

## *Robin of Loxley*



A pardon discovered by David Pilling and Rob Lynley reveals that Robin Hood was involved in the Peasants Revolt at York in 1381. His pardon reads:- “Robert Dore of Wadsley otherwise known as Robert Hode (Hood) given the King's pardon on 22 May 1382” (Roll of King's Pardons 4-5 Richard II 1382).

Located in the ancient manor of Wadsley are Loxley Common that was inhabited by fletchers and Loxley Chase that was reserved for the hunting of deer by the local Norman lords. As the Sloane Manuscript tells us Robin kept two bows at Loxley that were better than the birding bow he had with him, then it may be at Loxley where Robin learned to shoot a straight arrow while still a young boy and generally it was only the sons of the nobility who were trained up from childhood.

### **In Confirmation:**

Roger Dodsworth wrote, “Robin was born in the Bradfield Parish of Hallamshire; he wounded his stepfather to death at plough and fled into the woods where his mother sustained him until he was discovered. Then, he went to Clifton upon Calder where he met Little John who kept the kine. Little John is buried at Hathersage in Derbyshire where he has a fair tombstone with an inscription. Mr. Long saith that Fabyan saith Little John was Earl Huntley’s son after which he joined with Much the Miller’s son.”

Joseph Hunter, the assistant Keeper of the Public Records and Vice-President of the Society of Antiquaries wrote: “These open wrote “chases afforded fine opportunities for such marauders as Robin-Hood; who doubtless himself in proper person made some of his first essays in “chasing the fallow deer” in Fulwood and Riveling, lying so near Loxley, which beyond all competition has the “fairest pretensions” to be the birth-place of that noted outlaw; not sparing perchance the abbot’s herds. (“Fairest pretensions” is an archaic term meaning a claim free of all obstacles).

## *Robin Hood in York*



After killing his stepfather in Loxley, Robin fled to Kirklees Priory where he met Little John, then going to York he joined with the Hood family who may have been his grandparents on his mothers side, hence the change of name and identity from Dore to Hood. The Hood family were millers and bakers and one of Robin's merry men was the son of a miller. In the television series “Robin of Sherwood,” Robin was portrayed as his adopted brother and in real life Adam Hode the miller's son became a freeman of York in 1366 two years after Robin became a freeman in 1364. This allowed them to pursue their trade in the various markets that required travelling through the greenwood. Professor Thomas H. Ohlgren wrote, “Robin’s ‘guild’ or ‘fellowship’ is derived from the policies and practices of the urban guilds, including the master guilds or Great Livery Companies.... The parallels between guild policies and practices and specific scenes in the Gest are compelling, offering convincing evidence that the

poem (the Gest) was composed for an audience who would not only recognise the mercantile allusions but also appreciate the yeoman hero proving himself superior to a member of the knightly class.”

Edward III was a familiar figure in York, he was married there, he held Parliament there 15 times in the early 14th century and it was Edward who set up the guilds that enabled people like Robin Hood to trade. Close to the king was an elite clique including the knight, Sir Robert Morton who was a sheriff of Nottingham and at the time of the Peasants Revolt he was the steward of Conisborough Castle at Barnsdale right there on Robin's doorstep. He was one of John of Gaunt's most trusted retainers, he occupied several important posts in the duchy of Lancaster and his father, Thomas Morton was secretary to King Edward III giving Robin Hood ample reason to warn his men about the sheriff of Nottingham.

Gisbourne had always been a troublemaker and as he dealt in several commodities including cloth the same as Robin the two men may well have been business rivals? Gisbourne was constantly surrounded by scandal, he was a notorious patron of robbers, he tampered with the Royal Mint at York, he issued false money and two of his right hand men Robert de Harom and Richard de Kendale were accused of murder. In his position as Lord Mayor, chief Burgomaster (magistrate) and Member of Parliament he was able to enforce his will as a virtual dictator by imposing fines and penalties backed up by an army of around 1,500 men, which is the number of hoods and badges he had made that constituted his livery at a time “when liveries and personal badges were in everyday use” (Keen) “thus showing a time of social change when the lower classes and criminal gangs were imitating the aristocracy” (Ohlgren) in the 14<sup>th</sup> and 15<sup>th</sup> century and is known as “Merrie England” (Ronald Hutton).

The citizens of York were taxed over and above the norm to pay for such things as the ships that were used by the Merchant Adventurers without receiving any of the profits themselves and which Gisbourne lent to Edward III along with money belonging to the residents of York to help in the French war thereby keeping himself in the king's good books. Discontent between the populace and the ruling classes had been simmering away for years and when news of the Peasants Revolt in London reached York there was a riot in which Robin Hood participated, that was so violent considerable damage was caused to Bootham Gate and the city wall. John O' Gaunt and King Richard II., administered justice and as nothing had been achieved many merchants moved to other locations away from Gisbourne's authoritarian rule. Robin Hood is associated with Wakefield which is famous for its cloth-making and mystery plays that were performed by the various guilds and in the light of the happenings at York, perhaps this is where Robin settled which would explain Robinhoodstrete Close that Holt says was owned by Robin Hood in the 14th century, but was not given the name until the 17th century.

