

Young Shetland Writer 2008

**Winner - Dialect Prize
Caitlin Watt**

2050 - A Shetland Odyssey

"Ten! Nine! Eight! Seeven! Six! Five! Fower! Tree! Two! Wan! Happy New Year!" da crood gaddered at da cross shouted. Hit's da year twunty-fifty - can du believe hit?

I wis sittin' in me sittin' room, owerlookin' da throng o' young fok pairtyin' i'da street, haein' a great time ... 2050 aaready? I wis tinkin' aboot whin I wis dat age, when I wid o' been oot yunder wi' my pals. Hit seems lik joost yesterday fae I wis sixteen, an' hit wis da first year I gied yunder fir New Year ... an' first met John.

I hed tae tak my mind aff o' hit aa, so I picked up da 'Shetland Times' aff da floor. Hit opened tae da 'Reader's Views' page, an' da fist een wis entitled, 'Da Biggin' o' da Big Brig'. I started readin', an' discovered hit wis aboot da plans tae mak a brig ower tae Bressa. I wis joost tinkin' aboot hit, den I suddenly realised: wis hit really mair as forty year fae dey aa started spikkin aboot biggin' da brig tae Bressa? Da current set o' cooncillors still canna mak up dere minds aboot whether dey're wantin' a tunnel or a brig. Whaar'll hit go? How much'll hit cost? I wid o' tought fok wid o' lost interest by noo! But no, hit's still i'da 'Shetland Times' ivery week! Whit way can naebody decide? Dere must o' been at least fower or five different sets o' cooncillors fae dis idea wis first dreamt up ...

I could feel anidder tear springin' tae me ee. John's famly cam fae Bressa, an' he wis a big supporter o' da idea. Why wis hit, dat iverythin' ower da past week's joost minded me o' him?

I realised I wis watchin' da bairns again. Dere wis nae way I wid iver git tae sleep danight wi' da noise fae yun band dey hed playin upö da stage! I suppose hit wis good fir me - hit hed been a bit o' an epic battle fir me tae git oot o' me bed, which I hedna left fae afore Christmas. Fae da funeral. I needed somebody tae shaa me whit I wis meant tae dae noo. A guide. His life wis geen, so I joost feel lik my life's geen anaa.

"Stop tinkin' aboot him!" A voice in my heid wis shoutin'. Great. Noo I'm hearin' voices. Yun's joost aa I'm needin' ...

I watched oot da window, tryin' tae keep mesel' fae lookin' at John's empty airmchair. Da bairns in da band mindet me aboot a big idea aabody wis spikkin aboot, aroond aboot da time da 'Bressa brig' cerry on started. Dere wis plans tae big a massive cinema an' music venue somewhar near da museum, alang fae Bolts. Wis hit 'Mareel'? Wis dat da name o' hit? I canna mind. I ay tought hit wid be a fine idea, an' John an' I baith still tink a music venue wid be a guid idea noo. I joost dunna see whit way aathin' haes tae tak dat lang!

John an' I still tink ...? Yun wid o' been fine twartree weeks ago, but I canna keep sayin' dat ... John's geen. He canna support ony music venues onymair ...

I noticed John's auld briefcase in da coarner. Wha hed pitten yun yunder? I'm sure hit wisna me ...

John hed been a teacher at da Anderson High Schöl. He wis ay awfö auld-fashioned, so he insisted on bein da only person left in da world, I wid tink, wi' a briefcase. I don't tink

I'm seen annidder een fae at least Twunty-twunty! He wis ay makkin me laugh wi' his stories o' da bairns, an' med me sympathetic towards his stories o' how muckle da schöl wis faain apairt.

Hit wis way ower forty year fae dey nearly biggit da new Anderson High Schöl. I mind bein' in first year, an' aabody telt wis we wid be da first sixth-year class in da new schöl. Litter on, in fort-year, ee architect gied wis an assembly about whit wir new schöl wid look lik, whaar hit wid be, an' so on. Dey hed da costs aa sorted, hit wis cleared wi' da hiedteacher - whit could ging wrang?!

Fifth an' sixth years cam' an' gied. Da plans fir a new schöl cam tae naethin'. Fae den, dere's been dat mony attempts at hit dat I'm lost coont! Aabody agrees dat da schöl's faain' in bruck, but naebody's decided on onythin' fir a new een!

I used tae tell John he should joost design een himsel', if he wis dat fed up wi hit. Yun ay sparked an argument atween wis.

I wis feelin' guilty noo. I wish I could tak back aa da arguments we iver hed. If I'd kent life wis dis short, I wid hiv made sure we niver argued. Iver.

I could feel da tears wellin' in me een again. I didna want tae greet. I kent hit widna be whit he wantit.

Wheniver I wis upset, John wid joost gie me a muckle, freendly cuddle, an' hit wid seem lik naethin' could iver ging wrang. I wid feel ay much better eftir yun. I really wantit wan o' his cuddles eenoo. Tae be held in his airms, an' tae smell his smell. But I kent I could niver hae anidder een.

Again me een fell upö da briefcase. I picked hit up an' hugged hit tae me chest. Hit still smelled o' him, but hit didna feel lik him, of coorse. Da case felt brally light, I tought. Hit wis normally awfö heavy ...

I opened up da briefcase an' discovered hit wis empty, apairt fae a falded up bit o' pippier. I opened hit up an' read,

"Happy New Year, Jessie! I wish I wis dere wi' dee, but hit joost wisna tae be. Hae a guid 2050, an joost mind, nae maitter whit year hit is, dee guardian angel's ay gaein' tae be aside dee, leadin' dee on dis epic journey though life. John."