

Journey Planet

Journey Planet #66 December 2022

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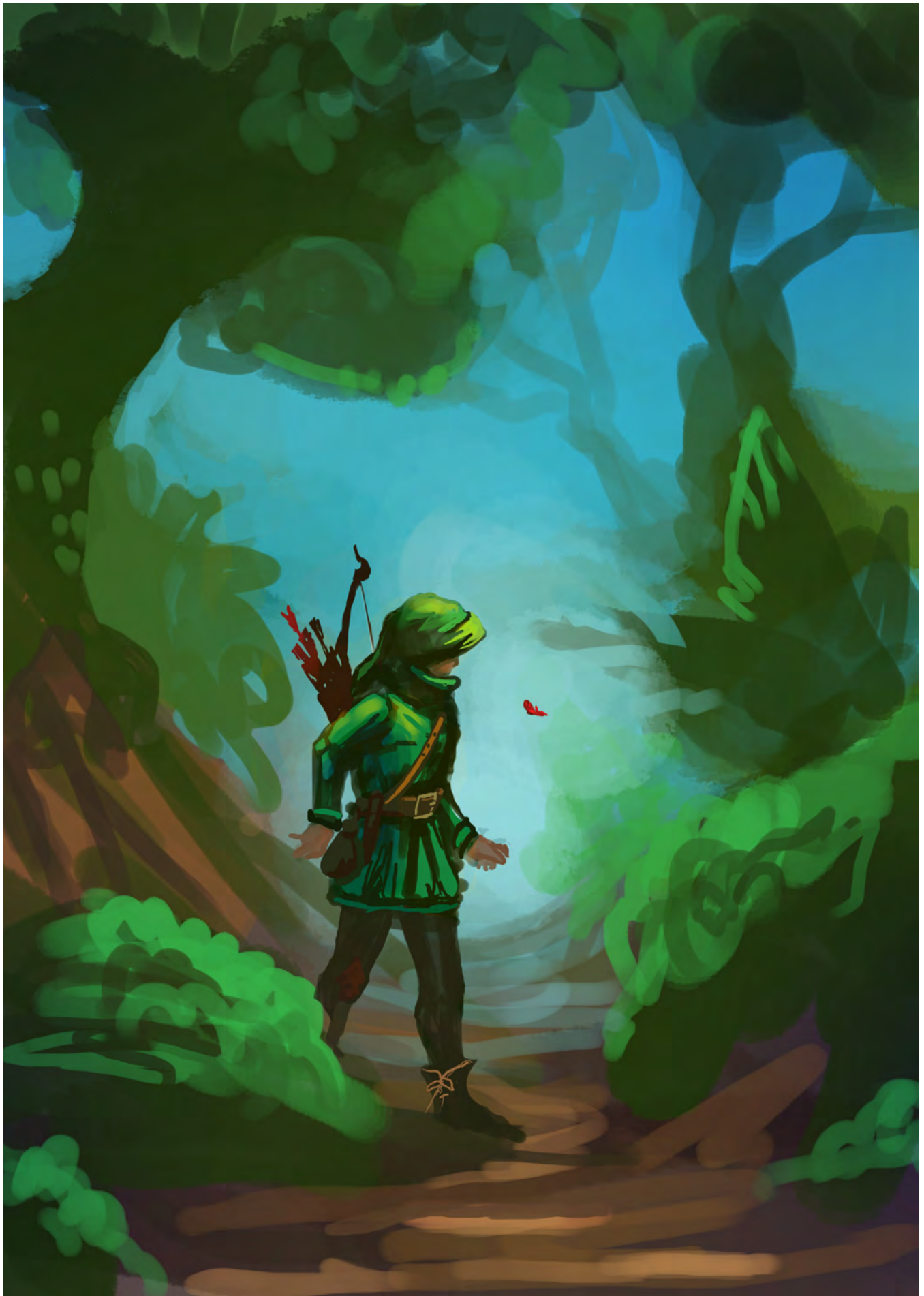
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Your Editors

James Bacon ~ Chris Garcia ~ Steven H Silver



The Matter of the Greenwood

Steven H Silver

Some early run ins with Robin Hood.

I imagine my first real encounter with Robin Hood must have been seeing the Disney animated version that was released in 1973 with Brian Bedford voicing Robin-as-a-Fox, Monica Evans as Marion-as-a-Vixen, Phil Harris as Little John-as-a-Bear, Roger Miller singing “Oo-De-Lally,” etc. Although I, along with many other people my age, imprinted on that version of the Robin Hood legend, I don’t actually remember the first time I saw the movie.

Other early encounters included a 1975 episode of a short lived television series called *Don Adams’ Screen Test* in which the former *Get Smart* star invited audience members to act out classic movie scenes. This was my introduction to Errol Flynn’s *The Adventures of Robin Hood* when an audience member was selected to act out the scene in which Robin (played by the audience member) had a quarterstaff duel with Friar Tuck (played by Ed Asner). It would be many years before I had the chance to see Errol Flynn and Eugene Pallette demonstrate how the scene was originally played.

That same year, one of the co-creators of *Get Smart*, Mel Brooks, along with Norman Stiles and John Boni, created the comedy, *When Things Were Rotten*, which I remembered enjoying at the time. It only ran for 13 episodes and was gone by the end of the year. In those pre-internet days, I couldn’t remember the specific title of the show and when I bumped into Brooks in 1982 and asked him about it, he gave me the name. A decade later, he would release *Robin Hood: Men in Tights*, recycling many of the jokes featured in *When Things Were Rotten*. I had a chance to catch an episode of the show in 1998 for the first time since its original airing and later had the chance to re-watch the entire series. I’m afraid it didn’t stand up to my youthful enjoyment of the show.

I discovered that the best parts of the series had been used in *Robin Hood: Men in Tights* and most of the series was not particularly funny or memorable, despite a cast that included Dick van Patten, who would appear as the Abbot in *Robin Hood: Men in Tights*, and Bernie Kopell, who Brooks had previously used in *Get Smart*.

One final early encounter with Robin Hood. I was over at my friend Stanton’s and he introduced me to a television show that WTTW, the Chicago PBS station, was running. It was the first episode I had seen of a British show with a weird sensibility. I would later learn that it was the eleventh episode of the third season and had originally aired in 1973. John Cleese was playing an eighteenth century highwayman based on Robin Hood: Dennis Moore, who stole lupins from rich and poor alike, never quite getting it right. His theme song was a re-writing of the theme from the 1955 British television version of *The Adventures of Robin Hood*, that starred Richard Greene.

Over the years, of course, I was re-introduced to Robin Hood in a variety of different guises: Errol Flynn, Kevin Costner, the stories by Howard Pyle, Martin Greenberg’s anthology *The Fantastic Adventures of Robin Hood*, Walter Scott’s *Ivanhoe*, as well as Arthur Sullivan’s operatic adaptation, Jennifer Roberson’s *Lady of Sherwood* and sequels, Parke Godwin’s *Sherwood*, and many more.

Although I am *not* a fan of Costner’s *Robin Hood: Prince of Thieves*, it does play a role in a significant day in my life. One afternoon in 1991, my girlfriend flew up to visit me. That afternoon, we went to see Costner’s film. Several hours later, after the movie, dinner, and a play, I proposed to her and she accepted¹.

Last year, when I was reaching out to authors for articles for the “Cancelled Too Soon” issue of *Journey Planet*, Marguerite Reed commented, “(btw, the Arthuriana issue was quite impressive). Perhaps a Robin Hood (the Matter of the Greenwood) issue should be done....” I noted that although I had a couple of articles in that issue, I hadn’t edited it, but would mention the idea to Chris and James. The results are in your han...on your screen.

¹ - I wrote about the play in “The Night I Proposed,” which appeared in Guy H. Lillian’s fanzine *Challenger’s* Winter 2011 issue.



Editorial—I Am No Robin Hood; Not Even Sure I Would If I Could

Chris Garcia

2022 has been tough, though also one of better years of my life.

That always seems to be the way it goes, right?

October of this year, I was feeling weird, shaky and having chest strangeness. I went to the hospital emergency room, and they found out I had extremely high blood pressure (198 over 135) and oh, yeah, I was diabetic. They gave me meds and sent me home.

I did not do well with the meds.

Six days, a fair bit of vomiting, and some more head-fogginess, I came over all shaky and called an ambulance and they actually agreed to take me to the hospital.

I had critically low sodium.

Since they can't just give you a bunch of sodium all at once (something about the brain not working if they do that...) so I was hooked up to an IV (first time ever) and then given a room for 60 hours or so.

And that's where I read (well, listened to) a lot of Robin Hood stories.

Now, I wrote about the Mexican Robin Hood, but I'd wanted to do a Robin Hood issue since the early days of *The Drink Tank*. As I put this out into the universe, Steven picked up my vibes and he suggested we do it.

And I'm psyched!

There's so much about the story that I could latch on to, and so many different versions, that it's been always around. I can remember the announcement of several new Robin Hood properties, from *Robin Hood: Prince of Thieves* to Disney's *Robin Hood*, and always I was psyched.

This issue starts our annual *Journey Planet* rush of issues. You'll want to stay tuned, because there's a little something for ever'body!

I



Dramatis Personae

Steven H Silver

As with the matter of England (King Arthur), the legend of Robin Hood started with a brief reference to the main character and over the years accreted additional support characters.

Robin Hood: An outlaw who leads a band of men in Sherwood Forest. Often depicted as a nobleman who has been dispossessed by corrupt men, his targets tend to be the church, which was often seen as corrupt, and the wealthy. Traditionally, he robbed from the rich and gave to the poor.

First mentioned in *Piers Ploughman* in 1377.

Little John: One of Robin's earliest and most common supporters, his name is often given as John Little, reversed to show the irony of his massive size. In the 17th century, the story of Little John joining Robin after besting him in a quarter-staff battle entered the canon. Often seen as Robin's second-in-command, he was present when Robin died and arranged to bury Robin.

First mentioned in the *Scotichronicon* in 1400s, associated with the year 1266 and Robert Hood.

Much the Miller's Son: A member of Robin's band, occasionally he is depicted as joining the group after killing one of the king's deer in the forest. In various versions, his name changes to Midge or Nick, but he is almost always identified as the son of a miller.

First mention in *A Gest of Robyn Hode* in the 1400s

Will Scarlet: Introduced at the same time as Much, Will Scarlet (also Scatheloke and other spelling variations) took on the role of a dandy as part of the band of merry men. A later ballad claims that he killed his father's steward and fled into Sherwood to escape punishment, occasionally being depicted as one of Robin's relatives.

First mention in *A Gest of Robyn Hode* in the 1400s



Friar Tuck: Along with Little John, one of the most recurring members of Robin's band. According to the legends, upon first meeting, Robin forced Friar Tuck to carry him across a river. Tuck dunked Robin when halfway across, cementing their friendship, and leading Tuck to join Robin's band as their spiritual guide. Sixty years before the character was introduced into the Robin Hood story, Robert Stafford was referred to as Frere Tuk in royal writs seeking his arrest.

First mentioned in *Robin Hood and the Knight* in 1475.



King Richard the Lionheart. The historical Richard I is first associated with Robin Hood in the sixteenth century. Prior to that time, Robin's adventures took place during the reign of a king named Edward (which could have been during the Anglo-Saxon or Plantagenet periods). Richard is often shown as being away on the Third Crusade, only returning at the end of the tale to pardon Robin of any crimes he may have committed. First appears in the 16th century

Prince John: When the Robin Hood saga is set during the time when Richard I was on crusade, Prince John is shown as being the regent and often a wannabe usurper. Just as John proved to be a poor monarch following Richard's death, he is portrayed as the villain of the Robin Hood stories, filling the kingdom with corrupt and unscrupulous men, raising taxes, and both out-lawing and ordering the death of Robin Hood. First appears in the 16th century

Maid Marian: Robin's love and often portrayed as a ward of the Sheriff of Nottingham, who is also often enamored of her. Often seen as an embodiment of the ideals of the blessed Virgin Mary, she was held in high esteem by all of Robin's men and was often shown to be Robin's match in wits and capabilities rather than a damsel in distress.

First mentioned by 1600.

Alan-a-Dale: Depicted as a minstrel, Alan-a-Dale is the only one of the Merry Men who is often shown to have a romantic life aside from Robin. Frequently, Alan first comes to Robin in order to get Robin's aid in rescuing the love of his life from a forced marriage.

First mention in "Robin Hood and Allan-a-Dale" in the mid-1600s.

Sir Guy of Gisborne: Originally introduced as an assassin who is hired to kill Robin Hood, over the years he was seen as a nobleman who was a romantic rival for Marian, although she had no desire for him. He was often a pawn of the Sheriff of Nottingham who planned to use him to capture/kill Robin Hood, marry him off to Marian, and acquire Marian or Robin's fortunes through Sir Guy.

First appears in "Robin Hood and Guy of Gisborne" in 1650.

The Sheriff of Nottingham: Given the role as tax collector and enforcer of the laws, his is Robin Hood's primary antagonist, although he is sometimes seen as a minion to Prince John and other times uses Sir Guy of Gisborne as his own minion. Generally referred to by his position rather than given an actual name, he donates the corruption and distrust the powers-that-be were generally held in. He has been identified with William de Wendenal, who held the office of Sheriff of Nottinghamshire and Derbyshire during the reign of King Richard I and with Philip Marc, who served as Sheriff of Nottingham in the early 13th century during King John's reign.





