



STRANGE COUNTRY

SIR GAWAIN IN THE
MOORLANDS OF NORTH STAFFORDSHIRE.
AN INVESTIGATION.

DAVID HADEN

STRANGE COUNTRY:

*Sir Gawain in the moorlands of North
Staffordshire, an investigation.*

by David Haden

2018

CONTENTS

Timeline.

1. An overview of the previous work on *Sir Gawain* and North Staffordshire.
2. Sir Gawain's possible routes into and through North Staffordshire.
3. Alton Castle as the castle of Bertilak of Hautdesert.
4. Who was William de Furnival, of Alton Castle?
5. The annual regional Minstrel Court at Tutbury.
6. "100 pieces of green silk, for the knights" at Tutbury.
7. The King's Champion: William de Furnival's friend in Parliament and a model for the Green Knight?
8. The nearby Cistercians at Croxden Abbey.
9. Wetton Mill and the Green Chapel: new evidence.
10. Two miles by *mydmorn*?
11. Some other local *Gawain*-poet candidates discounted.
12. "Here the Druids performed their rites": some other poets of the district.
13. Tolkien and the *Gawain* country: the 1960s in Stoke-on-Trent.

Appendix 1: A thrice 'lifting and heaving' folk practice in the Peak.

Appendix 2: Some pictures of continental wild-men.

Appendix 3: 'A Bag of Giant Bones': Erasmus Darwin and the district.

Appendix 4: A letter to the *Staffordshire Advertiser*, 1870, and article in *The Reliquary*, 1870. (Full-text).

Appendix 5: 'Notes on the Explosions and Reports in Redhurst Gorge, and the Recent Exploration of Redhurst Cave'. (Full-text).

Selected bibliography.

Index.

1. An overview of the previous work on Sir Gawain and North Staffordshire.

This chapter offers a short survey of the works which have, over the decades, associated *Gawain* with North Staffordshire. I discuss them in order of appearance.

The first mention of Staffordshire I can find is in Richard Morris, *Early English Alliterative Poems in the West-Midland Dialect of the Fourteenth Century*, Early English Text Society, 1869.¹ I quote from his revised Second Edition, his first edition having appeared in 1864...

“Formerly, being influenced by these broad forms [meaning “strong provincialism” in dialect], I was led to select Cheshire or Staffordshire as the probable locality where the poems [*The Pearl*, *Cleanness*, *Patience*, all written by the *Gawain*-poet] were written; but I do not, now, think that either of these counties ever employed a vocabulary containing so many Norse terms as are to be found in the Lancashire dialect. But although we may not be able to fix, with certainty, upon any one county in particular, the fact of the present poems being composed in the West-Midland dialect cannot be denied.”

Morris’s ‘Lancashire Norse’ argument was later discounted in a short analysis by Hartley Bateson’s Manchester University Press edition of *Patience* (1912), and then by highly detailed analysis by Dance (2012).² Interestingly, had

¹ There was an unchanged reprint in 1896. I also note that there are no references to Staffordshire in either of the EETS edition of the *Gawayne* text.

² Hartley Bateson, *Patience*, Manchester University Press, 1912, page 38. The reference is page xxxvi in the “Introduction” of the revised second edition of 1918.

The matter of ‘the Norse influence’ was later thoroughly investigated in the 2000s in: Richard Dance, “‘*Tor for to telle*’: Words Derived from Old Norse in Sir Gawain and the Green Knight”, IN: *Multilingualism in Medieval Britain (c. 1066-1520): Sources and Analysis*, Brepols, 2012. Dance concludes: “One could hardly, therefore, describe the Norse-derived words at this ‘fundamental’ end of the lexical spectrum as unusually deeply embedded within the author’s language; and, for all their interest in terms of the *Gawain*-poet’s stylistic strategies, their evidence does not justify searching for his home in parts of England reckoned to be especially densely settled by Scandinavian speakers”.

