C.S. Lewis

A biography of friendship

COLIN DURIEZ
A Brief Chronology

1862 18 May: Birth of Florence (Flora) Augusta Hamilton, mother of C.S. Lewis, in Queenstown, County Cork, in the south of Ireland.
1863 23 August: Birth of Albert J. Lewis, father of C.S. Lewis, in Cork, in the south of Ireland.
1872 28 March: Birth of Janie King Askins (later, Mrs Moore, “Minto”).
1886 20 September: Birth of Charles Williams.
1892 3 January: John Ronald Reuel Tolkien born in Bloemfontein, South Africa.
1894 29 August: Albert Lewis and Flora Hamilton married in St Mark’s Church, Dundela, Belfast.
1895 16 June: Birth of C.S. Lewis’s brother, Warren Hamilton Lewis, in Belfast.
1895 Birth of Arthur Greeves.
1898 29 November: Clive Staples Lewis born in Belfast.
1898 Births of Owen Barfield and Cecil Harwood.
1901 About this time, Warnie Lewis brings the lid of a biscuit tin into the nursery of the infant Jack.
1905 Lewis family moves to their new home, Little Lea, on the outskirts of Belfast.
1906 Birth of Maureen Moore, daughter of Mrs Janie King Moore.
1908 15 February: Flora Hamilton Lewis has major surgery for cancer.
1908 23 August: Flora Hamilton Lewis dies of cancer, on her husband’s birthday.
1908 September: Lewis is sent to Wynyard School in Watford, near London.
1910 Autumn: Lewis attends Campbell College near his Belfast home for half a term. Tolkien succeeds in Oxford Entrance Examination, and is offered an Open Classical Exhibition to Exeter College.
1911 Lewis is sent to Malvern, England, for preparatory study. It is during this time that he abandons his childhood Christian faith.
1913 September: Lewis enters Malvern College, after gaining a classical scholarship.
1914 February: Warnie enters the Royal Military Academy at Sandhurst.
1914 April: Lewis starts a lifelong friendship with Arthur Greeves in Belfast.
1914 4 August: Britain declares war on Germany.
1914 19 September: Lewis begins private study with W.T. Kirkpatrick, the Great Knock, in Bookham, Surrey, with whom he remains until March 1917.

1915 Reading George MacDonald’s *Phantastes*. Looking back, he said the dream story “baptized” his imagination.


1916 December: Lewis sits for a classical scholarship and is elected to University College, Oxford.

1917 From 26 April until September, Lewis is nominally a student at University College, Oxford, undergoing officer training for war. He meets Paddy Moore.

1917 September: Lewis is commissioned as a junior officer (second lieutenant) in the Somerset Light Infantry.

1917 November: Lewis reaches the front line in France.

1918 End of January or early February: Lewis is hospitalized in the British Red Cross hospital at Le Tréport, ill with trench fever.

1918 15 April: Lewis is wounded in battle. The same month, Edward Francis Courtenay “Paddy” Moore is killed in another part of the battle. He is awarded the Military Cross on 2 December “for conspicuous gallantry and initiative”.

1918 22 May: Lewis is transferred to a comfortable hospital in London.

1918 11 November: End of First World War.

1919 January: Lewis resumes his studies at University College, Oxford.

1919 March: Lewis’s *Spirits in Bondage: A Cycle of Lyrics* published under the name Clive Hamilton by Heinemann.

1920 He achieves a First Class in the first part of Classical Honour Moderations (Greek and Latin literature).

1920 Lewis establishes a house in Oxford for Mrs Moore and her daughter, Maureen. Lewis lives with the Moores, probably from 1920.