Among the York merchants were Henry and John Goldbeter, Thomas Gra, William Acastre and Walter de Kelstern. They were accused of smuggling wool in their absence (fugitives) but they continued to trade. Roger Swerd who was a privateer killed a man in 1343 when he attacked and pirated the cargo of an alien ship, but was pardoned by Edward III and became mayor of Hull in 1358. Professor Holt says, “In an age when outlawed royal officials continued to hold their own positions with relative impunity, it is understandable that many criminals showed little concern at being outlawed at all.” Edward III was very quick to issue pardons when raising an army and over 1,800 pardons were issued before the siege of Calais with the Earl of Warwick heading the list, but more commonly they were people like Robert

le White who was guilty of homicides, felonies, robberies, rapes of women and trespass, (M. Prestwich) thus giving the lie to those who say Robin Hood cannot have been an outlaw and a merchant.

## *Robin Hood the Merchant*



In Nottingham, the market and St. Mary's church that Robin attended are just across the road from each other and in St. Mary's is a private chapel that was built and paid for by the guildsmen who were knights, clerks, carpenters and drapers. The town attracted merchants like Robin Hood from far and wide due to its importance in the wool and cloth trade and according to the "Gest of Robin Hood" he sold green cloth to the king and Will Scarlett's name suggests he dealt in scarlet cloth.

**"Have you any green cloth," said the king, "That you will sell to me?"  
"Yes, for God," said Robin, "Thirty yards and three."**

**"Robin," said the king, "Now I ask of thee,  
Sell me some of that cloth, For my men and me."  
"Yes, for God," then said Robin, "Or else I were a fool.  
Another day ye will me clothe, I trust, against the yule."**

**The king cast off his cowl then, A green garment he put on.  
And every knight, also, Got a new green robe.  
When they were clothed in Lincoln green They cast away their grey.  
"Now we shall go to Nottingham," Thus the king did say."**

The journey to Nottingham through Sherwood Forest was fraught with danger and there was always the possibility of encountering the sheriff of Nottingham Sir Robert Morton who was verderer for the royal manors of Arnold and Edwinstowe near the Major Oak where Robin Hood and Maid Marian are said to have married. Adding to the hazards of travelling through the greenwood was William de Trent who was one of the sheriff's men in the ballad "Robin Hood and Guy of Gisborne" and as he lived at Gunthorpe on the River Trent where there was the only river crossing for miles around there was always the possibility of encountering the sheriff's men.

Considering the many dangers as they travelled from market to market it is understandable that the ballads don't mention women and children who were kept busy at home in the cottage industries of spinning and weaving that made Wakefield famous, while the dangerous journeying, the hard physical work, along with the buying, selling and bartering was done by the master, which is how the Gest describes Robin.

## *The Death of Richard II*



The glory days of Robin and the Merry Men ended with the death of King Edward. The Peasants Revolt under Richard II had failed and for the last 15 months Robin had been a virtual prisoner in the king's court by which time he "had spent his money and all his men's fee on both knights and squires to get him great renown. By the time the year was over, only two of his men remained with him – Little John and good Scarlett all the rest had gone." Robin's strength as an archer was failing and feeling he would die of sorrow if he remained with the king any longer he asked permission to return to Barnsdale where he had previously built a chapel. Here, he spent his last remaining 22 years as an outlaw with his men in lawless Barnsdale not going back for "fear of the king," by whose command at least 1,500 people had been massacred in the Peasants' Revolt.

After the death of John O' Gaunt, his son Henry Bolingbroke began plotting to usurp Richard II., and become the king of England. Thomas Neville in his role as Lord Furnival the lord of Loxley assisted him by voting in parliament for Richard's clandestine incarceration. Another of Bolingbroke's supporters was his brother-in-law Thomas Swynford, he was the Constable of Pontefract Castle in the district of Wakefield where the deposed King was murdered on the orders of Henry IV.

History does not record who killed king Richard, but Robin Hood was in Barnsdale along with his lord and as he had killed before he might do it again for a bag of gold? Anyone who killed their stepfather, then turned to highway robbery before becoming a rich merchant while at the same time making a name for themselves as an archer, then leading a riot against Gisbourne at York and finally killing the king of England, was destined to become a legend and this is what happened to Robin Hood a.k.a. Robin of Loxley in the following years.

N. B. The Peasants Revolt was 1381, Robin was released from prison 22 May 1382 and spent 15 months in the kings court and a further 20 years in the Greenwood. This brings us to 1402 when Alice de Mounteney became prioress at Kirklees. Richard II., was murdered in 1400 when Robin was in Barnsdale.

## *The Death of Robin Hood*



Kirklees Priory near Wakefield is associated with graves and death. The skeletons of new born babies were found there, victims of the Black Death were buried there and according to legend Robin was murdered there. Robin went to Kirklees after he killed his stepfather and between the years 1350 to 1360 Margaret Savile was the prioress and her brother Sir John Savile was the Sheriff of Yorkshire when Robin was pardoned in York after the Peasants Revolt. Fifty years later Robin was back at Kirklees, where between the years 1402 and 1416 the prioress was Alice de Mounteney. According to the ballad Robin was related to the prioress who killed him and in Wadsley/Loxley was a certain John de Mounteney who was rioting at Bradfield and Sheffield in 1373. The account reads:- "They came, armed, at Sheffield and Bradfield, co. York, broke Furnival's park at Sheffield, entered his free chase and warren in the said towns, hunted in these, felled his trees, fished in his free fishery, dug in his quarry and several soil there at Ecclesfield and

Handsworth and carried away the stones and coals of the quarry and the earth cast forth from the soil, fish from the fishery, the said trees and other goods in the said towns of Sheffield and Bradfield, as also deer from the park and chase, and hares, conies, pheasants and partridges from the warren, and assaulted his men and servants.”

