



0. J.M. BARRIE - EARLY LIFE - Story Preface

1. J.M. BARRIE - EARLY LIFE

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J.M. Barrie, the creator of Peter Pan, was born on the 9th of May, 1860, in the family home at Kirriemuir, Angus, Scotland. (The house today is a museum, owned by the National Trust of Scotland, and a camera obscura, a now-rare device which Barrie donated to the town, is also on display.)

His father, David, was a weaver. His mother, Margaret Ogilvy, was later the subject of one of her son's books.

When Barrie was six, his brother David died very unexpectedly. The shock of the loss so affected Barrie's mother that, for the remainder of her life, she never got over his death.

Sometimes Jamie would wear his brother's clothes and, on entering his mother's darkened bedroom, would pretend to be the lost son. Later, when Barrie became a writer, the theme of death, and the concept of ghosts, would populate his stories.

As a lad, Jamie studied at Dumfries Academy in southern Scotland. He and his friend, Stuart Gordon, engaged in boyish play at Moat Brae House, the home of friends, where the two found an "enchanted" garden. Their escapades later found literary life in Peter Pan.

Reflecting on those days, which he considered to be the happiest of his life, Barrie once said:

...when the shades of night began to fall, certain young mathematicians [Barrie and Gordon] shed their triangles, crept up walls and down trees, and became pirates in a sort of Odyssey that was long afterwards to become the play of Peter Pan. For our escapades in a certain Dumfries garden, which is enchanted land to me, were certainly the genesis of that nefarious work. (Speech at Dumfries, 11 December 1924)

Although Barrie wanted to be a writer, his family frowned on such an occupation. To make his mother happy, he graduated from Edinburgh University. His sister, knowing of her brother's literary passion, told Barrie about a journalist position in Nottingham. He got the job and performed well. But he did not abandon his desire to write novels.

Barrie's first two stories were set in his hometown of Kirriemuir (which he called "Thurms," named for the bundles of thread above a weaver's loom). Soon he was dramatizing his stories for the stage, although the world would not meet his most famous character, Peter Pan, until the following decade.

In one of those early stage productions, Barrie met Mary Ansell, a beautiful actress who would become his wife. It was a marriage, however, which was doomed to fail.

See [Alignments to State and Common Core standards for this story online at:](http://www.awesomestories.com/asset/AcademicAlignment/J.M.-BARRIE-EARLY-LIFE-Finding-Neverland)

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See [Learning Tasks for this story online at:](http://www.awesomestories.com/asset/AcademicActivities/J.M.-BARRIE-EARLY-LIFE-Finding-Neverland)

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Kirriemuir, Scotland - Birthplace of J.M. Barrie

This view depicts the town as it is seen from the Strathmore Valley.

Image online via the [Kirriemuir Heritage Trust](#).

View this asset at:

<http://www.awesomestories.com/asset/view/Kirriemuir-Scotland-Birthplace-of-J.M.-Barrie>



Interior Photo of J.M. Barrie Home - Scotland

Image online, courtesy Exploring Scotland.

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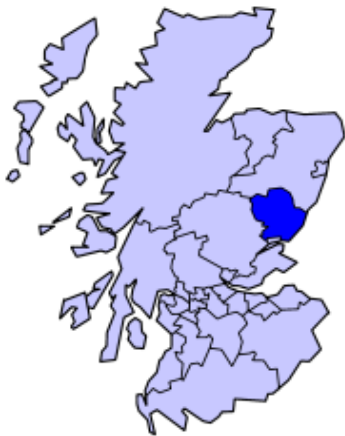


Exterior of J.M Barrie Family Home

Image online, courtesy the [rampantscotland.com](#) website.

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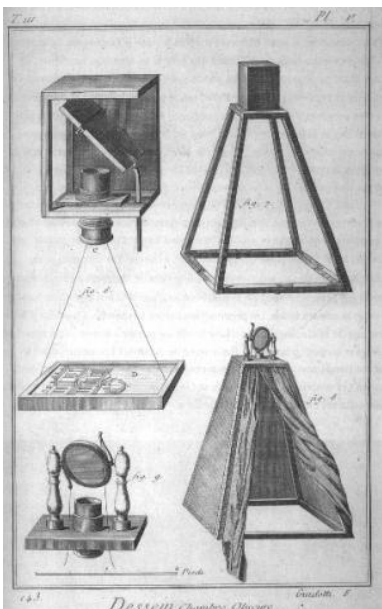


Map Showing Angus Scotland

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Camera Obscura

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Dumfries Academy - School of J.M. Barrie

Image online, courtesy dumfriescompanion.com website.

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Map Showing Southern Scotland

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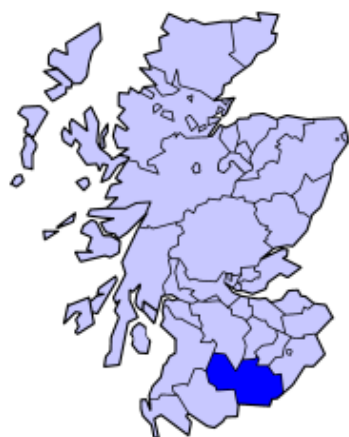
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Moat Brae House

Image online, courtesy the BBC [website](#).

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Dumfries Scotland

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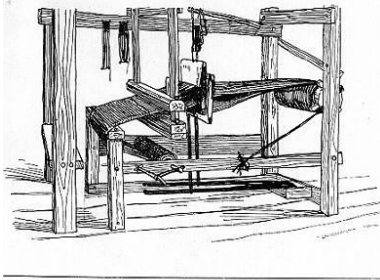


Mary Ansell - Wife of J.M. Barrie

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Old Time Loom

Image of an old loom, online courtesy Wikimedia Commons.

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OLD-TIME LOOM