

Brian Jacques

A tribute from the Redwall Online Community

During his life, Brian Jacques captured the hearts of thousands of readers young and old with his tales of the woodlanders of Mossflower Woods and the surrounding lands. Redwall Abbey's venerable sandstone walls loom large in our imaginations, guarded by Martin the Warrior and all the Champions that followed him. Strawberry Fizz and October Ale still populate the cellars of our imaginations, and Meadowcream, whether we are certain of what it is or not, still seems the most obvious choice to spread across a warm scone.

Brian Jacques passed away on February 5, 2011 but his legacy will live on. As evidenced by these tributes, his words and the world he created touched many lives. He inspired a generation of young artists.

We will not forget you, Mr. Jacques. We cannot. Thank you.

Ashen Fox

I was truly angry with Mr. Jacques once. Furious tears ran down my cheeks as I read *Martin the Warrior* and Rose died. I was so upset that he would do that to Martin, of all characters. Martin was always special, and yet Brian Jacques wrote his hero's true love out of the story. I just couldn't believe it. I didn't even finish the book until months later.

I read an interview a while after that; I don't know when or who wrote it or where to find it now. I believe it was one of those things where readers could ask him questions and he would respond, and one reader asked the question I know I had been dying to ask for some time: why did Rose have to die?

His answer changed me forever.

"Such is life."

That's it. No long explanation. No mention of if it was difficult for him to write or reasons behind it or something happy about how Rose and Martin were reunited after death. Just a simple response.

Such is life.

I thought about it for a long time. At first it only made me angry all over again. It sounded so flippant! I was young when I discovered the magic of Redwall and those characters and that place went with me through some tough years. I took Rose's death nearly as hard as the death of the family dog. Crazy, right? But it bothered me, it nagged at my soul. I just didn't get it, and all he can do to explain his actions is say "such is life"?

But he was right. The question was about death, and his response was a simple explanation that death happens. Death is an everyday tragedy.

"Such is life" may have come across as a bit uncaring, but it was true and deep and real. Brian Jacques wrote books for children, and while it was a fictional world so much of what he wrote about was real. Death was one of those things. Characters died, even the good ones, even the true loves.

And authors... even the most beloved authors... die too.

It was crushing to hear of Brian's passing today, but the moment I heard it his own words sprang to mind. "Such is life" he had once said of death. It is still true. It is still hardly as careless as it first sounds.

Mr. Jacques was 71 years old when he passed. Two grown sons and a wife survive him, as do millions of readers.

"Such is life" he said. But it wasn't a slight on the important and miraculous thing that is life as much as it was a humble admittance that we all will face death one day, and we do

not have the power to choose the time or the place. It means that many in the world will read of his passing or hear it on television and think nothing of it.

Do you know why it bothers us so much that Rose died? Lots of characters died, but the ones we agonize over were the deaths that felt too soon. I always thought Rose's story was unfinished. That was part of why it was so tragic.

I can't say that about Mr. Jacques. The stories he gave us were amazing, yet perhaps even more amazing was his own story. This wonderful man did a lot of living. We are so fortunate that he was able to share so much with us.

And I will do my best to keep sharing that. I still love Redwall, I love writing about it and enjoying it with others, I still love curling up with one of his books on a rainy afternoon, and I look forward to the day when I can share these beloved tales with my own children.

We miss you, Brian Jacques...

...thanks for leaving us so much to remember you with.

Amber

It's said that the pen's mightier than the sword;
Parchment and ink can beat a great horde.
Powerfully wielding his paper and pen;
Brian, the hero, he fought to the end.
Pictures he painted of Redwall and feasts;
Of vermin, woodlanders, all sorts of beasts.
Literature weeps to see a master fall;
Brian the Champion of old Redwall.

It's said that the pen's mightier than the sword;
Parchment and ink can beat a great horde.
Powerfully wielding his paper and pen;
Brian, the Champion, loved to his end.

Astrognash

When I heard the news that Brian Jacques had passed away, I was crushed. I literally felt as though a close childhood friend had died, even though I had only met him in person a few times and he probably didn't remember me. Never before has the death of an author made me cry. Brian Jacques's work affected me more deeply than any author ever has or ever will. He wasn't just a part of my childhood; he *was* my childhood. All throughout middle and high school, I was utterly immersed in his world, voraciously devouring every book (some at least a dozen times). I was the awkward kid in my class, and the stories of small mice courageously battling great, evil vermin was such a comfort to me growing up. One of the great running themes throughout the series is to be courageous and good, no matter the cost. It's such a simple, beautiful message, and there are plenty of wicked people in this world that still need to hear it.

Jacques inspired me not just to read, but to write. In middle school I wrote two (horrendous) full-length fan fiction novels. I still have them somewhere, I think. Sometimes I like to dig them out and laugh and cringe. I love that I wrote them, though. It gave me a positive outlet during a time in school where children were at their cruellest. I have written in many *Redwall* survivor contests online, and for the most part truly enjoyed the experience of creating a great story with nine or so other talented people. I have made lifelong friends on the Redwall Online Community, from the time I discovered it way back in 1996. I even met my husband on Terrouge. Yes. I literally never would have met and married the man of my dreams if not for Mr. Jacques and his wonderful stories of talking warrior mice. I can't even begin to describe the impact Brian Jacques has had on my life, but I am eternally grateful for everything he has done. I just hope that wherever he is now, he can see the incredible effect he has had on not just my life, but the lives of everyone that has read and fallen in love with his books. He will truly be missed.

