



Whatever Happened to Margo?

Margaret Durrell, Gerald Durrell (Preface)

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In 1947, with two young children to support, Margaret Durrell took the advice of her maiden aunt and started a boarding house in Bournemouth. But any hopes of a conventional clientele were dashed as the establishment was colonized by a host of eccentrics, comprising, among others, a painter of nudes, a battered wife, a chauvinist bricklayer, and a Maltese transsexual. With brother Gerald descending from time to time upon this extraordinary household, accompanied as ever by his travelling menagerie, the scene was set for a multitude of hilarious adventures. In such company, and with such tenants, the landlady herself could not long stand aloof, and indeed was shortly drawn into a surreptitious love affair with a trombonist.

Whatever Happened to Margo? Details

Date : Published August 1st 1996 by Time Warner Paperbacks (first published September 1995)

ISBN : 9780751516739

Author : Margaret Durrell , Gerald Durrell (Preface)

Format : Paperback

Genre : Biography, Nonfiction, Humor, Autobiography



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Exina says

2 stars

I've always loved Gerald Durrell's books, that's why I gave this book a chance. It is about a period of Margo's life when she was keeping a boarding house. Well, Margo is not a writer, and it shows.

It was okay, but far from an engaging read.

Simon Mcleish says

Plenty of eccentric characters in this reminiscence of running a boarding house in 1950s Bournemouth, but the comedy tends to fall a bit flat. Of interest mainly to fans of Gerald Durrell, rounding out his far funnier autobiographical tales.

Richard says

As a big fan of Lawrence and Gerald Durrell's work this came as a huge disappointment and at surprisingly great cost - the book is long out of print and difficult to find for good reason. Charming though she is as part of the mercurial Durrell clan her feeble efforts to run a boarding house populated by eccentrics in "Pudding Island" (Lawrence's term for soggy England) never justifies the cost of entry.

Sally Edsall says

I found this peculiarly unengaging. Despite the witty stories of my Family and Other Animals written by Gerald Durrell, and the fine writing of brother Lawrence, one shouldn't assume that all members of the family are going to be equally as gifted autobiographers.

There is a lot of material in this autobiog to weave a funny and entertaining tale - lots of "odd" residents in the guest house run by Margo, but it all falls rather flat - with a bit of a dull thud.

I ended up not really caring about any of the characters, and that is not how a biog should leave you feeling - love 'em or loathe 'em, you should CARE!

Anna says

I gave up on this. It's a funny little book, I just wasn't in the right mood to appreciate it.

Claire says

I quite enjoyed this book, it's nice to see the family so often depicted by Gerald from a different perspective.

Louise Culmer says

THE book opens in 1947, when Margo Durrell is divorced and she and her two small sons are living in Bournemouth with Margo's ever patient mother. Margo is persuaded by her formidable Aunt Patience to open a guest house, and soon finds herself with a colourful collection of boarders, nurses, artists, musicians, shop assistants, and the precocious schoolboy Nelson and his mother. Margo soon finds herself involved in the complicated lives of her lodgers, and there is also her brother Gerald, who is apt to turn up with collections of exotic animals that she is persuaded to house. Not to mention that she is falling in love with one of her lodgers.

This is a very enjoyable memoir. The Durrell family all seem to have had a knack for getting involved with colourful eccentrics, and Margo was no exception. I only wish she had written more about her life, I would love to know more about what happened to her during the war for instance, and the job she had later working on a cruise liner. OR just more about her crazy lodgers.

Shaz Goodwin says

<http://www.jerasjamboree.co.uk/2018/0...>

Whatever Happened to Margo? is an entertaining read due partly to the residents of No. 51 (and the neighbours) but also because of Margaret Durrell's writing style.

From the very first lodger, Edward Feather, you just know this is going to be an eccentric household (despite Aunt Patience's list of Do's and Don'ts that Margo has no chance of sticking to). Having read this biography, one thing I can say for definite is how closely the TV series follows real life with those quirky Durrell personalities.

This isn't a book about Bournemouth itself (I was hoping for more snippets of the town) but the antics of the lodgers and the neighbours at the boarding house on St Albans Avenue. I would recommend you read the article mentioned in my introduction from Dorset Life. There are a couple of photos bringing No. 51 to life.

Recommended if you're a fan of the Durrells and have an interest in their lives.

Carolyn says

Not as good as Gerald Durrell's books, but an interesting insight into her life.

Txe Polon says

Está claro que este libro únicamente vio la luz gracias al éxito de los libros de sus hermanos y de la serie de la BBC, ya que se trata de un libro mal escrito, con un tono que quiere imitar al de su hermano Gerald (pero al que ni de coña consigue aproximarse), con capítulos sin armonía ni temática ni tonal, con anécdotas que ni siquiera merecen dicho nombre... Una obra completamente amateur en un estadio de primera redacción, sin ningún tipo de corrección ulterior. Una absoluta perdida de tiempo.

Petra CigareX says

Whatever happened to Margo? Gerald became a naturalist and was a gifted author writing with humour about his and his family's experiences, Lawrence became a novelist, writing the brilliant *The Alexandria Quartet*, Leslie did all sorts of things, huntin', fishin', paintin' and farming in Kenya, ending up as a concierge of a Marble Arch hotel. An interesting life, it sounds like, but he never wrote about it. Margo had boyfriends, got married, had children, got divorced and bought a house across the road from her mother. She turned it into a boarding house for not very interesting paying guests. And then she wrote about it. Badly.

