

Life in old
Loweswater



Roz Southey

Life in old Lowswater

is a collection of short sketches on the history of this Lakeland village and its people, written by Roz Southey, mostly in the 1980s, and now edited and illustrated for Lorton & Derwent Fells Local History Society by Derek Denman.

Roz Southey

was born in Workington and came to Cold Keld in Lowswater with her parents at the age of six. Spending her childhood in a Lakeland village of the 1950s & 60s gave Roz an experience of rural life, from which developed her lasting interest in the history of village life.



£8.95



LIFE IN OLD LOWESWATER

Cover photograph: *The old Post Office at Loweswater* [Gillerthwaite]
by A. Heaton Cooper (1864-1929)

Life in Old Loweswater

Historical Sketches of a Cumberland Village

by
Roz Southey

Edited and illustrated by Derek Denman

Lorton & Derwent Fells Local History Society

First published in 2008

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* These images are taken from the Marshall family client records deposited in the Cumbria County Council Record Office at Whitehaven, reference CRO/W/D/WM11. The Society wishes to thank Waugh & Musgrave, Solicitors, of Cockermouth, for permission to reproduce these records, and the Archive Service of Cumbria County Council for assistance with the research for this book.

PREFACE

by Dr. Roz Southey

It's difficult not to be interested in history when the people of the past have left their names on the windows of your house. Who was the Ann Fisher who scratched her name in flourishes and curlicues on the glass in 1804? Who was the Thomas Smith who had much smaller and neater handwriting? I grew up in a house that reeked of history.

My parents moved to Loweswater in 1958 when I was six years old. The house we moved to, Cold Keld, was in need of renovations – just the thing to appeal to my father's practical instincts; over the years he replaced large parts of the roof, re-rendered the front of the house, put in fires and took them out again, painted and repainted, installed electricity. And in the course of this work, we came across hints as to the history of the house: carpenter's marks on roof timbers, blocked-up doorways, painted false windows, added partition walls. In the end, I succumbed to curiosity and went off to the Record Office in Carlisle to see if any documentary information survived to date the house.

It was at this point that I realised that the Record Office was crammed with documents about Loweswater and the surrounding area: manor records, parish records, council records, individual diaries ... It was all too good to keep to myself; I started writing articles for the parish paper.

The interest was immediate. Not only did people express their enjoyment of the articles, but they also started offering their own memories and memorabilia. Boxes of documents started coming out of lofts; Clem Storr of Thackthwaite generously allowed me to sift through piles of documents about Mockerkin School, other people brought out old savings books, or Show programmes, or invited me to check out the inscriptions in their houses. Someone pointed me in the direction of the large numbers of Quaker documents still remaining in London.

In the end, I wrote articles over a sixteen-year period. I moved away from Loweswater to get a job in Carlisle (which was handy for the Record Office), and then married and moved to Durham. Eventually, of course, I ran out of material and reluctantly gave up writing the articles.

Well, I say I ran out of material, but I still have enough notes on Mockerkin and Loweswater schools to write a book. I have files full of local wills, and copies of the parish registers and family trees of local families. Perhaps one day I'll sort them all out. In the meantime, I hope these articles are as enjoyable to read as they were to write.

Durham, March 2008

INTRODUCTION

This book is unusual in that people who spend their childhood in an area tend to accept it as normal and familiar, no matter how unusual the area and its people may seem to others. It is more often the offcomers to the Lakes who are stimulated to discover how the area developed its special qualities, through a millennium's interaction between people and the natural environment. But they usually start with landscape or houses. Perhaps only those brought up in this area can have a sufficient understanding of its people, through being a part of it, to approach a local history study by putting the people first. And history is about people.

Roz Southey's parents, the late Charles and Edna Williams, came to Roz's birthplace, Workington in Cumberland, from south-west England. In 1958, when Roz was six, they settled at Cold Keld in Loweswater, an old farmstead on the Thackthwaite road.¹ Roz attended school in Workington; then at Cockermouth Grammar before taking a history degree in Hull. More recently she was awarded her doctorate for her work on eighteenth century music and musicians, at the University of Newcastle, where she now lectures part-time.

The articles appeared in either the Loweswater Parish Papers, encouraged by the then vicar, Geoff White, or later in the Link of the combined benefice. The research was mostly done in the 1970s while Roz was living in Carlisle and was helping her father to uncover the history of Cold Keld. The articles formed a series of short, self-contained pieces, where the writing and often the narrative approach were as important as the local history content. There is a sense of discovery, a personal involvement and an apparent immediacy of writing that is not found in, say, a structured and systematically researched parish history. That is what makes the articles so attractive to anyone with a connection to Loweswater, but it leaves those readers with a definite risk of wishing to know more about local history.

In reprinting the collected articles for Lorton & Derwent Fells Local History Society, we had to agree whether they should be printed as they were or updated, revised, referenced, or joined together. We decided to leave the articles just as they were written, but to group them thematically, add notes where necessary, and some additionally supportive material for those who wish to have more context or to go further.

The society, the author and the editor wish to thank all those who have contributed to this book, and are grateful to the Council of the Civil Parish of Loweswater for their donation of £100 towards the cost of printing.

¹ L&DFLHS Journal No. 41 Feb 2008 contains Roz's Loweswater recollections.