Lady Tara Starblade aka Caitlin C.

Whenever I'm asked the question 'what is the best gift you've ever received?' I always struggle to answer. I've been blessed with so many precious and meaningful gifts throughout the years that it seems impossible to single out just one. But upon learning of Brian Jacques' death and reflecting on just how much his writing had impacted my life, I now know the answer to that question.

Ten years ago this February, my dad gave me *Redwall*. My ten-year-old self was thrilled to receive such a grown-up looking book, and one about mice, at that! I was hooked from page one. I've always loved reading, but few books have captivated me the way Mr. Jacques' did. But being an entertaining read is only the tip of the iceberg when it comes to what those books have done for me.

Suddenly, anything seemed possible when I put pencil to paper. Landscapes stretched forth as far as the eye could see; characters sprung up and began dashing about, and adventure was around every corner. I'd always been one for drawing and writing, but *Redwall* inspired a fierce creativity in me unlike any I'd ever felt before. Years and countless drawings of mice, badgers, otters, and squirrels later, the influence of Mr. Jacques' books is still visible in the characters I've created and stories I write today.

But that is only part of the story. In my younger years, the good creatures of Redwall were my faithful companions; they were always there for me when my oft-fickle friends were not. Elementary and middle school were not kind to me socially – while I wasn't exactly shunned, finding genuinely loyal friends was a constant, often painful struggle. When it got to be too much, I always knew I could turn to Mossflower Country for an escape. Eventually, that escape brought me to the online realm of Terrouge, which in turn brought into my life some of the most wonderful friends a lonely girl could ask for. Not a day goes by where I don't think about how lucky I am to have met them, and I marvel at the fact that a klutzy young mouse in an over-sized habit and sandals brought us all together.

Despite drifting away from the books these last few years (though faithfully purchasing or receiving as gifts each new novel) as my interests have evolved and expanded, the world of *Redwall* has always and will continue to be firmly lodged in my heart. It stands as a symbol of childhood, of imagination, of friendship... and endless possibilities. Thank you, Mr. Jacques. For everything.

Carolyn

Brian Jaques, you will be missed by many. You captivated the hearts, minds, and souls of thousands of people with your magic. Nowadays the young, curious fire has simmered down in this bosom, but now I view your works in a new light. You had something special. You had a gift. Your unique way of presenting stories captivated the heart, lit hot the fires of imagination, and stirred the soul. Selfishly put, for years and years you influenced this person. The many hours spent writing fan fiction in the Redwall universe is a testament to this fact. You captivated me with charm, wit, humor, and adventure. I wish to pass your legacy on to my children.

Like I said, I see *Redwall* in a new light. I see them not only as sparks of ingenuity but tools. Nothing would please me more or make me more giddy than to learn from your craft. Albeit, such joy could probably never surpass that which you gave me from your series. A person certainly can pick up something from your work. You were a talented writer who possessed a special gift. I wish to learn from you. Even though you are gone, your words still speak to me.

Daniel

A man named Brian took typewriter in hand
And wove himself an amazing land
It was written so kind
For the school of the blind
And since then his world did expand

Creatures were made
For peace and the blade
To protect their woodlander friends
But vermin and their hordes
Fought them tooth and swords
In a feud that may never end.

Mice banded together
With those furred, spiked and feathered
They battled on strong
But they wished long
To live a peaceful life
Not having to stop what vermin did wrong.

A place was built to protect against pain
A peaceful Abbey designed by Abbess Germaine
It did all it could
To protect the woods
Overlooking it and the western plain.

A series to enjoy
Of Mice and the Sword
One of which a person should never get bored
Brian had power
Making woodlanders good, vermin sour
A series which should for all time, all eternity... be adored.

(Thank you Brian for giving me inspiration and joy throughout my life.)

Dartpaw

I think everyone has that person that they read and said “I am going to be a writer.” Brian Jacques was that writer for me. I still have the Redwall series, and every one of those books is falling apart because I read and reread them so much. I used to finish the series and turn right around and start all over again, reading them in their sequential order.

I remember discovering the books at my library in Copperas Cove. They were in the young adult section, which, at the time I discovered them, was a massive, frightening territory. I was probably 9 or 10, and stuck quite firmly in middle grade books (most of them about dogs.) I’d noticed my brother reading them, and the covers were pretty mysterious, epic watercolors with mice holding swords. The first book I actually read was *Mossflower*, and no other villain in the series ever came close to Tsarmina with me. I remember being about halfway through the book and asking my brother “What is Boar the Fighter?” My brother, with all the eye-rolling condescension of an older brother, said, “He’s a Badger Lord.” I remember being totally awed by the concept, staring at the book. Because if the mice were this badass, what was a badger going to be like? I read the rest of the book almost in a whole night, because I wanted to see the Badger Lord.

The next book I picked up was *Redwall*, which stunned me (and still stuns me). I couldn’t believe that the author had taken a premise that the average person would find laughable, and made it into such a profound story about friendship and coming of age. It showed me that anything, handled intelligently, with respect to the human condition, could make a good story. I have yet to see a knight versus dragon fight that rivals the moment when Matthias faces down Asmodeous. I wanted to write things like Brian Jacques, and perhaps more importantly, I wanted to *write* like Brian Jacques.