As Alice de Mounteney became prioress of Kirklees in 1402 presumably Robin Hood was still living when Richard II. was murdered in AD1400. The prioress' lover was noted for his red hair and so are the Neville family who are credited with giving the Tudors their red hair. Lady Cecily Neville was the mother of Richard II., and Edward IV., while Anne Neville married Richard III. The Neville family who dominated the area possessed an extensive array of estates across northern England and Yorkshire as well as in other parts of the country and this unusually dense concentration of their northern estates gave them control of the roads. In one ballad about Robin's death Will Scarlett said to Robin he should take with him 50 of his best yeomen or Red Roger might not let them pass. One branch of the family was living at Heartshead near Kirklees, another branch of the family was living at Doncaster and Sir Thomas Neville was the Lord of Loxley by virtue of his marriage to Joan de Furnival.

From the ballad of Robin's death we learn that the prioress and Red Roger plotted together to conceal their murderous act by bleeding that was so common no one would suspect them of murder. Trusting his kinswoman Robin gave her £20.00 in gold to let his blood, saying to spend it while it would last and then she should have more, but the robber was about to be robbed himself and not just of gold, but of his life. The ballad ends with these words:

**Give me my bent bow in my hand, and a broad arrow I'll let flee; and where this arrow is taken up, there shall my grave digged be. Lay me a green sod under my head, and another at my feet; and lay my bent bow by my side, which was my music sweet; and make my grave of gravel and green, which is most right and meet. "Let me have length and breadth enough, with a green sod under my head; that they may say, when I am dead here lies bold Robin Hood. These words they readily granted him, which did bold Robin please: and there they buried bold Robin Hood, within the fair Kirkleys.**

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The ballad of Robin's death tells of a plank on which an old woman knelt over black water. When woad was used in the dying process, the dyer's hands were blackened by the dye and so was the water that became stinkingly polluted causing Queen Elizabeth I., to make a decree that woad dyers should be at least five miles from wherever she was staying. The chemical Arbutin that makes the skin lighter is found naturally in burberry, cranberry, mulberry and blueberry shrubs from which a yellow dye can be extracted for the production of green cloth and this may be the cause of Gilbert's white hand.

# *Robin Hood in History*

## **Sir Richard at the Lee**



In the "Gest of Robin Hood" the impoverished knight is described coming from a long line of noble knights from whom he had inherited a castle with fortified walls and a drawbridge at the entrance. The castle we are told was situated at the Lee in Verysdale surrounded by woods and later in the ballad he is revealed as Sir Richard at the Lee. This describes Sir Richard Vernon of the Lee in Wyedale and his home of Haddon Hall that was fortified during the reign of King Richard I. We read in the Gest that when he met Robin Hood at the Saylis he was intending to go over the seas on pilgrimage to the Holy Land and Sir Vernon was licensed to go on pilgrimage in 1364. The Lee at Wyedale came under the jurisdiction of the sheriff of Nottingham and the Gest recalls an incident where Sir Richard gave Robin and his men sanctuary in his castle from the sheriff of Nottingham who sought to ambush them after they won an archery contest. (Tournaments were held at nearby Castleton). Later Sir Richard Vernon of the Lee, joined with rebel forces in the Battle of Shrewsbury (1403) and was hanged, drawn and quartered on the orders of the Henry IV, his body parts being distributed throughout the kingdom. He has a prominent part in Shakespeare's play Henry IV., in which the character called Silence asked for news of Robin Hood, Scarlet and John. This was around the time of Robin's own death and like Robin and the Merry Men, life may have been better for Sir Richard under "Edward, our cumly kynge."

## **Poitiers**



The English force totalled 7,000 men, 2,000 of whom were archers against a total force of around 35,000 Frenchmen although Froissart gives the size of the French army as 60,000 including a contingent of Scots commanded by Sir William Douglas. Their cavalymen and horses were protected by armour and the only way the archers could be effective was to aim for the horses flank as they charged ever closer, requiring much courage, but as the arrows struck home and the horses fell to the ground the French charge came to a standstill. The two opposing sides now faced each other in hand-to-hand combat with the archers using their swords and bucklers (shields) as described in the ballads of Robin Hood. They were aided by the spearmen and axe-men who were sent in by King Edward, while those English archers who were running low on arrows, mounted any horse they could and joined their cavalymen comrades on the left flank, helping to gain a well-earned victory for the English. After king John of France was captured at Poitiers he was taken to London along with his son Philip, 17 great lords, 13 counts, 5 viscounts and 100 knights while ransoms were paid. On the journey, upwards of 500 yeomen who lay in ambush clothed in tunics and cloaks of Lincoln Green with bows and arrows, swords and bucklers sprang on him, as if they were a band of robbers and evildoers. When King John asked what manner of men they were; the Black Prince replied they were Englishmen living rough in the forest by choice, and it was

their habit to array themselves so every day.” (Holt-Anonimale Chronicle, ed. V. H. Galbraith), p. 41.)

