



2024 / Colour / Digital / 82 minutes

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LOGLINE

An intimate and enchanting portrait of childhood fears, imagination and the enduring power of the memories that shape our lives.

SYNOPSIS

When you are afraid of the dark, scared of monsters, and trying to be brave enough to face them, you'd better invent a story. For Harriet and her three older brothers, growing up 'among dragons' at Cumnor Place was a life of enchanted gardens, Arthurian legends and things that go bump in the night. Theirs was a rarified, story-book childhood that stoked their wildest imagination and greatest fears in equal measure.

Now adults and with both of their parents deceased, where they once played make believe and slayed dragons, the siblings must come together to clear out the family estate so it's ready for sale - and in the process, come to terms with who they are, given their unorthodox and at times traumatic upbringing.



DIRECTOR'S STATEMENT

The universal theme of this film, and one that I think will appeal to many people, is saying goodbye to your childhood whilst coming to terms with its trauma. Clearing out the house of a deceased parent is something that almost everyone has to go through at some point. It is the end of an era and you need to decide what you want to take with you. More than the objects or documents, it is the story of your childhood.

In the film, the clearing of this big house is an important element. The house is the backdrop of a lost youth, but also a symbol of an era that is culturally and politically over. The Impeys, although not aristocrats, are a typical product of the old English elite, from a time when people travelled a world that seemed to belong to them. A world where children went to boarding school and families acquired art treasures. Owning and maintaining a large house like this is extremely costly. Apart from the fact that none of the children would be able to live there (buying out the other siblings and the inheritance tax would require a fortune), the encroaching city also threatens paradise. In many ways, Cumnor is no longer feasible in this day and age.

In *WHERE DRAGONS LIVE*, Cumnor is a magical reserve in a disenchanted world. In our world, there is no Zeus hurling lightning bolts, there are no Biblical plagues or underground dragons causing earthquakes, but physical laws that can explain almost anything. Yet at the same time, dragons continue to exert a great appeal - just look at the popular games, series and films (*Harry Potter*, *Game of Thrones*, *Pokémon*). These dragons are no longer connected to the real world but have retreated into the fantasy realm. Perhaps we need this fantasy more than ever because the real world has such unsolvable problems.

For me, the dragon represents a constructed fear of the unknown. It can be a deeply ingrained instinctive fear, of real monsters that can threaten us, of fire, or of misunderstood natural eruptions. It can also be a childish fear of the dark, of hidden monsters under your bed. But fear can also be appealing: we like to be scared, we like things that are bigger than ourselves. It is these types of fears that stories have traditionally dealt with. Stories in which monsters are fought, or in which natural phenomena are explained 'logically'.

Fantasy, or better still imagination, is a way in which people have always tried to curb their fears or to turn them around. And stories also serve the purpose of educating children: don't go into a forest or a cave alone in the dark! We still raise children with stories, because they give them a grip on an often incomprehensible and horrifying world.

The dragon in my film is something you have to fight, but also something you have to learn to live with. Something that can make you stronger if you overcome it and that you can cherish as a secret fantasy. Clearing Cumnor is a monstrous task, but it is also vital for my main characters in order to end their childhood on a good note.

For Harriet, the dragon may be her father she wants to do justice to; for Lawrence maybe the mother he feared so much. For the children, Cumnor is the home of the dragon and a place full of forbidden rooms and mysteries. The dragon is something that exists because we have made it up ourselves.

Suzanne Raes



ABOUT THE IMPEY FAMILY & CUMNOR PLACE

Artist and writer Harriet Impey, resides in the Netherlands. Her work is inspired by the natural world using a wide range of media - ceramics, glass, watercolour, acrylic, collage, block-printing and silversmithing. Harriet co-authored and illustrated with Katie Pickwood two children's books about art, *A Bowlful of Happiness* (Geldermalsen 2011) and *The Temple Guardians* (Rubenstein 2014). She has two other books in the pipeline: *A Childhood in Flowers* and *Houdini*. Harriet works with a wide range of media, and has had many solo and joint exhibitions in the Netherlands, France, and the UK.

Oldest brother Dr. Edward Impey is a British historian, archaeologist, and museum curator. Between October 2013 and January 2022 he was Master of the Armouries and Director General of the Royal Armouries. He has written books on conservation and heritage and is writing a family history about Cumnor Place.

Matthew Impey is an English artist and cabinet maker who has lived and worked in Normandy for over 20 years. After completing his degree in Fine Art in London, he pursued a career as a painter, exhibiting his work in England, France and the United States. After moving to France in 1997, he moved into design and founded his furniture brand in 2006, whilst also keeping up his painting.

Professor Lawrence Impey is a Consultant in Obstetrics and the Lead for Fetal Medicine at Oxford University Hospitals. He is the Clinical Lead for the Oxford AHSN Maternity & Neonatal Network. He has worked in maternity care for over 30 years and is dual-qualified in general obstetrics and in gynaecology and as a subspecialist in maternal and fetal medicine.

Cumnor Place was famous for the murder of Lady Amy Dudley in the 16th century, after she was found dead at the foot of a staircase. There were rumours and much speculation as to what happened to her and some said that her ghost continued to haunt Cumnor Place.

ABOUT THE FILMMAKERS

SUZANNE RAES - Director

Suzanne Raes has been working as an independent filmmaker for more than 20 years. Her early films *The Houses of Hristina* (2007), *The Rainbow Warriors of Waiheke Island* (2009), and *The Successor of Kakiemon* (2012) premiered at IDFA and won several awards at international film festivals. Her film *Come Closer* about Boudewijn de Groot received the IDFA Music Audience Award in 2015.