Robin Hood Sung by M^r Beard

briskly

as blith as the

Canst sing in the Green Wood so blith will wake well wake the Mem so bly - th well

Wake the Mem And thro the wide Forrest of merry Sherwood well

Wind the Bugle Bugle Horn will wind the Bu - gle Horn.

The Sherrif attempts to take bold Robin Hood	Our Arrows shall drinke of y ^e fallow Dees blood
Bold Robin disdains to fly	Well hunt them all over the Plain
Let him come when he will in merry Sherwood	And thro the wide Forrest of merry Sherwood
well I anguish Boys or die	No Shaft shall fly in vain
Our Hearts they are stout & our Boies th ^e are good	Brave Scarlet & John who ner were Subduid
and well their Master know	Gave each his Hand so bold
They recul in the Forrest of merry Sherwood	Well range thro the Forrest of merry Sherwood
and neer will spare a bow	What say my Hearts of Gold

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Everything You Thought You Knew About Robin Hood Is Wrong! (Number 5 Will Amaze You)

Marguerite Reed

When I was a teenager, I discovered a very old paperback copy of Margaret Murray's *The God of the Witches*. There were any number of old books in my parents' basement, but as a fledgling writer, I glommed onto this like an octopus offered a lobster, cracked it open, and gorged myself. I was especially excited by the chapter on Robin Hood. Up until then I never gave much thought to Robin Hood; I enjoyed the various retellings; I'd grown up on a good children's book of Robin Hood stories (illustrated with surprisingly beefy outlaws). The story of the oppressed fighting against the oppressors through both brains and brawn was a common trope in children's literature. This adult Robin Hood, however, was an outlaw against Christianity—in a way that appealed to my nebulous ideas about history and spirituality. Following this discovery, I encountered the BBC series *Robin the Hooded Man*, which reinforced the pagan imagery surrounding the outlaw. I recognized the utter cheesiness of the show, but my hatchling writer brain flapped its tentacles excitedly at the thought of writing a Robin Hood novel.



It hasn't happened—yet—but I learned a great deal along the way. The deeper I dove, the more surprised and amused I became. Like many other figures of folktale and myth, the man and his merry band reflect the concerns of the times. I've made some peace with his various incarnations, but I'll never hear that crack about "I have an English accent" without rolling my eyes.

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1. Robin Hood did not have an English accent. If you accept the Robin Hood tales occurring between the Third Crusade and, say, the time of Chaucer, then you can't quibble about what accent he had. There was no English accent as we know it at the time. The nobility spoke Norman French; the commoners and serfs spoke Middle English. If we're to be sticklers, Robin Hood probably sounded as if he had a northern Germanic accent. I recommend finding a video of someone reading Chaucer in Middle English maybe even some late Anglo-Saxon (Old English) to get an idea of how the language sounded.
2. Guy of Gisborne was not a main character in the ballads. He appears once, in "Robin Hood and Guy of Gisborne." Gisborne announces to Robin that he's sworn to kill the outlaw, and Robin handily dispatches him. He mutilates Gisborne's face:

Robin pulled forth an Irish knife,
And nicked sir Guy in the face,
That he was never on woman born
Cold know whose head it was.

His plan is to pose as Guy and collect the reward, presenting Gisborne's head as his own. I can't help but think of the scene in Thomas Harris' *Silence of the Lambs* when Hannibal Lecter skins the guard's face and wears it as his own.

3. There's none of that Norman vs. Saxon nonsense until Walter Scott. Scott sets Ivanhoe during the end of the 12th century, with the return of King Richard, ransomed from Leopold of Austria's dungeon hospitality. This is over a century from 1066. By 1086, when the Domesday Book was finished, the English aristocracy had been removed and the Normans controlled the Catholic Church in England.

During his reign, William the Conqueror was alarmingly efficient at destroying anything that smelled like revolt; ask anyone in Northumbria during the winter of 1069-1070. This is not to say there weren't some rebels post-conquest. It's not beyond the realm of possibility to think that figures such as Hereward the Wake and Eadric the Wild became subsumed in the oral tradition.

4. Who was Robin Hood's king? The Merry Men have been associated with King Richard since 16th century Scottish historian John Major collared Robin Hood with the dates 1193-1194 in his *A History of Greater Britain*. Other writers have claimed the 13th through the 14th century as his rightful time. Understandable, considering that some of the ballads specifically mention King Edward—and the English crown was worn by three Edwards from 1272 to 1377.
5. Maid Marian was a late addition. She does not appear in the early ballads and in fact doesn't become associated with Robin Hood the outlaw until in the 1500s. Intriguingly, Maid Marian is a character in French May Day festivals possibly going back at least to the 13th century. Queen of the May, or Holy Virgin? Scholars don't know for sure, but I can't help but wonder whether or not there's a connection between this and the early Robin's veneration of Mary.

Robyn loved our dere lady,
For doute of deadly synne;
Wolde he never do company harm
That ony woman was ynne.

6. Robin Hood was not a freedom fighter. Though stories and songs about him have been popular for centuries, they weren't popular because he presented hope for the masses. Robin tricked people, stole, murdered, and advised his men to prey on the clergy, but he was no threat to the Three Estates of Christendom. I don't think it's a stretch to suggest he functioned in the medieval tales as a trickster figure, always putting one over on the authorities. He was no Wat Tyler. As Europe's social conscience evolved, Robin Hood adapted to a more genteel figure. The balladeers not only gave him better manners, but nobility as well, until the 19th century Robin is a paragon of chivalry, a disenfranchised lord of the woodland realm draped with all the virtues the Victorians were pleased to imagine of a bygone era. Skulduggery and degrees of violence were tolerated through the ages, but never, never anti-monarchism.
7. What is a yeoman? So often in the ballads and other literature Robin is described as being a yeoman. This word was first seen in English in the 14th century, and referred to a noble's servant of the middle rank, or a someone who owned a small amount of land. Over time, the term yeoman apparently came to mean someone not quite noble, but who could be trusted to serve competently in any capacity, as in the term "yeoman's service."

Even more than the re-imaginings of Camelot, the legends of Robin Hood have reflected the tastes of the times. Robin evolves from being a capable and violent outlaw to being a victimized nobleman. The inaccuracies of the stories accrue and feed on each other, until they become more of a gauge of the audience than of the original person, whoever he may have been. Some minstrel decided the people he played for needed Robin to have Marian as a love interest. Walter Scott's readers thrilled to the deeds of a patriotic rebel. Margaret Murray thought folklorists should believe that Robin Hood led a coven of witches in the East Midlands. American film director Richard Lester decided a story of Robin Hood as an old man would be just the thing. Various BBC productions spin utterly anachronistic series until we're rooting for the sheriff and not the wolf's head.

If historians and archaeologists ever do unearth the real Robin Hood, will we be able to accept him? Or will we turn our back on the truth and continue to feed on the legend? One thing I know, there will always be squabbles of “That’s not right” versus “Shut up, and let me watch!” in living rooms across the world.

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Keen, Maurice. (1978) *The Outlaws of Medieval Legend*. University of Toronto Press.

Murray, Margaret A. (1952) [1931]. *The God of the Witches*. London: Faber and Faber.

Ritson, Joseph; Jim Lees (intro). (1972) [1795] *Robin Hood: A Collection of All the Ancient Poems, Songs, and Ballads, Now Extant Relative to That Celebrated English Outlaw: To Which are Prefixed Historical Anecdotes of His Life*. East Ardsley, Wakefield, Yorkshire, EP Publishing, Ltd.



Robin Hood: The Hit Musical of 1891

Laura Frankos

The Origins of Robin Hood

This tale begins in 1888, in the offices of the Boston Ideal Opera. The “Bostonians,” as they were called, were founded in 1878 by a theatrical agent named Effie Hinckley Ober. They were mostly a touring troupe, specializing in light operas and operettas. In 1887, they had taken a chance with *The Begum*, a comic operetta set in India written by two young men who would have long, influential careers in American musical theatre. *The Begum* (heavily influenced by *The Mikado*) did modest business in Boston, and played briefly on Broadway. Luckily, it recouped in Chicago, where the composer had considerable social standing. Based on this, the Bostonians said, “Here’s a contract for another two shows. We want to make a name for producing American light operas.”

Don Quixote debuted in 1889, and didn’t run long, though company infighting may have played a part. The Bostonians might have regretted that their contract stuck them with another show. The young duo began work on what was first called *The Outlaw*, a musical based on the legend of Robin Hood. Continued payment let them rent an office in Chicago where they could work face to face—a definite improvement on the long-distance writing that resulted in their first two efforts.

The composer was Reginald de Koven, born in Connecticut in 1859, whose family moved to England when he was eleven. He went to Oxford, then studied music in Europe with masters like Richard Genée and Leo Deilbes. Returning to the States, he opened a dry-goods store in Chicago, and worked as a music critic for *Harper’s Weekly* and other publications. The success of his business—plus his marriage to a wealthy socialite—let him indulge his passion for composing.

In Chicago, he met a young man who was a reporter, as well as a theatre and music critic. Harry Bache Smith was a year younger than de Koven; they got on well enough, though de Koven saw himself as the superior in social status and education—the middle-class Smith had no college degree. Smith said his influences for the *Robin Hood* libretto were “The Merry Jest of Little John” (likely the Child ballads; *A Gest of Robyn Hode* wasn’t studied as a literary work until the edition of 1909), and also the recent (1883) novel of Howard Pyle. It was a fairly faithful retelling of the legend, but modified in keeping with the traditions of comic opera. The Sheriff of Nottingham and Guy of Gisborne are clearly the comic villain and sidekick; Alan-a-Dale, the troubador, is a trousers role (played by a young woman); the male chorus got several rousing numbers; and the emphasis in the show is on the romance between Robin and Marian. Smith wrote the libretto in three weeks; de Koven took three months to finish and orchestrate the score.

The Bostonians were not thrilled when they got it. Most of the actors complained about their parts, save Henry Clay Barnabee (the Sheriff) and William MacDonald (Little John). They were convinced they had another flop on their hands, so they changed the royalty contract with de Koven and Smith. They substituted a graduated royalty tied to the box office take, rather than the original five percent. If the show did well, the creators would get a higher royalty. But



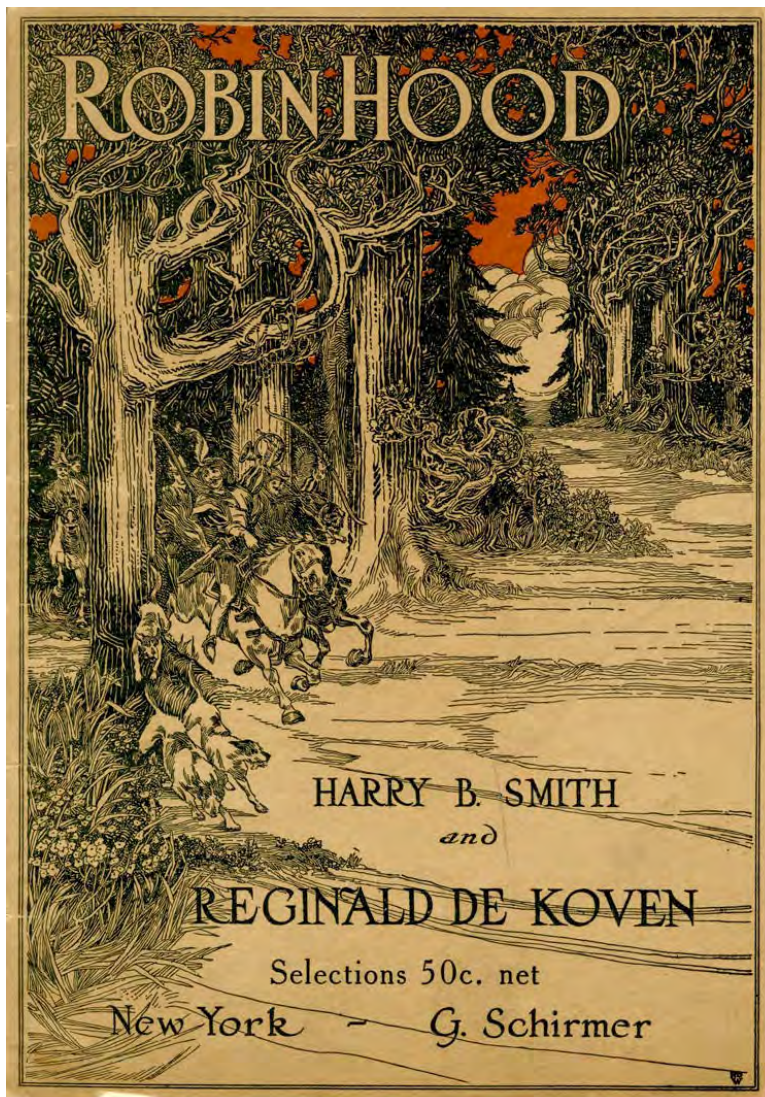


if it tanked, as the company expected, de Koven and Smith would have to bear more of the loss.

