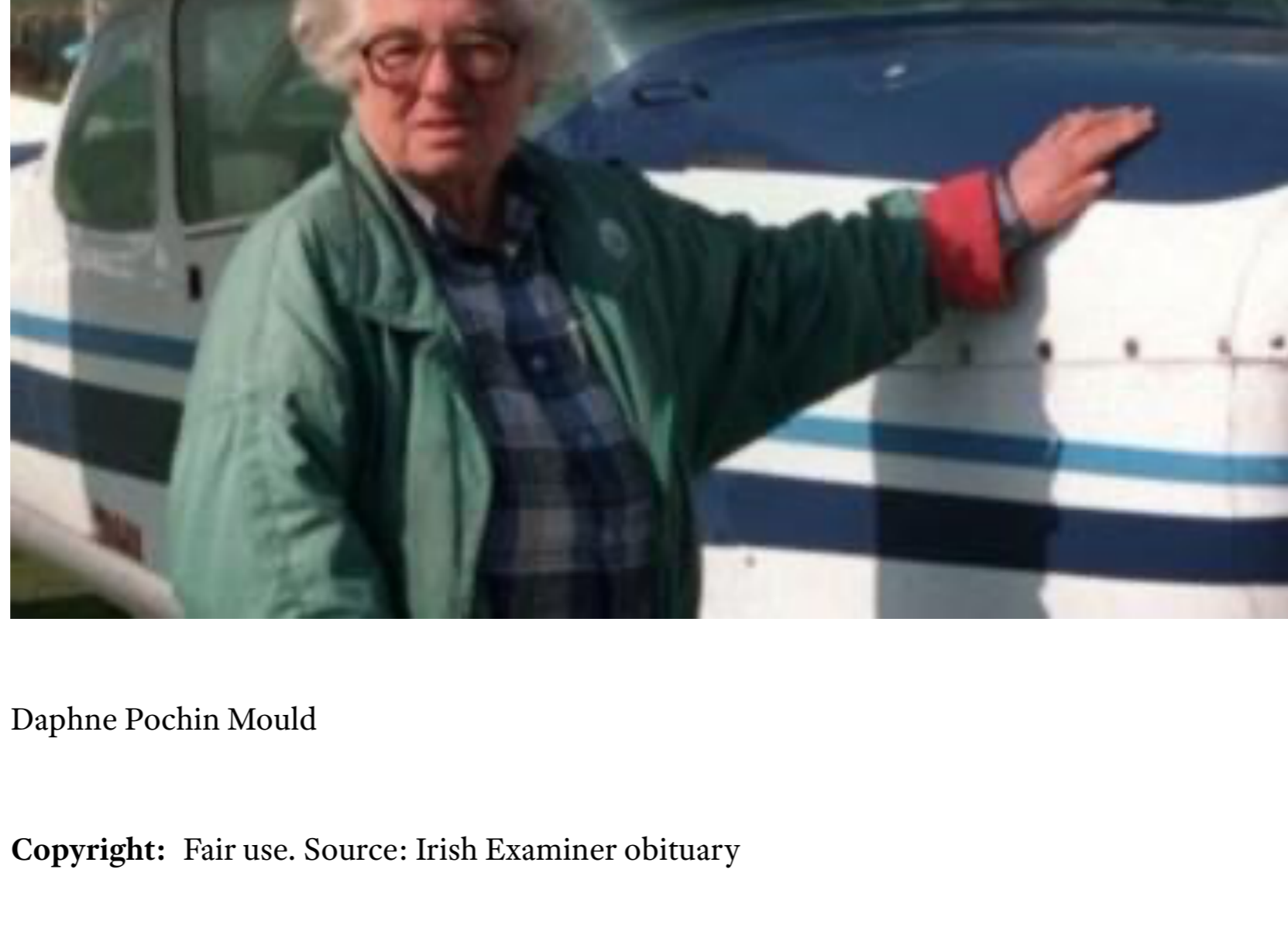


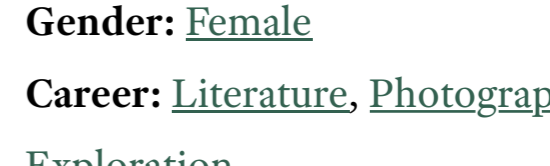
Mould, Daphne Desiree Charlotte Pochin

Contributed by
Gallagher, Niam



Daphne Pochin Mould

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Forename: Daphne, Desiree, Charlotte
Surname: Pochin Mould
Gender: Female
Career: [Literature](#), [Photography](#), [Travel and Exploration](#)
Born 15 November 1920 in [England](#)
Died 29 April 2014 in [Co. Cork](#)

