

## **On the green children**

by William of Newburgh in *Historia Rerum Anglicarum*

And it does not seem right to me to skip over an oddity, unheard-of in my lifetime, which was learned to have occurred under the reign of King Stephen of England. I have hesitated to tell the aforementioned tale for some time now, although many have reported it; it used to seem ridiculous to me that a story either about nothing or else the most hidden account in Christendom should be taken seriously. While I have been overwhelmed by the weight of so many and so great witnesses, that I assembled those who had believed and marveled at the tale, about which I was unable to either reach out to or gather information from any learned man.

There is a village in East Anglia, or so it is said, about four or five milestones from the monastery of the noble and wealthy king and martyr, Edmund. Some ancient pits, which are said to be wolf pits, can be seen nearby, and they grant the adjacent village with its name: Wolfpit. At harvest time, when the reapers were busy with the collection of the harvest throughout the fields, two children emerged from these pits; a boy and a girl, completely green-skinned, covered by strangely-colored clothes made from an unknown material. And because they were wandering, shocked, through the fields, they were caught by the reapers and led into the village, and although many flocked to the spectacle of such an unusual thing, the children refused to eat the food they had been offered several times throughout the day.

Although they were already almost dying from hunger, they would nevertheless take no notice of any food that was offered. As luck would have it, however, it happened that beans were being brought in from the fields, which the children snatched up then and there. They looked for beans in the stalk, and finding nothing in the hollow of the stalk, wept bitterly. Then some people who were at hand presented them with beans dug out from the shell, which they immediately accepted and devoured happily. They were nourished by this food for several months, until at last they learned the use of bread. At last their peculiar color gradually changed and became similar to ours by the stronger quality of our food, and they also learned the use of our speech.

And it seemed to the wise that the children should receive the sacrament of holy baptism, and this was done. But the boy, who seemed to be the younger in age, died a premature death, living only a short time after the baptism; his sister, however, remained unharmed and differed in no way from our kind of women. Afterwards she undoubtedly got married near Lenna, so it is said, and it is even said that she was still alive just a few years ago.

Once the children reasonably had the use of our language, they were questioned as to who they were and where they were from, and they are said to have replied, "We are people from the land of Saint Martin, which is obviously held in the revered land of our exceptional birth."

They continued to be questioned, as to just where this land could possibly be, and how they arrived here from there. "We don't know either," they said, "We only remember this: that when one day we were feeding our father's herds in the field, we heard some loud noise. It was the sort of noise we are now used to hearing near Saint Edmund's, when the bells are said to ring. And when we turned our minds to that marvellous

sound, lying down all of a sudden just as if in some departure of the mind, we stumbled across you in the field where you were harvesting."

Asked whether or not their homeland believed in Christ, or if the sun rose, they answered that that land was Christian and had churches. "But the sun," they said, "does not rise in our country. Our land is lit up minimally by sunbeams, since a small amount of that brightness has reached us, which in your land either precedes the sunrise or follows the sunset. Also, some shining earth is seen not far from our land, with a very bountiful river dividing the two."

These things and many others, which would take too long to recount, they are said to have answered carefully and with thorough hesitation. Let each person say what they wish, and reckon how these things are possible; but as for me, it does not pain me to have related this unnatural and wondrous event.