

# *All My Dogs Before Me*

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**D**ogs? Did C. S. Lewis own dogs?” That casual question, raised at one of the organizational meetings of the Arizona C. S. Lewis Society,<sup>1</sup> led to a rather obscure search. Was Lewis a pet owner? It is well known that he had created two imaginary worlds filled with talking animals: Narnia and Boxen. Less well known was his opposition to vivisection. An entire chapter of *The Problem of Pain* deals with pain as experienced by animals. A bear at the Whipsnade Zoo, nicknamed “Mr. Bultitude” by Lewis and his brother, Warren, appears as a minor character in *That Hideous Strength*. The other two books in the Ransom Trilogy contain vivid encounters between man and translunary beasts (both sentient and otherwise). Lewis obviously thought well of animals. But did he have any pets of his own to nurture and deepen that affection? Yes he did, as his autobiography, diary, and letters clearly demonstrate.

The following is a list of eight dogs and other pets that were part of Lewis’ household during his life, from boyhood to his death in 1963. The gradual compiling of this trivia provided some occasional moments of comic relief as the Arizona C. S. Lewis Society began to take shape. During future gatherings, there are sure to be additional trivia amassed on the pets and other pastimes of Lewis and his extended household.

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<sup>1</sup> There were eleven organizational meetings of the Arizona C. S. Lewis Society leading up to the workshop for the film premier of *The Lion, the Witch, and the Wardrobe* held on October 22, 2005. The organizational meetings were all held at *Rula Bula*, an Irish pub in Tempe, Arizona, where Lewis would have been very much at home. The founding members of the Society included Steve Beard, Grayson Carter, Bruce R. Johnson, and Kirk Sexton.



**Top left:** Jack, Mrs. Moore and Warnie with “Pat” and “Papworth” at The Kilns, 1930.



**Top right:** Douglas Gresham with “Ricky” after 1963. Taken by Walter Hooper and used by his permission.

**Middle:** David Gresham, Jack, and Douglas Gresham with “Susie” at The Kilns, about 1957.

*Both used by permission of The Marion E. Wade Center, Wheaton College, Wheaton, IL.*



**Bottom:** Lewis, Maureen, and Mrs. Moore with “Baron Papworth” on holiday in Cornwall, August 1927. Used by permission of The Marion E. Wade Center, Wheaton College, Wheaton, IL.



1. Jacksie (c.1900). “He is Jacksie.” It is no secret that C. S. Lewis disliked his given Christian name, Clive Staples. While on a childhood holiday, he approached his mother, pointed to himself and declared, “He is Jacksie.”<sup>2</sup> The nickname, later shorted to “Jack,” would remain with him for the rest of his life. Often overlooked is that Lewis took the name from a small, neighborhood dog that had recently been run over and killed.<sup>3</sup> Lewis was fond of the dog, and thus his change of name served two distinct functions: it memorialized his affection for the animal, and it disposed of an unappreciated given name.
  
2. Tim (c.1908–22). “[A] barrel, on four legs.”<sup>4</sup> At Little Lea, their childhood home outside Belfast, Jack and Warnie had a least three pets: a canary called Peter, a mouse known as Tommy, and an Irish terrier, Tim.<sup>5</sup> A brief, but tender tribute to Tim appears in *Surprised by Joy*.<sup>6</sup> He never, it seems, quite grasped the concept of going for a walk, or at least (unlike most dogs) he remained indifferent to the experience. As Lewis dryly explained, “He never exactly obeyed you; he sometimes agreed with you.”<sup>7</sup>
  
3. Pat (1923). “I had left him alone for [only] five minutes.” A canine of a very different disposition is found in the diary of C. S. Lewis.<sup>8</sup> Pat is mentioned in the diary no less than thirty times, usually in the context of going for a walk with his master. The dog was first acquired as a puppy on September 28, 1923, while Lewis was living on Holyoake Road, Oxford, with Mrs. Moore and her daughter, Maureen.<sup>9</sup> Some months later, when Lewis had stepped out of the room, Pat managed to consume half of a volume of Plato, which Lewis had been translating.<sup>10</sup> That put an end to Greek translation for the day.

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<sup>2</sup> W. H. Lewis, “Memoir of C.S. Lewis,” in *Letters of C. S. Lewis* (New York, 1975), 2.