General index:

Abbots Bromley Horn Dancers, 89
Adam Bede (novel, dialect), 15, 43
Abraham and Isaac (Bible), 102
Aeneas, 115-116
All Hallow's, 43
Alstonefield, 149
Alton Castle: Modern, 52, 54, 56, 58, 68-69
Alton Castle: Medieval, Name, 54
Alton Castle: Medieval, Features, 56-63
Alton Towers, 54, 64
Alveton, see: Alton Castle
Amber (substance), 92-93
Anjou (France), 102
Arles (France), 93
Arthurian, 57, 63, 96, 103
Armour, green, 74, 88
Ashbourne, 23, 28, 34, 46, 54-55, 62, 152
Astrology, 116
Astonfelde, 149
Axe Edge, 121
Back Forest, 34, 36, 47-48
Barons' War, 56
Bawd Stone, 49
Beautesert, 29, 62
Beeston Castle, 29, 32, 39, 34, 39, 55
Beeston Tor, 134
Benedictine order, 114
Beresford, 32, 45
Bernard of Clairvaux, 114
St. Bertelin, 142-146, 201-205
Bertilak, 20, 26, 54, 57, 62, 108, 136-137, 140, 142, 145
Bible, 72, 101-102, 107, 109

Bible, Abraham and Isaac, 102
 Bible, Revelations, 101-102, 110
 Biddulph, 40, 160, 163
 Biddulph Moor, 33, 36, 39-41
 Bignall Hill, 39
 Black Death, 67, 78-79, 107, 109
 Blackshaw Moor, 50
 Boar (animal), 38, 46, 61, 65, 113
 Bridestones, 12-13, 19, 32, 34, 42, 44
 Bunbury, 34, 54
 Burton, 77
 Burton Abbey, 29
 Butterson Moor, 14
 Buxton, 37, 50, 159
 Caerleon, 39
 Caldon, 33, 149
 Camelot, 39, 43, 56
 Cannock Chase, 16, 62, 106
Canterbury Tales, 118
 Carrington, Samuel, 127
 Cauldon, 19, 29, 31, 33-34, 50, 134, 159-160
 Charlemagne, 72, 97, 99, 102-103
 Chaucer, 15, 92, 118
 Cheddle, 23
 Cheddleton, 160
 Cheshire, 11, 15, 17, 20-23, 28-32, 34, 36, 39, 42, 55, 63, 70-71, 112-113, 127
 Chester, 27-29, 31-34, 39, 46, 54, 73
 Chetwynd, Sir William, 27
 Christmas, 60-61, 63-64, 71-72, 79, 84-87, 91, 102, 107, 111, 116
 Churnet (river), 34, 50, 62-64, 134, 139
 Cistercian order, 25, 48, 66, 75, 106-107, 113-114, 137, 140
 Cistercians, known as White Monks, 66
 Civil War (English), 105

Cleanness, 11
 Cloud End, 45
 Cloudside (Congleton), 32-34, 42, 45
 Combermere, 39, 113
 Congleton, 12, 28-29, 32-34, 40, 46, 55
 Congleton Edge, 33-34, 36, 39-40, 42
 Constance (wife of John of Gaunt), 55, 77-79, 86
 Coronation, 61, 70-73, 97-104, 109, 111
 Crakemarsch, 23-26
 Croxden Abbey, 22-23, 25, 31, 59-60, 63, 66-67, 75, 105-109, 112-114, 134, 140
 Croxden Abbey, *Chronicle*, 25, 56, 109, 111
 Croxden Abbey, Whipping Post, 63
 Crusades, 67, 69, 73-74, 96
 Dane (river), 34, 45-46
 Daneinshaw, 32, 34, 42
 Darfar Bridge (River Manifold), 123-124
 Darfar Crag, 123
 Derby, 22-23, 63, 82, 86, 125
 Derbyshire, 12-13, 17, 20-21, 42, 55-56, 69-70, 73, 82, 84, 145
 Dialect, *Gawain*, 11-23
 Dieulacres Abbey, 28, 32, 113
 Domesday Book, 54, 56, 62, 165
 Dove (river), 23-25, 42, 77, 139, 145, 151-152, 158
 Doxey Pool, 48
 Dragons, 40
 Dymoke, Sir (King's Champion), 97-104
 Earlsway, 17, 28-30, 32-34, 36, 39, 42, 45, 50, 54, 62, 113, 134
 Ellastone, 15, 34, 63, 160, 163, 165
 Ellesmere, 22
 Elvaston Castle, 56
 Endless Knot, 117-118
etaynez, 166-167
 Ettenmoors, 167