The company mounted the show in 1890 with no frills whatsoever at the Chicago Opera House. Smith recalled that the entire budget was \$109.50; de Koven thought it was even less. They reused sets from earlier shows and recycled costumes. Edwin Hoff, playing Robin Hood, wore Manrico's costume from *Il Trovatore*. The music director, accustomed to European opera, so despised the "Tinker's Song" (one of the rousers) that he threw down his baton and declared, "I positively refuse to play such trash!" Nobody wanted to rehearse or learn their lines. On opening night, June 9, 1890, Smith had to crouch under the stage floor, his head sticking up in the prompter's box, feeding the actors many forgotten lines.

But the home-field advantage saved *Robin Hood*. Smith had been born in Buffalo, but his journalistic career was in the Windy City. His supporters were there, and though the *Clipper* panned the show, the *Dramatic Mirror* raved, and other reviews were favorable enough to keep it going. De Koven's connections helped, too, with the cream of Chicago society coming to see the show.

The Bostonians were surprised, to say the least. When *Robin Hood* came for a five-week run at the Boston Music Hall, it got outstanding reviews ("an American composer has at last produced a highly credible opera comique"), though not much of an audience. The directors decided to make *Robin Hood* part of their repertory as the company toured through 1890, performing it a couple of times a week. Then Detroit really embraced the show; the manager of Whitney's Opera House announced that the Bostonians would play nothing except *Robin Hood* for the rest of the week, and advertised his decision. He even sent out men with sandwich boards to publicize it. The houses were packed, as were those for the company's return engage-



ment in Chicago.

After the merry singing outlaws did terrific business in Cincinnati, the Boston Ideal Opera decided that maybe they did need another show from de Koven and Smith. As 1891 began, though, Smith was busy writing a show with Digby Bell, and de Koven was in London, overseeing the London opening of *Maid Marian*—the British had so many *Robin Hood* pantomimes, they required a title change. The February 5th opening was regarded as a big event—the first American comic opera in the West End. The Prince of Wales attended, as did Oscar Wilde and the Astors. (George Bernard Shaw came later, but was not a fan.) Reviews were mixed, but the show did decently, especially given that its main competition was Sir Arthur Sullivan's *Ivanhoe*, which had opened the week before (and, in a bizarre coincidence, had Robin Hood and Friar Tuck in it). Sullivan was then having one of his many feuds with W.S. Gilbert, so de Koven secretly—and repeatedly!—sought out Gilbert as a potential new lyricist. He also snubbed Smith in the press, which the writer bitterly complained about, especially as the London critics had highly praised his libretto. Gilbert, however, bluntly rebuffed the young American composer, who returned to Smith.

The Boston Ideal Company, meanwhile, decided it was time to send their latest hit to

Broadway, and not on a budget of \$109.50. They splurged five grand revamping the sets and costumes, and the show opened on September 28, 1891, at the Standard Theatre. Due to the Bostonians' previously arranged touring schedule, *Robin Hood* played just 34 performances on Broadway, but quickly came back for five weeks. It was one of the hits of the season, with box office receipts earning \$10,000 to \$12,000 a week; the Bostonians were lamenting that revised royalty contract. They begged to negotiate a better deal before they ended up deeply in the red. Smith and de Koven agreed, largely to keep peace with the company, who would continue to produce their shows for years.

Robin Hood put this pair on the map, and de Koven and Smith ended up writing a dozen or so operettas and musicals, about half them successful. De Koven did about eight other shows with other lyricists, including two operas, *The Canterbury Pilgrims* (1917) and *Rip Van Winkle* (1920), but died after suffering a stroke, aged sixty, before the latter debuted.

Harry B. Smith, on the other hand, became known as the “dean of American librettists,” writing more than 300 of them, and over 6,000 lyrics to many hit songs like “The Sheik of Araby” and “Gypsy Love Song.” That is not a typo. The man was a workaholic, teaming with nearly every major composer between 1880 and 1920 (Victor Herbert, Irving Berlin, Sigmund Romberg, John Philip Sousa, Ted Snyder). He also wrote sketches and lyrics wrote for many of the *Ziegfeld Follies*, and was a charter member of ASCAP (Association of Composers, Authors, and Publishers).

The Plot of *Robin Hood*

If you had a time machine (yes, I'm fond of using time machines to attend classic Broadway musicals), what would you have seen, had you been there in 1891?

Act I opens in the medieval town of Nottingham, then having its May Day celebration. There's a good, scene-setting opener, "Tis the Morning of the Fair," during which three outlaws—Alan-a-Dale (Jessie Bartlett Davis), Little John (MacDonald), and Will Scarlett (Eugene Cowles)—also sing of their carefree life in Sherwood Forest. The number concludes in a "merry Morris dance." De Koven has given the villagers, the milkmaids, and the outlaws their own brief musical themes. This kind of "meet the players" opening became standard after *Robin Hood*, but wasn't before. Friar Tuck (George Frothingham) appears next, with his comic "As an Honest Auctioneer," and the village milkmaids get their own number. That one has Alan-a-Dale and Dame Durden's saucy daughter, Annabel (Lea Van Dyke), trading flirtatious verses.

The highlight of the celebration will be the archery competition, and at last our hero, Robert of Huntington (Tom Karl), enters ("[Come the Bowmen in Lincoln Green](#)"). The Dame (Josephine Bartlett) tells Annabel that Robert is due to come into his estates as the Earl of Huntington this very day. When Annabel welcomes Robert to the Fair, Alan-a-dale is jealous of the attention he gives the maid. This turns into a brief madrigal in which Annabel, Alan, Robert, and Little John sing that "All is fair in love and war."

A young cavalier suddenly dashes on, pursued by Friar Tuck. This, naturally, is Maid Marian (Caroline Hamilton)—who is a female character played by a woman, but for this entrance, Marian is pretending to be a boy page. Meanwhile, Alan-a-dale is a male character played by a woman. (Got it? Good.) Marian is in disguise as her own page so she can scope out this Robert fellow, since her guardian, King Richard, has commanded her to marry him once he becomes Earl. They bicker in "meet cute" style, and Robert figures out who this page really is. They discover one thing in common besides that sudden mutual attraction that is a staple of romances: the Sheriff controls both their fortunes. What's more, Marian says the Sheriff wants her to marry Sir Guy of Gisborne, despite the King's mandate. Their scene concludes with a charming duet, "Come Dream So Bright."

Enter our comic villain, singing his pompous "[I Am the Sheriff of Nottingham](#)," accompanied by his loyal doofus minion, Guy (Peter Lang) : "If any plebeian my greatness mocks, I answer by putting him in the stocks!" He reveals his evil plan to declare the "simple country lout" Guy as the Earl, have him wed Marian, and keep most of the money for himself. Guy is dubious that he can ever court a fine lady; the Sheriff suggests practicing on a nearby dairymaid—Marian, in disguise yet again ("When A Peer Makes Love to a Damsel Fair").



The action now builds to the end of Act I, where de Koven and Smith deftly blend plot and snippets of song into a dramatic finaletto. Robert has won the archery contest; the outlaws wish such a talent were one of their merry band. Robert goes to ask the Sheriff for his title and fortune. The wily villain suddenly produces a fake document that states the dead Earl had been married to a peasant girl, and that Sir Guy is the real Huntington heir. “Those papers prove his title quite!” the Sheriff sings, and in an aside to the audience, “I made them all and know they’re right.” The disinherited Robert leaves with the outlaws.

Act II opens on the edge of Sherwood Forest, and the Merry Men remark [“Oh, Cheerily Soundeth the Hunter’s Horn.”](#) Annabel brings the men ale from the casks at the nearby hunter’s lodge. Alan is jealous of every man she serves, especially Robin, for that is now our hero’s name. Robin says that’s nonsense—his regard for Annabel is “purely Platonic, and just to prove it, I will come to your window and sing you a purely Platonic serenade.” Because, of course, he just misses his Marian. Little John tells lovelorn Robin and Alan, “When an outlaw praises love and such like evils, there’s but one remedy—a flagon of brown October ale!” So naturally, he begins a rousing drinking song, [“Brown October Ale,”](#) the first of *Robin Hood’s* hits. This song was regularly performed well into the 1940s. Later musicals followed its example with their own songs celebrating inebriation, like the “Heidelberg Drinking Song” from *The Prince of Pilsen* (1903), “Drinking Song” from *The Student Prince* (1924), and “Drinking Song (A Flagon of Wine)” from *The Vagabond King* (1925).

Alan, hoping to remind the kittenish Annabel of their bonds of love, sings her *Robin Hood’s* biggest hit, [“O Promise Me.”](#) As this number soared in popularity, the Bostonians moved it to a more dramatic spot: the final scene in Act III, with Annabel about to become the Sheriff’s bride by force. This song has a considerable history; I’ll go into more detail below.

The outlaws exit, and our villains enter. They are disguised as tinkers (because everyone in this show plays dress-up), and enter the lodge with that “blithe roundelay, ‘The Tinker’s Song’”—the one that so annoyed the Bostonians’ musical director. Shows what that fellow knew, for this one became a minor hit.

The outlaws enter, but the Sheriff doesn’t recognize them. He also has no notion that Robert is Robin Hood. But the serving wench Annabel knows who these “tinkers” are, and tips off Robin. The Sheriff brags he has a warrant for Robin Hood and Guy says they’re looking for Marian, so he can marry her. This is shocking news to Robin. The gang get the Sheriff drunk; there’s a silly song of “Pastoral Glee” sung by the inebriated Friar, Little John, Sheriff, and Will; then everyone departs, leaving the Sheriff with the tab. Dame Durden, the company’s comic matron, shakes him down, then suddenly recognizes his clothes as belonging to her husband, who went off to the Crusades years ago! The Sheriff had bought them for his ruse, but now he must pretend to be Durden: “I must humor her or I will be arrested for buying stolen goods. As Sheriff, it would be my duty to arrest myself and have my right hand cut off.” The Dame drags him into the house as Marian enters, disguised as a hunter in Lincoln green.

Marian gets her solo here, [“Forest Song.”](#) She tells Annabel she’s here to join the outlaws, and admits she’s Robin’s sweetheart. Annabel stuns her by saying, “Then what right had Robin Hood to make love to me?” “Faithless wretch!” Marian mutters in an aside. Annabel explains she and Alan are an item, except he’s terribly jealous, which is why she enticed Robin into singing at her window tonight. Marian suggests that she take Annabel’s place, so Alan will keep peace with her, and she, Marian, can “surprise Robin, who seeks to play me false.”

That fateful promise of that serenade is causing all kinds of trouble, for our next scene has jealous Alan turning traitor. He informs the Sheriff that the notorious outlaw will be singing under Annabel’s window at moonrise.

Woeful Robin enters, convinced he’s lost Marian forever to Sir Guy. He sings a lovely solo at the window. Marian appears in Annabel’s cloak, keeping her face hidden. And we build to our Act II finale, with Alan ready to attack Marian (thinking she’s Annabel), and Robin simultaneously professing affection for “Annabel”—“With you, I may cease to remember that there are high-born ladies who forget their vows and forswear their loves.”

Whereupon, Marian reveals herself and snaps “Is there any particular high-born lady to whom you refer, Master Robin?” They make up quickly—that second act curtain is coming!—and plan to have Friar Tuck marry them on the spot. But Alan charges in with the bad guys. “Rather than see you marry my Annabel, I give you up to the Sheriff!”

Poor Alan soon realizes his “fatal mistake,” and flees. The Sheriff is delighted at bagging two birds (“She to the altar, he to the halter!”), but Robin and Marian are not going down without a fight. The brave girl holds off the Sheriff with her bow; Guy dashes off for the King’s Men; Robin sounds a blast on his bugle; and repentant Alan charges in with the Merry Men. Hooray, a happy ending, right? Even a comic ending, since the Dame now enters, wondering what on earth is happening to her longlost spouse. The very conundrum the Sheriff posed about Durden’s clothes before now returns to plague him: “I admit that I am a thief. Rather than marry *you*, I would be hanged a dozen times!”

The jolly finale has the good guys putting the Sheriff in the stocks. They rejoice too soon, though, for Guy returns with the King’s Men. The tables turn again. Marian tries to save Robin by insisting the King has commanded she wed the Earl of Huntington. The Sheriff chortles, “The Earl of Huntington is Guy, and Guy must bridegroom be! Sing hey for the merry stocks and chains, and the rollicking gallows tree!” End of Act II.

The final act opens in the Sheriff’s courtyard, where Will Scarlett is in the blacksmith’s shed, making a sword and singing his solo, the [“Armorer’s Song.”](#) Like the “Tinker’s Song,” this was a minor hit. Will has infiltrated the Sheriff’s household, making sure that the chains that will bind Robin have a weak link. Friar Tuck, Little John, and Alan enter, all dressed like monks. Rescue plans are put in motion, for Annabel is also being held. She is to wed the Sheriff when Guy and Marian are married. “A double wedding, eh?” says Little John. “Then we must have a double rescue!” The “monks” enter, Friar Tuck intending to change places with Robin while offering him spiritual counsel.

