AN ‘INSPIRING’ BELFAST CHILDHOOD

In Lewis’s day, Belfast was a mighty industrial city. Nowhere produced more ships or linen, more ropes or tea than Belfast in the early 20th century.

Lewis loved ‘the Belfast Symphony’ – the pulsating rhythm of the Harland & Wolff riveters, ringing out across the city. He later described the sound as “more tuneful than song of any bird, a thousand hammer’s ringing in the morn.”

In 1905, the Lewis family moved from Dundela Avenue to ‘Little Lee’ (little field), Circular Road. The young Jack probably played in the attic – could this have inspired the setting for the children’s adventure to Narnia in The Magician’s Nephew? A wardrobe in the home, built by Lewis’ paternal grandfather, may also have inspired the gateway to Narnia.

ST MARK’S CHURCH

St Mark’s Church was very influential in Lewis’s life. His maternal grandfather, Rev. Thomas Hamilton, was the rector and baptised Lewis and his brother here.

Lewis denounced Christianity before returning to the faith in 1931. He is well known for his Christian apologetics including Mere Christianity, Miracles and The Problem with Pain.

The church has a strong ‘lion’ association – it is known as ‘The Lion on the Hill’ and the church magazine is called ‘The Lion’. The most evident association is the lion shaped door handle at the rectory. As a young boy Lewis would have been standing face to face with this lion as he went to visit his grandfather and this, perhaps, influenced the creation of ‘Asham’ in The Chronicles of Narnia.

In 1935 the Lewis brothers presented a stained glass window to the church in memory of their parents. The window is full of symbolism and some of it is explained below the image.

To find out more visit: www.dundela.down.gov.uk

CAMPBELL COLLEGE

As Lewis embarked on his first journey to school here he could have been confronted by the solitary gas lamp on the grounds.

Could this lamp have been his inspiration for the Narnian lamp-post we read of in both The Magician’s Nephew and The Lion, the Witch and the Wardrobe. “This is the land of Narnia... all that lies between the lamp-post and the great castle of Cair Paravel...”

Mr Tumnus, the faun, explains to Lucy when they meet.

ST JAMES’S CHURCH

St James may refer to Lewis’ father, Albert James Lewis. You will also notice that St James is holding a silver chalice – similar to that used in the church, a gift from the Lewis family.

St Luke, the physician, could relate to Lewis’ mother Flora who suffered from ill health. Lewis’ memory of his mother may have been of her surrounded by doctors during her illness.

There is a winged lion around the shoulders of St Mark. This is significant as the lion is the icon for St Mark and is also a symbol associated with Venice, his final resting place.

EXPLORE BELFAST’S LITERARY SON

This trail will take you to the places that influenced and inspired the young C.S Lewis.

It starts at ‘The Searcher’ sculpture outside Holywood Arches Library on the Holywood Road. To get there, catch a Metro 3 or 4 bus from Belfast City Centre, or take a taxi. Then enjoy a couple of hours exploring east Belfast’s main C.S Lewis sites.

Clive Staples Lewis was one of the intellectual giants of the 20th century. He wrote more than 40 books, ranging from children’s fantasy literature to popular theology. Known as ‘Jack’ to his friends and family, Lewis was born in Belfast on 29th November 1898, the second child of Albert and Florence (Flora) and younger brother of Warren (Warnie). He grew up in family houses on Dundela Avenue and Circular Road in east Belfast. His early years in Belfast influenced much of his later writing, especially The Chronicles of Narnia.

Lewis was a Campbell College and Oxford alumni and a veteran of WWI. He was appointed Fellow and Tutor in English Literature at Oxford University, where he served for 29 years until 1954. He died on 22nd November 1963 aged 64 and is buried in Oxford.

The C.S. Lewis Trail has been developed by the Connswater Community Greenway, a £35 million investment in east Belfast.

The Connswater Community Greenway will develop a 9km linear park through east Belfast, following the course of the Connswater, Knock and Loop rivers, connecting the green and open spaces. The greenway will create vibrant, attractive, safe and accessible parkland for leisure, recreation, community events and activities.

The project has been developed by the East Belfast Partnership and is funded by the Big Lottery Fund, Belfast City Council and the Department for Social Development.

WWW.COMMUNITYGREENWAY.UK

The Searcher

The Searcher is a life size statue depicting Lewis as the character Digory Kirke, from The Magician’s Nephew, opening the wardrobe door – no doubt in search of his mystical land.

Two murals in east Belfast are dedicated to the author. Both include a portrait of him and imagery from The Chronicles of Narnia.

The C.S. Lewis Reading Room, Queen’s University Belfast, features glass engraved quotations from Lewis and a wardrobe door marks the entrance to the room. The carpets and central table are also based on Narnia themes.

Lewis was memorialised in Poets’ Corner, Westminster Abbey on the 50th anniversary of his death in 2013.

Movies and TV series have been made based on Lewis’ life and work. The most well known are the 3 recent The Chronicles of Narnia movies by Walden Media which have grossed over $1.5 billion worldwide. The BBC produced a popular TV series (Nov 1988–Dec 1990) based on the Narnia books. The film, Shadowlands, (1993) is based on Lewis’ later life, focusing on his relationship with his wife Joy Davidman.
C.S. Lewis spent the first ten years or so of his childhood in East Belfast. During that time, many of the people that he met, the places he visited and things that he saw had such a profound influence on him that they were to emerge in his later writings.

This trail will lead you to many of these influential places. It will reveal the events that helped to shape one of the most wonderfully creative minds of the twentieth century.