Eyam, 159
 Farnham Royal Manor, 72
 Foresters (profession), 88, 90
 Forests, 20, 24-25, 33
 France, 24, 57, 69, 92, 93, 96, 102, 103, 114, 150
 de Furnival (family), 26, 61, 63, 66, 73, 77, 86, 96, 99, 102-103, 106,
 111, 113
 Gallows Green, 63
 Gaunt, John of, 79, 85-86 (see also: Constance, his wife)
 Goldsmiths Company, 61, 100
 Goyt Valley, 37, 129
 Gradbach, 46
 Great Gate, 25, 63
 Green Knight, red eyes, 111
Grene Knyght, The (late version of Sir Gawain), 104
 Grindon, 134, 139, 148-150
 Gryngolet (horse), 150
 Gun (placename), 46
 Halycon Days, 116
 Hannah's Cave (see: Old Hannah's Cave)
 Hamps (river), 121, 134, 157
 Hartshill, Stoke-on-Trent, 161-163
 Hautdesert (type of place), 26, 31, 54
 Heighley Castle, 55
 Hen Cloud, 48-49
 Heywood, Thomas, 15
 Hollington, 31, 59, 151
 Holyhead, 73
 Hoo Brook, 14
 Hunting, see: Boar
 Hunting horn, 87-88, 91, 151-152
 Ilam, 121, 142-143, 145, 149, 153, 157
 Ingestre Hall, 27

Ipstones, 160
 Ireland, 29-30, 55-57, 73, 88, 126, 143-145
 Jerusalem (place), 24
 Johnson, Dr., 43
 Kidsgrove, 39-40
 King's Champion, see: Dymoke.
 Knight's Low, 20
 Lancashire, 11, 15-16, 17, 21, 69, 127, 166
 Lancaster, Second Earl of, 86-87, 91
 Leek, 15-16, 20, 28-29, 32-33, 40, 43, 45-46, 50, 54, 56, 61, 113, 121, 125, 128, 146, 149, 160
 Lichfield, 12, 62, 95
 Lincoln, 32, 54, 62-63, 70, 73, 99, 145
 Lithuania, 69, 73
 Little Ice Age, 108
 Longmynd, 106
 Lud's Church, 16, 20, 34, 36, 45-48, 113, 119, 165-166
 Macclesfield, 28, 46, 54
 Manifold, 14, 120, 129, 134, 139, 147, 149-150, 153
 Manifold (river), 120-121, 123, 131-132, 141, 150
 Meerbrook, 34
 Mercia, 15, 144-146, 163
 Merlin, 57, 91
 Middlewich, 39, 63
 Miles (distance, Roman mile), 138
 Minstrel Court, 77-78, 81, 83-84, 86, 90
 Morridge, 34, 36, 50
 Mow Cop, 32-34, 36, 39-40, 42, 159
 Mucklestone, 13
mydmorn (time concept), 136-140
 Nannys Tor, 133
 Nantwich, 32, 34, 39, 113
 Needwood, 89