The Sheriff and Guy are excited for the upcoming wedding. Dame Durden brings in Annabel, and Alan manages to alert her to his true identity before telling the Sheriff that the Bishop has been captured by the outlaws. Annabel rejoices that the wedding must surely be cancelled, but the Sheriff improvises. “We will get some pious friar to perform the ceremony.”

What luck, here is “Brother Joseph,” and marrying is his specialty! This, of course, is Robin, who has broken his chain and is wearing Friar Tuck’s robes. Alan sings about “The Bells of St. Swithin,” and everything is ready for the rescue. Robin reveals himself to Marian; both hope the newly returned King can put things right with the Earldom.

The Sheriff tells Marian, “This is my moment for gloating. You may want to gloat sometime yourself, so just watch me and you will pick up a few points.” He opens the jail door to force Robin to witness the wedding before he is hanged. What’s this? Robin Hood has escaped! Nonetheless, the weddings are still on, though the Dame tells the Sheriff her daughter is “not eager to marry you.” “Well, there’s no accounting for taste,” he replies. Annabel threatens to make his life a misery. This leads to a comic [“Quintette”](#) with Annabel, the Dame, the Sheriff, Friar Tuck, and Guy on singing “tooral-looral lay” when times are tough. It’s sort of the 1891 version of “Hakuna Matata.”

The weddings are about to take place. The unwilling brides and their grooms await “Brother Joseph,” but the church doors open. Robin throws off the friar’s garb, and he and his men save the day! What’s more, a messenger runs in with a pardon from King Richard! Robin is pardoned, his title restored, and everyone lives happily ever after.

“O Promise Me”

This is the only song in *Robin Hood* that does not have lyrics by Harry B. Smith. It was written in 1887 when de Koven was studying music with Richard Genée. He was supposed to bring new compositions to each lesson. One week, he hadn’t prepared anything, so while awaiting the train, he hastily wrote two songs using some poems he knew as lyrics. One was “O Promise Me” by Clement Scott. Genée hated it, and declared it would never be popular. “There is too much of this Wagnerian dissonance in it.”

Nonetheless, in 1889, de Koven managed to sell the song (and two other “art songs” to Gustave Schirmer, an American music publisher...for the whopping sum of \$100. There they languished. Schirmer did nothing to promote any of them.

When de Koven was overseeing the British production of *Robin Hood*, the actor playing Robin asked for another song. The composer pulled “O Promise Me” out of his trunk for Robin to sing to Marian at the finale.

As the Bostonians were tricking out their previously low-budget show for its Broadway debut, Jessie Bartlett Davis wanted another song for Alan-a-dale to sing. She was the company's prima donna, and yet she had no solo until the third act. "See if you can fix up something," Harry Smith wrote to de Koven. Once again, de Koven hauled out "O Promise Me." After all, it had been in the show—albeit the London production and given to a different character. She refused it at first, finding the melody odd. During rehearsals, she was practicing it an octave below the written key, a common technique to preserve the voice—and everyone suddenly took notice. It worked better that way, so De Koven made the transposed key the official version. "O Promise Me" quickly became her signature number, always getting an encore or two. In 1896, Davis estimated that she had sung it around five thousand times. One evening, she told the conductor, "Sam, I'm so sick of 'O Promise Me' that I've made up my mind to sing something else." The audience predictably rebelled; she had to sing it, or the show could not go on. H.C. Barnabee, who played the Sheriff nineteen hundred times, said he never tired of hearing "that gorgeous contralto voice pouring forth its rich deep notes like a nightingale," and would stand in an entrance just to hear the number.

Barnabee also remarked in his memoirs that de Koven had "unconsciously plagiarized" an old Italian peasant melody for the tune of the song. Whether there's any truth to that, de Koven did admit in later years that much of his music was modeled after other composers'. During the U.S. Senate hearings that eventually led to the landmark Copyright Act of 1909, de Koven was asked to make a statement. At some point in the proceedings, the similarity of "O Promise Me" to "Musica Prohibita" by Stanislao Gastaldon (1881) was mentioned. Whether this is the old peasant melody Barnabee cited isn't clear. In any event, the hearing decided that although the two songs had similar openings, de Koven used different themes for the rest.

The first year after *Robin Hood's* Broadway debut, the sheet music for "O Promise Me" sold more than one million copies and it would continue to sell well for decades. It quickly became adopted for wedding ceremonies. Many artists recorded it, from turn-of-the-century wax cylinders to Nelson Eddy in the forties and the Platters in 1957. Jessie Bartlett Davis herself recorded it in 1898; this track is included on an album that describes itself as the cast album of the 1919 revival of *Robin Hood*. It isn't, really. There are tracks from that cast, but also from 1906 and 1916 recordings of songs from the show, and older ones like Davis'. Still, that kind of documentation was the exception, not the rule, back then, which shows the importance of the show. *Robin Hood* finally got a complete cast album in 2004 from the Ohio Light Opera, which used de Koven's original manuscripts.

Jessie Bartlett Davis may not have liked "O Promise Me" at first. She clearly got tired of performing it thousands of times. But she asked that a copy of the sheet music be placed in her coffin, and lines from the song are on her gravestone. She died at forty-five in 1905 of Bright's disease.



June 10, 1890

MUSIC AND DRAMA.

At the Chicago Opera-House last evening the Bostonians produced, for the first time on any stage, a comic opera in three acts entitled "Robin Hood," the text by Harry B. Smith and music by Reginald de Koven. The overture opens with a slow and sustained introduction more in the spirit of romantic than comic opera, but this gives place to a spirited and rather catchy movement, and the remainder of the number—except for a momentary return to the first design—is quite after the comic opera order. The first scene is laid in the market place of Nottingham Town the morning of the May-Day fair. The stage gradually fills with people, including a number of children who join in a dance around the May-pole. After some introductory chorus work an effective ensemble leads the merry-making to a climax. Friar Tuck (Mr. George Frothingham) comes upon the stage after the outlaws have made their appearance and proceeds to auction off their plunder. His song is Gilbertian in rhythm, and the setting did not entirely avoid suggestions of Sullivan. Miss Maconda as Annabel has a pretty song in this act which was well received. The "Milkmaids' Chorus" led into a "Milkmaids' Song"; the latter, interesting and charmingly sung by Mrs. Davis, was received with applause, and the solo redemanded and repeated. Robin Hood's first solo number of importance was the song "In Leafy Shades," which was not especially well sung by Mr. Hoff, but the quality of his work improved as the opera advanced. The madrigal which came shortly after was quite in the old English style, and was encored. Mario Stone as Maid Marian sang her first song badly, but the ensemble which followed secured it an encore. In the repetition she made a false entry, a measure too soon. She, too, improved somewhat as the work advanced, but a considerable proportion of the singing which she did was uncertain in intonation and of poor quality. She did not know her lines and was at a loss several times.

Mr. Barnabee as the Sheriff of Nottingham was amusing, as usual, though he never succeeds in disguising his personality in any part in which he appears. At the close of the first act the principals were recalled and then Messrs. De Koven and Smith were summoned before the curtain. The first act contains much that is original, and also here and there strains that are suggestive of Sullivan, probably in most cases due to the form of the text which frequently drops into the Gilbertian "patter," in the setting of which it is next to impossible to avoid the Sullivan spirit.

The second act, the scene of which is laid on the border of Sherwood Forest, opens with a male chorus, with sundry solos, which is bright and taking in style. Mr. Macdonald, as Little John, sang his "Song of Brown October Ale," a characteristic number, in a manner which deserved and secured an encore. In fact it is one of the best things Mr. Macdonald has done here in a long time. The Sheriff finally makes his appearance with his band disguised as tinkers. A quartet which occurs soon after the arrival of Maid Marian to join the band of outlaws is romantic in coloring and contains some clever bits of imitation. The performance was unduly lengthened by the numerous repetitions, but as far as could be judged would be improved by condensation. As it was the second act came to a close only a few moments before 11 o'clock. As far as could be judged from a single hearing the libretto is much superior in general character and workmanship to that of "Don Quixote," though there are places that are too much drawn out for the interest of the scene. The music is less interesting than that of the preceding work, and the composer has been less successful in avoiding suggestions of the work of others. When writing in the romantic style there is more of originality shown, but in the essentially comic scenes, owing to the limited scope of such treatment, there is much greater resemblance to other works.

* * *

Maid Marian

In the prosperous years following *Robin Hood*, de Koven and Smith hoped lightning would strike again. *Rob Roy* (1894), the tale of the Scottish folk hero and Bonnie Prince Charlie, was the hit show for that Broadway season, but the cocktail created in honor of the show's title character had a more lasting influence than the show. *The Highwayman* (1897) continued their love of outlaws. The pair had worked with the Bostonians for a few shows after *Robin Hood*, but these shows had different producers.

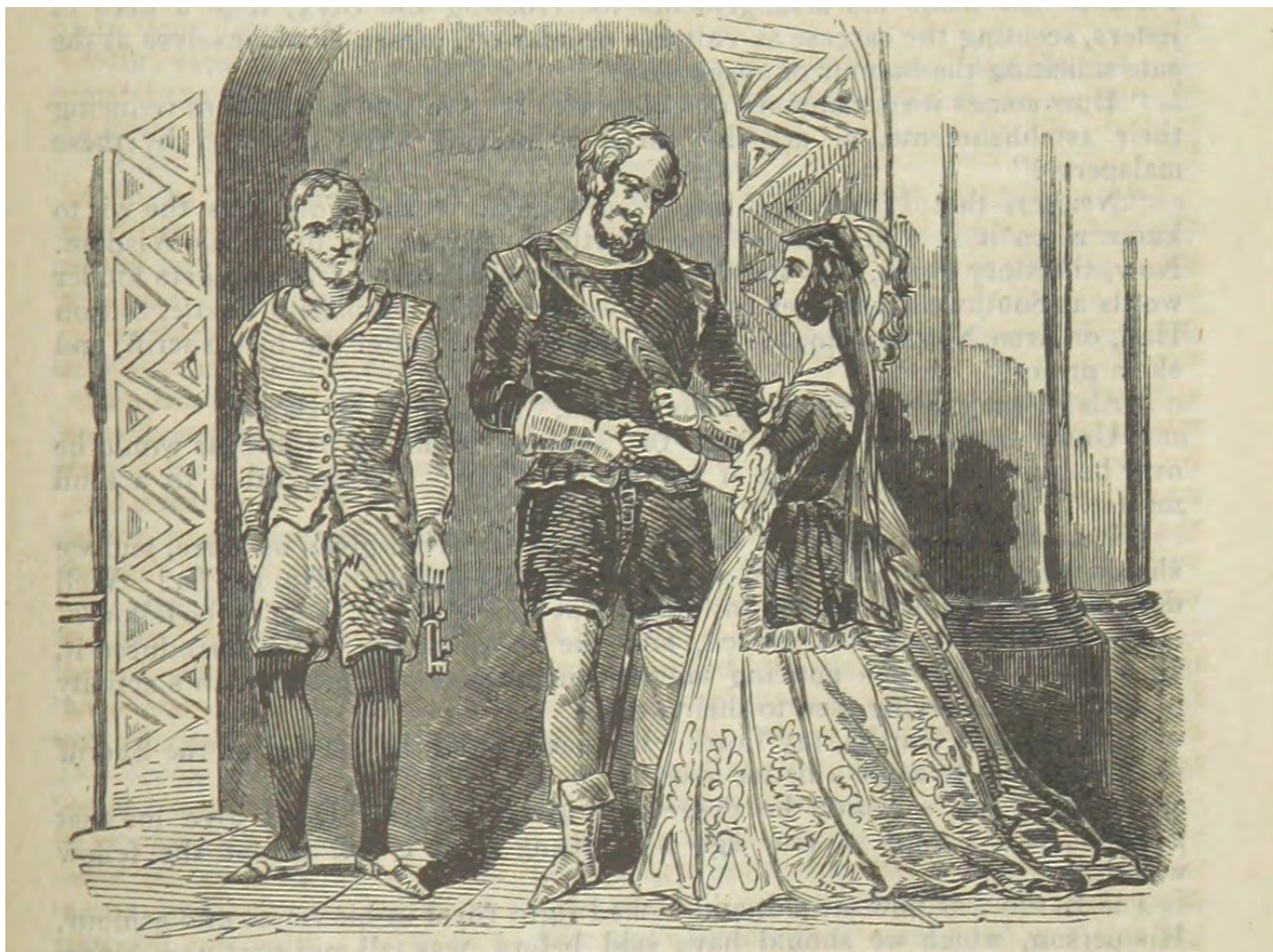
After the turn of the century, the Bostonians fell on hard times. They commissioned a sequel to their greatest hit, and had de Koven and Smith return to Sherwood Forest. *Maid Marian* opened in Philadelphia on November 4, 1901, and reached Broadway on January 27, 1902. It proved popular enough for 64 performances, largely on the basis of the original cast members: Henry Clay Barbabee and William MacDonald reprised their comic villains, with George Frothingham and Josephine Bartlett as Friar Tuck and Dame Durden. It played several other venues in New York after the Broadway run, including the Harlem Opera House; it also played in the Bostonians' repertory tour that year. Through the summer, they performed it with the original *Robin Hood* at the Manhattan Beach Theatre—warming up the frenzy for a full Broadway revival of *Robin Hood* in September 1902, with those same four actors in their original roles. After that, *Maid Marian* largely vanished from view, save a 1903 run in Boston. No hit songs here to fix it in people's memories. The Bostonians dissolved not long after.