The Lincoln Green they famously wore is the livery of the royal household and the above description fits Robin's company of merry men numbered at between 140 and 300 in the ballads, with the figure probably rising in times of war due to the high number of mercenaries who made up the larger part of any medieval army, perhaps giving rise to stories of robbers in the greenwood as they travelled to the various towns and markets in Robin's dual roll of merchant in peacetime and commander of a company of men in wartime. According to the Gest, Robin paid retained knights an annual fee, Little John as Reynolde Grenelefe was offered a fee of 20 marks a year and a good strong horse, to which he replied he already had a master who was a “courteous knight.” Later Little John told the sheriff's cook that every year Robin Hood would give him 20 marks for his fee” if he joined with them and later still we read that Robin had spent £100 and all his men's fee while he was in the kings court.

**Noteworthy people** in the ballads for whom we have a historical record are:- John Gisbourne the Lord Mayor of York, then there was Ricardus de Gyseburne who may have featured in “Robin Hood and Guy of Gisbourne,” he became a freemen the same year as Robin and along with the Lord Mayor of York all three men were in the same trade. Also, in the same ballad one of the sheriff's men was William de Trent, he witnessed the signing of a document regarding the transfer of land on Wednesday before St. Michael, 30 Edward III. Gisbourne's son-in-law was William Plumpton, he was born in Plumpton, which is where according to the Gest Robin loved to go hunting. Then, there were the Monteneys in Loxley, Alice de Mounteney was the prioress and the ballad of Robin's death tells us the two were related. Robert Stafford, alias Frere Tuk was still evading the law in 1429 and Robin's claim to the earldom of Huntingdon may be through Sir Thomas de Sheffield of Wadsley.

## *The Earldom of Huntingdon*



In the Wadsley district of Sheffield was Sir Thomas de Sheffield who was born in the Wadsley/Loxley district of Owlerton, dying there in 1348 when Robin Hood was a boy and Margaret De Savile was the acting prioress of Kirklees. He married Agnes Fitz Alan who was descended from David, king of Scots, the Earl of Huntingdon and Agnes had a claim to part of the earldom through her grandfather John II de Bailliol King of Scots. We are told by Roger Dodsworth that Robin killed his stepfather and if his stepfather was Sir Thomas then Robin would be the pretended Earl of Huntingdon, which simply means someone with a claim. If Robin was under the age of criminal responsibility when Sir Thomas died in 1348 then he will have been born c.1334, making him 22 years of age at the battle of Poitiers in 1356, a freeman of York in 1364, famous by 1377 age 41 when Piers Plowman was written, 66 years of age when Richard II was murdered, and bled to death c.1402 age 68.

On a side-note, the first husband of Agnes was Sir Gilbert Stapleton who participated in the murder of Piers Gaveston in 1312 and her eldest son Sir Miles Stapleton of Bedale was a Knights Founder of the Order of the Garter under Edward III. Her grandfather de Bailliol, king of Scots featured in Mel Gibson's 1995 Oscar-winning film Braveheart.

On 2 June 1388 John Holland was created the earl of Huntingdon by an act of parliament. He was half-brother to Richard II., son-in-law to John O' Gaunt and brother-in-law to the future Henry IV, but after Richard's deposition in October 1399 he was condemned to forfeit his dignities and lands. This caused him to conspire against Henry IV., to have Richard restored to the throne so that he might regain his lands, but when the plot was discovered Holland was beheaded and Henry IV., had king Richard killed to prevent further uprisings. The Hastings family have the honour of Huntingdon today and can trace their ancestors back to Loxley through Ann Hastings, George Talbot and Maud Baroness Furnivale. Sometimes they give their children the middle names Robin Hood.

## *Royal Forest of the Peak*



The castle at Castleton was the home of the sheriff of Nottingham when he was in Derbyshire, situated as it is in the Royal Forest that provided better hunting than the New Forest or Millbank Forest on the Welsh borders, it is close to York, it was a favourite hunting ground of the kings of England and Tideswell was known as the 'King's Larder.' When the castle came into the possession of King John the demand for the hunt was so great that large studs of horses were maintained specifically for the hunting. Along with the horses were large numbers of cattle belonging to the Canons of Welbeck Abbey in Sherwood who were ordered by King John to keep them away from the sparrow hawks nesting sites between mid April and the 24 July.

King Henry II had the stone keep built and the last sovereign to stay at Peveril Castle was Edward III in September 1331. Among the castle's Constables were Edward I., Piers Gaveston, and Simon de Montfort. The forest was a poachers paradise and there were so many deer that men and dogs were trampled to death when they stampeded in 1184AD, but the worst of the poachers were the nobility and among them were William de Ferrers the Earl of Derby, the Earl of Arundel, Sir Thomas Furnival, lord of Sheffield and Matthew de Hathersage. Robin Hood, who may have learned the skills of archery and hunting from the king's barons and knights as they travelled through Loxley on their way to the castle at Castleton that doubled as a hunting lodge can be added to the list of poachers. His birth name of Dore indicates a connection with the village of that name near Beauchief Abbey that was founded by a sheriff of Nottingham and the deer of that abbey were kept in Rivelin Firth near Loxley which made it easy for young Robin to poach the abbot's deer while keeping a wary eye open for the sheriff.

