

J M Barrie Exhibition

The exhibition, which will run throughout the month of May, features an impressive collection of items, including letters, first-edition books, plays and theatre programmes that help chart the amazing life and career of one of Scotland's favourite literary sons.

Amongst the treasure trove of J M Barrie gems to be showcased is a rare booklet of one of his earliest short plays, 'Caught napping' (1883), penned whilst Barrie worked as a journalist, with only three copies recorded in publicly accessible collections; and also his first ever book, 'Better dead', which he published at his own expense in 1887, losing £25 in the process.

Items relating to his most famous creation, 'Peter Pan', include the first American edition of the novel 'Peter and Wendy' (1911), which later became 'Peter Pan' and a letter from Barrie to the play's costume and set designer, William Nicholson, following the opening of the play in 1904 where he reports: 'It is a huge success – biggest bookings they've ever known.'

The exhibition will also provide a fantastic insight into Peter Pan's early admirers with some charming audience feedback in the form of letters from young fans, some declaring how often they had seen the play, others requesting autographs and even an offer of marriage to the fictional Wendy from a 6-year-old boy.

Stephanie Breen, curator of the J M Barrie exhibition, said: 'It is wonderful to be able to celebrate J M Barrie's 150th anniversary by creating this special exhibition at the National Library of Scotland. The display will enable people to catch a real glimpse of the life and times of the man behind Peter Pan, seeing first-hand personally penned items alongside eye-catching literary rarities.

'The stories behind some of these items are fascinating too, such as the fact that "Caught napping" was drafted in an

attempt to impress an actress, and for his first ever book, "Better dead", he enlisted the help of an old school friend to design the front cover.

'We hope that people, both young and old, will visit this enlightening exhibition throughout the month of May and won't miss out on the opportunity to get up close to a man who did indeed grow up but will never be forgotten.'

J M Barrie's memoir of his mother, an early edition of his book 'My Lady Nicotine' and two privately printed booklets for the amateur cricket club Allahakbarries, which Barrie founded in order to indulge his love of the game, will also form part of the display.