

NEWS IN FOCUS

INVESTIGATING THE LEGEND OF THE OUTLAW AND HIS MERRY MEN

'Bring Robin Hood back to Loxley': Campaign launched for folk hero

Molly Williams was born in Nottingham and spent a good part of her childhood playing games inspired by Robin Hood, in her words 'exploring the castles and caves and waving sticks around the garden wearing a green hat'. But as a journalist with *The Star* and an honorary Sheffielder, she says the truth cannot be ignored...

Robin Hood was a Sheffielder. He was born in Loxley, roamed the forests of South Yorkshire – which are now towns and cities – drank from its springs, regularly took refuge in a cave on Stanage Edge and his right hand man – Little John – is said to be buried up the road in Hathersage. And people can still visit most of these places today.

The merry outlaw is one of the most famous folk heroes in English history but it seems many do not know him at all.

Nottingham claimed him as their own with statues, visitor centres, tours and merchandise. Modern comics, TV shows, films, plays and poetry also say he based himself in Sherwood Forest, stormed Nottingham Castle and battled feuds with his arch nemesis the Sheriff of Nottingham, his Sheffield roots are rarely recognised aside from using his formal name, Robin of Loxley.

However, sources from as far back as more than 500 years ago tell a different tale.

Even his mantra was a myth. 'Rob the rich and feed the poor' was more 'steal and spend' with his merry men, according to dozens of ballads written about him at the time which also pinpoint his stomping ground as South Yorkshire. There are even conflicting theories about when he would have lived, with some claiming he would not have been alive during King Richard the Lionheart's reign.

So the Sensoria festival and the Centre for Contemporary Legend are on a mission to set the record straight and bring Robin Hood back home to Loxley.

Their campaign kicks off this week with the launch of an app of key sites in Yorkshire. It includes audio and images of Robin Hood's cave on Stanage Edge, Little John's Grave in Hathersage, the Trysting Tree in Rotherham under which Robin is said to have met with Maid Marian and Little Haggas Croft in Loxley where he was born.

'Everyone associates Nottingham with him but that really is a modern thing, if you go back to the earliest records he's from Yorkshire. So all we are trying to do is get that recognised, not upset Nottingham'

Dr David Clarke, co-founder of CCL



It comes ahead of a special outdoor screening of the 'definitive' 1938 film *The Adventures of Robin Hood*, starring Errol Flynn, at Storrs Wood this Saturday, August 31, and the publication of a booklet exploring the legend in Yorkshire.

There are also plans to install plaques, mapping out important places in the Robin Hood legend, and those involved even hope a statue of the man himself in Sheffield, similar to the monument that stands outside the entrance to Nottingham Castle.

Dr David Clarke, co-founder of CCL, said it was time to 'bring Robin back home'.

He said: "There is a long and ancient tradition that he was born in Loxley. But if you're a visitor to Sheffield and are interested in Robin Hood, there's nowhere to go. There's no markers or statues. If you go to Nottingham, who have sort of appropriated him, there are loads of places to visit. But here, the place where he was born, there's zero."

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He added that as an elusive character, it is difficult to pin down where Robin lived but said South Yorkshire had the strongest connection to the legend. "There is some evidence that a man or men who called themselves Robin Hood

and Little John lived in this part of Yorkshire at that time. What we cannot say for sure is this was the Robin Hood and Little John, if such individuals ever existed outside the legend that we are familiar with today."

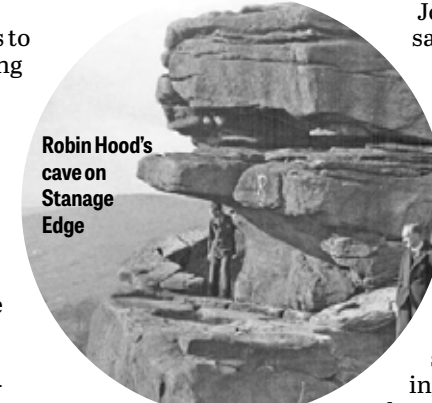
Jo Wingate, of Sensoria, said it was nice to see the local enthusiasm for the campaign already.

She added: "Sensoria is a festival that is very grounded in Sheffield and we've always celebrated Sheffield talent."

"This year our theme is myths and legends and we've always sort of harboured this feeling of 'it's a shame we don't do more to celebrate Robin Hood of Loxley' so we thought this year is the year to do it. There are so many on-screen depictions of Robin Hood so it seemed like a natural thing for us as a festival."

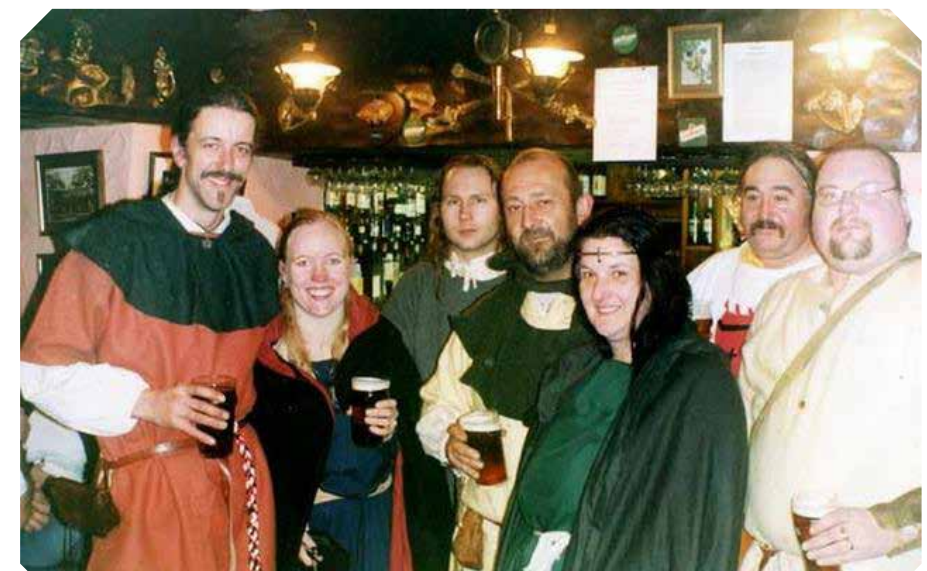
"One of the main forests that was a stomping ground for him was Barnsdale forest... he did go to Nottingham to do tournaments and things but it's more likely his stomping ground was Yorkshire. We do have a very strong claim."

The story has been depicted on screen dozens of times. As well as the Flynn movie, there is a famous animated Disney version from 1973, the 1991 picture *Robin Hood: Prince of Thieves* starring Kevin Costner, and last year's *Robin Hood*, directed by Otto Bathurst, which starred Jamie Foxx as Little John and Taron Egerton as Robin. ■ Visit www.sensoria.org.uk/events/the-adventures-of-robin-hood-u-outdoor-screenings for tickets to the screenings.



SHEFFIELD'S CLAIM TO THE ROBIN HOOD LEGEND – THE EVIDENCE:

- Born at Little Haggas Croft, Loxley
- Contemporary ballads describe his home as being in South Yorkshire
- Said to have used a spot on Stanage Edge – Robin Hood's Cave – as a hideout
- Believed to have met with Maid Marian at the Trysting Tree, near Todwick
- Sidekick Little John is reputedly buried at St Michael's Churchyard in Hathersage



Re-enactment event at the Robin Hood and Little John Inn, Greaves Lane, Little Matlock