As Robin Hood has been identified as coming from the Yorkshire Loxley, then Loxley in Shropshire and Warwickshire are ruled out along with their candidate Robert FitzOdo otherwise known as Robert FitzOoth who William Stukeley proposed as Robin Hood in 1746 and who Nottingham 'adopted' as their candidate. Professor Holt dismisses this fabrication as does the Complete Peerage. FitzOoth did not live in the era in which the Gest is set, he does not match the description of Robin Hood in the ballads, he did not live in the reign of a king called Edward and neither is he from Nottingham whose only connection with the legend is the sheriff.

## *Little John's Grave Hathersage*



Near Loxley is the Royal Forest of the Peak and the village of Hathersage where we find the grave of Little John. Here the feared sheriff of Nottingham and his men patrolled the forest bounds, so for safety-sake the good folk of Hathersage hunted for food on the moors between Hathersage and Loxley away from the Royal Forest and its officials. This led to endless arguments between the people of Loxley and Hathersage until finally a ditch was dug across Hallam Moors marking the disputed boundary between the two villages. This was also the county boundary between Nottinghamshire and Yorkshire and although the initial argument was about hunting rights the official marking of the county boundary confirmed Robin's status as a Yorkshireman, which explains why the Sloane Manuscript says;

**“Robin Hood was born in Locksley, Yorkshire which some say was in Nottinghamshire.”**

Then there was this:-

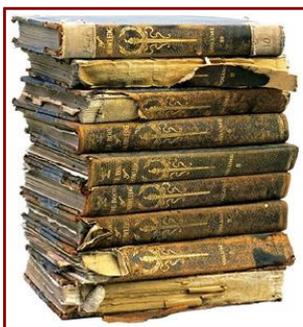
**“In Locksley town, in merry Nottinghamshire,  
In merry sweet Locksley town,  
There bold Robin Hood was born and was bred,  
Bold Robin, of famous renown.”**

There is no Loxley in Nottinghamshire and it should of course be Yorkshire, but the rhyme may have been written before the ditch was dug, although we know it was in existence by 1559 when the Earl of Shrewsbury walked the forest bounds.

According to Elias Ashmole; after Little John had buried his comrade at Kirklees Priory he made his way sadly back to Hathersage where he spent his last remaining days. He dug his own grave under the old yew tree in the graveyard near the old preaching cross and directed that his cap, bow, and arrows should be hung in the church. In 1625 Ashmole wrote, “Little John lyes buried in Hathersage Churchyard within three miles from Castleton, near High Peake, with one stone set up at his head and another at his feete, but a large distance between them.” (Ashmole MS, fol.147)

The ballad adds: — “His bow was in the chancel hung, His last good bolt they drave, Down to the rocks, its measured length, Westward fro' the grave. And root and bud this shaft put forth, When spring returned anon, It grew a tree, and threw a shade, Where slept staunch Little John.”

## *Professor Holt on Robin Hood*



First, the critical figure for both Stukeley and Mr. Lees is William ‘FitzOoth,’ who (Stukeley) or whose heir (Lees) was transferred to the custody of Robert de Vere, earl of Oxford, in 1214. In reality the William son of Otho, whose heir or heirs were placed in the custody of Aubrey de Vere, earl of Oxford, in 1205 and transferred to Robert de Vere, earl of Oxford, in 1214, had nothing to do with the family of Kyme, or with the earls of Huntingdon, still less with Robin Hood. He is well known as an official of the Mint, holding

his office in charge of the manufacture of the royal dies as a sercanty. By 1219 he was succeeded by his son, Otho son of William, who still held office in 1242-3. It follows therefore that 'Robert fitz Ooth' is entirely fictitious; so is the alleged link between 'FitzOoth' and Kyme; and so are the grounds for seeking an original Robin Hood in the Kyme family.

Secondly, there is no evidence that any Robert of Kyme mentioned by Mr. Lees was outlawed. The instance on which he relies is a royal remission of wrath and indignation incurred by an appeal of rape against a Robert of Kyme at Wenlock in 1226; there is no mention of outlawry.

Thirdly, Mr. Lees's 'Robert of Kyme' is compounded of at least two distinct individuals, none of them an outlaw and none of them a disinherited elder son; many of the relationships he proposes within the Kyme family are quite unsupported by any contemporary evidence.

The recent attempt by Mr. J. Lees (*The Quest for Robin Hood*, Nottingham 1987) to alter the accepted geography of the tales by placing Barnsdale in Sherwood is most unacceptable. It involves an elementary misreading of the Gest: the knight was travelling south through Barnsdale, not north, as he insists, for he was intending to voyage to the Holy Land; it is only later, after leaving Robin in Barnsdale, that he visits St Mary's, York, to repay his debt. It is also based on a tendentious and uncritical evaluation of the place-name evidence.

'Brunnisdale' in Basford, Notts., cannot be equated with Barnsdale. 'Brunnis' is most probably 'brun,' i.e., brown; 'Barn' comes from the personal name 'Beorn'. Moreover, the evidence linking Wentbridge, Sayles, Barnsdale and Watling Street is very clear and certain.