The plot of the sequel has Robin and Marian still not married, regardless of the ending of *Robin Hood*. Robin's off to the Crusades. He leaves a letter for Marian with Little John, but the Sheriff turns it into a forgery that makes Robin seem untrue. Marian refuses to believe this unless she hears it from Robin himself. So everyone runs off to the Holy Land in Act II. The outlaws are going to join Robin; Marian wants answers; and the Sheriff and Sir Guy go, too, so Guy can marry Marian. Alas, the Saracens capture Marian and sell her into slavery, but brave Robin rescues her. Then villains show up, disguised as merchants (no word on where they got those clothes). Shenanigans in the harem with Dame Durden follow. The Sheriff betrays Robin, Marian, and the outlaws to the Saracens, but they escape.

Somehow, the baddies find a faster boat back home, for the Sheriff has taken over Robin's lands. Robin reclaims them, justice is served, and our lovers wed at last.

Maid Marian vanished from memory quickly, but

Robin Hood was a landmark show in musical theatre history. The first truly successful American operetta, *Robin Hood* toured continually for decades, became a staple of regional light opera companies, and had eight different Broadway revivals, the last one in 1944. By then, it seemed creaky and old-fashioned next to shows like *Oklahoma!* But in 1891, it was cutting edge entertainment, complete with two hit songs and a couple of lesser ones. More importantly, de Koven and Smith's work (in *Robin Hood* and their other shows), along with that of Victor Herbert, helped shape the popular operettas of the next few decades. De Koven's scores evolved from the Gilbert and Sullivan tradition; Herbert's from the operettas of Continental Europe. And Harry B. Smith wrote libretti for both, making exotic adventures appealing to American audiences. Operettas fell out of favor with the start of World War I and the rise of ragtime, returning in the twenties with far more sophisticated books, like Hammerstein's *Rose-Marie* and *The Desert Song*, but they all owe a debt to *Robin Hood*.



Rebel/Reactionary: Robin Hood Onscreen in the 20th Century

Lawrence Ellsworth

Robin Hood the Rebel

The early stories of the Outlaw of Sherwood were oral tradition told in the form of songs and verse known today as the Robin Hood Ballads. These began to be transcribed in the mid-1400s, and though recent historical research has had some success in identifying the people and events that inspired these 14th and 15th century tales, it seems likely that the stories elaborated on a tradition dating back centuries earlier.

[Let's note up front that this article isn't about the historical Robin Hood, whoever that was, but rather about how stories of Robin Hood were told over time.]

The Robin Hood of the ballads was a yeoman, that is, a freeholding commoner who ranked above the peasantry and serfs but below the gentry (lower nobility). Though an outlaw, Robin had a sense of justice and fairness—but he was also a thief and a trickster with a sense of humor, though sometimes with a touch of malice. This made him a favorite with the common folk, a true hero of the people. He was a loveable rogue, a champion of the commoners against unjust authority, a symbol of cheerful defiance and nonconformity.

Robin lived outside the law at need, robbing and ridiculing churchmen, wealthy merchants, and “lustful knights.” In the tales, casual violence was common, and Robin didn't always get the best of his opponents. Though he often preyed on corrupt church elders, Robin was usually portrayed as personally pious, devoted to the cult of the Virgin Mary—a “Marian,” in short, which may help explain the name of the lady love he acquired in later tales. In this, he once again resembled the common folk of Britain, who were largely devout but disgusted by the greed and hypocrisy of the prelates of the church and the abbots of the monasteries.

Robin was frequently personified at May Days, fairs, and festivals, reigning for a day over the constituted authorities in a “world turned upside down.” There the ballads would be enacted by local amateurs or traveling performers as the audience reveled in temporary freedom from social strictures, a costumed Robin cheering them on.

Robin Hood as Society's Conscience

Over time Robin Hood performances at festivals became sponsored by the church in drives to raise charity funds—this is perhaps where the idea of “robbing the rich to give to the poor” came from. Robin Hood became a jolly but non-threatening fellow whose rebellion against the feudal order was more personal than political, his deeds intended to right temporary wrongs rather than to defy society and rebel against it. Robin's original merry men, the ruffians Little John, Will Scathelock, and Much the miller's son, were joined in the greenwood by the warm-hearted Friar Tuck and Robin's virtuous lady love Marian.

More and more, professional entertainers took over telling the story of Robin Hood from the commoners, pitching the tales toward the more upscale audience of the gentry, who could afford to pay them. As the outlaw began to appear in verses and plays written to appeal to the upper classes, they emphasized Robin's background as a gentleman or even a noble, a process codified when playwright Anthony Mundy in 1598 identified him as “Robert, Earl of Huntingdon,” a name and title still used in some modern Robin Hood retellings. Other written adaptations moved the outlaw's adventures from the 13th century to the 1190s, during the Third Crusade and the time of Richard Lionheart. As the centuries advanced, Robin Hood's exploits receded into history, and from a champion of the present he became a hero of the past.

Revival: Scott and the Romantics

After a period of neglect, interest in Robin Hood revived in the late 18th century with the publication of popular collections of the ballads, especially a 1795 edition by Joseph Ritson, which promoted the idea of Robin as a displaced nobleman unfairly outlawed by his enemies. Ritson was a friend of Walter Scott, whose best-selling medieval-knights adventure novel *Ivanhoe* (1819) made Robin Hood a central character. This version of the Outlaw of Sherwood became a familiar figure in Victorian literature and popular culture: the noble Robin of Locksley, loyal to King Richard Lionheart but outlawed by wicked Prince John and his cronies, who organized the exiles hiding in Sherwood Forest from injustice into a rebellious force for good, robbing the rich, feeding the poor, and helping to hold England for King Richard's return. Scott also popularized the idea of ethnic conflict between the settled Saxons and the tyrannical newcomer Normans, with Robin squarely on the Saxon side.

The Victorian Robin Hood, the laughing rebel living with his merry men in the greenwood, was as popular for his cheerful defiance of authority as he always was, but with his adventures sanitized and coopted by the ruling class as entertainment for their children, his rebellion was strictly bounded and confined to a fight for redress of specific grievances. Typically, once Robin's complaints were answered and his enemies thrown down, he was thanked by King Richard and restored to his place in the feudal hierarchy. Though there was a tension between the two sides of Robin's character, it was always resolved in favor of the landholding gentleman and pillar of society. In the end, this Robin of Locksley had no complaints about the structure of England's social order.

Robin Hood in the Silent Film Era



It was this starchy Victorian version of the legendary outlaw who was depicted in the first moving pictures at the dawn of the 20th century, appearing in half a dozen theatrical shorts between 1908 and 1913, as well as a silent version of *Ivanhoe*, now lost. The first big-budget epic to put his adventures on the screen was Douglas Fairbanks Sr.'s *Robin Hood* in 1922. Fairbanks had had a couple of global mega-hits with *The Mark of Zorro* (1920) and *The Three Musketeers* (1921), and Robin Hood seemed the obvious place to go next. Fairbanks' Zorro and d'Artagnan had been both cheerful and energetic, charismatic presences that leapt from the screen, but his Robin Hood film was surprisingly long on grand spectacle and short on laughing roguery. With a virtually

unlimited budget for castles and tournaments, Fairbanks decided to focus on Robin's reputed noble background as the Earl of Huntingdon, making him a close chum of King Richard Lionheart and following him to the holy land on the Third Crusade.

The first hour of the film is all rather tiresome feudal intrigue involving Huntingdon, Richard, and his wicked brother Prince John. Fairbanks' Earl of Huntingdon is a ludicrously upright manly knight who is "afraid of women," even when the lovely Lady Marian lowers her eyelashes in his direction. As the royal favorite, Huntingdon couldn't be more orthodox, a pillar of the feudal community. It's only when Prince John, left behind to misrule England, breaks the social contract by mistreating the English people, that Huntingdon returns to Albion to don Robin Hood's green tights and rally the common folk to fight tyranny. In the role of Robin, Fairbanks is suddenly the same jaunty swashbuckler he was as Zorro and d'Artagnan, but the sudden transformation is jarring and unpersuasive. Rather than reconcile the two sides of Robin's character, Fairbanks simply splits him down the middle. This certainly emphasizes the inconsistency of the Victorian approach to Robin Hood, but it makes for a decidedly unsatisfying movie, especially at the end when Robin reverts to the status of earl and all thoughts of rebellion are swept away in the happy cheers of the populace.

Errol Flynn Splits the Arrow

Fairbanks continued playing swashbuckling heroes throughout the 1920s, often quite memorably, but his career sputtered out with the end of the silent era. He was replaced as king of the swashbucklers in 1935 by the debut of Errol Flynn in *Captain Blood*. Flynn displayed all of Fairbanks' laughing irreverence, but his pirate captain had a darker, vengeful side more suited to the gritty '30s. After playing similarly haunted daredevils in *Charge of the Light Brigade* (1936) and *The Prince and the Pauper* (1937), it seemed his next heroic portrayal had to be Robin Hood.

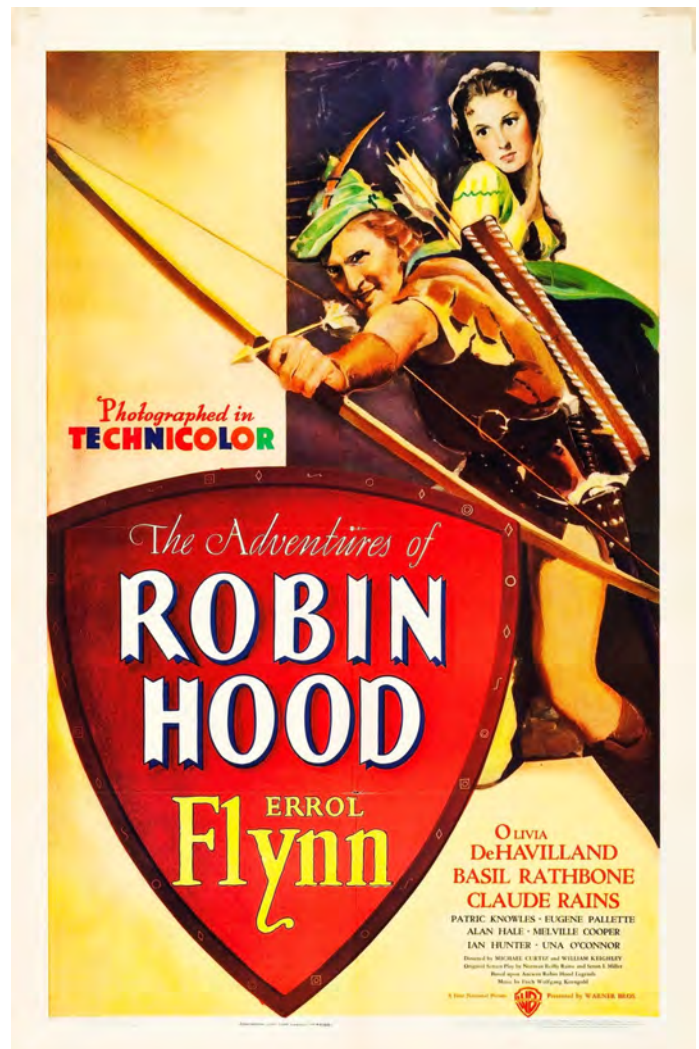
Flynn was a natural for the part, and *The Adventures of Robin Hood* (1938) convincingly combines for the first time onscreen the roles of the laughing rogue and the noble knight. Walter Scott's Saxon vs. Norman conflict is resurrected, with Robin of Locksley as a Saxon noble opposing the outrages of the Normans under Prince John while good King Richard is away killing infidels. Cheerful and courageous, Robin turns rebel out of a combination of moral outrage and sheer cussedness, and from the beginning his fight is a political insurrection rather than an outgrowth of outlawry. Though he has the good of the people at heart, his rebellion is a top-down affair, and his greenwood gang, though jolly, ultimately shows him all the deference commoners owe to a noble. More than anything, it's Robin's gleeful defiance of unjust authority that makes this film so much fun, but then as usual King Richard returns to restore the feudal order and the fun is over. Conformity wins again.

Postwar in the Greenwood

After the late-'30s swashbuckler surge that peaked in 1940 with *The Sea Hawk* and the Tyrone Power *Mark of Zorro*, the advent of World War II brought a change in favor of movies deemed to be more serious fare. Film noir ruled the theaters after the war, but in 1948 the rerelease of the Flynn *Adventures of Robin Hood* was a solid hit, almost as popular as the first time around, and the merrie men returned to Sherwood Forest for good on movie screens and then television.

The Bandit of Sherwood Forest (1946), *Prince of Thieves* (1948), *Rogues of Sherwood Forest* (1950), *Tales of Robin Hood* (1951), *The Story of Robin Hood and his Merrie Men* (1952)—though made with more modest budgets, all of these films stood in the long shadow of *The Adventures of Robin Hood*, and despite slight variations in Robin's origin and story situation, none of them strayed far from the template established in Errol Flynn's blockbuster. Robin Hood always came from the gentry or better, his cheerful acts of theft and rebellion were never really malicious, and the story always ended with the rightful authorities back in charge of Merrie Olde England, or at least Nottingham. Gleeful defiance was played for laughs, but the status quo was never really threatened.