A lot of my early stuff reflected that. I remember my father rather scornfully informing me that my writing was too flowery, without substance, and being rather crushed by that. Meanwhile, I was growing up, and like many fans of the series, suffered a moment where the series jumped the shark for me. *Outcast of Redwall* was the last book I felt had merit, despite it being my favorite of the series (badger main character and a chance to see a vermin as a good guy for once.) I’ve watched the fandom from afar (and even watched the lamentably bad cartoon series when it came out) and seen it happen for other fans with each successive book. However, it didn’t sour my memories of the books, or the author in my mind. Jacques was still a master storyteller; I acquiesced that I had merely grown up, not that his talent had diminished. I didn’t rage at him for not growing up with me. Jacques was telling stories for the audience that would derive the most from it. Jacques was comfort to me when faced with worlds like *Twilight* or *Eragon*, the balm that damn, at least *somebody* out there was writing children’s lit that would last the ages without insulting the intelligence of its reader.

I always dreamt of meeting the guy someday, of being able to walk up to him and say “You are the reason I started writing.” And now I can’t. It’s a shame. I never even wrote him a fan letter, based on the misguided opinion that he wouldn’t care about one more fan, or the assumption that he probably got that all the time and would be exasperated to hear it again.

But he was my idol.

He still is.

I can’t say much more than that.

Droemar

When I was a kid, my family didn't have a lot of money to go around, so my siblings and I learned to make do with what we had. We had this game we'd play when we got a catalog. On each spread, we could circle one and only one thing that we each wanted from the catalog. There was no saving up circles either – you had to pick what was on the page. Nobody liked the puzzles page, but you had to choose.

Toward the middle were the books and on the left-hand page, towards the top, was this awesome-looking series by a man named Brian Jacques. Thinking back, it's about the only thing I can remember from the catalog and I always had a profound desire for it. I don't know why, but it ensnared me like a fly in a spider's web.

Every year, my siblings and I had a way to make money. A few summers running, we sold home-grown green beans and tomatoes door-to-door. Only thirty percent of my cut was for spending, the rest going to tithes or various savings, but the first year I remember making any money, I spent every penny on *Redwall*. Every week or so, I'd go down to a little, independent bookstore and I'd get another book and devour it whole. At the end, I remember spending more than a month saving up for the hardback edition of *The Long Patrol*.

My formative years were deeply influenced by those books. Other than a few shorter-than-short stories, the first thing I wrote was a story inspired by Redwall. It wasn't great; it wasn't even *good*, but it was the first thing I wrote. Now I consider myself a writer. That is part of Jacques' legacy in me.

It was through Redwall that I first got involved with any kind of community online. I joined a club as soon as I found one, back when the ROC was young and you did things for points to get ranks and be cool, but that was only the beginning of how Redwall would affect me socially. There's so much history there – the Daliwynd, Questor's Bold, the Vulpine Imperium, and Terrouge. Even now, I know more people online than I do offline.

However, in my heart of hearts, I believe that that first profound desire to read *Redwall* was God setting my life on a course. I don't know where it will lead and I don't know why it goes there, but I do know, that under the heading of Mossflower, sailing with Joseph the Bellmaker and Martin the Second, was where I found the love of my life, my light and my joy, my wife.

So here's to Brian Jacques, the man who led me to Paula Gale, my wife. May he ever rest in the Dark Forest, in peace and happiness, knowing that he brought true joy and lifelong fulfillment to at least one life. He will be deeply and sorely missed.

Falar aka Jesse P.

Wow.

What can I say? What can anyone say? Many things have already been said--very eloquently, too, I might add. Like many of you, Brian shaped my adolescence, and he showed me a world...a world that wasn't overpopulated like some, but still held mystery and intrigue, a world with heroes and villains and triumph and tragedy... fantasy, romance, horror, action, adventure, mystery, poetry... and I knew those characters. They were *my* characters. When I checked out what few paperbacks we had in our school library, it was usually my name (or a few others) on the card inside the cover. I felt like Brian wrote them for *me*, and it was a wonderfully terrific secret that we shared.

Then I found the ROC. I had friends I could share *Redwall* and Brian Jacques' vision with. Absolutely incredible.

Look at what this man has done. He brought us TOGETHER. His vision...his wonderful storytelling...brought us together from all corners of the planet. Different countries, different ages, different races, different beliefs... but we all shared a love for reading, and Brian lavished it on us.

I knew, when I read his books, I wanted to be as descriptive as Brian Jacques. I wanted to paint with vocabulary. Nobody can do it as well, I think.

I had the honor of meeting him once, at a book signing for *Pearls of Lutra*. I'd heard he performed the chapter introducing Cluny from *Redwall* at signings, but I wouldn't have believed it until I saw him actually do it, and heard his rich voice molding every description of this terrifying rat. He loved children, and it was awesome to see him do what he did best for a live audience.

For some of my childhood, I read because my parents forced me to. When I found the wilds of Mossflower, I read because I *wanted* to. And that made all the difference.

Thanks for opening a door to me, Mr. Jacques. I wish I could repay it. Cheers.

