she hated going over the ground again it was the only thing to do to get the novel moving in the direction she wanted.

Although Daphne wrote part of *Rebecca* in Egypt, she completed it at Greyfriars, the house they moved into near Fleet, in Hampshire, near to where Boy had been posted. She sent the manuscript to Victor Gollancz in April 1938 and *Rebecca* was published in August. Daphne's American publisher Nelson Doubleday published the US edition in September, and the book took off as a hugely successful novel on both sides of the Atlantic. Daphne was suddenly a big earner and financially very secure, a fact that Boy accepted with his usual pragmatism as he knew that as a Lieutenant-Colonel in the Grenadier Guards he could never earn the sort of money that his wife could. Boy Browning had much more worrying things to think about than money, he could see the war clouds gathering

again, and after his experiences, in the First World War, he was deeply concerned about what was about to happen next in the world.

Of course, the Second World War did begin within less than a year, and the lives of everyone, not only the du Maurier Browning family, would never be the same again. Boy became busier and busier and worked harder and longer hours until he was rarely at home. The decision was made that Daphne, Margaret, Tessa and Flavia should go and stay as paying guests with a couple called the Puxleys in their beautiful Lutyens house in Hertfordshire. Here they were considered to be safely away from London but still close enough for Boy to visit should he have a spare moment.

Daphne had become involved with the Moral Re-Armament Group and, through them, made her own small contribution to the war effort by writing a collection of short stories each of which had a theme which would encourage people to be brave and keep going no matter how bad things seemed. The stories were published in local newspapers up and down the country and were collected into a small book called *Come Wind, Come Weather* (1940), which was sold to raise money for the Soldiers', Sailors' and Airmen's Families Association. Editions of the book were sold in several allied countries including India, Canada and the USA.

Christopher Puxley, Daphne's host, was unable to join up for military service because of health reasons and he proved to be a charming and relaxed companion, very different to Boy, who was by then heavily weighed down by the amount of work and responsibility with which he had to cope. Paddy, Christopher's wife, worked for the Red Cross, the Women's Voluntary Service, and was also looking after two evacuee children. Tessa and Flavia adored her, and everything seemed very congenial. During her stay with the Puxleys Daphne, who was expecting her third child, moved out for the birth and then returned when her new little son Christian (known as Kits) was a few weeks old. During this time Daphne was also writing her next novel *Frenchman's Creek* (1941).

Frenchman's Creek has been variously described as an adventure story and a romance with a capital "R". Daphne intended to write something to lighten the mood during the horrors of wartime and to create a narrative that was purely escapist and frivolous. She described it as the only romantic story that she ever wrote, but she was never particularly happy with it. When it was published, it received non-committal reviews, and yet, even though initially it lacked the success of *Rebecca*, it went on to be one of Daphne du Maurier's most successful books, probably largely because of its Cornish setting.

Meanwhile, Daphne was developing a romantic attachment for Christopher Puxley, a fact which was observed by Margaret, but not initially by Paddy. When Paddy did realise what was going on Daphne, Margaret and the children had to make a hasty exit, and they all fled down to Fowey. Ferryside had become a permanent home for Daphne's mother and two sisters after Gerald had died, but it had been seconded by the US Navy, who were in Fowey preparing for D-Day, so the du Maurier family were living temporarily in a house on the Esplanade in Fowey. Daphne rented a house at Readymoney Beach just a short walk from her mother's house and set up home there with Margaret, the children and what-ever other help she could muster.

While there Daphne embarked on another novel *Hungry Hill* (1943), which was a big family saga set in Ireland and based on Christopher Puxley's copper mining ancestors. She also started to work on a plan to gain agreement from Dr Rashleigh, the owner of Menabilly, to rent the property from him. Amazingly, she gained permission to rent Menabilly, was given a twenty-year lease and managed to employ people to work on the house and make it habitable. She moved herself, Margaret and the children in just before Christmas 1943 and employed several young girls from the local villages to help her run this vast house.

During the time it took to restore the house to a reasonable standard Daphne also wrote a play called *The Years Between* (1945). She had already dramatised *Rebecca*, which had been a success on the London stage, and her second play proved to be just as successful. It was the story of the wife of Colonel Wentworth, a Conservative MP, who is reported missing presumed dead during the war. His wife goes on to build a life for herself, being appointed MP in his place and finding a new love, only to discover, just as the war is ending, that her husband is not dead after all.

The first novel that Daphne wrote at Menabilly was *The King's General* (1946), a historical novel set during the English Civil War in the West Country and narrated by Honor Harris, one of Daphne's best-drawn female characters. She worked hard on historical research for this book, giving it a strong basis of fact while creating an exciting tale about Richard Grenville, who really was the King's General in the West, and members of the Rashleigh family living at Menabilly during the time of the Civil War. Daphne dedicated the novel to Boy with the words

To My Husband, also a general but, I trust, a more discreet one.

