



0. THE REST OF THE STORY - Story Preface

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J.M. Barrie, who was known as "Uncle Jim" by the Llewelyn-Davies boys, outlived both George and Michael. This image depicts the creator of "Peter Pan" near the end of his life. He died, in 1937, at the age of 77. Image online via American Society of Authors and Writers.

Three of Arthur and Sylvia's sons died tragically:

- George, while serving his country in World War I, was shot in the head during the early morning of March 15, 1915. His entire battalion loved and respected him. Peter later wrote about the effect of George's death on Barrie:

*The effect on J.M.B. was dire indeed...Oh, miserable Jimmie. Famous, rich, loved by a vast public, but at what a frightful private cost. Shaken to the core...by the death of Arthur; tortured a year or two later by the ordeal of his own divorce; then so soon afterwards prostrated, ravaged and utterly undone when Sylvia pursued Arthur to the grave; and after only four and a half years, George; George, whom he had loved with such a deep, strange, complicated, increasing love, and who as he knew well would have been such a pillar for him to lean on in the difficult job of guiding the destinies of Sylvia & Arthur Llewelyn Davies' boys - " my boys." (Quoted in *Lost Boys*, page 244.)*

- Peter also served in World War I. According to his sister-in-law Gerri, he was "mentally wounded beyond repair" by the effects of World War I. (You need MP3 for this audio link.) He formed a publishing company but became ill near the end of his life. Gerri believed Peter knew he would get worse and likely thought about taking pills. Instead, he jumped in front of a tube train (at London's Sloane Square Underground Station) which had to be "perfectly awful for anyone who'd seen it." (This link takes you to a map of the London Underground, including the Sloane Square station where Peter died. Look for the Picadilly [blue] Line, approximately in the middle, near Victoria Station.)

- While at Oxford, Michael (who could not swim) drowned in Sanford Pool. After George's death, Michael had become "Uncle Jim's" favorite. By all accounts, Barrie never got over the shock of Michael's death nor the sadness which consumed him afterwards. Although some people wondered whether Michael died intentionally, Sebastian Earl (a family friend) said: "The thing is too absurd for words" to even think he committed suicide.

The other two boys grew up and led productive, happy lives.

- Jack survived the war and married Gerri Gibb. Never really close to Barrie, he did not live in London and had relatively little contact with his former guardian.

- Nico lived to be an old man and provided much of the primary-source information for Andrew Birkin's book

and subsequent documentaries. His daughter, Laura Duguid, has a small (but important) role in *Finding Neverland*.

Barrie never got rid of the cough and bronchitis which he developed just before his marriage to Mary Ansell. He died, of bronchitis it is said, on the 19th of June, 1937 and is buried in Kirriemuir Cemetery, next to his parents, sister and brother David. Mary, his ex-wife, came to see him at the nursing home before he died. "She was," recalled those who were there, "exquisite to look at, very nice and very kind."

Mary's marriage to her second husband, Gilbert Cannon, also ended in divorce. Nico remembered her as a wonderful person: "When I was pretty small, she was devoted to all of us boys and all of us five boys were devoted to her."

There has always been speculation about Barrie's true relationship with the five boys. Today, especially, his motives are questioned. But those who knew him best - like Nico who was one of the five - adamantly denied anything but the most honorable intentions. When specifically questioned on the topic, Nico stated that Barrie "had no sexual interest of any sort or kind. He was one hundred percent neuter and one hundred percent innocent, I'm absolutely certain of it."

In a move which surprised the surviving Davies boys, in 1929 Barrie gave London's Great Ormond Street Hospital all rights to *Peter Pan*. Royalties have been buying beds, funding research, and expanding the Hospital's ability to care for children ever since.

Nico Davies speculated why Barrie gave the rights to Great Ormond Street. He thought it was because Barrie wanted to help children, and because he knew Elizabeth Lucas and Audrey Lucas who were connected with the hospital.

Great Ormond Street opened its doors with ten beds on Valentine's Day, 1852. Today, it cares for approximately 100,000 children each year.

As Barrie (the writer) closed the book on Tommy (the character from *Tommy and Grizel*), the narrator of the story made this telling observation:

I was really pitying the boy who was so fond of boyhood that he could not with years become a man...The days of childhood are the best. (Pages 160 and 161.)

Some say this recurring theme was really about Barrie himself. Perhaps that is so. But with the gift he gave to Great Ormond Street Hospital, it is clearly true that Barrie's greatest work will continue to benefit the people he seemed most to love - children.

See Alignments to State and Common Core standards for this story online at:

<http://www.awesomestories.com/asset/AcademicAlignment/THE-REST-OF-THE-STORY-Finding-Neverland>

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Media Stream



J.M. Barrie Near the End of His Life

George died, during World War I, after being shot in the head. Peter, who also served his country in the war, was traumatized by all he had endured. Michael drowned while he was a student at Oxford.

Jack, who survived the war, never maintained much contact with his former guardian. Nico, however—who outlived Barrie by several decades—had many fond memories of his family's benefactor.

In 1922, Barrie received the Order of Merit. Many admirers, including duchesses, ministers and film stars, congratulated him at his Adelphi-Terrace penthouse.

One of his home country's main universities—St. Andrew's—elected Barrie as Lord Rector and, in 1930, he also became Chancellor of Edinburgh University.

By 1937, however, Barrie's health began to deteriorate. Despite his productivity, during the last decade of his life, the man whom the Llewelyn-Davies boys called "Uncle Jim" had grown weary. He died—at the age of 77—on the 3rd of June in 1937.

This image depicts Barrie in his later years.

Image of J.M. Barrie, during his later years, online via American Society of Authors and Writers.

View this asset at:

<http://www.awesomestories.com/asset/view/J.M.-Barrie-Near-the-End-of-His-Life>



Peter Llewelyn Davies

Image online, courtesy the sociedadaugusta.com website.

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Map of the London Underground

Image online, courtesy knightsbridge.net website.

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Oxford College

Image online, courtesy the oximun.org website.

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Report of Michael Davies Death

Image online, courtesy Wikimedia Commons.

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Michael Davies Photo

Image online, courtesy jmbarrie.co.uk website.

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Jack Davies

Image online, courtesy the jmbarrie.co.uk website.

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Great Ormond Street Hospital

Image online, courtesy the Great Ormond Street Hospital website.

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Audrey Lucas Photo

Image online, courtesy the jmbarrie.co.uk website.

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Great Ormond Street Hospital Opening in 1852

Image online, courtesy the victorianweb.org website.

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