Frost

Like a comet pulled from orbit
As it passes a sun
Like a stream that meets a boulder
Halfway through the wood
Who can say if I've been changed for the better?
But because I knew you
I have been changed for good.

-from Wicked song "For Good"

Sunlight flittering through the thick foilage. Warming the hide and cheering the soul, the deep green of wandering through Mossflower time and time again.

In time, the quest challenges and character's maws have blurred into each other. The books have gained dust on my shelf. Time has passed. Much has changed. But without some books about European woodland creatures with Medieval weaponry, where would I be?

I've known for years that the *Redwall* books have left their pawprints all over my life, but it wasn't until I heard that Brian Jacques had died that it struck me how deep the impressions were. Through his writing, Brian Jacques nudged and pulled at the strings of my imagination. First in the world of reading, and eventually in the world of art and writing. He gave me a love of characters and atmosphere and just telling a good yarn. He gave me more than a stepping block, he gave me an entire stairway up through my own quests through challenges and turmoil.

If not for his books, I would not have found this cozy little Internet spot, I would not have dared to write and draw any further than my vague jottings and scribbles, I would not have met most of my best friends.

When the news of his death came out, I watched the Twitter feeds unroll, the news sources pick up the story, the lives touched. There was that sick feeling in my stomach that I'd lost something deeper than I ever suspected. When I try to find the words, they are fleeting, they do not remain still, for there are so many possible words to say about the passing of Brian Jacques and nothing that can quite capture it.

I never met Brian Jacques. There are at least a half dozen letters I wrote but never quite sent.

In the end, I suppose if I met him, I wouldn't have to say anything clever or witty or deep or in rhyme. I wouldn't have to say how he's made me the person I am today. I wouldn't have to babble aimlessly until I said something dumb and shuffled away. If I really had to say anything to Brian Jacques at this moment, it would all come down to two words.

“Thank you.”

Geo Holms

Brian Jacques passed away on Saturday. He was 71.

I was going to write this long, eloquent post about how he was an inspiration to a nine-year-old kid in a new school, how she read every single book cover to cover, how she paid probably fifty dollars' worth of fines every year because she'd forget to return them. I was going to write about how she joined the ROC in fifth grade and how she found Fort Nightshade and Fort Marshank and, last but not least, the Vulpine Imperium. I was going to write about how her stupid weasel characters (it was always weasels with her) were one of the only things that kept her sane during middle school and high school. I was going to write about how she met friends through those sites, some of them clear on the other side of the world, with whom she's still friends today.

Then I realized that none of that was what was truly important. Because what was truly important was that if she had never discovered the *Redwall* series, *she wouldn't be writing any of this in the first place.*

Brian Jacques taught me to express myself when my school couldn't. He taught me that it was okay to try my hand at fiction, that it was okay when I broke the English language and wrote sentences that would make Strunk and White roll in their graves, because I could put it back together again, and look, hadn't I improved afterward? He taught me that a poem didn't have to be as lofty and obscure as I thought it did, and that it could just as easily be about a really proper pudding as it could be about love and honor and chivalry. He gave me the courage to put my soul on paper, and he taught me the pen really could be as mighty as the sword.

So thank you, Mr. Jacques. Thank you for being my childhood, for helping me become who I am today. And I hope that wherever you are now, there are roaring fires and ripping good yarns and feasts so beautifully described that you know you've got to be in heaven.

Irene

This will probably be a familiar image to you: a ten year-old girl is browsing her school book fair, chilly with the morning air and brisk with the excitement fresh new books bring. Nevertheless, she is rapidly growing weary of the bright colors, the typical topics she's come to expect from such collections. She's just about run out of hope when suddenly a gold foil book cover catches her eye. What keeps her there is what stands in its center: a mouse with a... sword?

I loved adventure stories as a kid – enough that they were the only kinds of stories I wrote. I did write before I discovered *Martin the Warrior*, and I probably would have continued writing had I decided it wasn't for me (and I nearly did – the first run through my young attention span didn't hold, but like a good record album it took me a second try to find what I loved about it). What I would have written, though, and what I would have read, is impossible to tell. What I imagine is that I would have taken a more conventional road, written more usual stories. What I liked about Brian Jacques is that his stories were exactly the opposite.

Brian Jacques's work remains to this day some of the most truly special writing in children's literature or indeed modern literature as a whole. Once I had collected all the books to date and read them all through three times (something I've never managed with any other book since!) I found it difficult to sate my reading hunger with something of equal quality. I still do. His writing was plain enough for children to understand, but he did not shortchange his audience: his stories were beautiful. They painted images that remain with me even today, and feelings that are renewed each time I open one of his books. There are, I think, two or three authors who come to my mind who so perfectly balanced the pace and interest of a story with readable yet gorgeous language. Brian Jacques is one of them.

His ability and drive to write in this way has often been chalked up to Redwall's beginnings in tales told at a school for the blind, or simply Brian's well-cited literary talent. I like to think that he must also have wanted to give his readers the very best stories he could tell.

Redwall fit me like a glove – today it's easier to see than ever. In the mornings I roll up to my desk and write a bit over my Weetabix, before leaving the house to embark on another day of vet school. Stories and animals, stories about animals: that's a lot of what I do!

Thank you so much, Brian Jacques, for all you gave and for all that you will continue to give. Your wonderful, beautiful stories will last for generations to come.