The most popular screen Robin of this era, the British *Adventures of Robin Hood* TV series (1955-1959) starring Richard Greene, continued to follow the basic pattern established by the 1938 film. The series was written largely by liberal American screenwriters, many of whom had been blacklisted in Hollywood during



the Red Scare, and they shifted the balance somewhat away from authority and toward rebellion, or at least social justice, but the show was considered family fare and couldn't really have much of an edge to it.

These movies and TV shows were solid entertainment for the most part, but their Robin Hoods, though jaunty to a man, were entirely too polite to inspire restlessness in the lower classes or resistance to duly constituted authority. The Richard Greene series in particular was broadcast widely in reruns for years, carrying the influence of the Flynn approach to the Outlaw of Sherwood well into the 1960s. The Robin Hood movies that followed the show made tentative moves toward breaking the pattern, but most of them—including *Sword of Sherwood Forest* (1960), *A Challenge for Robin Hood* (1967), an *Ivanhoe* TV miniseries (1970), and especially Disney's animated *Robin Hood* (1973)—were nonetheless firmly in the grip of the cinematic tradition established in 1938, even while that tradition seemed increasingly out of step with the times.



Revisionist Robins

The antiestablishment attitudes of popular culture in the '60s finally reached screen retellings of the Robin Hood legend in the '70s and '80s, swinging the pendulum back in the direction of Robin's rebellious roots. Richard Lester, an American director relocated to Britain, had helmed the Beatles' first breakout features, *A Hard Day's Night* (1964) and *Help!* (1965), in which the Fab Four thumbed their noses at the establishment in a way that was, if not outright rebellious, at least counterculture-adjacent. After following up with a couple of less-successful antiwar films, in a surprise move in the early '70s Lester turned to making big-budget swashbucklers, rescuing the *Three Musketeers* from moldy irrelevance by the radical idea of returning to their rowdy roots in the novels of Alexandre Dumas.

Lester next turned his sights on the Robin Hood legend in 1976's *Robin and Marian*. By that time, the story of the Outlaw of Sherwood was ripe for reinvention or at least robust revision. Working from a script by veteran screenwriter James Goldman, Lester set out to turn the 1938 canon on its head. For starters, Robin (Sean Connery) was restored to the rank of yeoman, a commoner, and the plot was set during his middle-aged years rather than his adventurous youth. Forgiven for his acts of youthful outlawry by King Richard Lionheart, Robin had followed his monarch to the Holy Land in the Third Crusade, which for the first time, in Robin Hood films at least, was depicted as a campaign of ruthless plunder. Richard was a brutal and arbitrary tyrant, and upon his death Robin and Little John, disgusted with bloody warfare, returned to England and Sherwood Forest, where they found their early adventures had become the subject of exaggerated legend. Reunited with a reluctant and skeptical Lady Marian (Audrey Hepburn), Robin resumed his career of fighting the injustices of the Sheriff of Nottingham (Robert Shaw), but the time of youthful heroics was past, chivalry was dead, and the grip of reality couldn't be avoided.

Robin and Marian was a bracing and long overdue corrective to two generations of cinematic worship at the altar of *The Adventures of Robin Hood*, but its successor, the British *Robin of Sherwood* TV series of 1984-1986, went even farther. Its roots were in the counterculture of the '60s, it was decidedly antiauthoritarian and exhibited a strong back-to-nature ethic. The legend of Robin Hood and his outlaws living off the land in the greenwood was a perfect embodiment of these themes, and new



additions to the legend carried those themes farther than in any previous screen take. As usual, the Sheriff of Nottingham and the Abbot of St. Mary's, made brothers in this version, were corrupt and abusive, but their outlaw opponent, unlike previous Robin Hoods, didn't look to orthodox Christianity or the old feudal hierarchy for his moral authority, instead revering a (almost entirely fictional) pre-Christian forest spirit called Herne the Hunter. The hermit in a forest cave who incarnated the Hunter adopted Robin as "Herne's Son," endowing him with a magic sword and mystical foresight abilities. Because, in another addition to the legend, *Robin of Sherwood* was a full-on fantasy, complete with witchcraft, warlocks, spells, and enchanted weapons.

The common folk, peasants, and villagers who lived in and around Sherwood, were preyed upon by both church and state, their hard lives made even harder by oppression. But they remembered the old ways, worshiping both Herne and Christ in parallel, and accepted Herne's Son as a leader in a sort of slow revolt against the more powerful forces of the Sheriff, who had the full support of the monarch: King Richard the Lionheart, as in *Robin and Marian*, was once again depicted as a tyrannical autocrat.

In another new twist, a Saracen outlaw was added to the Merrie Men, a gang who, though bonded by camaraderie, weren't often very merry—they knew their lives were forfeit if they were captured, and they feared also for the lives of the villagers who were complicit in their rebellion. This version's Robin of Loxley wasn't a scion of the gentry, but the son of a Saxon rebel slain in mid-revolt. Robin was played by Michael Praed for the first two seasons of the series, but when Praed decided to leave the role at the end of the second, showrunner Richard Carpenter had him cut down by Nottingham crossbows, like his father, and then replaced for the third season by Jason Connery, playing a *different* Robin Hood. Bold move! Connery's Robin was a son of the Earl of Huntingdon but left his father's feudal manor to join the outlaws, drawing his authority not from his noble birth but from his adoption as the latest Herne's Son. And thus, the tale of Robin's noble origin was turned entirely on its head.

Time Warp: Prince of Thieves



Robin of Sherwood ran successfully in reruns throughout the late '80s, but by 1991 there had been no major Hollywood Robin Hood movie since the Disney animated film of nearly twenty years before. Warner Bros. had a hot, young romantic hero in star Kevin Costner, and it seemed like a good idea to cast him in a big, showy action movie that would update the Robin Hood legend and introduce it to a new generation. *Robin Hood: Prince of Thieves* was loud and busy but not very smart, except when Alan Rickman was onscreen playing a parody version of the Sheriff of Nottingham. Drawing inspiration from *The Adventures of Robin Hood*, both the movie and the TV series, and even from *Robin of Sherwood* (witchcraft, a Saracen outlaw), it was certainly effective at reintroducing many of the familiar scenes from the legend, while paying at least lip service to newer concerns such as racial tolerance and female empowerment. But

beyond that, *Prince of Thieves* had few ideas in its head other than how to set up its next action scene.

And it couldn't make up its mind as to where it fell on the rebel-to-reactionary continuum. *Prince of Thieves'* Robin Hood was another dispossessed son of the nobility, fighting both oppressive authorities and to regain his own authority over his feudal estate. His jaunty defiance of the wicked sheriff and his greedy baronial backers was mainly played as a crowd-pleaser, and in the end Good King Richard returned to forgive the outlaws their shenanigans and restore the feudal hierarchy. *Prince of Thieves* was global mega-hit: everyone bend the knee.

Robin Hood: Men in Tights, the Mel Brooks comedy that followed in 1993, parodied both the Costner film and the Errol Flynn adventure of 55 years before, mixing riffs from both so interchangeably that it only emphasized how little mainstream Hollywood had changed in the interim.

Harmony Under the Hood (At Last)

However, 1991 also gave us another film about the Outlaw of Sherwood, John Irvin's British production simply titled *Robin Hood*, starring Patrick Bergin and Uma Thurman. Though largely overlooked at the time in the shadow of the much flashier *Prince of Thieves*, this is the movie that actually has something new to say about the subject. You probably haven't seen it and believe me: you want to.

Story wise, it starts out much like any other retelling of the Robin Hood legend: young Robert Hode, the Earl of Huntingdon (Bergin), is out hunting on his lands when he encounters Much the miller, who is fleeing from a party of nobles led by Sir Miles Folcanet (Jürgen Prochnow) who spotted him poaching the king's deer. Robert gives the poacher sanctuary and tells the nobles to take a hike, which puts him at odds with his feudal lord, Baron Daguerre (Jeroen Krabbé), who has a wealthy ward, Maid Marian (Thurman), whom he plans to marry to Folcanet. Walter Scott's conflict between Saxon and Norman, which also figured in the Errol Flynn version, is resurrected here: Robert is a minor Saxon noble, Daguerre is a powerful Norman, their falling-out turns violent, and Robert is proscribed. His lands and title forfeited, Robert flees to the nearby forest where he joins a band of outlaws, rising to their leadership on his fighting skill and angry charisma.

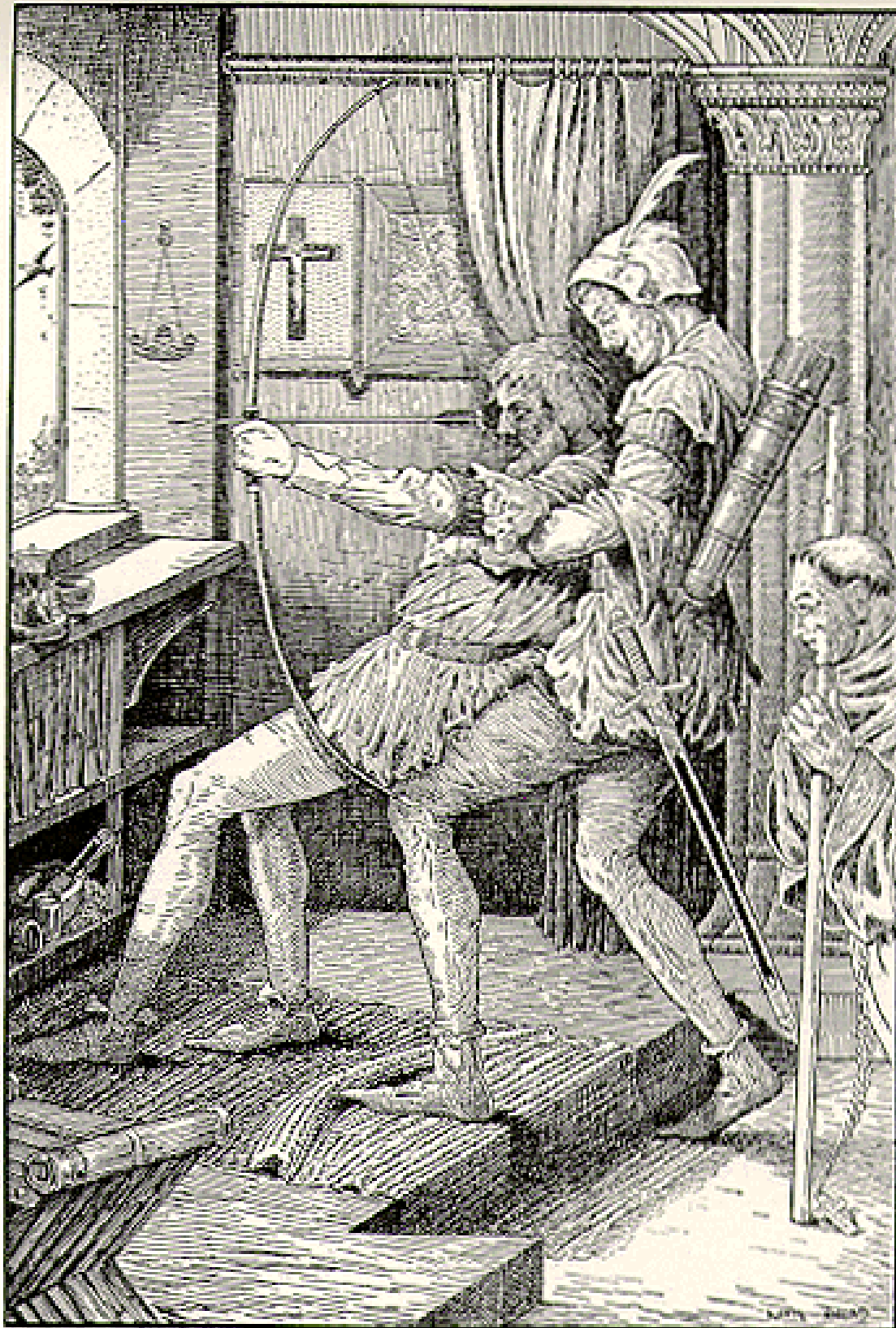
So far, all pretty standard—but Irvin's film has ambitions beyond just another retelling of the Robin Hood story. First of all, it aims to place the outlaw and his band back in the milieu of the late Middle Ages, with the peasants and villagers in authentic living conditions for the period, and with the outlaws hiding in low, smoky forest caves rather than in Disneyland treehouses as in *Prince of Thieves*. As Robert Hode becomes Robin Hood and the champion of the common folk, he learns their lives and ways and their community traditions—as does Marian, who joins the outlaws, fleeing her forced marriage. In fact, it's the scruffy outlaws who persuade Robin that the wealth stolen from corrupt abbots and merchants should be redistributed to the poor from whom it was wrested rather than kept and spent.

