Beatrix Potter and her letters

A keen correspondent

Throughout her life Beatrix Potter was a letter-writer. Many of her letters have inevitably been lost but a good number are still around and several thousand are known about. Beatrix Potter wrote them from the time when she was a girl until just days before she passed away in 1943, even though she was seriously ill in bed.

Letters on many subjects

Sometimes the letters were written for the amusement and entertainment of others, usually family and friends. The most famous of these were the picture letters that she created for children she knew and then used later as the basis for her stories. The best known is the one to Noel Moore which introduced Peter Rabbit for the first time.

Beatrix also corresponded with fans around the world who wrote to her. There were recipients of her letters in many countries, but especially in America, where she acquired such a devoted following that in her book The Tale of Timmy Tiptoes she actually introduced an American animal, - a chipmunk - to go with the native British animals she usually featured in her books.
Inevitably much of Beatrix's formal business dealings were done via letter. There is a collection of letters charting her dealings with her publishers, Frederick Warne throughout the years when her books were being published (between 1901 and 1928). There are also letters relating to land and farm management issues in the Lake District written in her later years.

**Her letters and the woman behind them**

In the letters of Beatrix Potter we see something of the personality of the writer: a woman of wit, but also a tough determined woman with her own strong opinions and views.

Beatrix lived through several major historical events and expresses views about some of them in her letters. However, she does so in quite a matter of fact way and in passing, often more concerned with other practical matters.

What does come across, especially in her letters to children and in particular in the delightful 'mini-letters' written to children by some of her famous characters themselves, is Beatrix Potter's superb sense of fun. It's hard to imagine anyone reading her mini-letters on the subjects of Samuel Whiskers' housing situation or Squirrel Nutkin's tail and not being amused.

These letters were written on very small pieces of paper, folded even smaller and some put into small mailbags or red post boxes that Beatrix made herself, before being despatched to her young friends.

In most of her photos, Beatrix is not smiling and comes across as a rather sombre and 'unamused' person. In her letters however, a much less serious character is clear to us, one with a great and imaginative sense of humour.

Why not read the letters and find your "own" Beatrix Potter?

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**How you can read Beatrix Potter’s letters**

Judy Taylor is a leading authority on Beatrix Potter's life and works and has edited two volumes of Beatrix Potter's letters: one a general collection, 'Beatrix Potter's Letters'; and the other, 'Letters to Children from Beatrix Potter' which includes the mini-letters. A new publication for 2012, illustrated and in small book format, is also available and reproduces just the mini letters.

All are available in the National Trust's shops at Hill Top and in Hawkshead and are published by Frederick Warne.

[Go to Hill Top shop webpage](#)