

SEAWIFE(S)

This is a very general basic description:

The Seawife/ Seal-wife/ Mer-Wife; in one part of Scotland Mer-Men, share many traditions with 'Fairie' wives.

These creatures need their magical cloaks or skins to pass between the mortal realm and their own world.

When they marry mortals, they bestow great wealth and/or success on their chosen partner.

Are said to take children, mortal children and their own by mortal fathers, to the realms of magic. These children are well educated and cared for. When returned, as they usually are, they have aged very little in comparison to the time apparently elapsed.

There is usually a bargain entered upon. What this agreement involves, varies geographically but the patterns (including west European) are very similar, some virtually identical.

The bargain is usually broken, in other words, the Seawife/ Magical Wife, is betrayed.

'THE ALLONBY SEAWIFE'S'

Source: Apocryphal:

I heard of Seawives when I was a child, to my knowledge there is no written source.

The Seawive's of Allonby and up-coast toward the Solway head, are/have been blamed for deaths. The social/traditional implication of this is more than interesting, this is a very dangerous part of a dangerous coast. Moving Quick sand, sand bars, lethal tides, storms and banks of mist that spring from no-where.

To the best on my knowledge this is the only Western European instance of Seawives being blamed for death(s).

The play has a traditionally accepted root base; son 'enchanted' away from betrothed chosen by his family.

Traditionally, fisher/ farming family's rarely inter-married. There were old divisions between these community's that still held at the beginning of the last century. This was also true of farming/ fishing/ mining.

I have deliberately, used/mentioned Witches, Sea Witches, and Wise Woman as part of the storyline: These are all traditionally west coast, so I hope we might jog some memories.

Solway Witches were justly famous and were credited with keeping this coast free from invasion on more than one occasion.

'THE ALLONBY SEAWIVES'

STORYTELLER)

I...Am a spinner of truth and myth

By majic I may call before your eyes...Past, present, future.....

Future, past...

Children) Tell us a tyal.....

TELLER) A tale?

Children) Aye! A real ane...

TELLER) A yarn, a tale, a tyal. A real one, a true one...As far as I know....

(children clap, and sit in a circle around Teller)

On this wild and lovely Solway coast-lived, Aye!-and still live, many strange creatures.....

Boggle..Banshee..Kelpie... Aye! -and some might say...Dragons. For there are many who say, nay swear that this place was, and still is...Aurthers land. But that's for another day....

Children) (clapping in rhythm) Tell 'us a tyal , tell 'us a tyal, tell'us a tyal.....

Teller) Aye! Aye! A tale, a tyal.... Wisht! Hush! Do you know what a 'Sea-Wife' is?

Children) Aye!. (indicates audience.) They div'na.

TELLER) You do? (to children) They don't? (indicating audience)

Children) (clapping in rhythm) Seawife! Seawife! Seawife!

TELLER) Seawife! A creature of many guises, of many names. On this wild and beautiful coast of Solway she's the Seawife. There are tales of the seawife as old as time itself. Some tales old, some new- Aye! and meb'ee some to come...?

Who knows how many have met the Seawife... She's a creature that few would recognize, or meb'ee your wiser than most?

Long, long ago and not so very far from here, just a step up the coast-there lived a lad and his step-mother.

(to the children) go, go find them...(children run away to where other characters wait.)

This woman was a recent widow, yet they were rich enough. Well off, by any standard. for the lads father had been her third husband of some wealth and this step-mother had brought both gold and land to this profitable union.

Canny, as woman of this North West were and still are, she had arranged a fine match for her stepson, a match to equal him in both land and gold.

These people were more owners than farmers, their many acres gathered by judicious marriage and there were some folk who whispered of 'other means'. Majical means, but it was dangerous to speak of these things aloud-for in that far off time, to be deemed a witch, meant death.. Drowning, if you were lucky: Burning, if you were not.

Their present lands, stretched from the un-forgiving Solway to-ward the rising moors of the border lands.

In this place farmland and fisherfolk lived cheek by jowl, in that long ago time they existed in un-easy peace for the fisherfolk were Celt and most land owners of Norman descent-and memories were long.....

angry voices are heard- the children run back, laughing and once more sit in a wide circle around the Storyteller

The storyteller and the children are invisible to the other characters

TELLER) Hush! Whisht!

Son and stepmother appear

MOTHER) Thou know nowt! About owt!

TELLER) Now here's trouble!

STEPSON) Nowt!

M) Nowt!

S) A'll not marry to please thee!

M) Nay, thou shall!

S) That a' shan't!

M) Not s' long 'sen- thou were well pleased!

S) Aye! Meb'ee...

M) Let's have none 'f this... What changed thee?

S) Love.

M) Love! Lad, this life's too hard f'r love.... Thou made vow and promise...

S) Meb'ee a' did.

M) Vow and promise to kinfolk, but they could, nay-they would turn enemy. A' wish thy father were here.

S) Y' say life's too hard for love ya' breath cry for my father in't next! Thou, three husbands and prospered well by all.

M) Thou know nowt of me....

S) Nor thee of me....

M) In full knowledge of thy father a'I did my best for thee. Thy promised bride has brothers, cousins... Think... Revenge would be harsh, and taken on others as well as on thee.

S) My true bride ... Her of my heart has none . Neither kith nor kin... Aye! she's not 'f our kind, yet-a' would dare all and owt f'r her.

M) Not our kind?

S) Thou may as well know. She's Fisherfolk. Think hard afore thou speak, for all and out would a', nay will a', dare for her...

M) Think hard! Aye, that a' will... Thee think hard... The trouble a' could bring on thee..

L) Great riches, she's promised me...

M) Riches! How...

L) I vowed...Nee'r question, fer a year an' a day...

M) He's enchanted...

Children) Enchanted.

S) Thou's a fool woman...

M) Ne'er call me fool!

TELLER) Now here's trouble!

S) Care, woman...

M) Care...

S) Aye, care. Care with thy words.

M) A' say what a' please.. Enchanted...

Children) Enchanted...

S) What of thee? Three husbands, never a child. Three husbands, prospered by all. Three husbands, thrice a widow. Art thou a witch? Some would say it...

Children) Witch.!