And when the time comes for the inevitable raid on Nottingham Castle to rescue Marian from her Norman captors, it's a medieval peasants' tradition that gets Robin and his outlaws through the gates: the annual revels in which the ruled become rulers and for a day and feudal laws are suspended. Supported by the serfs and town citizens, Robin leads an insurrection, slays the brutal Folcanet, and the world is turned upside down. Baron Daguerre sees the error of his ways, and Norman and Saxon come together to become a single people. In this way, Irvin's film draws on the tone and events of the original Robin Hood ballads to



create nothing less than a creation myth for British society. And instead of Robin the rebel turning in the end to the duly constituted authority for legitimacy, he assists at the birth of a new authority that draws from all levels of society—while the Magna Carta, if you know any British history, looms in the offing.

Plus, it's a good movie.



ROBIN SHOOTS HIS LAST SHAFT

Swashbuckling Adventure with a Behind-the-Scenes Secret

Jeff Berkwits

It's doubtful anyone considers Robin Hood a herald of technological wonder. Yet he is—over the past 500 years his story has played an important role in the formative stage of just about every new method of mass communication.

For example, *A Gest of Robyn Hode* (the Middle English version of Robin Hood) was one of the first books published after Johannes Gutenberg introduced movable metal type to Europe in the mid-1400s. In 1908, soon after motion pictures became popular, a film adaptation of the fable graced the silver screen. A few years later radio became the dominant means of communication, and audio interpretations of the legend were some of the earliest performances heard on that nascent medium. So it shouldn't be too surprising that, as TV became prevalent in the early 1950s, Robin Hood was among the first tales adapted for broadcast.

In 1953, a six-episode adventure was aired on the BBC starring future *Dr. Who* actor Patrick Troughton. That effort is all but lost, but in 1955 that channel's rival, ITV, debuted *The Adventures of Robin Hood*, which went on to become one of the most successful syndicated programs of television's golden age.

Based on the pedigree of its cast, one might think the production would have played perfectly on *Masterpiece Theatre*. The handsome star, Richard Greene, was classically trained, and after a successful stint in Hollywood—starting out as a romantic lead and culminating as a swashbuckler in films like *Lorna Doone* and *Captain Scarlett*—he returned to England to portray the legendary Robin of Locksley. His costars, including Alan Wheatley (the Sheriff of Nottingham), Bernadette O'Farrell (Maid Marian), and Alexander Gauge (Friar Tuck), had equally notable backgrounds.

Still, the series is anything but highfalutin, with all 143 episodes brimming with derring-do, double-crosses, hijinks, and humor. The actors are obviously having fun, delivering their dialogue with relish, and although the sets and props are rudimentary it's a joy to watch the sheriff and his conspirators plotting, scheming, and rushing to and fro while Robin's small but steadfast band of merry men find new ways to outsmart, outmaneuver, and, of course, outshoot their foes.

Behind the scenes, a real-life political drama helped add to the show's cachet. In the mid-1950s, Senator Joseph McCarthy and his disciples were alleging that countless US citizens were either outright Communists or Marxist sympathizers. Hollywood was roiled by this inquiry, with hundreds of prominent industry professionals publicly accused of ties to the Communist Party. Many had to quit their jobs or leave the country, but others—especially writers—were able work under pseudonyms.

Hannah Weinstein, the executive producer of *The Adventures of Robin Hood*, made it a point to hire blacklisted screenwriters for the series, including Academy Award-winner Ring Lardner, Jr., future Oscar recipient Waldo Salt, and Howard Koch, who in 1938 had penned the script for Orson Welles' famed radio adaptation of *War of the Worlds*. Working under pennames, these men, along with over a dozen other exiled authors, crafted plots that were far more engaging, mature, and historically accurate than typically seen in similar TV adventures.





As a result, the program, which aired Monday evenings on CBS, was a huge hit, spawning dozens of spin-off products during its four-year run. Many of these items—comic books, children's shoes, Band-Aid bandages, jigsaw puzzles, trading cards, etc.—continued to be coveted even after *The Adventures of Robin Hood* went off the air. This was especially true immediately following the show's conclusion, when Greene reprised the character, with an altogether different cast, in the 1960 movie *Sword of Sherwood Forest*.

Even in the 21st Century, the famed archer remains popular (a revamped version of the tale aired on the BBC as recently as 2006–2009, with a Canadian hip-hop series titled *Robyn Hood* set to debut in 2023) and a harbinger of fresh technology. In fact, a few years ago Mill Creek Entertainment combined the past and future in a single package. They issued the entire run of *The Adventures of Robin Hood* in an impressive 11-DVD box set, with a special added feature: Each installment is also downloadable in a digital format, proving once again that, whatever the medium, the legend of Robin Hood will resonate for generations to come.

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Robin Hood at Hammer

Anthony Roche

For the past five years or so, Propellor/Indicator have issued box sets on Blu-ray to put



the extensive back catalogue of Hammer Films back into circulation. There have been six box sets in all, each containing four films. They are all drawn from the Hammer films released in the U.S. by Columbia Films between the late 1950s and mid-1960s. After the huge success of the first two Hammer films in the Gothic style, 1957's *The Curse of Frankenstein* and 1958's *Dracula* (in the U.S. *Horror of Dracula*), Sir James Carreras Hammer's managing director thought Universal would continue to release his product. But Universal passed on the first sequel, 1957's *The Revenge of Frankenstein*, and Carreras was put to the pin of his collar to find a company to release not just the Frankenstein sequel but the other films Hammer had announced in a variety of genres. Columbia obligingly stepped forward. Almost all of the Propellor/Indicator films were released by them—twenty-four across the six box sets.

In each case, the films are accompanied by an eye-watering range of accompanying featurettes of critical commentary and interviews with surviving personnel (very few, alas, over fifty years later).

In the summer of 2022, a seventh box set was issued. Its most unusual feature is that it only contained two feature films: *Sword of Sherwood Forest* (1960) and *A Challenge for Robin Hood* (1967). This would seem logical at one level, since Hammer only made two Robin Hood films. They also made two war films about the Japanese, but these are included in a group of four entitled "Blood and Terror." But the two Robin Hood films stand alone and receive separate treatment.

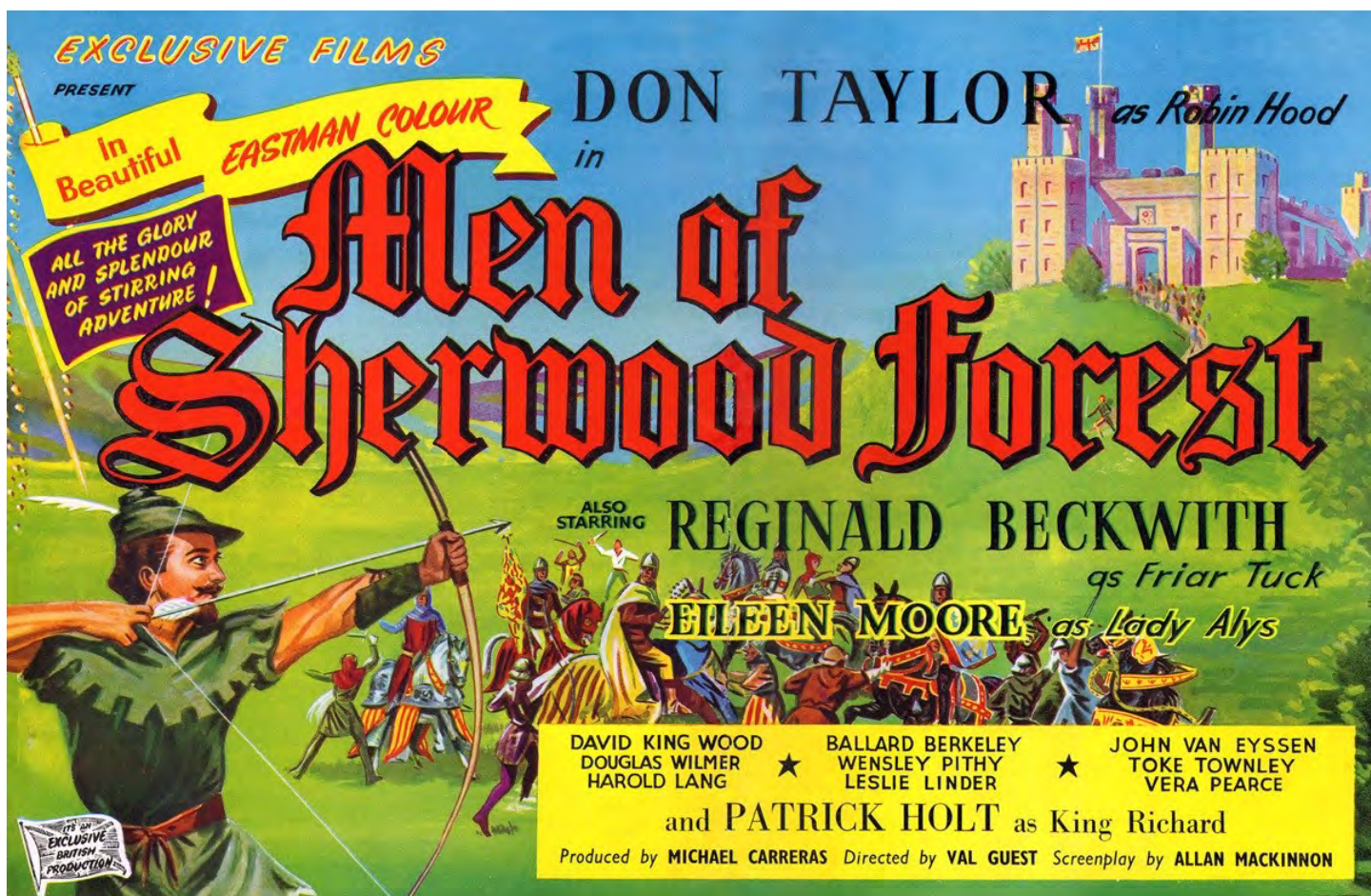
It's a pity room wasn't found for an earlier film by Hammer, *The Men of Sherwood Forest*, made in 1954 by director Val Guest and with U.S. actor Don Taylor in the title role (to attract American interest). In his informative study, *Terence Fisher: Master of Gothic Cinema* (FAB Press, 2021), Tony Dalton indicates that this film was a commercial success for the studio. So in making a Robin Hood film in 1960 and another seven years later, Hammer were revisiting a title that had helped to kickstart the studio long before the Gothic horrors were ever thought of. It may not have been included in a Hammer box-set because the film was made by Exclusive Films, before they changed their name to Hammer later in the 1950s.

But the key factor in their return to the legend was what had occurred in the five years in between: an ITV series *The Adventures of Robin Hood* starring Richard Greene as Robin Hood, in all approximately 143 episodes (amazingly, still available from Amazon). This was the first big success for the commercial English TV channel; I remember hurrying home from school every week to catch it. The theme tune became iconic and can be remembered (and sung) by every child of the fifties: "Robin Hood, Robin Hood, riding through the

glen;/Robin Hood, Robin Hood, with his band of men;/Loved by the poor, feared by the rich, Robin Hood.” By 1960, Richard Greene had decided to give up the series but he wanted to bow out with a feature film which he would co-produce with the TV series producer, Sidney Cole. Probably remembering the 1954 film, Greene and Cole approached Michael Carreras, Sir James’s son and a key player in the Hammer set-up. Carreras was interested and a deal was struck.

Greene would of course play the role with which he was so much associated. The Sheriff of Nottingham would be played, not by Alan Wheatley but by Peter Cushing. Cushing had moved from TV to movie stardom with the Gothic roles he had played for Hammer in the previous five years, Baron Frankenstein in *Frankenstein* and Dr. Van Helsing in *Dracula*, and was anxious to extend his range beyond the Gothics. The sheriff was a much more straightforwardly villainous role for him and he was electrifying in it, speaking with calm authority and measured threat. When it came to director, the role went to Terence Fisher. He was Hammer’s leading director at the time, but it could be argued that he was not right for an outlaw film. But this is to overlook the salient fact that Terence Fisher had directed 11 episodes of the Robin Hood TV series, four from series one in 1956, seven from the second series in 1957.

At the time, Richard Greene was planning to move to Ireland and wanted it to be filmed there. Michael Carreras agreed, for the following reason: “It’s becoming more and more difficult to aim a camera in England without getting background anachronisms. Modern buildings, pylons, telegraph wires, TV and radio aerials, and even vapour trails make outdoor filming of historical or period films a positive nightmare.” (Quoted in the 78-page booklet accompanying the box set.) Hammer were aided in their decision to film *Sword of Sherwood Forest* in Ireland by the fact that 1958 had seen the opening of the country’s first film studio, Ardmore Studios, just outside Dublin in Bray, Co. Wicklow, justifiably known as “the Garden of Ireland.” (Ironically, their home studio near Windsor was also located in a town called Bray.) Ardmore gave on to beautiful natural scenery which Fisher and his director of photography, Ken Hodges, exploited to the full. In the main, the film draws on the 47-acre Powerscourt House Estate in County Wicklow and the opening scene begins with the striking Powerscourt Waterfall. This was to feature prominently in Wicklow-made feature films over the years, notably John Boorman’s 1980s Arthurian epic, *Excalibur*. The waterfall descends in-





to a pool from which the magical sword emerges at a key point in Boorman's film. In the Fisher opening, Ken Hodges' camera pans across from the waterfall to a bluff on which a group of the Sheriff's men are holding a prisoner. When he escapes, there is a spirited horse chase across the Wicklow countryside, including a close up of the horses pounding across a wooden bridge. When Hammer returned to Ardmore Studios seven years late to make Don Chaffey's *The Viking Queen*, even more extensive use was made of the landscape for the filming of several chariot races.