1921 Death of W.T. Kirkpatrick, the Great Knock.

1922 He gains a First Class in Greats, the final part of Honour Moderations (philosophy and ancient history).

1923 He is awarded a First Class in English.

1923 Lewis begins composing *Dymer*.

1924 October: Lewis begins teaching philosophy at University College, standing in for E.F. Carritt, for one year.

1925 20 May: Lewis elected a fellow of Magdalen College, Oxford, where, from October, he serves as Tutor in English language and literature for nearly thirty years until leaving for Magdalen College, Cambridge, in 1955.
1925 October: Tolkien is appointed Rawlinson and Bosworth Professor of Anglo-Saxon at Oxford.
1926 11 May: The first recorded meeting between J.R.R. Tolkien and C.S. Lewis.
1926 Publication of long narrative poem, Dymer, again under the name Clive Hamilton.
1928 2 May: Albert Lewis retires with an annual pension from his position as Belfast Corporation County Solicitor.
1928 Owen Barfield publishes his Oxford B.Litt as the influential Poetic Diction.
1929 According to Lewis, he becomes a theist in Trinity Term.
1929 25 September: Albert Lewis dies of cancer in Belfast.
Late 1929 Tolkien gives “Lay of Leithian” to Lewis to read, and draws up his “Sketch of The Mythology” to fill out its background. Lewis reads it the night of 6 December.
1930 May: Warnie Lewis decides to edit and arrange the Lewis family papers.
1930 October: Mrs Moore, Lewis, and Warnie purchase The Kilns near Oxford.
1930? Tolkien begins to write The Hobbit.
1931 Tolkien’s reformed English School syllabus, drawn up with C.S. Lewis, is accepted, bringing together language and literature.
1931 19–20 September: After a long night’s conversation on Addison’s Walk in Oxford with Tolkien and Hugo Dyson, Lewis becomes convinced of the truth of Christian faith.
1931 28 September: Lewis returns to Christian faith while riding to Whipsnade Zoo in the sidecar of his brother’s motorbike.
1931 Christmas Day: Lewis starts to take communion in church, after a gap of many years.
Late 1932 Lewis reads the incomplete draft of The Hobbit.
1933 The autumn term may have marked the beginning of Lewis’s convening of a circle of friends named the Inklings.
1934 Dr “Humphrey” Havard takes over a medical practice with surgeries in St Giles and Headington, and becomes C.S. Lewis’s GP.
1936 11 March: Charles Williams receives his first letter from Lewis, in appreciation of his novel The Place of the Lion.
1936 Spring: Lewis proposes he and Tolkien write stories of time and space. A coin toss gives Lewis space travel and Tolkien the challenge of writing on time travel.
1936 Publication of Lewis’s greatly lauded The Allegory of Love: A Study in Medieval Tradition.
1937 December: Tolkien begins writing *The Lord of the Rings*; much of it will be read to the Inklings, and some of it to Lewis alone.


1939 2 September: Evacuee children arrive at The Kilns. Around this time, Lewis begins a story, soon abandoned, about some evacuees who stay with an old professor.

1939 4 September: Warnie Lewis recalled to active service the day after Britain declares war on Germany.

1939 7 September: Charles Williams moves with the London branch of Oxford University Press to Oxford.

1940 Lewis begins lecturing on Christianity for the Royal Air Force, which he continues to do until 1941.

1940 27 August: Maureen Moore marries Leonard J. Blake, then director of music at Worksop College, Nottinghamshire.

1940 14 October: Lewis’s *The Problem of Pain* is published. It is dedicated to the Inklings.

1941 The Oxford University Socratic Club is formed shortly after Christmas, and Lewis becomes president.

1941 6 August: Lewis broadcasts the first of twenty-five talks on BBC radio.

1942 Charles Williams’s *The Forgiveness of Sins* is published, dedicated to the Inklings.

1942 Lewis publishes the enormously popular *The Screwtape Letters*, dedicated to J.R.R. Tolkien.

1943 18 February: An honorary Oxford MA is awarded to Charles Williams.

1943 Lewis publishes *Perelandra (Voyage to Venus)*, the second of his science fiction books. Some of its rich poetic prose was later turned into poems by Ruth Pitter.

1944 5 January: Williams tells Michal, his wife, about a *Time* magazine journalist writing on Lewis. The cover story eventually appears in 1947 and helps to ensure Lewis’s popularity in the United States.

1944 Lewis lectures at Cambridge – the Clark Lectures. These lectures become the important chapter “New Learning and New Ignorance” in his volume for *The Oxford History of English Literature*.

1945 Germany surrenders on 8 May, Japan on 2 September. End of Second World War.

1945 15 May: Warnie Lewis records in his diary the sudden, unexpected death of Charles Williams. “And so vanishes one of the best and nicest men it has ever been my good fortune to meet. May God receive him into His everlasting happiness.”

1945 Lewis publishes his third science fiction story, *That Hideous Strength: A Modern Fairy-Tale for Grown-Ups*, greatly influenced by Charles Williams. This same year he brings out his dream story, *The Great*
Divorce: A Dream, about a bus trip from hell to the borderlands of heaven.