Julia

I remember the day I ran into *Redwall*. I was in an English bookshop in Henley-on-Thames, on a family vacation from Canada, visiting my grandparents. As a kid, staying in such a seemingly sleepy place, with only four television channels seemed to be, as I would have put it then, "THE WORST!" So, walking into the Bell Bookshop, with my Grandma encouraging me to purchase any book I wanted, was an interesting prospect.

It's going to sound sappy, but the sun literally glinted off the golden "Redwall" lettering on the spine and caught my eye. I needed some help reaching it, as it was too high, and I was too short (not much has changed). As has likely happened to all of us here, I became hooked upon first read, and lapped up the books as quickly as I could get them. I remember my Aunt and Uncle bringing over *Marlfox* from England on a visit, and pulling a very out-of-season, "Kid at Christmas" routine, due to the fact that it would not be published in Canada for months. I became so immersed with the series that I sought out other fans, and became part of my very first fandom, discussing, and writing (albeit, somewhat poorly) about *Redwall* – even here at Terrouge.

Redwall, for me, was a gateway into a world of books, and was the starting point from which my love of writing and reading grew. Brian's novels quietly fostered my reading comprehension and writing skills, and provided a much-needed counterpoint to my utter inaptitude for mathematics. Throughout my education and early career, I have relied heavily on these skills to distinguish myself from others, and attribute much of my success to them. *Mossflower* – my favourite *Redwall* book - has been thumbed through so many times that the cover art is wrinkled by the haste of re-reading; its pages have been discoloured by the sun, and the spine must be handled gingerly when removing from my heavily-laden, Redwall-centric bookcase.

Browsing the Internet today, I've stumbled across so many stories that are similar to my own – may it be how Brian Jacques connected people together in some small way, or nurtured interests or cultivated talents that have propelled us forward into our careers, and shaped our ambitions. Some of these individuals I know, some I have never heard of – but you get the feeling that you know you shared something special.

I never met Brian Jacques. But, I didn't need to; he gave us all something no matter how close or far we were to him. And the wonderful thing is he still can.

Thanks, Brian; you will be missed, but I'll never forget the times we shared in Mossflower country. Nobody else could make dandelion cordial sound so tempting, or mice so valiant.

Kathryn

I've never followed a Redwall recipe, I hardly ever solved the riddles before our heroes did, and I only wrote about two lines of my own shanty (my bumbling searat character managed to fill in the blanks with "um"s and "*hic*s") but I tried. I submitted horrible survivor-style contest candidates. I got about five hundred words into about three different fanfics. I shiver to think of my first fan-poetry foray, and I'm grateful that my most noob-ly posts are now lost.

But it was all so much *fun*.

I read my first *Redwall* books at my grandparents' house one summer, and when the local library only had them up to *Salamandastron*, I started at the first again ("*Didn't you read that one already?*" "*No! This is the sequel!*"). When I couldn't read, I relived. I re-imagined.

It was absolutely wonderful to come online and find people like me! There were so many Redwall Abbeys, Salamandastrons, and new places on the map to help define and explore. There were forums full of people who would speculate with me on the relative sizes of creatures and buildings, on inconsistencies, on possible Continuity Nods, on the contents of books yet to be written. But roleplay was always the best. We got to share the world we had read about, live in it, and write it new histories and futures.

We got to connect in the "real world" and share our memories of this secret world. Some of us have hung around for years, some of us have disappeared, and some of us pop in occasionally to keep tabs on our old favorite places and people. But the thing is, there's an *us*. There's a huge network of people who have shared the dream. All of the worlds we've created through fanfic, roleplay threads, contests, and conversations (how many Redwallian plotbunnies has each of us dragged around over the years?) are still there, hanging around in their various levels of definition and waiting for when we can come back to them.

All the time I spent on webpages made me comfortable enough with computers to start a degree in computer science – I'll graduate with it in May, and I can't imagine how different my life would be if I hadn't thought, so many years ago, "I want to make a Redwall page, too!" and subsequently spent hours tweaking designs and scripts.

Redwall has presence not just on my bookshelf, but on my social media, my vocabulary, my hard drive, my resume. So if I'd ever gotten the chance to meet Brian Jacques, that's what I would have thanked him for. I'd have thanked him for all the hours I spent with my imagination and those of others. I'd have thanked him for the histories we tried to emulate and the themes we got to play with as growing writers. I'd have thanked him for the genesis of dozens of friendships with people I would have otherwise never met, never talked to, never written with, never planned nor argued nor laughed with.

Lauren

I'm really struggling to write this. Brian Jacques and his writing had such a profound influence on my life, my friends, my morals, my writing, my ambitions – how do you condense all that into a few words? I suppose the best thing to do is go back to the beginning.

I was seven when I first discovered *Redwall*, and eleven when I first discovered the internet. Together they formed the community where I felt most at home; where other children and teenagers wrote about weasels and stoats beating up otters and squirrels, and being beaten up in their turn. We wrote epic feasts and quests across land and sea, we developed characters and joined Redwall clubs such as the Imperial Navy Serving Ublaz, Terrouge, Fort Mossflower, Fort Ruddler, Camp Willow, the Vulpine Imperium. And through our community I learnt to write, to collaborate and share, and to use my imagination to the best possible result.