Her writing is full of descriptions and adjectives, similes, fancy passages that aren't quite lyrical, nor humorous, and not at all interesting rounded out by detailed conversations she couldn't possibly have remembered in that much detail. Still, she had to fill the pages.

I was looking for a passage that was so badly written, it would illustrate just how bad this book was from both content and writing, but I couldn't find one, it's all like that. But this is the paragraph where I thought there really isn't any reward to suffering and it was time to move on. It is the second paragraph of chapter 9 (I really did try).

"(For Edward's suggestions of a farewell party as a tribute to Gordon had brought cries of approval and put the womenfolk into a pantomime of preening as new dresses became the talk of the day.)

I was doing just this, posed before the only long mirror in my part of the house and examining myself for indolent bulges. Swathed in a hectic combination of candy stripes — a petticoat of patriotic colours, the skirt a mass of tucks and lace — pirouetted as my fancy took me to see the effect it would create under a dress, while giving a running commentary on my progress to Andy. He was squatting earthily in the middle of the drawing-room floor, busy disembowelling the wireless set while listening to me with divided attention, for Nelson was also calling to be noticed. He was established, king-like, in the bay window in Mother's usual position, even to the curtain, discreetly pulled in places to allow light and observation but not the unwanted attention of a passer-by. He was instructing the children in a game of crap. I was unprepared for the knock, the door opening and — posed in the attitude of a Giles cartoon — the visitors."

Did you get through that? Did you want to know what came next?

The book has no redeeming qualities apart from the curiosity of a reader knowing of Gerald and Lawrence and wanting to know what happened to Margo.

Anne says

Margaret Durrell's memoir was originally published in 1995, and I suspect that it's because of the very popular and successful TV show *The Durrells* that this has now been re-published and re-jacketed. There's been a huge surge in interest in the Durrell family over the past few years, and anyone who read Gerald Durrell's *My Family and Other Animals* will know that Margo has been expertly portrayed on our television screens.

I was unaware that Margaret had written a memoir, so was really interested to see what she'd got up to after the family left Corfu. Margo married a British RAF man, and had two children. However they later divorced and Margo and her sons returned to Bournemouth in 1947. Struggling financially, she's encouraged by her Aunt Patience to open a boarding house.

In true Margo fashion, she sets about to do just that, and her recollections of her assortment of guests are at times, quite hilarious. Margo seems to attract the oddest of people, but as her own family are not the most normal of folk, she takes it all in her stride. It's great to be reacquainted with her mother; Louisa, and her three brothers, Lawrence, Leslie and Gerry. None of them have really changed, and of course Gerry is accompanied by a collection of animals ... well, why wouldn't he be?

With a forward written by Gerald Durrell, this is an entertaining memoir that made me smile a lot. There were times when I found the writing to be a little flowery and maybe could be termed as old-fashioned. However, just imagine Margo herself speaking, and it's really a perfect fit!

Jo Barton says

I've always loved *My Family and Other Animals* by Gerald Durrell and have watched the current TV adaptation of his Corfu trilogy with great delight. Margot Durrell is one of my favourite characters so to have a book written by her has been an absolute joy.

We meet Margot again in *Whatever Happened to Margot?* in 1947 following her divorce from a British RAF pilot. On her return to England from Corfu and with limited financial resources she is persuaded by her aunt Patience to open a guest house in genteel Bournemouth. This idea is met with slight scepticism but as always, Margot with considerable aplomb embarks on this enterprise with great gusto.

Margot's guest house is soon filled with an assortment of lodgers, some are genuinely odd and others are so funny that they make you laugh out loud with glee. Their adventures are as varied as their characters and it soon becomes obvious that the new occupants of this large Edwardian house, in a quiet leafy street, will certainly shake up the neighbourhood. And as the guest house gets underway and begins to influence the area so Margot's standing in the community starts to take a knock, especially when people accuse her of running a brothel.

The other Durrells who flit into and out of the story add a real sense of continuity and it was lovely to meet up again with Mrs Durrell, always with her interminable knitting in tow, and of course, I looked forward to a visit from Margot's younger brother, Gerald, who landed at the guest house accompanied by a crate of

monkeys and large python.

In Whatever happened to Margot?, Margaret Durrell has recounted her adventures as a landlady with a fine eye for the ridiculous and a real sense of time and place. And anyone who has ever read any of the Durrell novels will recognise that marvellous self-deprecating wit which is always so evident. Margot's self exuberance continues this trend, and she writes with a natural flair for observation and more than a hint of the downright eccentric.

If you are a fan of the TV series, then Whatever happened to Margot? is a great continuation of the story of Margot's fascinating and eventful life.

Emily Morgan says

This was quite enjoyable to begin with but I lost interest about halfway through and I confess I did not finish it. It was too repetitive and self aware for my liking, but considering she did not have a lot of practice at writing, it was a commendable memoir. It was nice to see another Durrell's perspective on the chaotic life of the Durrell family, particularly Gerald.

Catherine Ritchie says

Quite a sweet story of another era when large houses could be snapped in Bournemouth for a song and turned to amateurish guest houses by a young divorcee, but curiously badly edited. Information and even jokes and phrases repeated within pages of one another. There is way to many adjectives and adverbs. I'm sure her friends found her hilarious but this reader found her humour a bit forced.