Mould, Daphne Desiree Charlotte Pochin (1920–2014), geologist, author, photographer and flight instructor, was born on 15 November 1920 in Salisbury, Wiltshire, the only child of Walter Mould, a teacher, and his wife Marguerite (née Steer). Growing up in the heart of what she called the 'Englishry' of the south, Daphne was mostly home-schooled by her aunt, a Greek scholar, because of a problem with her eyesight. At home she was introduced to classics such as Homer's *Odyssey* and brought on nature rambles, where she discovered an urge to identify plants and animals, to study rocks and uncover fossils. In an autobiographical piece for CatholicAuthors.com, she wrote that on those walks she came to believe that 'science ... meant the discovery of truth, reality, the nature of being'.

In 1937 her cousin lent her his Horch car which she used to travel around the Salisbury countryside, and the following year she drove to Scotland to explore the Highlands. In 1939, just as the second world war was breaking out, she enrolled in a pure science degree at Edinburgh University. Her studies were interrupted by a life-threatening heart condition that prevented her being called up for full-time war service. Instead, she joined the volunteer car-pool and, after graduating with a first-class degree in 1943, was granted permission to take up a research fellowship and undertake a Ph.D. in geology. In 1946 she was awarded a doctorate for her thesis entitled 'The geology of the Foyers Plutonic Complex and the surrounding country' but, instead of taking up a career in academia, found herself turning to writing, in particular about the Scottish Highlands. In October 1948 she took out a five-year lease on a dilapidated house called Inchnacardoch in an area of the same name in Fort Augustus, overlooking Loch Ness. Her mother came to live with her permanently, while her father travelled north during school holidays until his retirement, when he also came to live there.

Mould's time in Scotland was transformational, both spiritually and creatively. Her first book, published in 1950, was *The roads from the Isles: a study of the north-west Highland tracks* which told the story of the tracks along which the black cattle of the Highlands and Hebrides were driven south. Her second book *Scotland of the saints* (1952) was written after her conversion to catholicism. In the autobiographical *The rock of truth* (1953), Mould detailed her journey from Anglican to agnostic and finally to reluctant catholic when Fr Augustus, prior of the local Benedictine monastery, used Thomas Aquinas's arguments to prove the existence of God. Mould says she fought hard against accepting the possibility but, on 11 November 1950, was received into the catholic church after a final row with her family.

In autumn 1951 the lease on the house in Inchnacardoch expired and Mould, accompanied by her parents, moved to Ireland, partly to follow in the footsteps of the Celtic saints whom she felt had brought about her conversion. They initially lived in Kylemore, Connemara, Co. Galway, where Mould forged a friendship with the Dominicans of Claddagh. In February 1952 she was confirmed in a private ceremony by Joseph Walsh (1888–1972), archbishop of Tuam, and two days later was admitted into the Third Order of St Dominic at the Dominican priory there. As committed to her faith as to her love of science, Mould produced fifteen books between 1952 and 1976 exploring the history and nature of religion in Ireland and Scotland, as well as her personal journey as a catholic, and in 1957 wrote a history of the Dominicans in Ireland at the request of minister general of the order. Her strong religious faith did not, however, quash her fiercely independent view of the world. In 2004 she wrote a strongly worded letter to the *Irish Times* regarding women's role in the catholic church, calling their treatment 'third-world' and reminding readers that Jesus exhorted his followers to 'do this in memory of me' without adding 'but only if you are a man' (*Irish Times*, 3 June 2004).