The vivid descriptions Brian Jacques wrote, the honesty about life, death, injury and the journeys each Redwall character took through their lives, they all sank into my mind and understanding whether I was aware of it or not. I learnt so much about writing, about creating a scene – I learnt that not all stories have to be grim or sad to be 'true', but full of thanksgiving and rejoicing as well.

Most importantly for me, through *Redwall* I met my friends. In 2008, nearly ten years after we first exchanged emails, I flew to America to be a bridesmaid at my best friend's wedding. Without the Redwall series, I would never have met her or the four other Redwallers who drove hours to meet us. In 2010 three friends came out to Australia to visit me for the first time; without Redwall, we would not know of each other's existence. I have learned to write alongside people I have come to know and love as friends – and without Redwall, without the online community that sprang up in celebration of Brian Jacques' epic series, I would not know any of them. Without Redwall, I would have been a very lonely child and my life would have taken quite a different course.

What I treasure most about my time spent on the Redwall community is the atmosphere of good humour and courtesy, of friends and collaboration. I look back on our time spent with the mice of Redwall Abbey, the hares and badgers of Salamandastron, the otters of the River Moss and the vermin who must always be defeated, and I am so grateful for all that Brian Jacques and his creations gave us.

Lucy

We all remember those books that influenced us as children, the books that we practically ruined from reading them over and over and over again. Harry Potter is an obvious one, with LOTR and Narnia following close behind. But for me, what predated even Harry Potter was a novel by Brian Jacques called Redwall.

Sit me down and I can tell you the whole story, every twist and subplot and minor character's name, despite being 351 pages... heck, I can even recite the opening lines almost perfectly, ("Matthias cut a comical little figure as he wobbled his way across the cloisters") without missing a beat. I'll admit it; I was even reading this book as late as my sophomore year in high school because it's *just that good*.

The story is of Matthias, a young mouse who lives with the monks at Redwall Abbey, and must fulfill his destiny as protector of the Abbey when a rat named Cluny the Scourge seeks to destroy the Abbey. I was never that into anthropomorphic tales, but this is no ordinary cat and mouse story. Redwall takes everything fascinating about country animals and everything good and bad about people and mixes the two in a way that made my head spin. A fact that I didn't know astounds me further: Brian Jacques wrote Redwall for blind children at a school he delivered milk too, so the book is particularly vibrant, describing the countryside of Redwall Abbey in fantastic detail. I've read this book and its sequel, Mattimeo, more times than I could possibly count, never tiring of them since each re-read brought new light to the story. Ergo, I must allot Jacques a place in the golden canon of authors and poets who made me a writer.

As you may already know, Brian Jacques passed away this weekend at the Royal Liverpool Hospital, despite emergency surgery for an aortic aneurysm. There is little I can do to do justice to this man's life and work, a man who inspired not only me but many other young people and pulled us into the art we all hold claim to today.

As I read the news on a journal post from Australian writer findmeastorm's Deviantart page, my heart sank as I realized that his 21st and final book, set to be published later this year, would be the last we would hear from Redwall Abbey. But I couldn't help but remember that iconic prophesy found on the Abbey walls:

*Who says that I am dead
Knows nought at all.*

and

*The warrior sleeps
Twixt hall and cavern hole
I – am that is
Take on my mighty role.*

This call to action, this final battle cry from the dead warrior Martin to the young Matthias, echoes even now, nine years after my first reading of Redwall, and rings out all the louder, from a legend to a young writer. Brian Jacques will live on in his works, and in the memory of those who loved him.

Maddie

Monday morning, I received word that my dear friend Brian Jacques, author of the *Redwall* series, had passed away. After a day spent writing to mutual friends, I decided to expand one of the letters into this post. Brian's death was sudden and unexpected. The last time we spoke, the future seemed boundless. "I hope we can work together on many other books. Take care of yourself!" Part of mourning Brian is mourning the books I know he would have written. I'll miss the regularity of the novels, year after year. When I was young, I would get them as Christmas presents. Eventually, I would see the manuscript only days after our editor did, neatly stacked into a huge package that was more cement bag than envelope. The pages were typed on an old typewriter to the very end.

Brian leaves a legacy not only of books, but of lives and communities made better by his imagination and his generosity. In reconnecting to the fan community, I've been counting the marriages, relationships, careers, educations, and other blessings that came through Redwall. Spouses that met through internet message boards, friends that met at book signings, people deciding to become software engineers, or authors, or journalists, or English professors, and tracing these decisions to the first time they picked up a Redwall book.

I wouldn't have become an illustrator if not for Brian's belief that I already was one. Drawing characters from books was something I did, and loved, since childhood, but to make a life out of it still seems like a miracle. Brian would eventually write my college recommendations, and my admissions essays focused on his influence and my work on the Redwall series. At Princeton, I studied medieval architecture and poetry.

The last time I saw Brian in person was late 2007. Penguin threw a wonderful party for Redwall's 20th Anniversary, and Redwallers from both sides of the ocean reunited or met in person for the first time. Eventually, I gravitated towards a group I saw was like me. I may have been the only illustrator, but I was not the only person who owed Brian his place in the world. A fellow Princeton alumnus, an attorney, also had his college recommendation letter written by Brian. "You're like the Godfather," he said. But in a good way. Brian stopped what he was doing and slipped into an excellent Marlon Brando impression.