1945 Birth of Douglas Gresham.
1946 Award of Doctor of Divinity by St Andrews University, Scotland.
1947 Lewis publishes his study Miracles: A Preliminary Study, philosophical theology for the lay person.
1948 2 February: Philosopher Elizabeth Anscombe gives a paper to the Oxford Socratic Club, replying to C.S. Lewis’s argument in his book Miracles that naturalism is self-refuting, and seeking clarification.
1949 With his mother’s death, Arthur Greeves moves from Strandtown, Belfast, to Crawfordsburn, County Down.
1949 20 October: The last Thursday night Inklings literary meeting is recorded in Warnie’s diary. “No one turned up” the following week. The group continues to meet informally until Lewis’s death.
1950 10 January: Lewis receives a letter from a 34-year-old American writer Helen Joy Davidman Gresham.
1950 Publication of The Lion, the Witch and the Wardrobe.
1951 12 January: Mrs Moore dies. Since the previous April, she had been confined to a nursing home in Oxford.
1951 Publication of Prince Caspian: The Return to Narnia.
1952 Publication of The Voyage of the “Dawn Treader”.
1952 Publication of Lewis’s Mere Christianity, collecting his wartime BBC radio broadcasts.
1952 September: Lewis meets Joy Davidman for the first time.
1953 Publication of The Silver Chair.
1954 Lewis is persuaded by Tolkien to accept the Chair of Medieval and Renaissance literature at Cambridge. He gives his inaugural lecture, De Descriptione Temporum, on his 56th birthday, 29 November.
1954 Publication of The Horse and His Boy.
1954 Publication of the first two volumes of The Lord of the Rings. Tolkien dedicates this first edition to the Inklings.
1954 Lewis publishes English Literature in the Sixteenth Century, Excluding Drama.
1955 Publication of Lewis’s Surprised by Joy: The Shape of My Early Life.
1956 23 April: Lewis enters into a civil marriage with Joy Davidman at the Oxford Registry Office, in order for her to gain British citizenship.
1955 Publication of The Magician’s Nephew.
1956 Lewis publishes The Last Battle, which is awarded the Carnegie Medal, a prestigious award for children’s books. His Till We Have Faces: A Myth Retold is also published this year.
1957 21 March: Lewis’s Christian marriage with Joy Davidman takes place while she is in hospital.
1957 September: Joy Davidman’s health is improving; by 10 December she is walking again.
1957 December: Death of Dorothy L. Sayers, friend of C.S. Lewis.
1958 Publishes *Reflections on the Psalms*, a literary study for the lay person that is an important contribution to biblical theology.
1957 Publication of Owen Barfield’s groundbreaking *Saving the Appearances*.
1959 October: X-ray shows return of Joy’s cancer.
1959 Owen Barfield retires as a solicitor, freeing him to write many more books, and to lecture, particularly in the United States.
1959 Death in Strandtown of Jane McNeill, Belfast friend of C.S. Lewis and Warnie Lewis, and also scholar Helen Waddell.
1960 May: Joy Davidman and Edith Tolkien are in hospital together.
1960 13 July: Joy dies at the age of 45, not long after the couple risk a Greek holiday.
1960 *The Four Loves* is published, exploring affection, friendship, erotic love, and **agape** (charity, or divine love).
1961 Under the pen name N.W. Clerk, Lewis publishes *A Grief Observed*.
1961 Lewis brings out *An Experiment in Criticism*, a lucid and inspiring distillation of a lifetime’s response to books.
1963 15 June: Lewis has a heart attack while under treatment for poor health at Acland Nursing Home.
1963 September: Warnie returns to The Kilns after having been in Ireland for several months.
1963 Friday 22 November: Lewis dies at home, one week before his 65th birthday.
1964 Publication of *Letters to Malcolm: Chiefly on Prayer*, prepared by Lewis for publication before his death.
1966 Warnie Lewis publishes *Letters of C.S. Lewis*.
1966 Death of Arthur Greeves.
1973 9 April: Warren Hamilton Lewis dies, still mourning his beloved brother.
1980 Death of Nevill Coghill.
1985 Death of Dr Robert Emlyn “Humphrey” Havard.
1987 Death of Roger Lancelyn Green.
1997 15 February: Death of Maureen Blake (née Moore, titled by inheritance, Dame Maureen Dunbar of Hempriggs).
1997 14 December: Owen Barfield dies, just short of his 100th birthday.
1998 Conferences are held in Belfast and worldwide to commemorate the centenary of C.S. Lewis’s birth.
Notes

1. A Northern Irish Childhood


4. From an unpublished memoir willed by W.H. Lewis to The Marion E. Wade Center, Wheaton College; copy in the Bodleian Library, Oxford.