The main facts concerning the use of Watling Street as a name for the Great North Road in the Barnsdale area, which Mr. Lees questions, are incontrovertibly presented in *The Place Names of the West Riding of Yorkshire*, vii, p. 145. (Professor Holt) *The Complete Peerage* Volume 6 speaking about Nottingham's candidate says, "Robin Hood (for whose existence no contemporary evidence has been found) was first called Robert fitz Ooth in a fictitious pedigree concocted by the 18th century antiquary William Stukeley."

**Since this was written a pardon has been discovered confirming Robin Hood was from Wadsley where Loxley is situated.**

## *Robin Hood Timeline*



1252. The first yeoman archers.

1319. Pavage Tax that we read about in *Robin Hood and the Potter* was not introduced until this year in Wentbridge. (David Greenwood)

c. 1322. First known use of Lincoln Green was at the Battle of Boroughbridge.

1336. Gisbourne born. Robin Hood will have been born about the same time.

1337. Nottingham city walls that Robin Hood and Little John climbed over to escape the city were not completed until this year. In the ballad "Robin Hood and Guy of Gisbourne" line 89 tells us the two men discussed the "merchandise they made" and someone in the same trade as

Robin was Ricardus de Gyseburne who was admitted to the freedom of York the same year as Robin (38 EDW. III).

1344. The first gold coins in England were issued by a royal proclamation in January of this year, Robin Hood gave the prioress £20 in gold coins.

1350-1550, The two-handed longsword we read about in Robin Hood and the Monk was in service in the later medieval period. It was after this time (the Black death) when local lords and prominent citizens began to have their own livery.

1357. In Robin Hood and Guy of Gisbourne one of the sheriffs men was William de Trent. A man of that name witnessed the signing of a document regarding the transfer of land on Wednesday before St. Michael, 30 Edward III.

c. 1362. Gisbourne's son-in-law born. He was William Plumpton born in Plumpton, Yorkshire. Gisbourn's wife Ellen was related to Robert and John Morton who were Sheriffs of Nottingham and Yorkshire respectively. Robert's wife Joan was lady-in-waiting to Richard II queen, Anne of Bohemia.

1369. Robin hunted deer in "Plomtom Parke.

1371. The chapel in St. Mary's that Robin attended wasn't built until this year.

1377. Edward III "Our Comely King" died. Piers Plowman published. Robin was well known by this time and may have excelled at Poitier in 1356?

1381. The Sheriff of Nottingham Robert Morton was in Conisborough Castle, Barnsdale. Robin was outlawed for his involvement in the Peasants Revolt.

1390. Gisbourne died.

1396. William Courtenay died. He was the Bishop of Hereford and Prebendary of York. His journeys to York took him through Barnsdale where Robin Hood made a bishop of Hereford do a dance.

1400. William Langland died.

1402 to 1416 Alice de Mounteney of Loxley the prioress of Kirklees.

1429. Robert Stafford, alias Frere Tuk was still evading the law in 1429.

In keeping with the late medieval period in which the ballads are set, Professor Holt believes the origin of the "Gest of Robin Hood" is circa 1450. All the literature, the setting and the dates are in this later period and Holt goes on to say that Major's conception about a 13th century Robin Hood "was not reinforced by argument, evidence or proof it was simply recycled through later versions of the tale and so became an integral part of the legend." Neither is this view supported by the earliest ballads that name the reigning monarch as "Edward." This accords with Professor Thomas Ohlgren who writes the Gest was "commissioned by one of the fifteenth-century guilds — possibly the Dyers Guild in the light of the numerous references to cloth and liveries — to commemorate Edward III not only as the protector of the English Channel but as the founder of seven of the twelve Great Livery Companies."

Barbara A. Buxton writes: – “The legal and royal records for the reigns of Richard I and King John are more than adequate to detail Robin’s offences, but they do not. Neither is the name of the sheriff ever mentioned even though the names of sheriffs were recorded as far back as 1135. There were no friars in King John’s England, the first came to England in 1221.

## *Robin Hood’s Bay*



The robbers in Robin Hood’s Bay were not the legendary archer but pirates (robinhoods) many of whom were funded by local landowners on condition they got half the bounty. It was the same in other coastal towns around England and Wales and kings and queens, fisher-folk (who have become confused with the archer), farmers, clergy and gentry alike were all involved in piracy. In Robin Hood’s Bay, hiding places, bolt holes and secret passages abounded. It was said that a bale of silk could pass from the bottom of the village to the top without leaving the houses.

It was King Henry III (1216–1272) who issued the first licenses to individuals (these were privateers not pirates) allowing them to attack foreign ships for plunder. Other members of the English royal council funded even more privateers who attacked Flemish, Dutch, and Hanse ships resulting in letters of complaint from the Count of Flanders between the years 1324 to 1346 one of which reads:-

“They put to sea from Newport, Flanders with their crew and tackle to make their living by fishing, they had taken 14 lasts (168 barrels).” Englishmen came in six ships and “took Cullin’s ship and all within and took it and the people and all in it to Robin Oed’s Bay where they were given to the people of the country and led them overland to Witteby.”

