

# Robin hood: man or myth



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Whether Robin Hood was a man or myth is unknown, but who really was Robin Hood? Was he a real historical figure who changed the lives of many? Or simply a fictional character made up by a group of bored village men. There are too many options to decide between either. But why has the so called Robin Hood evolved over time to be this legend of great heroics and courage? He was known for his incredible gallantry and his skillful archery. His stories tell him as a fearless outlaw whom ' stole from the rich to give to the poor' with his band of merry man (Little John, Friar Tuck, Alan A Dale, Much the Millers son, Will Scarlett).

They were the outlaws of Sherwood forest, or so the ballads said. He was notoriously known from the ballads to have lived in Sherwood forest but Barnsdale was still a possibility. The only evidence we have of robin hood is from inauthentic ballads from hundreds of years ago. Luckily we have the luxury of having hindsight to really delve further into the evidence we have from ballads and the chronicles and make a genuine inquiry in the robin hood legend.

Various sources say that Robin Hood lived within 1189-1220 (King Richard the Lion heart) It would extremely unlikely that Robin hood lived through this period. He would have lived between the period of 1260-1330. The first ballads were written by William Langland, mentioning the notorious Robin Hood in 1337. This suggests he or someone of the same name lived somewhat before that date (1337). It is unlikely that he lived after that time frame as it wasn't possible for someone to write a ballad about them, if they never existed. It was most likely that he lived under the reign of King Edward the II (1307-1327) or the I (1272-1307) because they ruled over the

suggested life time of Robin Hood. There was another character in this ballad called the Earl of Lancaster, a source we know did exist. That gives the likelihood of Robin Hoods existence a but more authenticity.

Movies and books have always suggested that Robin Hood lived in the notoriously famous Sherwood forest. But many websites and booklets (Robin Hood: Man or myth) have suggested otherwise. Robin Hood was always put into the picture that he lived in the famous forest of Sherwood, but that is highly unlikely. Robin Hood legends suggest that Hoods birthplace was the town of Wakefield, which is quite close to the forest of Barnsdale. Therefor it was more likely that he lived in the Forest of Barnsdale. It was quite possible that he went between, moving from one to another to avoid being captured. There are also records that a man named Robin hood bought a house with his wife name Matilda (possibly maid Marion) in 1316, which is in the suspected life span. In 1429, a judge of the court of common please stated ‘ Robin hood in Barnsdale stood’. Many ballads of the 14th and 13th century mention Robin Hood in Barnsadale and Sherwood where as in the early 15th century it is mainly based around the forest of Barnsdale.

Ballads were tales and stories told throughout villages over the middle ages. They were about adventurous tales, heroics and bravery. They were the villagers gossip. Over time many Robin Hood ballads have arisen. The peasants and serfs would tell many ballads about heroic stories of Robin Hood. The peasants lived extremely dull, uneventful lives in the middle ages and these ballads were all they talked about. Though, the ballads we have now may seem true, these would have been told thousands of times before someone actually wrote them down. That would loose a bit of their

authenticity as each time they were told, they were probably tweaked and changed slightly to make the story sound more interesting and exciting. So the ballads we read are most likely substantially different to the true story.

The merry men (group of outlaws) were in a way, the peasants heroes. Peasants heard ballads of how the merry men would fight the oppressors to get the peasants what they deserved. Robin Hood was no ordinary man to them, he gave the oppressed hope that one day, there will be health and happiness all around. Robin did what the peasants would never have the guts to do, he fought back. He fought the church and the king and somehow, gained back a bit of respect for the peasants. The rich felt menaced and the king was robins biggest enemy. Many say he changed the lives of England. He was said to have stolen from the rich what was rightfully the peasants and returned it to them. He was their savior. Even if you think he was a criminal, there is no doubt that he gained respect for what he did for those people and the people for centuries to come.

Definition of an outlaw " A lawless persons or habitual criminal, especially one who is a fugitive from the law, a person, group or thing excluded from the protection and benefits of the law, a person under a sentence of outlawry'. Outlaws were fairly common in Europe in the middle ages. Many people would become an outlaw to escape the punishment they would receive for crimes. They were given cruel punishments for little criminal activity, some so severe you would risk loosing everything and just run away.

These include, the chopping off of a hand, or even eyes being plucked out. When you become an outlaw, you are no longer protected by the law, that

entitles that anyone can kill you and not be punished, you simply had no protection, from anything. Outlaws had to get food so they would hunt the kings deer in the kings forest, though a risky job, many of the outlaws were very skilled archers that could kill an animal from afar. Hunger (famine) was a very big issue in the middle ages with the peasants hardly being paid enough to put food in their stomachs, so many people became outlaws so they could hunt for food in the kings forest.

Robin Hood is a name to remember. Whether he was a murderer with only bad intentions or a hero to millions of people suffering, he was known for being a kind hearted man who thought about others before himself. He may have not been perfect, but he made the people forget about the darkness and poverty and simply entertained them. Him and his merry men brought peace and happiness into sorrow peoples minds and portrayed the hero to thousands of smiling people.

“ Robert earl of HuntingtonLies under this little stoneNo archer was like him so goodHid wildness nam’d home Robin Hood, Full thirteen years and something moreThese northern parts he vexed sore: Such outlaws as he and his menMay England never know again.”

That was the message engraved on the grave stone of Robin Hood. The legend of Robin Hoods death is that he went to see his cousin, prioress of Kirklees because he became ill. She used a blood-letting method to extract the toxins in his blood stream but she took too much blood and robin passed away. It is still unknown whether she killed robin intentionally or pure accident. Little John heard robin hood calling out to him from inside and ran

in to find RobinHood, he said that he would shoot a bow and arrow out the window and wherever It landed was where he wanted to be buried. He shot it 30 meters away from the Kirklees priory, considering he lack of strength.

In conclusion, I doubt there will ever be a direct answer to whether robin hood was a man or myth, and frankly, it doesn't really matter. We have gone for centuries knowing about robin hood and the tales of his heroics and not once have we ever really questioned wether he was a true person or a fictional character made up to entertain the village people. There is no true facts to identify him as a real person, where and when he lived and whether he was good and bad. There is secondary evidence to suggest such a person did exist in this time but there won't be a answer to rely on. Whether he was a fact of fictional character, he was a story told from generation to generation and brought smiles upon millions of faces. He stood up to the oppressors and risked his life do millions could have a better future. Whether he succeeded or not doesn't matter, even without knowing his true existence, he has changed lives and will live on for centuries to come.