6. While studying English and philosophy at Ulster University in the seventies, I had digs in the station house at Castlerock for a term, at the time when I was becoming increasingly aware of C.S. Lewis’s strong association with the north Irish coast.


13. Bodleian Library, C.S. Lewis Special Collection, d. 241, fol. 22.


18. From W.H. Lewis (ed.), *The Lewis Papers*.
20. The letters are quoted from W.H. Lewis (ed.), *The Lewis Papers*.
22. Early draft of *Surprised by Joy*, the Bodleian Library, C.S. Lewis Special Collection, d. 241, fol. 22.

2. **Schooldays and Arthur Greeves: Watford, Belfast, and Malvern**

5. Henry W. Longfellow’s translation of Esaias Tegnér’s Swedish poem *Drapa*.
7. A selection has been published; the entire diaries are held at The Marion E. Wade Center, bequeathed there by him. Warren Lewis was a natural historian, his abilities evidenced later in life in his books on seventeenth-century French social history.
3. “The Great Knock”: Bookham, Surrey

1. Kirkpatrick made his mark on C.S. Lewis’s fiction, to be seen in some characteristics of the learned Professor Digory Kirke in the Narnian Chronicles and in the sceptical Ulsterman Andrew MacPhee in That Hideous Strength.


6. In early November 1917.

7. This kind of effect can be seen in verse and paintings of the Romantic Movement, which transformed the way people saw the English Lake District.


12. Oxford University is a federation of colleges within the city, rather than a single campus.

4. Oxford and France: “This is What War is Like…”


3. Letter to Arthur Greeves, 3 June 1917 in ibid.

4. The Marion E. Wade Center Oral History interview. Mrs Moore also mentioned this fact in a later letter to Albert Lewis, The Lewis Papers, Vol. VI, p. 44–45.


12. Letter to Arthur Greeves, 14 December 1917, in *ibid*.

13. K.J. Gilchrist discusses this sanitizing of the horrors in his *A Morning After War*. For instance, casualties were often described as dying instantly from a head wound, whereas the reality was very different.


22. For more on the philosopher Arthur Schopenhauer see *ibid.*, pp. 92–93.


5. **Student Days: Oxford, and Mrs Janie Moore**


3. A number of the rented flats and houses Lewis shared with Mrs Moore and Maureen, however, also had live-in landladies.


7. For example, in letter 12 February 1918, in Walter Hooper (ed.), *They Stand Together*, p. 208.


10. The Marion E. Wade Center Oral History interview with Maureen Moore.


12. 20 May 1919, in W.H. Lewis (ed.), *The Lewis Papers*.


16. To Arthur Greeves, June 1921, in Walter Hooper (ed.), *They Stand Together*, p. 287.

6. **The Aspiring Poet and Scholar in Hard Times: The Inspiration of Owen Barfield**


7. G.B. Tennyson (ed.), *Owen Barfield on C.S. Lewis*, p. 3.


10. Ibid., p. 4.
13. Ibid.
16. Another Oxford B.Litt student closely associated with C.S. Lewis also published his thesis. Roger Lancelyn Green’s Andrew Lang: A Critical Biography was published in 1946. One of Green’s supervisors for his B.Litt was J.R.R. Tolkien.

7. The Young Don: Meeting J.R.R. Tolkien

3. I am assuming that this is the same conversation recorded in Surprised by Joy, which is very likely. See Walter Hooper (ed.) All My Road Before Me: The Diary of C.S. Lewis, 1922–1927, p. 379, and C.S. Lewis, Surprised by Joy, chapter 14.
4. Entry Tuesday 11 May 1926 in Walter Hooper (ed.), All My Road Before Me.
6. Entry Wednesday 12 May 1926 in Walter Hooper (ed.), All My Road Before Me.

