

Thomas John Barnardo

Best known by the name Dr Barnardo, Thomas John Barnardo founded the British charity Barnardo's to provide care for vulnerable children and young people.

Born in Dublin, Ireland, on 4th July 1845, Thomas John Barnardo was the fourth of five children born to John Michaelis Barnardo, a furrier (someone who makes clothes or items, such as rugs, from animal fur) and his second wife Abigail.

In 1866, Thomas Barnardo left Ireland to move to London where he planned to study at London Hospital to become a doctor. However, when he arrived in London, he was so appalled by the amount of children that he saw living in terrible conditions that he desperately wanted to help. A deadly disease, cholera, was spreading through the East End of the city due to a lack of clean water and basic hygiene; in the Victorian times, less was known about the need for cleanliness and good hygiene. This fatal disease meant that many children from underprivileged families became orphans; this caused many of them to become homeless and end up living on the streets. Unfortunately, many children did not make it to their fifth birthday.

Ragged Schools

Despite his name, Dr Barnardo stopped training to become a doctor therefore not achieving his qualifications, due to his enthusiasm to help the children of London to experience more positive lives. His initial step was in 1867 when he set up a ragged school, which was an independent school providing free education, food, clothes and homes to impoverished children – these children were too poor to pay for education, as was the norm during the Victorian era. One of the original pupils at Dr Barnardo's first ragged school, Jim Jarvis, took Dr Barnardo for a walk around the East End of London one evening, showing him the high quantity of children who slept on the street, often on roofs or in gutters. What he witnessed affected him so much, making him feel very distressed, that Dr Barnardo decided to give up his dream of becoming a doctor, choosing instead to devote his life to helping disadvantaged children.

Homes for Vulnerable Children

In 1870, Dr Barnardo started his charity, which was known as Dr Barnardo's Homes, to help as many poor children in London as possible. He opened his first orphanage for vulnerable boys at 18 Stepney Causeway, London and spent the nights walking the streets of London looking for homeless boys who needed somewhere to stay. It upset Dr Barnardo greatly when, initially, he could only help a certain number of boys; he vowed to help all children, believing (unlike the majority of Victorians who saw poverty as shameful) that every child deserved the best possible start in life, whatever their background. As well as providing a home for the boys, Dr Barnardo also trained them in carpentry, metalwork and shoemaking and found apprenticeships for them to give them a future career.

Following his marriage in 1873 to Sara Louise Elmslie, who was known as Syrie, Dr Barnardo began to help vulnerable girls too. As a wedding present, they were given a piece of land to live on in Barkingside, east London but, due to Syrie's desire to support disadvantaged girls, they opened the Girls' Village Home on the land instead of building a home for themselves. Needy girls were looked after in small, family-style groups with a house 'mother' who taught them the skills of looking after a home while keeping them safe. By 1900, there were 65 cottages, a school, a hospital and a church on the land which housed over 1,500 girls.

Legacy

During his lifetime, Dr Barnardo and his charity opened 96 homes to look after vulnerable children and young people. From the foundation of the first Barnardo's home in 1867 to his death in 1905, more than 8,500 children had been taken in, including children with physical and learning difficulties. Dr Barnardo's experience of raising his own daughter Marjorie, who had Down's syndrome, influenced his desire to accept and care for all children. He also raised a lot of money to help children to stay with their families when times were difficult. Dr Barnardo's dream of giving every child the best possible future is continued by his charity to this day.

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Questions

1. **Thomas John Barnardo founded the British charity Barnardo's to provide care for vulnerable children and young people.** What does **vulnerable** mean? Tick **one**.

safe and secure
unsafe and needy
safe and strong
unsafe and lonely

1. What was Dr Barnardo's dream? Tick **one**.

To give every child a home.
To give every child the best possible future.
To give every child an education.
To give every child a family.

1. **... he was so appalled by the amount of children that he saw living across the city in terrible conditions...**What does **appalled** mean?

List **three** things that Dr Barnardo set up in order to help vulnerable children.

Find and copy a word from the text which shows that Syrie's **ambition** was to help disadvantaged girls.

1. How did education in the UK in Victorian times differ to education today?
2. Summarise what you have read about the Girls' Village Home in 40 words or fewer.

1. How did Jim Jarvis affect Dr Barnardo?
1. How did Dr Barnardo's daughter influence his view on looking after children?
1. Why do you think that the charity Barnardo's continues to this day? Explain your answer.

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