By the end of 1952 Mould and her parents had moved from Connemara to Cork, renting a large house in the village of Aherla, thirteen miles outside Cork city. It was here that she discovered the third love of her life when she learned to fly a small plane out of Farmer's Cross Airfield, near to where Cork Airport was later built in 1961. As with all her activities, Mould committed wholeheartedly to excelling at flying, becoming the first female flight instructor in Ireland, and then the only female class-one chief instructor. She joined the Hibernian Flying Club and Farranfore Flying Club, renting small planes by the hour to conduct lessons and maximise her own time in the air. Recognising the value of aerial photographs of archaeological monuments (which had begun in Ireland in 1934), she took her camera on flights to photograph various archaeological sites. One of her students, Simon O'Flynn, described sitting white-knuckled beside her as she leaned out the window several thousand feet in the air, both hands off the controls and on her camera. From 1970s onwards she published a series of books incorporating her aerial photographs such as *Ireland from the air* (1972), *Valentia: portrait of an island* (1978) and *Discovering Cork* (1992), while in the 1980s she was commissioned by the Cork Archaeological Survey to take photographs for the five-volume series *The archaeological inventory of County Cork* (1992–2009). Her entire collection of photographs, ground as well as aerial, are now held by the Muckcross House Trustees.

In total she published twenty-five books and contributed many articles to academic journals as well as to local publications, newspapers and tourist magazines. She also featured regularly on the radio, writing and producing a series of programmes entitled 'The islands of Munster' (1959–60) with Síle Ní Bhriain, as well as contributing widely to radio series such as *Sunday miscellany* and *Seascapes*. In 1990 she received the Sherkin Island Marine Station environmental award for her commitment to Irish heritage, environment and culture, while in 1993 UCC awarded her an honorary doctorate, describing her as 'a scientist and a free spirit, a courageous pioneer and an outstanding woman warrior' (*Irish Times*, 2 May 2014).

In her final years, ill-health forced Mould to move between guesthouses and hotels, rather than return to live alone in Aherla. Her indomitable spirit remained, however, and she continued to research and write despite arthritis in her hands. When she was confined to bed for her final months, her friend Matt Murphy, director of Sherkin Island Marine Station, described her as 'a caged lioness'. She died on 29 April 2014 in Cork University Hospital and donated her body to medical science.

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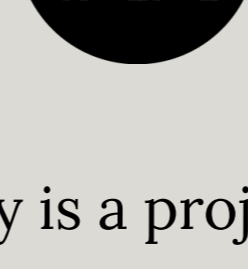
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Daphne Pochin Mould

By Kathy O'Sullivan

Children, when learning to colour pictures, are often told not to colour outside the lines. And yet, how is someone supposed to live life to the fullest, to follow their dreams, unless they do precisely that, colour outside the lines? Daphne Pochin Mould, author, broadcaster, geologist, photographer, pilot and Ireland's first female flight instructor, described as 'a magnificent woman in her flying machine', lived her life to the fullest, colouring outside the lines, unaware that there was any other way to live.

Born on 15 November 1920 in Salisbury, Wiltshire, in the very heart of the 'Englishry', as she called it, she was the only child of Walter Mould, a teacher, and his wife Marguerite. Daphne had a problem with her eyesight, which led to her being mostly home-schooled, by her aunt, a Greek scholar. This led to her education being what education in the truest sense should be, being something that is created, not something that is prescriptive. At home she was introduced to classics such as Homer's *Odyssey* and, later in life, wrote: 'With the urge to write, I also had an urge to study science, especially the natural sciences. I used to go out in the country and identify the plants and trees, watch the birds, go quietly through the English woods so that the red squirrels came playing past me, unnoticed.'

She understood at a young age that science is, quite simply, constantly questioning new evidence as it comes in, and repeatedly reexamining prior conclusions: 'Science for me meant the discovery of truth, reality, the nature of being, finding out what things were, what life was about.'

Having learned to drive at the age of 17 when a cousin lent her his Horch car, Daphne drove on a visit to Scotland and the Highlands the following year, in 1938. As war was breaking out in 1939, she enrolled for the BSc course in Pure Science at Edinburgh University. Even a life-threatening heart condition could not derail this rebel's graduation in 1943. She joined the ARP (Air Raid Precautions – or Civil Defence) but soon transferred to the Volunteer Car Pool (a pool of cars and drivers used mainly for emergencies such as blood transfusions and emergency births).

