

# REMEMBERING GEORGE LLEWELYN DAVIES

Sunday 15 March 2015, marks the centenary of the date that George Llewelyn Davies died in action during the First World War. George was the eldest of the Llewelyn Davies children and, along with brother Michael, was one of J.M. Barrie's favourite boys who inspired him to create the characters of Peter Pan and the lost boys.

**Remembering Llewelyn Davies and a generation of lost boys, our production of *Peter Pan* will open on the Western Front of World War I.**



XI. While Jack was removing the crocodiles from the stream, George shot a few parrots (*Psittacidae*) for our mid-day meal.

## J.M. BARRIE AND THE LLEWELYN DAVIES BOYS

J. M. Barrie first met George (aged 4 years old) in Kensington Gardens.

In 1901 Barrie had printed two copies of a photo essay book of his adventures with the Llewelyn Davies boys, entitled *The Boy Castaways of Black Lake Island*. The following year he published another set of adventures in a novel called *The Little White Bird*. In a story-within-a-story, the narrator tells "David" (George Llewelyn Davies) about Peter Pan, a seven-day-old boy who flies away from his parents to live with fairies.

All children start out as birds, the story goes, but soon forget how to fly. Peter eventually flies home, and

tearfully sees through his nursery window that his mother is holding a new baby and has forgotten him. Now Peter Pan can never go home and will never grow up. *The Little White Bird* was popular, and readers begged Barrie to give them more of that new character, Peter Pan.

Peter Pan was given the same age as George (10 years old) when Barrie began writing the play in 1903.

## GEORGE AS A YOUNG MAN

Barrie became primary guardian of the Llewelyn Davies boys in 1910 when George was 17 years old, following the death of their parents.

George was educated at Eton College, and then Trinity College Cambridge where he joined the Amateur Dramatic Club. He enrolled for WW1 in 1914 (along with his Uncle, Guy du Maurier).

## WWI

George received a commission as a second lieutenant in the King's Royal Rifle Corps and served in Flanders, corresponding regularly with Barrie. Barrie wrote to George to inform him of the death of Guy Du Maurier, to which George replied, on 14 March 1915, to say that 'I take every care of myself that can decently be taken'...and that 'dear Uncle Jim, you must carry on with your job of keeping up your courage.'

The next day, before Barrie received this letter, George died of a gunshot wound to the head. He was 21 years old.

What follows is a transcript of George's final, poignant letter.



George in July 1914

# TRANSCRIPT OF THE FINAL LETTER SENT FROM GEORGE LLEWELYN DAVIES TO J.M.BARRIE ON 14 MARCH 1915, THE DAY BEFORE HE WAS KILLED IN ACTION.

March 14th

Dear Uncle Jim,

I have just got your letter about Uncle Guy. You say it hasn't made you think any more about the danger I am in. But I know it has. Do try not to let it. I take every care of myself that can decently be taken. And if I am going to stop a bullet, why should it be with a vital place? But arguments aren't any good. Keep your head up Uncle Jim, and remember how good an experience like this is for a chap who's been very idle before. Lord, I shall be proud when I am home again, & talking to you about all this. That old dinner at the Savoy will be pretty grand. It is very bad about Uncle Guy. I wonder how he was killed. As he was a colonel, I imagine his battalion was doing an attack. Poor Aunt Gwen. This war is a dreadful show.

The ground is drying up now, & the weather far better. Soon the Spring will be on us, & the birds nesting right up in the firing line. Cats are the only other things left there. I wonder what Spring will bring to us in this part of the line. Something a little different from the forty-eight hours' routine in the trenches, I daresay.

There have already been doings in various parts of the line. I would rather be George Davies than Sir John French just now. He must have got some hard decisions in front of him.

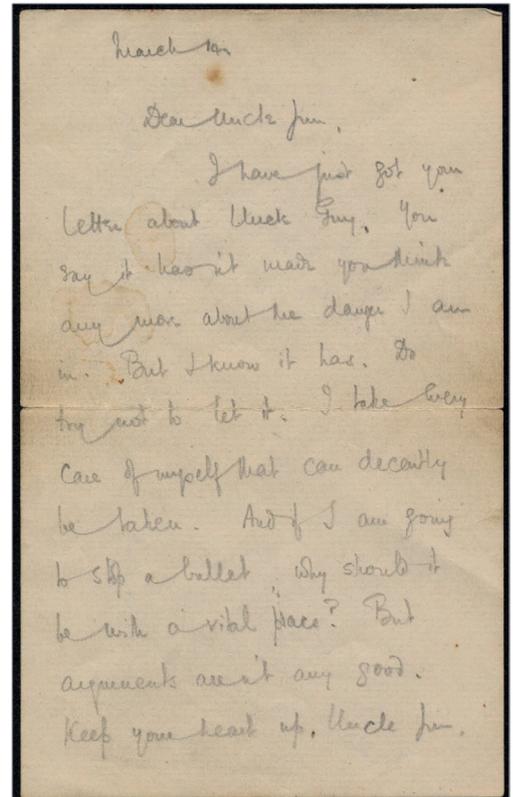
Well let's hope for a good change in the next month.

Meanwhile, dear Uncle Jim, you must carry on with your job of keeping up your courage. I will write every time I come out of action. We go up to the trenches in a few days again.

Your affect.

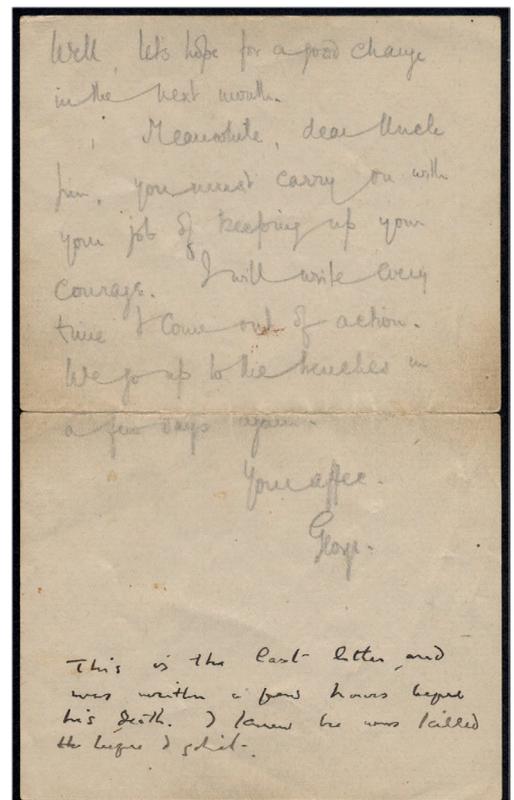
George.

***This is the last letter, and was written a few hours before his death. I know he was killed before I got it.***



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Page 1



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Page 4