8. The Most Reluctant Convert

7. In prepublication information about his intellectual biography, *C.S. Lewis: A Life: The Story of the Man Who Created Narnia* (London: Hodder & Stoughton, to be published 2013), author Alister McGrath reveals that he has found evidence that points to 1930 as the year of Lewis’s conversion to theism.
16. Author’s note: The “mess” is the officer’s mess, i.e. the place where they ate, drank, and socialized.
19. After his brother’s death, they were bequeathed by Warren Lewis to The Marion E. Wade Center, Wheaton, along with other invaluable material. This was as a result of his friendship with pioneering C.S. Lewis and J.R.R. Tolkien scholar Clyde S. Kilby.
24. Lewis examined this theme more fully in his book Miracles.

9. The Company of Friends
1. James Boswell – companion of Dr Samuel Johnson, and author of his extensive biography.
2. From his unpublished memoir of C.S. Lewis, held at The Marion E. Wade Center, Wheaton College.
4. i.e. Alexander Pope’s poem, “The Rape of the Lock”.
number! Tolkien gives a very similar account in a letter to Donald Swann earlier, on 14 October 1966 (see my J.R.R. Tolkien: The Making of a Legend (Oxford: Lion, 2012), p. 171). Having two such similar accounts drawn from memory but nearly a year apart suggests the accuracy of the record.


13. Warnie disguised Mrs Moore’s name in his diaries, employing another of her names, King.


15. Corrections were made on long columns of paper before the text was divided into page lengths, as correcting was expensive and time-consuming, and involved remoulding the metal block that made up a line of text on the page.


**10. Storytelling and Reflections: Through the Changing Thirties with Tolkien**


3. This suggests Havard joined the group before Lewis’s well-received *Out of the Silent Planet* was published in 1938, and perhaps even before the publication of Tolkien’s *The Hobbit* in September 1937.

### 11. The Wartime Years and After: Enter Charles Williams

11. George Orwell, “The Scientist Takes Over”, review of C.S. Lewis,


13. Jill Flewett (Lady Freud) was later an actress who married Sir Clement Freud, grandson of the psychoanalyst Sigmund Freud and brother of the artist Lucian Freud.


17. Letter to Warnie, Sunday 11 August 1940, in ibid.

18. Letter to Warnie, Saturday 17 August 1940, in ibid.

19. Local Defence Volunteer (later renamed the Home Guard).


12. A New Era and a Change of Strategy: The Narnia Factor


9. From *St Andrews Citizen*, 29 June 1946. The very apt quotation of “things unattempted yet in prose or rhyme” is from John Milton’s prayer for help and inspiration in his new venture in the opening lines of *Paradise Lost*.


13. **The Surprising American:**

   **Mrs Joy Davidman Gresham**


3. See the biographies *Shadowlands*, by Brian Sibley (who researched the BBC film), *And God Came In*, by Lyle Dorsett, and *Lenten Lands: My Childhood with Joy Davidman and C.S. Lewis*, by Douglas Gresham, younger son of Joy Davidman and stepson of C.S. Lewis.


7. For a full account of the events leading up to Lewis’s move to Cambridge, and Tolkien’s crucial role in it, see my *J.R.R. Tolkien and C.S. Lewis: The Story of a Friendship* (Stroud: Sutton Publishing, 2003), chapter 10, p. 146 ff.


9. There are some parallels with Francis Schaeffer’s small book *Escape From Reason* (Leicester: IVP, 1968), which also posits a cataclysmic divide between modern and older thought starting around that time.


13. Lewis is quoting Tertullian, in reference to the Latin poet Virgil, who appeared to be anticipating the coming of Christ.


18. Back jacket endorsement on *ibid*.


14. **Leaving the Shadowlands**

1. N.W. stands for Nat Whilk, Old English for “I know not whom”, and Clerk is Middle English for “scholar”.


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C.S. Lewis was the author of the children's classic The Lion, the Witch and the Wardrobe. Learn more about the man, the storyteller and the Christian. On this page.

Introduction. C.S. Lewis (29 November 1898 - 22 November 1963) was a prolific writer, poet, scholar of English literature and defender of Christianity. His most famous book is The Lion, the Witch and the Wardrobe, the first published of his Chronicles of Narnia. This article explores more of Lewis the man, the storyteller and the Christian. Lewis's childhood.