After the war Boy worked as Military Secretary at the Ministry of War in London for a short while before being appointed Comptroller and Treasurer to Her Royal Highness Princess Elizabeth and her new husband Prince Philip. Later, when King George VI died, and Princess Elizabeth became Queen, Boy's role within the Royal Family changed, and he was appointed Treasurer to the household of the Duke of Edinburgh, with offices in Buckingham Palace. At no time did Daphne seriously consider the possibility of moving into London to be with Boy, so he stayed in their London flat during the week and travelled home to Menabilly, by train, on as many weekends as was possible.

Meanwhile, problems were brewing for Daphne in the USA. Before the war, there had been some claim that she had plagiarised *Rebecca*, but now a court case was pending, and she needed to travel to New York to give evidence. The literary executors of a woman called Edwina MacDonald sued Daphne du Maurier, her US publisher Doubleday Doran & Co. and Selznick International Pictures Inc, who had made the film of *Rebecca*, starring Lawrence Olivier and Joan Fontaine. They claimed that the story of *Rebecca* had been plagiarised from a short story called *I Planned to Murder my Husband*, which had later been developed into a novel called *Blind Windows*. Daphne went through numerous days of questioning in the New York court, but the case could not be proven, and she was able to return home. However, it could not be said that she returned home unscathed because, during her time in New York, she had stayed with the Doubledays and developed feelings for her publisher's wife, Ellen.

Ellen never reciprocated Daphne's feelings, but they did maintain a long and deep friendship, which involved a vast correspondence over many years, visits to one another and holidays spent together. Once Daphne was back at Menabilly, she wrote the play *September Tide* (1949), which was basically about her feelings for Ellen, heavily disguised in a relationship between a mother and her son-in-law. The mother figure, Stella, was played by Gertrude Laurence, and the play was another great success. Daphne is seldom thought of as a playwright, but the three plays that she wrote were all West End successes. Gertrude was another woman that Daphne had strong feelings for, oddly in some ways because Daphne's father had enjoyed a relationship with her when she had been younger. Certainly, Daphne was devastated when Gertrude died after a short illness in 1952 aged only 54.

With thoughts of *September Tide* still in her head, Daphne wrote her next novel *The Parasites* (1949) about a theatrical family. This book was the first novel that she wrote in her new writing hut in the grounds of Menabilly, situated a little way from the house and with a view of the Gribbin Daymark and the sea from the hut's window. It was also the only novel that she wrote without planning the whole story into its proposed chapters. The story tells of three adult siblings going back over their

lives, and each sibling is a different facet of Daphne's personality. It is a very overlooked novel and is extremely autobiographical, so tells us a lot about Daphne.

Daphne's next project was to edit a book about her grandfather. Her cousin Peter, one of the five boys about whom the story of *Peter Pan* had been written, was a publisher. Daphne and Peter decided to collaborate on a book based on the letters their grandfather wrote between 1860 and 1867, the time when he was a young man establishing himself as an illustrator in London and his earliest years of marriage to Emma. The resulting book, called *The Young George du Maurier: A Selection of his Letters 1860-67*, was published in 1951, as was her next novel *My Cousin Rachel*. This book was another historical novel, based in part at Menabilly and tells the story of a man and his young ward who live in bachelor bliss until the elder of the two becomes ill and needs to travel abroad. While away, he meets and marries a distant cousin called Rachel and subsequently dies. Philip, the young ward, then goes through a range of emotions about Rachel, who eventually comes to live with him on the Cornish estate. The book was written so cleverly that you can never be sure if Rachel is good or evil, and indeed Daphne said that she could not decide the answer to that question either.

In 1952 Daphne returned to short stories and published a collection called *The Apple Tree*, which included *The Birds*, one of her most famous short stories, because of the Hitchcock film. Her next novel was *Mary Anne* (1954), based on the true story of Daphne's great, great, great grandmother, who had been a courtesan and who had enjoyed a relationship with the Prince Regent's brother Frederick Duke of York.

While Daphne had embarked on several relationships, with Christopher Puxley, Ellen and Gertrude, it cannot be entirely surprising that Boy, up there in London working hard, was also coming in contact with people to whom he was attracted. Indeed, when he was back at Menabilly, he had a fling with a local girl that he went sailing with and who Daphne, rather cruelly, nicknamed Sixpence, but she was largely oblivious to what was going on. In 1956 Daphne started work on a new novel called *The Scapegoat* (1957). Set mainly in France, this is the story of two men who meet briefly and are identical to one another. A set of circumstances conspire against one of them who then needs to live the other man's life. It sounds as if readers would need to suspend belief quite substantially, but the novel worked and made a very successful book and film.