Brian was much better than the Godfather, though. When Brian gave, he never asked for anything in return. It's difficult to describe this without seeming gauche, bragging. Sometimes, Brian met a child, and he decided to do what he could to see that child's dreams come true. I do not know why I was included in this number. I never asked. I don't know that any of us did. Brian didn't just write books, he wrote lives. He was, and is, an extraordinary example of what an artist can make possible. When you knew Brian, you believed that anything was possible.

My mother, who met Brian several times, had a way of putting this that only a parent can: "Rest in peace dear friend of children, and thank you for making a child's dream a wonderful reality."

Sean

If you want to know if Brian Jacques' *Redwall* series was something special, you need only look at its community of fans.

Soon after my house got the internet, 5th-grade-me found, and was enthralled by, a tiny web club called Salamandastron. I joined as Shorestar and submitted a few pieces of poetry and art, pestering my dad to take my drawings to his work to scan them. The site soon disappeared, but the damage had been done... I was hooked.

I wanted to be a part of the fantastic and imaginative world I'd found in the Redwall books. I also wanted to be a part of the community the series had inspired online. No matter what you were looking for - website developers, artists, or writers - you could find someone who was shockingly good.

When you combine the presence of real skill with the community attitude a series like Redwall creates, the result is an environment which truly nurtures creativity.

Some of those surprisingly good individuals got together and created Terrouge in late 1998. I was fortunate enough to join them shortly thereafter, and later became Editor-in-Chief.

With the help of an ever-more-amazing staff, we dreamed bigger and bigger, and were able to work together to keep achieving our dreams. We got exclusives from famous authors, including Brian Jacques himself. Inspired by a Redwall Survivor contest, we decided to hold a writing contest called Questors Bold, which was extremely successful in nurturing young writers. A small team within Terrouge created the Vulpine Imperium club and Greenhawk, both of which were unlike anything produced previously (and both of which were excellent).

And now? Years later? I edit web stories for a local news station. Several who met through Terrouge and related communities are married or engaged. Others are well on the track to being accomplished authors or artists. Whether they first identified as bold hares, crazy squirrels, thoughtful moles, or simply as fans, so many were profoundly affected by the imagination of Brian Jacques.

From the bottom of my heart, Brian, thank you so much for what you gave us.

Shorestar

Come, tell me a story.
Master, weave me a tale,
another of Martin
bedecked in chainmail!

Spin one last riddle
of treasures found within.
Savor a nameday feast,
delighted by kin.

Oh, sing of the adventures
of Mariel or Gonff.
Please... just one more story;
twenty-two isn't enough.

Wait... where is Mattimeo?
And where is Rakkety Tam?
Where are the vermin
with the battering ram?

The Abbey is empty,
and so are our hearts,
for from both worlds
you must depart.

I remember your lessons
with each crackling page.
You were my inspiration,
and you were the sage.

The world's a little darker;
one more chair is bare.
No more come the stories
you so loved to share.

The great ship has docked;
the warrior's gone home.
Rest, weary paws...
No road left to roam.

It seems, somehow sudden
we must bid you adieu.
But when the Laterose blooms,
I will think of you.

SilverRose

I remember my first encounter of this magical world. I was eight years old on that peaceful Sunday morning and I saw a commercial for the first season of *Redwall* on PBS Kids. So I decided to watch it and see if it was any good at all. That day changed my life forever. Every Sunday after that I got up and watched it. I was so into it that I couldn't stop talking about the show for weeks on end. But then it ended when the station stopped showing it after the 2nd season. I felt this emptiness inside of me that was known by adults as depression. Then I found out a month later that the show was actually based off of a book series. So I got a copy of the book *Redwall* and started reading it. My favorite characters in *Redwall* were Matthias, Cornflower, and Martin the Warrior. I couldn't get enough of this wonder series.

I remember reading *The Legend of Luke* in the hallways of the YMCA in Ashley, *Mossflower* out in the corn field underneath a big oak tree, and reading *Martin the Warrior* as a bed time story every night until I finished it. I would spend hours at a time reading the books and then I would spend time making up my own stories of this world that seemed to be realer than the real world. I entered my middle school and high school years with this series as my number one series. I run for Cross Country and Track. And I am in wrestling. During this time in sports I gained the nickname, Matthias Martin for my hardcore will of never giving up and pushing myself past my limits. I wanted to write him a letter for advice and to share with him some of my stories and see what he thought of them. But I never got around to sending it out and now I feel regret for not sending it out. And I was going to see him the next time that he came to America . But alas it wasn't meant to be.

Redwall played an important part in my life and I would not know who I would be today if it wasn't for it. *Redwall* taught me that no matter how big or small you are, you can do the impossible. It taught me to dream big and to never give up and to never give in to the bad pressure of this cruel world. I want to personally thank you Brian so much for all that you did. For your stories and the gift of writing that you gave to the world. They have touched so many lives and will touch so many more for generations to come. My prayers go out to his family in this time of grief and sadness.

Thomas

When I first heard of Brian Jacques passing, my first thought was shock. An outpouring of posts the likes of which I haven't seen in years came on our forums, with every member expressing shock and dismay. This man had a huge influence on all of our lives, considering we like his mystical universe enough to seek out and join websites based off of it. He was a man who knew how to craft a universe so deep and engrossing, it kept people coming back for more, even after cranking out twenty of them.

