

= Sea Mither =

Sea Mither , or Mither of the Sea , is a mythical being of Orcadian folklore that lives in the sea during summer , when she confines the demonic nuckelavee to the ocean depths . Each spring she battles with her arch @-@ enemy Teran , another spirit of Orcadian legend capable of causing severe winter storms , to gain control of the seas and the weather . Eventually Sea Mither overcomes Teran and sends him to the depths of the ocean , but the effort of keeping him confined there along with her other benevolent labours during the summer exhaust her , until in the autumn Teran takes advantage of her weakness to wrest control from her once again .

Stories of the Sea Mither and Teran are among Orkney 's oldest legends , perhaps invented to explain the vagaries of weather and other naturally occurring events . In Shetland fishermen petition Sea Mither to afford them protection from the Devil .

= = Etymology = =

Mither is defined in the Dictionary of the Older Scottish Tongue as the Scots variant of " mother " , which may particularly reflect oral Orcadian use . The name of her opponent , Teran , is local Orkney dialect meaning " furious anger " , and may be a derivative of tyrren , Norse for " angry " .

= = Folk beliefs = =

= = = Description and common attributes = = =

Sea Mither is a spirit of summer days that quells the turbulent sea waters around the northern isles of Scotland . Shetland islanders , particularly fishermen , seek her protection from the Devil . Control of the seas is maintained by Teran , the spirit of winter , until Sea Mither arrives around the time of the vernal equinox in mid @-@ March . Both spirits are invisible to humans . Teran is her arch @-@ enemy and the pair fight bitterly , often for weeks as she tries to gain control . Their arguments cause gale force winds and heavy tumultuous seas as she tries to wrest control from him . Teran 's screeches are carried by the howling gales as the two spirits try to oust each other . The period of the spring combat between the pair is termed the Vore tullye or the " spring struggle " . Eventually Sea Mither overcomes Teran , relegating him to the depths of the ocean ; inclement summer weather is caused by Teran 's attempts to escape .

During summer months the Sea Mither also keeps the demonic nuckelavee creature confined , and undertakes benevolent labours : she empowers aquatic creatures with the ability to reproduce ; warms and calms the seas ; and instils a softer song @-@ like quality to the gentle summer breeze . According to folklorist and Orkney resident , Walter Traill Dennison , during Sea Mither 's reign in summer the conditions reported by islanders may have " tempted one to believe that the Orkney archipelago had become the islands of the blessed . " But the continual work she undertakes to keep everything calm and the strain of maintaining control over Teran gradually tires her .

As autumn approaches , Teran takes advantage of Sea Mither 's exhaustion to break free , and conflict between the two starts again . The power struggles cause the weather to change with darkening skies and howling winds . This time , Teran triumphs in the conflict termed the Gore vellye . Control of the ocean and weather is returned to Teran and Sea Mither is forced to leave . No details are given as to where she spends the winter , but during the storms caused by Teran the fishermen were consoled that Sea Mither would return refreshed and powerful in the spring , to again oust Teran from his malevolent grip over the seas .

= = Origins = =

Orcadian tales were strongly influenced by Scandinavian mythology with a blending of traditional Celtic stories . Folklorist and writer Ernest Marwick describes the Sea Mither and Teran as " pure

personifications of nature . " Several ancient myths were based upon the natural elements of the turbulent and ever changing sea surrounding Orkney , but the stories of the two spirits are among the oldest legends on the islands . People had to be able to explain the vagaries of weather and other natural life cycles without the benefit of science ; Traill Dennison hypothesises that this is why " the imagination of some half savage " may have formed the foundations of the myth .