As she was not called up for full time war service, due to her heart condition, the Ministry of Labour decided Daphne could take up a research fellowship for a PhD in Geology. In 1946 she was awarded a doctorate for her thesis entitled 'The geology of the Foyers Plutonic Complex and the surrounding country'. How she came to be awarded a doctorate from the University of Edinburgh illustrates the kind of person Daphne was. Her Director at the Department of Geology at the time suggested she gather what was known on the rocks at Foyers, in



Daphne Pochin Mould



A 1930s Horch car – nice to learn to drive in!

the middle of the Highlands, so she paid a visit to the Geological Survey in Edinburgh. The small-scale map she found there did not correspond in the least to what she found, so she rectified the situation, studying those one hundred square miles of Scotland with the attention to detail that characterized everything she did throughout her life.

Daphne was always more interested in writing than in academia, and so, captivated by the Scottish Highlands, she took out a lease on a dilapidated house overlooking Loch Ness. Her mother came to live with her permanently, while her father spent time there during school holidays until his retirement, when he also came to live there.

Not only did Daphne clear the overgrown garden, but she also reclaimed the adjoining three-acre field, growing oats potatoes and other vegetables. She learned how to plough with a two-wheel 'walking' tractor with a 3.5 HP engine, as well as how to harrow, from her neighbour. Daphne's first book, *The Roads from the Isles*, the story of some of the old cross-country tracks of the West Highlands, was published in 1950 when she was 30 years old.

After this, Daphne's path became more spiritual, much to her bewilderment. Writing about the islands of the Outer Hebrides, she encountered Catholic life and thought for the first time. She then embarked on a book about the Inner Hebrides, including Iona of St. Columba (an Irish saint who lived from 521 to 597). She said her intention as an agnostic was to show up the saints and the Church for what she thought they really were, but 'to attack the Church meant finding out just what was to be attacked'. As she already knew some of the Benedictines at Fort Augustus, she sought information from them. In Daphne's own writing: 'That reason could enter into religion was a completely new idea to me. I fought hard against accepting any such possibility, but after a year of struggle and argument was received into the Catholic Church on November 11, 1950.'



Daphne Pochin Mould in later years. Source: <https://www.irishexaminer.com/news/arid-20267226.html>

In 1951 the lease on the house in Scotland was up, so Daphne and her parents decided to move to Ireland. At first, they lived in Connemara, Co. Galway, but in 1952 Daphne and her parents rented a large house near the Church of Ireland church at Aherla, Co. Cork. In addition to writing prolifically, she discovered what was to become another passion, namely, flying. She learned to fly at Farmer's Cross Airfield, near Cork Airport (built in 1961). Not knowing how to do anything by halves, Daphne became the first female flight instructor in Ireland, and then the only female class-one chief instructor, a most popular one, by all accounts. She joined the Hibernian Flying Club and Farranfore Flying Club.

Flying helped Daphne to understand the key value of aerial photographs to archaeology (aerial photography of archaeological monuments began in Northern Ireland in 1927 and was first used in the Republic in 1934), so she took her camera on flights to photograph various archaeological sites. Imagine being a student of hers, learning to fly, as she took both hands off the control in order to lean out the window with her camera to take photos, as she apparently did on a regular basis! Childhood visits to nearby Stonehenge drew her to archaeology and geology: 'When I was very small, I tried out my climbing instincts on its stones – to be immediately hauled off by an irate official!' Her entire collection of photographs is now held by the Muckcross House Trustees in Killarney, Co. Kerry.

