

Fact-file: Daphne du Maurier: Her life and work

Her Life



Dame Daphne du Maurier (1907-1989) was born in London on 13 May 1907, the middle daughter of her father, Gerald du Maurier (actor-manager, 1873-1934) and mother, Muriel, née Beaumont (actress, 1881-1957). Her grandfather, George du Maurier (1834-1896), was

the renowned Victorian novelist and illustrator, in whose footsteps her father hoped she would follow.

The Loving Spirit (1931), Daphne du Maurier's first novel, was written in the winter of 1929-30 at Ferryside, Bodinnick by Fowey, which was the family's country house in Cornwall. Whilst staying there, she met 'Tommy', or 'Boy Browning' (Major Frederick Arthur Montague Browning, 1896-1965) who sailed in to the Fowey Estuary looking for the famous young writer. They married in 1932 and had three children: Tessa (b. 1933), Flavia (b. 1937) and Christian (b. 1940).

Daphne du Maurier tried to play the part of the army wife, accompanying her husband to Egypt, but she longed for Cornwall and wrote *Rebecca* (1938), her best-known novel, whilst homesick for the county she made her own. In 1943, she took the lease of Menabilly, the Rashleigh family home that was the model for Manderley. Du Maurier lived and wrote at Menabilly for over 25 years, but after her husband's death in 1965 the Rashleighs would not renew the lease. In 1969, she moved to Kilmarth, Menabilly's dower house, where she was to spend her last years, writing two more novels and a slim volume of autobiography.

Daphne du Maurier died at her home in Cornwall on 19 April 1989.

Source: Margaret Forster, 'Du Maurier, Dame Daphne (1907-1989), rev., *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography* (Oxford University Press, 2004) and Margaret Forster, *Daphne du Maurier* (1993).



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Her Work

Selected books

- The Loving Spirit* (1931)
The Progress of Julius (later *Julius*) (1933)
Gerald: A Portrait (1934)
Jamaica Inn (1936)
The du Mauriers (1937)
Rebecca (1938)
Frenchman's Creek (1941)
The King's General (1946)
The Parasites (1949)
My Cousin Rachel (1951)
The Apple Tree (later *The Birds and Other Stories*) (1952)
Mary Anne (1954)
The Scapegoat (1957)
The Breaking Point (later *The Blue Lenses*) (1959)
The Infernal World of Branwell Brontë (1960)
The Glass-Blowers (1963)
Vanishing Cornwall (1967)
The House on the Strand (1969)
Not After Midnight (later *Don't Look Now*) (1971)
Growing Pains: The Shaping of a Writer (later *Myself When Young*) (1977)

Source: For further reading and bibliography of Daphne du Maurier's books, as well as films, biographies and critical works, see *The Daphne du Maurier Companion*, edited by Helen Taylor (Virago, 2007).

Her Archive

The University of Exeter holds the largest publicly accessible archive of literary papers by Daphne du Maurier, through the continuing generosity of her estate, The Chichester Partnership.

The Archive includes her manuscripts, typescripts, research papers and correspondence, as well as material representing her sister Angela du Maurier, her father Gerald du Maurier, her aunt Sylvia Llewelyn Davies, and Daphne's grandfather, George du Maurier.

The archive is regularly used for research, teaching and events celebrating the life and work of Daphne du Maurier. If you want to learn more, contact Special Collections:

Email: libspc@exeter.ac.uk

Tel: 01392 262096

www.library.exeter.ac.uk/special/

Source: 'Who I am: Adventures in the du Maurier Family Archive' by Charlotte Berry and Jessica Gardner, in *The Daphne du Maurier Companion*, edited by Helen Taylor (Virago, 2007).