<sup>3</sup> Douglas Gresham, *Jack’s Life: The Life Story of C. S. Lewis* (Nashville, 2005), 2.

<sup>4</sup> C. S. Lewis, *Surprised by Joy: The Shape of My Early Life* (New York, 1955), 162.

<sup>5</sup> Michael Coren, *The Man Who Created Narnia: The Story of C. S. Lewis* (Grand Rapids, 1994), 8.

<sup>6</sup> *Surprised by Joy*, 162–3.

<sup>7</sup> *Ibid.*, 163.

<sup>8</sup> Walter Hooper, ed., *All My Road Before Me: The Diary of C. S. Lewis, 1922–1927* (San Diego, 1991).

<sup>9</sup> *Ibid.*, 269.

<sup>10</sup> *Ibid.*, 284.

Afternoon walks were always a source of great pleasure to Lewis, even more so when a canine companion shared his routine. Typically, he would return home for lunch, walk the dog (or dogs), and be driven back to college by Maureen about 4:30 p.m.<sup>11</sup> Several other pets are also mentioned in the Lewis diary: a turtle named Henry (owed by a housekeeper)<sup>12</sup> and several cats, including Tibbie<sup>13</sup> and Biddy Anne, who, Lewis writes (in 1924), had “recently adopted us.”<sup>14</sup>

4. Mr. Papworth (c.1922–36). “[P]loughing *through* every wave like a tramp.”<sup>15</sup> A third dog, christened “Mr. Papworth,” “Baron Papworth,” or “Tykes,” became a favorite of both Lewis and Mrs. Moore.<sup>16</sup> In September 1927, Papworth accompanied them and Maureen on holiday in Cornwall, where his frolicking in the waves amused everyone.<sup>17</sup> A perceptive eye can discern the dog as the large dark object on Maureen’s lap in the photo of Lewis, Maureen and Mrs. Moore taken during that trip.<sup>18</sup> On September 28, 1931, Lewis and his brother undertook the now well-known motorcycle trip from Oxford to the Whipsnade Zoo, in Berkshire, during which Lewis’ conversion to Christianity was finally completed. Even in the midst of this large drama, a dog played a small role. Mrs. Moore, Maureen, and an unidentified Irish friend lagged behind the Lewis brothers in a much slower car. Accompanying them that day was Mr. Papworth.<sup>19</sup>
  
5. Troddles (c.1936). “The heartless treatment meted out to poor old Troddles.”<sup>20</sup> The diary of Warren Lewis mentioned another well-loved dog from a later time, though little is known of him. Apparently, Troddles was

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<sup>11</sup> Colin Duriez, *Tolkien and C. S. Lewis: The Gift of Friendship* (Mahwah, N. J., 2003), 40.

<sup>12</sup> *All My Road Before Me*, 412.

<sup>13</sup> *Ibid.*, 271.

<sup>14</sup> *Ibid.*, 288.

<sup>15</sup> Walter Hooper, ed., *The Collected Letters of C. S. Lewis, Volume 1: Family Letters, 1905–1931* (San Francisco, 2004), 724.

<sup>16</sup> *Ibid.*, 683.

<sup>17</sup> *Ibid.*, 722–4.

<sup>18</sup> For example see Walter Hooper, *Through Joy and Beyond: A Pictorial Biography of C. S. Lewis* (New York, 1982), 64; Humphrey Carpenter, *The Inklings* (Boston, 1979), 16.

<sup>19</sup> William Griffin, *C. S. Lewis: Spirituality for Mere Christians* (New York, 1998), 41–2.

<sup>20</sup> W. H. Lewis, *Brothers and Friends: The Diaries of Major Warren Hamilton Lewis* (San Francisco, 1982), 232.

displaced by a dog both Warren and Jack came to despise: the highly spoiled Bruce. Ten years after Bruce's death, when a meeting of the Inklings focused on the question of whether dogs would share in the resurrection of the dead,<sup>21</sup> it can safely be assumed that the Lewis brothers may have longed for a reunion with Troddles or Mr. Papworth, but certainly not with Bruce.