The disturbances at Whitby caused by pirates (Robin Oed’s) who “came and wasted that place, as they had compassion on none” was so severe that the monks in the abbey were forced to leave and eventually settle in St. Mary’s at York.

## *Ranulf Earl of Chester*



The names of two famous men, Robin Hood and the earl of Chester are associated with disturbances in York and Staffordshire respectively. For Robin Hood the cause of the trouble was John Gisbourne who was the Lord Mayor of York and the name of the earl of Chester, who had founded the Abbey of Dieulacres over a century previously, was brought to remembrance by the Abbott of Dieulacres who caused endless trouble for the people of Leek and Staffordshire. According to legend Ranulf de Blundeville had a vision one night in bed from his grandfather Ranulph de Gernon, Earl of Chester who instructed his grandson to found a Cistercian abbey near Leek in Staffordshire. As a result the abbey named Dieulacres was founded in 1214 and by the fourteenth century had risen to the status of a great landowner and often behaved as such. The abbot retained bands of armed men and his power over the town of Leek was absolute. He erected gallows in Market Street

and was legally authorized to hang anyone he pleased. The only stipulation of this law was he had to give 48 hours notice to the person concerned!

In 1379 a royal commission inquiring into events at Leek noted that the Abbot of Dieulacres by the name of William Lichfield had used his armed men (marauding monks), to do all the mischief they could to the people in the county of Stafford and that they have lain in wait for them, assaulted, maimed, and killed some, and driven others from place to place... The abbot himself was arrested and imprisoned following an incident during which a John de Wharton was beheaded by these men on the abbot's order, but suspiciously he was soon pardoned and released. In subsequent years members of the abbey community were accused of theft and the abbot criticized for appearing to protect them. There were also numerous lawsuits.

The events of the day were printed on broadsheets that were sometimes folded to make chapbooks containing several songs known as 'garlands' that could be sung to well-known tunes. The broadsheets sold for a penny each making ideal 'copy' for the printers and providing the lazy priest of Langlands "Piers Plowman" with the ballads he knew so well. The activities of Ranulf, earl of Chester continued to inspire the later balladeer, Bob Dylan when he wrote "Lord Randal" and A Hard Rain's A Gonna Fall" in which he dealt with the issue of nuclear bombs in the Cuban missile crisis, although Bob himself said this was an over simplification.

### *Robin Hood and the Potter*

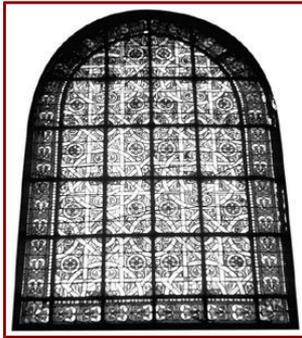


An example of Robin's no-nonsense approach can be seen in Robin Hood and the Potter who Little John first met at Wentbridge where the potter refused to pay pavage tax, preferring instead to pay Little John with a good thrashing from his two handed quarter-staff, the memory of which prompted Little John to bet Robin 40 shillings he couldn't make the potter pay, with money that is. With that Robin accosted the potter, telling him that for the last three years and more never a penny of pavage tax had he paid. The potter replied in the same manner he had to Little John and getting down from his horse he took up his two-handed staff from off his cart and with an 'awkward' stroke (difficult to counter) smashed the buckler out of Robin's hand, striking him in the neck on the follow through. Robin with good grace admitted defeat and offered the potter a fellowship (business associate, line 94). Exchanging his clothes for those of the potter, Robin set off to Nottingham to sell the potters wares. On arrival at Nottingham market he gave his horse oats and hay before setting up his stall and selling the pots that went like the proverbial hot-cakes due to their low price, the sheriff's wife bought the last five pots.

Taking a liking to Robin, the sheriff's wife invited him to dine with her and her husband. At dinner the two men got on well and the sheriff challenged Robin to a shooting match which Robin impressively won even though, as he said, the bow he had been given was weak compared to the bow Robin Hood gave him. When the sheriff heard this, he asked the 'potter' if he knew Robin to which the 'potter' truthfully replied that he had shot with him many times and would take the sheriff to meet him the next day. Giving the sheriff's wife a gold ring and thanking her for her hospitality the two men rode into the sunlit forest where Robin blew his horn, whereupon the sheriff found himself surrounded by Robin's men and if it had not been

for his wife's hospitality there is no telling what merriment Robin might have had at his expense, but instead Robin contented himself with keeping the sheriff's horse and making him walk home barefoot, saying he will send his wife a white palfrey. When the sheriff told his wife she laughed aloud and said "by him that died on a tree, now you have paid for all the pots that Robin gave to me." Being the gentleman he was the story ends with Robin paying the potter for his pots which was much less than the value of the sheriff's horse. All-in-all Robin came out of it without a stain on his character, a richer man and with the satisfaction of having 'got one over' on the sheriff.

## *Robin Hood and the Monk*



In Robin Hood and the Monk, Robin who had not been to church for two weeks decided to go to St. Mary's in Nottingham. Much the miller's son advised him to take 20 of his yeomen for safety-sake, but Robin would have none of it and insisted he and Little John would go together. On their journey they struck a bet on whom the best archer was, but when Little John claimed his five shillings for beating Robin, he refused to pay. This led to a fight in which Robin struck Little John who promptly left his master, leaving Robin to go to Nottingham on his own.