Always writing, Daphne published 25 books, including *Scotland of the Saints* (1952); *The Celtic Saints, our heritage* (1956); *Saint Brigid* (1964); *Saint Finbar of Cork* (1965); *Ireland From The Air* (1973); *A Book of Irish Saints and Irish Saints' names* (1975); *Mountains of Ireland* (1976); *The Monasteries of Ireland: An Introduction* (1976); *Aran Islands* (1977); *Discovering Cork* (1991) and *West over Sea* (1999). She also published a number of articles, not least for *Sherkin Comment*, a quarterly publication of Sherkin Island Marine Station (Sherkin Island is offshore from the fishing village of Baltimore, Co. Cork). Daphne also wrote and produced a series of radio programmes entitled 'The islands of Munster' (1959–60) with Síle Ní Bhriain (broadcaster & producer with Radio Éireann, the highlight of whose career was covering the visit to Cork on 28th June 1963 of US President John F. Kennedy), as well as contributing to radio series such as *Sunday miscellany* and *Seascapes*. In 1993 UCC awarded Dr. Daphne Pochin Mould an honorary doctorate, to add to her one of 1946, describing her during the ceremony as 'a scientist and a free spirit, a courageous pioneer and an outstanding woman warrior'.

She was much loved by those who knew her. Even those who did not know her, or know her well, were

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appreciative of her rich contribution to Irish life. Despite her English background, she once wrote that she was 'so long out of the country, out of contact with its thought and way of life, that going back there in recent years, I found I passed readily enough for a born Irishwoman!'

A fiercely independent spirit, Daphne's final years were difficult for her to bear. In January 2007, at almost 87 years of age, Daphne was found unconscious in her Aherla, guarded by her two beloved Alsatian dogs and was removed to Cork University Hospital. She wasn't expected to survive, but, in typical Daphne style, after nearly two months in hospital she signed herself out, having had enough. Good for her! She booked herself into a guesthouse. Over the next seven years Daphne moved from guesthouses to hotels to nursing homes. A natural nomad, she had to be on the move, even as her body grew more frail, because her mind remained as alert and sharp as ever.

Arthritis set in, making it impossible to write and difficult to type, and yet continue to type she did. Just because someone gets older, it doesn't mean that their wisdom and experience should not be valued. Daphne still had a lot to say, and said it even though she had no access to her notes and material, such as the depth and breadth of her encyclopedic knowledge. Never being concerned with material possessions, Daphne survived on her small pension - and support from her friends. In her final months she was confined to bed. As her friend, Matt Murphy, director of Sherkin Island Marine Station, wrote: 'One must understand that for nearly ninety years this indomitable lady was a free spirit and to be confined was like being a caged lioness.' She died on 29 April 2014 in Cork University Hospital and donated her body to medical science.

Daphne was someone who made a valuable



Aerial view of Aherla House, 1960s Source: <https://www.muckcrosshousereseearchlibrary.ie/>



Aerial view of Kilcrea Friary, 1960s. Source: <https://www.muckcrosshousereseearchlibrary.ie/>

contribution to her adopted country. She made the effort to become familiar with Ireland, she made the effort to give back, and was loved all the more for that. The dust jacket of her book, *Irish Pilgrimage* (1957, New York, Devin-Adair Company) describes her perfectly:

'Miss Mould, an English girl who has made Ireland her home and her way of life, has written an exulted guidebook through many realms of her fabulous adopted country...Most important, she is in love with Ireland, with its antiquities, its traditions, its

culture, and she imparts her devotion to the reader. She has not only lived with the people; she has joined them in their faith and gone on pilgrimages with them, the length and breadth of the country. She has climbed mountains in the predawn and rowed out to holy islands. She lives and moves in the Ireland of a thousand years ago and the Ireland of today, bringing it all to the reader with ease of style and with competent scholarship.'



A selection of Dr. Daphne Pochin Mould's books

Air Ambulance, Ballygeary



The Buckley Family with the proceeds of a recent charity walk in Ballygeary



Muintir Uí Bhuachalla, Béal Átha'n Ghaorthaidh ag bronadh seic do Donie Lucey ó Irish Community Air Ambulance.



Staff from M. & J. Kelleher Oil with Jerry Buckley after a recent fundraiser for Irish Community Air Ambulance.



Jerry & Eileen Buckley presenting a cheque to Donie Lucey of Irish Community Air Ambulance recently in Ballygeary. Pic. Nóirín Uí Thuama