

# COUNTRY LIVING

MAY 1997 £2.50

## *Timeless traditions*

Invitation to tea in the orchard



**KITCHEN SPECIAL**  
Create, update, renovate

**CORNISH ROMANCE**  
The family home  
of Daphne du Maurier

**FARMHOUSE FARE**  
Choice cheeses, healing  
herbs & country notes  
from Marco Pierre White

**ESCAPE TO THE  
DERBYSHIRE DALES**  
Streams, spas  
& stately homes





**Main picture** Kits and Olive with dachshunds on their bedroom balcony overlooking Fowey estuary. External paintwork has been restored to the original Cornish blue.

**Right** The "drawing room" of the Long Room, the former boathouse with a stable door. A huge mirror reflects a portrait of Daphne du Maurier.

**Below** Writing runs in the family: a novel by Daphne's sister Angela



# The domain of DU MAURIER



Daphne du Maurier's love affair with Cornwall began with a house on the creek at Fowey. Seventy years on, her son lives there, in an atmosphere redolent of her memory

"Swiss Cottage was bought and renamed Ferryside. Throughout the winter and spring it was put in the hands of decorators and builders and on May 14th, 1927, the day after my 20th birthday, my mother and sister [Angela] who had come with me to see the transformation, returned to London, leaving me on my own for the first time in my life. Oh! the happiness of those first weeks! The thrill of crossing backwards and forwards on the ferry never palled."

Daphne du Maurier's words could easily be those of her 24-year-old granddaughter Grace nearly 70 years later when, in October 1993, she and her family moved in to Ferryside at Bodinnick in Cornwall: "I love it. I was overawed when my parents told me that we were actually going to live here." Christian ("Kits") Browning, Daphne's son and his wife Olive bought Ferryside from Angela du Maurier, Daphne's elder sister, who had lived there since 1957.

The Fowey estuary is unique in that the deep draught of the river allows huge vessels to

Text by Olivia Temple/Photographs by James Merrell  
Styling by Hester Page







The dining area of the Long Room, presided over by portraits of Daphne du Maurier's father, Gerald, and his mother Emma (just visible). The dining table belonged to Daphne's grandfather, George





**Main picture** Daphne du Maurier's writing desk, at which she wrote her first novel. Beside it is the highchair once used by her son Kits.

**Right** View across to Ferryside from the Fowey ferry landing.

**Below** Leather-bound first editions beside a photograph of the author.

pass to and from the jetties that unloaded china clay upstream. Originally a boatyard with a slipway leading straight into the main body of the house and storage rooms above, with a flat on the top floor, Ferryside is very much part of the estuary, perched beside the slipway at Bodinnick.

"We had very good advice from the surveyors concerning the structure and virtual rebuilding of the house," Kits explains. "They advised a new roof, extensive anti-damp work, new plumbing and heating and complete electrical rewiring." Olive well remembers first going to the house 35 years ago: "I dreamt of living here one day and started a file of ideas that I thought might work."

The boathouse is now a splendid family drawing room referred to as the Long Room, with a dining room at one end. "At Menabilly where I was brought up, there was a long corridor in the old part of the house which we called the King's Road because it was full of furniture and pictures. As and when they needed things, the family chose pieces of furniture from there. Some of it had originally come from Cannon Hall in Hampstead, home of Gerald and Muriel du Maurier, Daphne's parents," Kits explains. On one side of the oak staircase the wall has been restored to provide a white backdrop for a gallery of drawings by Daphne's grandfather, the illustrator George du Maurier. A bronze bust of Gerald gazes out from an alcove. The colours throughout are predominantly blue and white, "so that everything can be moved from one room to another without looking wrong," Olive says.

First editions of all Daphne du Maurier's

books bound in leather cleverly mask the back of a sofa at one end of the sitting room; in the corner is her writing desk at which she wrote her first novel, *The Loving Spirit*. Above an 18th-century banded lowboy is a portrait of Daphne as a girl by Frederick Whiting.

Grace Browning bears an uncanny resemblance to her grandmother and there are photographs of her and her three brothers, all taken by Kits.

Upstairs are three bedrooms and bathrooms, the cliff wall jutting out on one side

like the mouth of a cave. The Brownings' bedroom is sunny and light with a balcony smothered with geraniums and a wooden table and chairs ready for breakfast facing the magical vista out to sea.

Although the old Swiss Cottage has been greatly altered, it has a strong sense of continuity through the love each generation of du Maurier has felt for it. Their influences and eccentricities, loves and dramas pervade the house and will surely continue to do so for years to come.

Following the TV screening of *Rebecca* in January, Carlton Television is developing a series based on Daphne du Maurier's short stories.

The first Daphne du Maurier Festival of Arts and Literature takes place in Fowey from 9 to 18 May. For details call 01726-74324.