Sadly, trouble was just around the corner. As Daphne prepared for their 25th wedding anniversary Boy collapsed in London with a nervous breakdown. The party was cancelled, and Daphne dashed off to the nursing home in London to see him. Poor, foolish, Boy had been having an affair with Sixpence, but also with a woman in London who Daphne called Covent Garden and possibly with one or two other women. His guilt, the pressure of work, a drinking problem, the exhaustion of travelling from London to Cornwall and back week on week and the approaching Silver Wedding had culminated in a total breakdown. He was a shattered wreck and the sight of him and the guilt that Daphne also held inside herself almost drove her to a breakdown too. But a determination to get things right again and to regain each other's trust and love made them both fight to get back to a level of equilibrium, and to a large extent, they did succeed. Boy had only just gone back to work at Buckingham Palace when Daphne's mother died, a further blow, which affected her much more than she expected it would.

Daphne realised that she needed to spend more time in London with Boy and made a huge effort to live a life that put him first and her writing second. At this time, she wrote a collection of short stories called *The Breaking Point* (1959) and felt that they helped her to cope with her feeling of hopelessness as she literally wrote herself out of her own breaking point.

The time had come for Boy to retire and move home full time to Menabilly. Daphne could not imagine what life would be like with Boy at home all the time after so many years of leading very separate lives. She decided that her next book should be a biography of Branwell Bronte, the overlooked brother of Charlotte, Emily and Anne. Daphne felt that to carry out research and write biography rather than more fiction was a more realistic approach for her at a time when Boy still needed her support emotionally. During the writing of *The Infernal World of Branwell Bronte* (1960), Daphne discovered that Winifred Gerin, a recognised biographer, with a book about Anne Bronte already under her belt, was also writing a book about Branwell. Daphne carried on, with great trepidation, but her book was published first and did at least as well as she hoped. In fact, while Daphne's biography about Branwell Bronte is still in print, Winifred Gerin's book has been out of print for years.

Foy Quiller-Couch came up with the next idea for a book. Her father had started a novel called *Castle Dor* (1962) and put it away in a drawer unfinished. It was the retelling of the local legend of Tristan and Iseult set against a Victorian background with the action taking place in Fowey, along the river and in the countryside around the site of Castle Dor itself. Daphne was a little unsure about completing something of the great literary man's work, but with encouragement, for Boy and Foy, she agreed. Boy and Daphne walked together in the footsteps of the book and soaked up the atmosphere as she began to write. She took over the story at chapter 17, but she did also adjust some of the earlier wording so that the story flowed seamlessly from one writer to the next.

The next book Daphne wrote was *The Glassblowers* (1963), a fictional account of her French ancestors, before and during the French revolution. Her grandfather George had believed that his family was descended from aristocracy, but Daphne's research proved that her ancestors' name was Busson and they were a family of master glassblowers who took the name du Maurier from a farm called Le Maurier where some of the family of glass-blowers had lived for a time.

The idea for Daphne's next book *The Flight of the Falcon* (1965) came after Daphne had visited Urbino in Italy with her son Kits and had also been on holiday in Italy with Tessa. It is a contemporary novel, gripping and suspenseful but fast-moving.

For a while there had been rumblings about the lease on Menabilly and Daphne and Boy's future in the house, and then Dr Rashleigh died, and the heir to the estate decided that he wanted to live in his house, so the time drew near when leaving Menabilly would become a reality. After much discussion, it was agreed that Daphne and Boy would move to Kilmarth, the dower house to Menabilly, a beautiful, but smaller house less than a mile away with views over St Austell Bay. The negotiations were slow and then very sadly, Esther, Daphne's housekeeper, lost her husband to a sudden illness. She was only young with a small son to care for, and Daphne felt a deep responsibility and sadness for her. Then Boy also died, and Daphne was suddenly completely lost in grief. Their marriage had endured many ups and downs, but without him, she was devastated.

As Daphne began to recover from the loss of her husband, her son Kits encouraged her to consider writing another book to help her to regain her writing routine. They decided to produce a book about Cornwall together and called it *Vanishing Cornwall* (1967). The subject matter looked at the many aspects of Cornwall, its history, industry, myths and legends, which Daphne believed were vanishing under the invasion of tourism. Daphne and Kits drove around Cornwall together, while he took the photographs to go with the text that she would write. The book was a great success, has been reproduced in updated editions in 1981 and again in 2007 and is considered to be an important book about Cornwall.