6. Bruce (1935–50). “Met J[ack] in the Cloister,” Warren confided to his diary, “who gave me the joyful news, ‘Bruce is dead and buried.’”<sup>22</sup> During her declining years, Mrs. Moore became obsessed with pampering Bruce, insisting (among other things) that either Jack or Warren take him on numerous walks each day. Sometimes Bruce would bark throughout the night. Often, he would relieve himself in Mrs. Moore's centrally located (and often overheated) bedroom; the stench would permeate the entire house.<sup>23</sup>
7. Susie (c.1951). “. . . the dog, being an honest, humble person, always has a bad [conscience].”<sup>24</sup> Susie appears in several photographs dating from the time of Lewis' marriage to Joy Davidman.<sup>25</sup> Joy also brought with her a Persian cat named Snip,<sup>26</sup> whom Lewis referred to as my “step-cat.”<sup>27</sup>
8. Ricky (1962). “Very anxious to be friendly.”<sup>28</sup> Ricky, a boxer, was the last dog Lewis owned. He shared the Kilns with Lewis and his brother, with Snip, and with a ginger cat named Tom, who was described humorously by Lewis as “a great Don Juan and a mighty hunter before the Lord.”<sup>29</sup>

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<sup>21</sup> The meeting was held on Thursday, 28 March 1946. *Ibid.*, 186. For more on Lewis and the eternal state of animals, see Gregory Bassham “Some Dogs Go to Heaven: Lewis on Animal Salvation” in *The Chronicles of Narnia and Philosophy: The Lion, the Witch, and the Worldview*, ed. Gregory Bassham, et al. (Peru, Illinois: Carus, 2005), 273–86.

<sup>22</sup> *Ibid.*, 232.

<sup>23</sup> Colin Duriez, *The C. S. Lewis Chronicles* (New York, 2005), 242.

<sup>24</sup> C. S. Lewis, *Letters to an American Lady* (Grand Rapids, 1967), 38.

<sup>25</sup> See the photograph section in Douglas Gresham, *Jack's Life: The Life Story of C. S. Lewis*; and in Douglas Gresham, *Lenten Lands: My Childhood with Joy Davidman and C. S. Lewis* (San Francisco, 2003).

<sup>26</sup> Gratitude must be expressed to Walter Hooper for assistance in distinguishing between this cat and Sambo, an earlier Siamese cat owned by Joy. *Jack's Life: The Life Story of C. S. Lewis*, 64.

<sup>27</sup> *Letters to an American Lady*, 105.

<sup>28</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>29</sup> *Ibid.*

This list of dogs is helpful in illuminating the chapter on animal suffering in Lewis' apologetic work, *The Problem of Pain*.<sup>30</sup> First, Lewis had pondered the problem of animal pain since he was a child. While still only three years old, the suffering and death of the much-loved Jacksie led Lewis to adopt the dog's name for himself. Second, Lewis grounded his theological inquiries on animal pain on firsthand experience, with his own beloved pets. He began chapter nine of *The Problem of Pain* by admitting that all we say about what animals may feel is speculative.<sup>31</sup> This and other theological speculation on beasts, says Lewis, "must be based" on what we observe in tame animals.<sup>32</sup> What he had observed in Bruce and in a feline contemporary was that they both "live together in my house and seem to enjoy it."<sup>33</sup> From this Lewis could speculate whether one of humanity's unfinished tasks was to restore peace to the animal world—a theme explored creatively in *The Chronicles of Narnia*.

Of course Bruce brought little by way of peace to Lewis over the next decade. His remark to Arthur Greeves after Bruce had died speaks volumes: "We have (thank goodness) no dog now."<sup>34</sup> This leads to a third point: Lewis attempted to live out his theology in everyday life even when it proved difficult. Caring for Bruce, like caring for Mrs. Moore, grew more difficult as the years passed. For Lewis, however, these were among the various responsibilities given to him by God: they were a small part in the divine plan to restore a sense of order and peace to the world.

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<sup>30</sup> C. S. Lewis, *The Problem of Pain* (New York, 1948).

<sup>31</sup> *Ibid.*, 117.

<sup>32</sup> *Ibid.*, 126–7.

<sup>33</sup> *Ibid.*, 124.

<sup>34</sup> From a letter dated 15 June 1950, in Walter Hooper, ed., *The Letters of C. S. Lewis to Arthur Greeves* (New York, 1979), 228.