For her film about the Rotterdam social service, *Quid pro quo* (2015) Raes won a Golden Calf, the most important film award in the Netherlands. The international co-production *Ganz: How I Lost My Beetle* (2019) had a theatrical release in the Netherlands and has been broadcast in the Netherlands, Germany and Switzerland.

In 2023, her film *Close to Vermeer* was the only Dutch feature-length documentary that qualified for an Academy Award® for Best Documentary Feature, following successful theatrical runs in the Netherlands, United States and Germany. The film was also nominated for a Golden Calf and won the Special Jury Prize at Guangzhou International Documentary Film Festival. *Close to Vermeer* has been sold to 15 countries to date.

ILJA ROOMANS - Producer

Ilja Roomans is producer for Docmakers, a collective of the award-winning documentary filmmakers Aliona van der Horst, Suzanne Raes, Sanne Rovers and Yan Ting Yuen. She has 20 years of experience producing both national productions and international co-productions, and is a member of the Documentary Branch of AMPAS.

Ilja recently produced *Gerlach, the last farmer* (2023) by Aliona van der Horst and Luuk Bouwman, winner of the Best Dutch Film Award at IDFA 2023.

In 2023, Ilja produced Suzanne Raes' previous film *Close to Vermeer*, which was the only Dutch feature-length documentary that qualified for an Academy Award® for Best Documentary Feature, following successful theatrical runs in the Netherlands, United States and Germany. The film was also nominated for a Golden Calf and won the Special Jury Prize at Guangzhou International Documentary Film Festival. *Close to Vermeer* has been sold to 15 countries to date.

In 2022, Ilja produced *Master of Light* (2022) by Rosa Ruth Boesten, together with Roger Ross Williams and Anousha Nzume. *Master of Light* was nominated for 3 Emmy Awards® and won the SXSW 2022 Best Documentary Feature Award, San Francisco Film Festival McBaine Documentary Feature Award, Sheffield DocFest 2022 Best First Feature Documentary Award, NFF Debut Competition and the Cinema Doc Eye Spotlight Award 2023. The film was sold globally to HBO Max.

www.docmakers.nl

REECE CARGAN – Co-Producer

Reece Cargan is a BAFTA-nominated and RTS award-winning producer and founder of Bombito Productions. Reece was selected by Screen International as a Scotland Rising Star and by the British Film Institute as an Insight Producer for 2023. He has produced numerous award winning shorts and recently co-produced his first two features: *Midwinter Break*, a dramatic feature directed by Polly Findlay with financing from Film4 and Focus Features to be released in 2025; and *Where Dragons Live* directed by Suzanne Raes - a documentary currently premiering at Sheffield DocFest.

Reece, as his slate attests, is passionate about working with and turning up the volume of the next generation of Queer UK talent, with a focus on intersectional LGBTQIA+ stories and voices.

DAVID ARTHUR - Editor

David Arthur is a BAFTA and RTS award-winning editor who has been working for over 15 years in drama and creative documentary. David edited the feature documentaries *Irene's Ghost* (winner at Aesthetica Film Festival and RTS awards), *Where You're Meant to Be* (winner of Grierson, and Chicago International Film Festival) and *Electric Malady* (BAFTA-nominated). His drama credits include *Winners* (UK submission for the Academy Awards® for Best Foreign Film and winner at the BAFTAs, Raindance, BIFA, and EIFF), *Guilt* (BBC), *Outlander* (Sony), *Run* (Tribeca Film Festival premiere), musical *God Help the Girl* (Sundance winner), and he has worked on several of director David Mackenzie's films including the historical epic *Outlaw King* (Netflix). He has been nominated 4 times for the RTS Professional Excellence: Editing Award, which he won for *Sighthill* (BBC).

VICTOR HORSTINK - Director of Photography

Victor Horstink is a cinematographer from The Netherlands. He has worked on many documentary films and series such as *Close To Vermeer* (directed by Suzanne Raes and produced by Docmakers 2023), *Rainbow Murders* (Blue Circle / Amazon Prime 2023) and *Human Playground* (Netflix 2022), as well as dramas such as the International Emmy Award-winning series *Kabam* (IJswater Films 2021).



END CREDITS

With Special Thanks To
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JANE IMPEY 1938-2021

EDWARD IMPEY
KAREN
ELIZABETH
FRANCES

LAWRENCE IMPEY
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CICELY
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JOHANNES FEND - Double Bass, FX
THOMAS VAN GEELEN - Cello
ELEONORA LEWIT - Cello
YANNA PELSER - Viola
ALEX SIMU - Clarinet, Bass Clarinet
ANNIE TÅNGBERG - Cello, FX
LAURENCE WEIMER - Violin

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Producer Junior Co-Production Market
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BIBLE, REVELATIONS 12, READ BY REVEREND JONATHAN WIDDESS

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GOLDEN LEGEND BY JACOB DE VORAGINE

HARRY POTTER AND THE DEADLY HALLOWS (COVER) BY JK ROWLING,
PUBLISHED BY BLOOMSBURY PUBLISHING

THE HIPPOPOTAMUS SONG, WRITTEN/COMPOSED BY DONALD SWANN,
WRITTEN BY MICHAEL FLANDERS

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