I remember my first Redwall book. It was *Salamandastron*, a dusty book my father found in our basement. I finished it in a few days, often staying up late just to keep reading. It filled my mind with heroic images, beautiful descriptions, and captivating characters the likes of which few authors can make, especially when they're all anthropomorphic animals. I immediately sought out and read every other Redwall book I could find. To my delight, when I reached middle school, one of the teachers had an entire wall painted to resemble Redwall Abbey, and *Redwall* was a required reading. That same teacher got the new books before I did. I say all this to prove a point, Brian Jacques could craft a tale that could be enjoyed by all audiences and by all ages.

Dibbuns Against Bedtime had its own brief brush with fame, when Brian Jacques included a fictionalized version of them in *Triss*, *Doomwyte*, and *The Sable Queen*. We've had the unique luck out of every group in the Redwall Online Community to be featured in the works of this great man.

Brian Jacques was a great man and a fantastic author. Without him, I doubt I would have become an avid reader, an able writer, or running this website.

Rest in Peace, Brian Jacques.

Tysharm

I found out about Brian's passing from a friend of mine at university, who knew that I had been a big *Redwall* fan back in the day. Shortly afterwards, some real-life friends of mine got to talking about Redwall, and about how it had affected our lives, and it stunned me to realize how much of an impact the series had had on my life.

I got my first Redwall book, *Mattimeo*, for my thirteenth birthday, and I was hooked from the get-go. I read the series avidly, drew the characters, and conducted fantasy tournaments in my head as to which of the villains would reign supreme over all of the others. Someone happened to hear me quote "The Long Patrol" one day, and our mutual interest in the series sparked a deep friendship that's lasted for nearly ten years.

Additionally, in immersing myself in the fantasies of *Redwall*, I learned to appreciate the beauty of the English language. I wrote some (admittedly pretty awful) fan creations of my own, and, through experience and experimentation and the editing of other Redwall writers, I gradually improved.

I'm currently a second-year English major, and have never fallen below a 4.0 in any of my English courses. I can honestly say that I have Brian to thank for that. I couldn't possibly have gotten to where I am today without the Redwall series, and the community of fans that they've inspired. Redwall changed my life, and for that I owe a deep debt of gratitude to Brian. Thank you so much, from the bottom of my heart.

Ublaz

I didn't believe the topic title to be true until I read its contents... For a few moments, I could not speak and my mind froze.

Brian Jacques influenced my life, as it had for many others. In grade school I would read like mad, slowly eating through the library's fiction section. I happened upon *Redwall* in my own house, a beat-up pocket-sized paperback my older siblings read. After that book came *Mossflower*, and pretty soon I finished all 21. *Redwall* provided what no other book I had read came close to providing--an interest to be the one making all the scratches on paper that we interpret as writing. Nothing fired my imagination so greatly.

There are few people who have accomplished what Brian has accomplished. Not only creating a massive, wonderful series of books, but bringing together people with the same passion for his books, and those people enjoying each other's company and creating works of art and just having fun. Although I hopped on the Redwall Online Community train a bit late, I am so grateful for all the awesome people I've met here.

So Godspeed, Mr. Jacques, and thank you for everything.

Zaran

In 9th grade, I opened the door to Redwall. I spent hours immersed in the series, only surfacing from time to time to care for the most pressing needs. I cannot begin to list the things that attracted me to them though the superb storytelling and exciting battles surely played a part. Each book provided a chance to return to Redwall Abbey in a new point in time and I eagerly visited each moment. Furthermore, each book was a chance to follow a new adventure and a new cast of characters.

Yet, this understates the power of the books for at the end of many of the novels, the author includes a warm welcome for future travelers. And, it is only after his departure that such statements can truly be understood. For now, he cannot chronicle adventures and invite us to follow. Instead, we must enter his world in a different way.

Ever since the Redwall Online Community (ROC) began, people have been visiting the Redwall world in new ways. Readers use their own imagination to add to the world or to renovate parts of it. And, through these changes, one is able to enter the world through the intersection of the reader's imagination and Jacques's imagination. Then, one may go on new adventures, explore beyond the edges, and meet characters beyond the author's wildest dreams.

The ROC is also a collection of people with a special bond to Mossflower and its environs. It has been a privilege for me to meet other people in the ROC and develop many relationships. Just as the novels are replete with characters going the extra mile for others to preserve relationships, we must remember to do the same for those in the real world for whether we journey in the Redwall world or the real world, such an adventure can be a very lonely affair.

Inasmuch as the books are a reflection of what most call the real world, the works are a reminder to persist and to seek out things that we can only imagine. Even in their darkest moments, the mice of Loamhedge remind us to look beyond the present and towards a better future. We must never forget that *Redwall* existed as a thought in the author's mind before existing on paper and, likewise, existed in Abbess Germaine's blueprints before the Abbey was realized with stone.

I am immensely thankful to Brian Jacques for the worlds he has invited me to and the people he has brought into my life. His work will continue to encourage me to travel into an unknown future.

And so, for everything that has happened.

And for everything that is yet to come.

Thank you.

Zian Choy

Brian Jacques

1939-2011

With thanks to all who sent in their tributes.

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