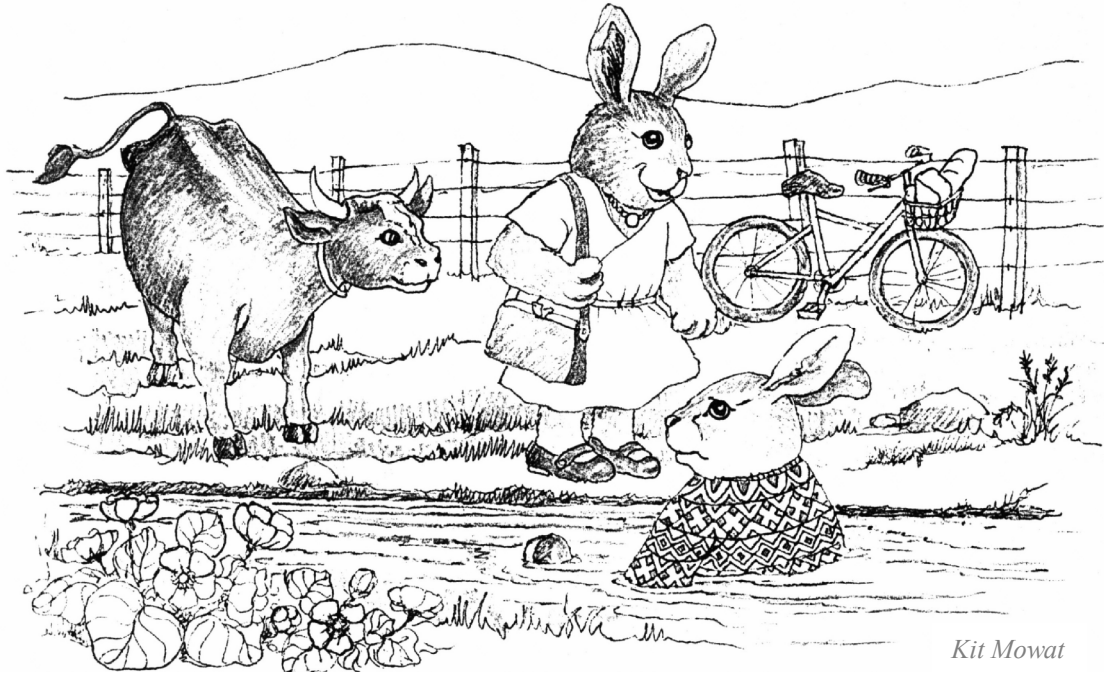


A Letter fae Uncle Bertie (pairt 1)
by Christian Tait

Da day A'm goin ta tell you whit wye it wis at Bobby Broon, da middle-sized rabbit, cam ta bide for a start in Burra.



Ee fine day ida first o da voar Bobby Broon wis playin fitbaa ida yerd wi his big bridder Bruce an his peerie sister Barbara, an twaartree idder peerie neebour-rabbits. He wis joost aboot ta score da winnin goal whin der Mam cam oot o da burrow wavin a letter in her haand, an cried apo dem ta come in at wance. Dey cood see at shö wis kinda raised-laek an, bein biddable bairns, dey drappit doon apo aa fower paas an bunny-jamp hame as fast as dey cood.

‘Leave your boots outside the door,’ shö said. ‘I don’t want any mud on my clean floor.’

You’ll notice, jewel, at shö doesna spaek Shetland laek wis. Dat’s becaas dey bide ida sooth o Eengland.

Sae dey left der guttery böts in a neat row on da briggistanes an göd but ta fin oot whit aa da hooro wis about.

'This is from Uncle Bertie,' said Mam Rabbit, an held up da letter. 'It's bad news, I'm afraid. He's got bronchitis and he isn't able to do his spring croft-work. He wants one of you to go and help him.'

'Where does he live?' axed Bobby.

'Can you go there by bus?' axed Bruce.

'Can I go?' axed Barbara.

'One question at a time, please!' said da midder rabbit, gaffin. Shö lifted da peeriest ean onta her lap. 'I'm sorry dear, you're too small for heavy croft-work. It will have to be one of the boys.'

'I'm big enough now,' whinged Barbara, an da taers stöd fae her een.

'Not quite, dear,' Mam Rabbit said, an kyodered aboot her an strakit her lugs till shö whet greetin. Dan shö telt dem at Uncle Bertie lives in Burra Isle.

'That's in Shetland,' shö added. 'It's a long way from here.'

'But can we go there by bus?' Bruce axed ageen.

'Not all the way, dear. First you'd have to go by bus to the station; then by train to London; then by plane all the way to Shetland. I expect someone would meet you at the airport and take you to Burra Isle by car.'

'Brilliant! Can I go?' said Bobby an Bruce tagidder, but afore dey hed time ta start ony argie-bargie aboot it, Bruce mindit at he wis gyaain ta play ida finals o da school fitbaa league. Dey wir nae wye at he wis gyaain ta miss dat, fur he wis hoopin at a talent scout wid see him an sign him on. Dat wis his draem.

'I'm sorry, Mum, but the big match is coming up soon. It will have to be Bobby.'

'Bobby, is that all right with you?'

‘Great!’ said da middle-sized rabbit, feelin very important, ‘but I have one more question. How can I go from the airport to Burra Isle if it’s an island?’

‘I bet there’s a bridge,’ interrupted Bruce.

Der Mam nodded. ‘You’re right.’

‘As usual,’ tocht Bobby, for Bruce seemed ta ken aa da answers an aa da lang-nebbit wirds – weel, no ivvery ean, for he hed ta axe

‘How did Uncle Bobby get bron... bron... whatever it is?’