Plans for the move to Kilmarth edged forward slowly. Daphne was insistent that the house must be completely ready before she moved in and that a home would be made for Esther and her son too so that they could all move from Menabilly together. Daphne spent a lot of time at Kilmarth, soaking up the atmosphere and getting used to the idea of living there. She discovered that a man called Professor Singer had lived in the house and in a room in the basement she found his laboratory with jars containing embryos. She also found out that the origins of the house were much earlier than Menabilly dating back to medieval times. A new novel began to brew in Daphne's mind, taking in the theme of travel back into a medieval past with the aid of a drug, and soon she was writing *The House on the Strand* (1969). *The House on the Strand* was published not long before Daphne made the move to Kilmarth and in the long term has become one of her most popular novels among Daphne's followers.

In June 1969, the month that Daphne moved to Kilmarth she was included in the June Honours List and awarded a DBE, she was secretly thrilled but also embarrassed and said Dame Daphne made her sound like someone out of a pantomime.

Daphne had loved Menabilly more than anything else. Her children tell stories of her hugging the walls, and she was devastated when she had to leave but, in the fullness of time, she became friends with Veronica Rashleigh, who now lived at Menabilly with her husband, and she went back often to visit Veronica and to walk in the grounds of her former home. Meanwhile, she grew a fondness for Kilmarth that she had not expected, and wrote her last novel there. *Rule Britannia* (1972) is a story about a time when Britain leaves the European confederation and joins in a new alliance with the USA. Far from it being an alliance, it soon becomes clear that America is assuming a dominant role and attempts to subdue the country. However, the Cornish population rebels when American Marines land in Par Bay. This book has recently become extremely popular as it resonates a situation which has become all too familiar to people in Britain.

After *Rule Britannia*, there was to be no more new fiction, although several compilations of short stories were published. Instead, Daphne turned her hand to memoir and biography. She wrote *Golden Lads* (1975) about Anthony and Francis Bacon and their friends, having researched them very thoroughly. Daphne's biography tells of how the Bacon brothers were linked to Queen Elizabeth I through their association with the Earl of Essex. Anthony acted as an agent in France, collecting intelligence information for the Earl. Francis was compelled by the Queen to charge the Earl of Essex with treason, leading to his beheading on 25th February 1601. Anthony died soon after, but Francis lived on and became Lord Chancellor and Lord Keeper, going on to win fame as a writer and philosopher. Daphne enjoyed the research, and the writing of this historical biography so decided to go on and write a further volume *The Winding Stair* (1976) which continued the story of Francis Bacon's life and work.

To celebrate Daphne's 70th year, Victor Gollancz Ltd. published a volume of autobiography called *Growing Pains: The Shaping of a Writer* (1977). Victor had died in 1967, but his daughter Livia took over ownership of the publishing house and continued to work with Daphne. Using the diaries that she had written throughout her childhood and right up until her marriage Daphne pieced together an interesting account of her family life, friendships, and how her writing had developed in that time. Her next book was a memoir called *The Rebecca Notebook and Other Memories* (1981), in which she included the original notes from when she planned out the storyline of Rebecca and articles on subjects that had been important to her during her life including her views on romantic love, success, death and widowhood. This collection, though not an autobiography as such tells us a lot about Daphne, her strength of character, the things that interested her and her sense of humour.



Daphne du Maurier's 70th birthday portrait

In 1987, to celebrate Daphne's 80th birthday, Victor Gollancz Ltd published *Classics of the Macabre*, a collection of her finest short stories beautifully illustrated by Michael Foreman. There was to be no more new material, Daphne was elderly now, and her wonderful brain no longer inspired her to write. This was a tragedy for Daphne, her whole life had been built around her writing for as long as she could remember, and without her work, she was lost. Gradually she withdrew from her friends and indeed life itself, becoming frail and thin and needing lots of care, but she remained at Kilmarth, the home she had grown to love, with its views over St Austell Bay until on 16th April 1987 she died.

In the thirty years since Daphne's death, her fame had increased, and peoples love of her writing has grown from strength to strength. Her books are as modern and relevant today as when they were written. Despite being thought of as 'a romantic novelist loved by housewives' during her lifetime, a label that was always entirely inaccurate, she is now recognised as a vitally important writer in the history of British literature and is studied by students at school and university as well as by academics. Much of her work has been made into film or television drama, and any news item about her or relating to her work is pounced on enthusiastically by her many followers. She is a great writer and recognition in her work continues to grow.

Suggested further reading:

Myself When Young: The Shaping of a Writer by Daphne du Maurier, Virago 2004

The Rebecca Notebook and Other Memories by Daphne du Maurier, Virago 2005

Daphne: A Portrait of Daphne du Maurier by Judith Cook, Bantam Press 1991

Daphne du Maurier by Margaret Forster, Arrow Books 1994

Daphne du Maurier and her Sisters: The Hidden Lives of Piffy, Bird and Bing by Jane Dunn, HarperCollins Publishers 2013

Manderley Forever: The Life of Daphne du Maurier by Tatiana de Rosnay, Allen & Unwin 2017

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