Norbury, 147
 Normandy, 24, 102
 Norse, 11, 74
 North Staffordshire Field Club, 121, 123, 128
 Northwich, 39
 Nottingham, 34, 54, 70, 73, 82
 Oaks (trees), 20, 24, 33, 48, 60, 62, 73-74, 89, 147-148
 Old Hannah's Cave, 19, 119, 122-123, 125-126, 129-133
 Ossom's Hill, 18, 124, 131
 Paganism, 67, 69
 Parliament, 67, 70, 97, 99, 142
Pearl, 15, 72, 102, 116
 Pentangle, 27, 102, 116
 Peveril Castle, 55
Piers Plowman, 67
 Plague, see: Black Death
 Plot, Dr., 14, 26, 81, 83, 87, 131, 142, 145-146
 Poetry, in relation to astronomy, 116
 Potteries, see: Stoke-on-Trent
 Primitive Methodism, 33
 Prussia, 67-70, 73-74, 96
 Pugin (builder of modern Alton Castle), 52, 54, 56, 58, 68-69
 Rakes Dale, 160
 Ramshaw Rocks, 48
 Red Street, 32-34, 39
 Redhurst Gorge, 121-126
 Richard of Shepshed (Abbot of Croxden Abbey), 107
 Roaches, 36, 46, 48-50, 113
 Rocester, 114
 Rushton Spencer, 29, 32, 34, 36, 42-43, 45-47
 Scotland, 54-55, 79, 95, 109
 Shakespeare, 94-95, 99
 Sheen (place), 149

Sheffield, 73-74
 Shropshire, 17, 22, 26, 104, 106
 de Somerville, Sir Philip, 84-85
 Stafford, 25, 27, 33, 46, 55, 77, 79, 81-82, 104, 107, 113, 125, 141-142, 144-146
 Stafford Castle, 79
Stella Maris (Catholic aspect of the Virgin Mary) , 114
 Stoke-on-Trent, 15, 40, 43, 94, 113, 161-163, 166
 Stone (place), 119, 125, 163
 Swainsley, 121
 Swythamley Hall, 20, 36, 43-46, 119
 Tamworth, 167
 Terce (time concept), 140
 Teutonic Order, 67-69
 Time (medieval concepts of), 136-140
 Tiptoft missal, 102
 Thomas Bateman, 125, 127
 Thor's Cave, 14, 128, 131, 133, 148, 153, 157
 Thornborough Hall, 160
 Three Shire Heads, 38, 46
 Throwley Hall, 141-142, 145-146
 Thursehole, Thurshole, see: Thor's Cave
 Troy (ancient place), 115-116
 Tutbury, 40, 55, 64, 70, 74, 76-91, 118
 Uttoxeter, 15-16, 22-23, 25, 40, 43, 77, 84, 159
 Venus (goddess, morning and evening star), 114-116
 Verdun, Verdon (family), 24-26, 30, 56-59, 66, 70
 de Vere, Robert, 27
 Walsingham (chronicler), 70, 98
 Waterfall (place), 134, 149
 Waterhouses, 28-30, 33-34, 36, 50, 62, 121, 134, 139
 Weag's Bridge, 134, 149
 Weather phenomena, 42, 108-109
 Weaver Hills, 28, 34, 50, 63, 134, 147, 159-160

Welsh bards, 74, 78
 Westminster Hall, 98, 101, 104
 Wetton, 119, 122-125, 127-128, 131-132, 134, 139, 142, 153, 157
 Wetton Mill, 14, 18-19, 26, 119, 121, 123, 125-126, 129-130, 133, 136, 141, 146-147, 149
 Wickenstone Rocks, 41
 Wildboardclough, 38, 46, 61
 Wild Men, 40, 166-167, 172-175
 Wincle, 20, 47, 113, 119
 Windsor Castle, 67, 72
 Wirral, 14, 32
 Witch Brooch, 95
wodwos, 166-167
 Wolves, 40, 143, 145
 Wooton Lodge, 105, 164-165
 Wootton, 34, 63, 147-148, 152, 163, 165
 Worksop, 73-74, 99
 Yarlsway, see: Earlsway
 York, 15, 99, 125
 Yorkshire, Yorkshiremen, 17, 69, 73-74