‘Bronchitis, dear,’ said his Mam. ‘I’ll read you the letter, then you’ll know the whole story.’

Shö crexed ta clear her trot, dan began ta read...

A Letter fae Uncle Bertie, Pairt 2.

**But-an-Ben Cottage,
Bridgend,
Burra Isle,
Sunday, 30th March**

Dear Bertha,

Dis is joost ta lat you ken at A’m bön braaly little-wirt for twaartree days noo. A’m gotten da bronchitis, an hit’s aa doon ta my peerie blissit coo. Hit wis laek dis...

(Midder Rabbit hed ta stop noo an ageen ta explain da Shetland wirds ta dem, but dey shön began ta git da hang o it.)

Da coo wis gotten her tedder in a buckle. I wis bendin doon ta oonreffel it whin shö geed a faersome bröl an bultit me on me breest. Backlins I göd ida burn!

Weel, dere wis I, bummelin aboot amang da benistickles/ banstickles an da blugga-floors whin alang cam Bella fae da Bakeshop on her bike. (Shö aye brings me some fresh-baken bannocks an a curny brönnie for da helly.) Whinivver shö saa me shö got aff her bike an set it up fornenst da fence sae da bread widna faa oota da basket.

'Hello, Bertie,' says shö. 'Is du takkin a bath? Du sood a taen aff dee böts an dee breesks an dee boannie gansey first.' An shö stöd dere gaffin fit ta burst.

I tocht, 'My lass, du'll no git da better o me.' Sae I said, 'Stop yun bledderin, wife, an help me git oota here. Gie me dee haand.'

Shö cam ta da banks o da burn an held oot her haand. I yockit a hadd o'im an pooed her in aside me.

'My Bella,' says I, 'is du takkin a bath? Du sood a taen aff dee shön an dee tights an dee boannie froak first.'

Man, shö wis fairly barmin. Shö took aff her shooder-bag an begöd ta beetle me wi it dat herd at da clesp brook, an aa her bits o bölliments laanded ida boddam o da burn.

For a mercy shö saa at hit wis nae mair as a hermless plunkie – ta pay her back for laachin at me, an baith o wis climmed oota da burn da best o freends ageen.

'Laeve yun bruck o dine whaar it is, an we'll fish it aa oot wi me pocknet whin wir gotten on dry claes an hed a browst o tay ta waarm wis.'

Be da time at we wan ta da hoose we wir baith blue wi caald. I pat a match ta da fire ida best room an göd but ta switch da kettle on. Whin I cam ben Bella wis gotten on a CD (da latest fae 'Drop da Box'), an shö wis birlin aroond an baetin da scarf in time wi da music. 'Aerobics', shö caa'd it.

'Come on Bertie,' shö peched. 'Dis'll git da circulation goin.'

We wir a pair o boannie billies, I can tell you – me in me Sunday breesks höld up wi a bit o towe, an her rowd up in a blanket höld up wi my strops – da twa o wis loupin aroond laek föl craetirs.

Whin we wir taen wir tae, we packit Bella's weet claes in a muckle black bag, an göd back ta da burn wi me pock ta fish oot her gaer. Dan shö got on her bike an set aff for hame pedallin laek mischief, for shö didna want onybody ta see her lookin siccan a boky!

I didna git a blink o sleep dat nicht, for me breest wis datn sair. I tocht da coo wis blue-meltit me or I wis gotten da spaigie wi aa yon reelin aroond, but next moarnin da swaet wis hailin aff me broo an I wis hostin fit ta burst.

I canna win ta maet da baess, far less ta brak oot da ley or flay da bank. Ta tell da truth, Bertha, A'm joost a pör body arlin atween da bed an da fire. So I'd be ower blyde if du wid pit ean o dy boys ta help wi da voar. Bella'll meet him aff da boat or da plane.

Whin A'm bettered up a grain A'll tak him on da back o my motor-bike ta see roond Burra, an idder places forby. Hit'll be a fine peerie brak for wis baith.

Hoopin ta hear fae you shön,
Dy little-wirt bridder,

Bertie.

Bertha Rabbit faalded up da letter an laid it up apo da brace for der Dad ta see whin he cam hame fae his wark. Bobby could hardly wait...

Activity:

You'll mebbe fin at a lock o da wirds begin wi da letter B, an if you look herd you nicht fin ten or mair things ida pictir at begin wi B tö.

A Letter fae Uncle Bertie (paint 1)



KEY WIRDS

a start	a little while
biddable	obedient
briggistanes	flat stones at house door; patio!
crexed	cleared throat
cried apo	called to
guttery	muddy
hooro	fuss
kyodered	caressed
lang-nebbit (wird)	lengthy (word)
raised-laek	wrought up
taers	tears <i>Da taers stöd fae her een</i> Her eyes brimmed with tears
twaartree	a few

A Letter fae Uncle Bertie (pairt 2)



KEY WIRDS

arlin	moving very slowly
baess	cows, cattle
banstickles/ benistickles	sticklebacks
barmin	raging
blissit	having a white streak down forehead (cow)
blue-meltit	bruised
blugga (flooers)	marsh marigolds
boky	scarecrow
bölliments	odds and ends, possessions
brace	mantelpiece
brak oot da ley	break out new ground for cultivation
bröl	bellow (cow)
brönnie	brown tea -loaf <i>or</i> thick oatmeal scone
bultit	butted with head
flay da (paet)bank	open the turf of the peat bank ready for cutting
little-wirt	poorly, weak
oonreffel	untangle
plunkie	prank
strops	braces
tedder	tether
voar	spring;(here) spring croft-work

You might say **yard** instead o **yerd**, **geed** instead o **göd**, **gaein** instead o **gyaain**, **teen** or **tön** instead o **taen**.