On entering St. Mary's church a great-headed monk who recognised Robin claimed he had been robbed by him. The monk raised the alarm, he bared the town gates and alerted the sheriff who along with his men broke into the church where a fight ensued. Robin killed twelve of the sheriff's men with his two-handed longsword but disaster followed when Robin was captured and thrown into jail. Further accusations were made against him by other monks who all wrote letters of complaint against Robin that were to be taken to the king.

In the next scene the outlaws heard that Robin had been captured and jailed, so Little John who must have returned to Barnsdale set off with Much the miller's son to find the monk they knew had been sent to report Robin's capture to the king. Finding the monk Little John killed him and took the letters off the dead body while Much killed the page who would be able to identify them.

Little John and Much carried the monk's letters to the king themselves, telling him the monk had died on the way. After reading the letters, the king exclaimed there was never a yeoman in all Merry England he wished more to see. After that, the king gave Little John and Much twenty pounds and made them yeomen of the Crown, he also gave Little John his seal for identification purposes and told him to go to the sheriff at Nottingham and bring Robin to him.

Arriving in Nottingham the sheriff received the two men courteously and asked after the monk. He was told the king's pleasure was such that he had made him Abbott and lord of Westminster Abbey. On hearing that, the sheriff offered both men hospitality and after they had drunk their fill the sheriff fell into a drunken stupor. Taking the opportunity Little John and Much the miller's son went to the jail where they roused the sleeping jailer with the cry that Robin had escaped. Taking the bait he let them into the jail and once in Little John killed the jailer and taking the porter's keys released Robin. The three men made haste climbing

over the city wall and escaped to Sherwood. When the king heard what had happened he remembered the hospitality and the money he had given them as well as making them Yeomen of the Crown and he realised he had been well and truly tricked. Remembering the loyalty of Robin's men and Robin's loyalty to them, the king, who was full of admiration for Robin Hood and the Merry men decided to draw a veil over the whole affair and let matters rest, neither would he punish the jailer who had been tricked just like he had been.

## *Robin Hood and the Impoverished Knight*



At Barnsdale Little John, Much the Miller's son, and Will Scarlok were sent down the Saylis by Robin to invite any traveller who should pass that way to dine with him. Shortly, along came a knight in threadbare clothing, with only ten shillings to his name and in conversation it turned out the knight's son had killed someone at joust and for this he was thrown into jail presumably on a trumped up charge. Bail was set at £400 which was an extraordinarily large amount and to release his son the knight had borrowed the money from St. Mary's Abbey, mortgaging his castle and lands as security. The loan was now due to be repaid and as the knight has been unable to raise the £400 he will lose his lands. Finding the knight to be honest Robin lent him the money, he gave him some fine clothing a grey packhorse, a palfrey, a saddle, a pair of boots, some new clothes and a pair of gilded spurs (only a knight would have these). Lastly he sent Little John to accompany him on his journey.

**“Master,” then said Little John, His clothing is very thin.  
You must give the knight some good clothes, to wrap his body in.**

**“For you (Robin Hood) have scarlet and green, master, and many a rich array.  
There is no merchant in merry England so rich, I dare well say.”**

**“Take him three yards of every colour, and see that you measure it true.”  
Little John took no other measure but his long bow of yew.**

**And at every handful that he met, he counted it a yard.  
“What devils draper,” said little Much, Do you think you are?”**

**Scarlet stood still and laughed and said, “By God almighty,  
John may give him good measure for it costs him but lightly.”**

In York the abbot and high justice of England were waiting. They knew the deadline for the loan to be repaid was due to expire resulting in the knights land and property becoming theirs, but much to their surprise and chagrin the knight turned up on time pretending to be penniless. No mercy was shown to him and after seeing their unhelpful, unbending attitude he surprised and disappointed the unscrupulous monks by telling them in no uncertain terms what he thought of them, he finished by saying he had the money and no way was he going to pay any interest. Their scheming plan had failed.

The knight returned home and eventually collected enough money to repay Robin, but meanwhile who should come along the Saylis, but two black monks from St. Mary's abbey,

one of whom is the High Cellerer. The monks are rude, and deceitfully say they have only 20 marks while at the same time denying any knowledge of the £400 they took from the impoverished knight. When Little John looked in their bags he found they had £800. Because of the lies Robin felt justified in relieving them of the money for how can you rob a man who has nothing, the money said Robin had been sent by the Virgin Mary. The monks rode away saying regretfully they “could have dined more cheaply in Blyth or Doncaster” and Robin’s parting shot was to tell them to say to the Abbot, “Robin sends his greetings and requests he sends the company of a monk to dine with him every day.”

Later when the knight returned to repay the £400 borrowed from Robin with an additional 20 marks for his courtesy, good Robin said nay, for Lady by her High Cellerer has sent me my pay. When Robyn finished telling his tale to the knight they laughed and had good cheer. “By my trouthe” then said the knight, “Your money is ready here.” “We have our £400” Robin said “and £400 beside. You keep the £400 for the debt has been cleared and your son is safe. The last time you passed this way £400 was owed, but now you are £400 in pocket and by God’s grace justice has been rightfully done to one and all.”

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