The most problematic aspect of the *Sword of Sherwood Forest* is the script. Alan Hackney had written several episodes of the TV series but his greatest claim to fame in 1960 was that he had helped to script two very successful satiric comedies for the Boulting Brothers, *Private's Progress* (1958) and *I'm All Right, Jack* (1959). The latter was based on Hackney's original novel of the same name and had just won him a BAFTA for the shared screenplay. The hiring of a prestigious screenwriter was very much in line with Hammer producer Michael Carreras's aim to improve the cultural standing of the brand. Hackney's script delivers at the level of the individual scenes, which are built on memorable, charged exchanges well mounted by Fisher and well delivered by the film's outstanding cast. But the scenes don't add up to anything like a coherent overall plot.

Tony Dalton puts it best when he says that the eighty minutes of the completed *Sword of Sherwood Forest* "feels like several episode ideas all crammed into one film." I would say that it's like three separate thirty-minute episodes of *The Adventures of Robin Hood* loosely stitched together with virtually no connective tissue. The first thirty minutes contain everything you could possibly ask for in a Robin Hood film: the title character in Sherwood Forest surrounded by his merry men; a first meeting with the beautiful Maid Marian (Sarah Branch), glistening from a swim, half clad in a smock and full of hauteur towards this outlaw fellow; a face to face encounter between Greene's outlaw and Peter Cushing's sheriff. For the second half hour, the film goes off on several inconsequential and barely explained tangents which it would wear me out to relate and which would make little sense.

The last half hour pits the Archbishop of Canterbury (Jack Gwillim) against the villainous Earl of Newark (Richard Pasco), two characters only introduced at the halfway mark, who come to dominate and replace Robin and the Sheriff. (The sheriff is despatched before the climax by a 22-year-old Oliver Reed, one of Newark's more vicious men, who repeatedly stabs him in the back.) Maid Marian is in the Archbishop's retinue. She has sought him out to seek redress for the widow and children of one of Robin's merry men, Martin (memorably played by a very young Derren Nesbitt), who had been promised a free pardon by the sheriff and then brutally murdered. As Jonathan Rigby points out, this Maid Marian is a much more pro-active figure than her counterpart in the 1967 film. The Archbishop and Marian seek sanctuary from Newark and his crew in a convent run by a formidable French abbess (Vanda Godsell). *The Sword of Sherwood Forest* climaxes in the convent, introducing scenes of violence and mayhem in the midst of art director John Stoll's sacred icons.

The prioress is first cousin to Newark and lets them all in, disguised. Along with them in mufti are Robin Hood and some of his merry men (don't ask). There is a no-holds-barred encounter where Richard Greene skewers Richard Pasco; in these sword fights, Greene looks his age (he is now over forty and rather tubby) and finds it hard to keep up. A brief return to Sherwood Forest for the final scene. The archbishop refuses Marian's request for a pardon on behalf of Robin Hood, saying it must await King Richard's return from the Holy Land. He leaves by reminding Friar Tuck to see Robin and Marian properly married, as the couple wander off into the glade. A fitting curtain and closure for Richard Greene's seven years in the part.

One additional point of interest. If the visual aspect of the film is dominated by the green of the Wicklow landscape, the film's acoustic with all of those British actors is noticeably English. There are two exceptions, scenes where the acoustic of *The Sword of Sherwood Forest* becomes markedly and unmistakably Irish. The first is an assizes halfway through set in a place called Bortrey. In an opening scene that was bizarrely cut, the Lord of Bortrey was killed in the Holy Land and his squire is on his way back there when he is seized by the sheriff's men at what is now the start of the film and mutters "Bortrey. Danger." on his deathbed. At the assizes, Peter Cushing is at full villainous throttle, declaring that since the Lord had no heir the lands belong by right to him. This is opposed by a man from the floor, a villager played in unmistakably Irish tones by the Irish actor Jack Hoey. And there is also the matter of the magistrate in charge of the assizes, played by Anew McMaster; a posh accent but with an undeniably Irish strain in it. Fair play to Jonathan Rigby, who makes much of the fact that the magistrate is played by the famous actor-manager Anew McMaster (uncredited, as is Oliver Reed) and that in his fifty years on the boards touring Ireland with his fit-up company playing (mainly) Shakespeare this is McMaster's only film, a few minutes of his acting preserved for posterity. And then there are the convent scenes, where the Reverend Mother and her nuns are in the middle of saying the Rosary when all of the men arrive. We can hear the British accents of Maid Marian and the archbishop, and that of the French prioress, but these are drowned out by the voices of dozens of Irish women belting out a decade of the Rosary. Opposition to English oppression in Fisher's film would appear to derive primarily from the Irish.



I do not intend saying as much about 1967's *A Challenge for Robin Hood* since it is less interesting than the Fisher, though still worth noting. It had been the way with Hammer in the early years to make motion pictures from popular TV and radio shows. The most famous examples were *The Quatermass Experiment* (1954) and *Quatermass II* (1957), developed from screenwriter Nigel Kneale's powerful science-fiction series on the BBC and both directed by Val Guest in documentary fashion. In the case of Robin Hood, the 1954 *Men of Sherwood Forest* was also directed by Val Guest. This helped give rise to the TV series in 1955, rather than the other way round. When *The Sword of Sherwood Forest* came along in 1960, it fell into the more usual Hammer pattern of a motion picture arising from a celebrated TV series and cashing in on its reputation (in this instance, by casting Richard Greene in the title role). By 1967, the TV series was eight years in the past. Coincidentally, in the same year as *A Challenge for Robin Hood*, Hammer finally got round to making a film from Nigel Kneale's third and final TV series, *Quatermass and the Pit*, also eight years after the TV original; it turned out to be one of their greatest successes critically and commercially. The new Robin Hood film, by contrast, attracted hardly any attention and has scarcely been seen in the fifty plus years since. All the more reason this Propellor/Indicator box set is welcome, putting it back into circulation with its

1960 predecessor. If *Sword* inaugurated what Jonathan Rigby calls Hammer's "swashbuckling" adventure films in the 1960s, *A Challenge for Robin Hood* brings that cycle to an end. The Gothics once more dominated in Hammer's output from 1968 on.

A Challenge for Robin Hood was made in 1967 at Pinewood Studios. Hammer had moved out of their studios in Bray, near Windsor, the year before, but continuity was preserved with their earlier works by extensive location shooting at a place called Black Park, which they had used throughout the 1950s and 1960s. It can be recognised by the fact that the forest leads right up to the River Thames; it's where the coach driver in Terence Fisher's 1965 *Dracula, Prince of Darkness*, dumps the two English couples he is carrying before they are carted off to Castle Dracula. The other location in the 1967 Robin Hood is Bodiam Castle, Sussex, which accompanies the opening titles and provides an impressive setting, with its big stone castle and its lily-covered extensive moat. In one memorable scene, in order to save their lives, Robin Hood and Friar Tuck jump from the window into the moat below (the Friar gets stuck and has to be pushed through). The shoot was a tight six weeks and the budget £100,000, quite a bit less than the budget of the 1960 film, in large measure a result of the absence of stars from the cast. The only two names which would evoke any recognition are Alfie Bass, star of the popular ITV series *Bootsie and Snudge*, who contributes an amusing cameo as a cowardly and boastful pie man, and as Friar Tuck James Hayter, who had been featuring in character parts and the occasional lead in films since the 1940s. Director was C.M. Pennington Richards, his only film for Hammer: he had made his name principally as a Director of Photography in films like 1951's *Scrooge* and directing such 1950s TV series as *The Buccaneers* with Robert Shaw and *Ivanhoe*. One of the cast interviewed in the extras describes how the director was a tall, silent man who stood to one side on the set and let them get on with it.

What they got on with was an original screenplay by Peter Bryan, one of the Hammer regulars whose presence along with the Black Park location marks this as more a Hammer film than *Sword of Sherwood Forest*. The film's cinematographer was Hammer regular Arthur Grant, no doubt aided by Pennington-Richards' expertise in this area. Bryan had form as the author of two outstanding screenplays for Hammer, 1959's adaptation of Conan Doyle's *The Hound of the Baskervilles* and in 1966 one of Hammer's best ever Gothics, *The Plague of the Zombies*. The script is best described as a version of the "how Robin Hood became Robin Hood" narrative, with the first half hour devoted to the riveting power politics in a Norman family, the de Courtenays. Sir John, the paterfamilias, passes in a moving death scene where his carefully enunciated and scribbled handwritten will is torn into pieces by the chief villain of the piece, Peter Blythe's Roger de Courtenay. Blythe had contributed a memorable sneering cad to Terence Fisher's *Frankenstein Created Woman* the year before. Sir Roger sets about getting all of his father's property for himself by summarily stabbing (to death) his brother Henry and framing his cousin for the murder by using Robin's knife. All of this has been witnessed by Friar Tuck (James Hayter), who then flees the castle with Robin into Sherwood Forest. The Sheriff turns up in the villainous form of John Arnatt and mainly spends his time skulking in the shadows, with predatory sexual designs on Maid Marian (Gay Hamilton). These scenes rather disturbed the British Board of Film Censors and, though damped down in the presentation, may still have been enough to earn the film its "PG" rating.

James Hayter's performance as Friar Tuck is the film's star turn, one that elevates *A Challenge to Robin Hood* into something memorable. Niall MacGinnis's Friar in *Sword of Sherwood Forest* is a complete buffoon, one whose onscreen life is entirely devoted to food and drink. His trip to Bortrey to represent Robin is delayed by his supposedly comic exchanges with a recalcitrant donkey. MacGinnis is riveting in a sinister role like that in 1957's *Night of the Demon*; but he's inclined to amble through a broadly comic role like this. Verbal mention is made of his giving the last rites to a young outlaw murdered by the sheriff and of his marrying Robin and Marian at the end; but we never see either of these. All we see are his eating and drinking and endless giving out about the strict fasting laws. James Hayter is shown in a fair number of scenes eating and drinking but attention is also paid to his performance of his spiritual duties: laying out the body of Sir John in his bed and conducting a marriage service between Robin and Marian at the end. The Friar does turn rather a blind eye to the bandits' acts of robbery, but since the money has been taken from the poor in taxes by the rich and will be returned to them, it is probably relatively easy to square with his conscience. Hayter appears along with Barrie Ingham's Robin throughout in what is virtually a co-starring role. He also has some of the

best jokes. When the friar is buying some cloth at the fair, a disguised Robin argues it is “too red” and asks if there is any green. A bale of Lincoln Green is produced and Robin says he will take the entire bale. When the man looks flabbergasted Friar Tuck responds with: “It’s the Order of St. Patrick.”

A final detail is that James Hayter, in the same year as he played the lead in *Pickwick Papers* (1951), had also won fame for adding his portly frame and plummy voice to the role of Friar Tuck in the Walt Disney film *The Story of Robin Hood and His Merrie Men*, with Richard Todd as Robin. Kim Newman points out that this was the first Robin Hood film to be made in England since the silent era. It was followed by the first Hammer Robin Hood in 1954 and the TV series from 1955 to 1959. Richard Greene’s huge worldwide success in this was an achievement to put beside Douglas Fairbanks in 1922 and Errol Flynn in 1938. Barrie Ingham, while performing almost all of his own stunts and wielding a mean sword, was not about to replace him.

Robin Hood at Hammer: Two Tales from Sherwood Forest (Propellor/Indicator) is a beautifully presented box set which should prove of value to anyone interested in the stories of Robin Hood and/or the history of Britain’s Hammer Films.



The Mortal Hero

Danette Sills

Do legends die? Not if they are granted immortality through the songs and stories told about them. Heroes live and die, and this is how they become legends. Heroes generally begin as young, strong, and fearless characters. They accomplish amazing feats and are beloved by the good people who know them. Heroes may be gods and they may simply be mortal. But, they both achieve immortality by their connections to humans. These connections involve the hero becoming a savior for humanity—as a protector, as a provider, perhaps as an object of worship. Humanity loves its heroes, for it allows them the ability to feel worthy of something beyond their status in life. They are able to share in the possibility of immortality, beyond the mortality of their everyday existence.

Collective mythology presents Robin Hood as a young, vigorous leader, living with his comrades in the greenery of Sherwood Forest. They are rebels, living apart from the “false” king’s decrees, honing their fighting skills, and working towards the greater good. They are somewhat carefree, as they live off the land and its bounties and help those that are far less fortunate and suffering under the hardships decreed by the King.

This is the ideal of Robin Hood. He is an icon that was always one who takes from the those that are wealthy and powerful and returns that wealth to the downtrodden. This image/ideal would most certainly have been a positive one for the middle ages, as it later became for the more modern American Depression and countless class struggles throughout history. In particular, I think of Fidel Castro and his brother Raoul, gaining strength with their men in the forests of Santiago, Cuba, to finally overthrow the corrupt Batista government and bring about the Cuban revolution.

But, what if we consider Robin Hood as more of a real human being, apart from the stylized image of his legend. What if Robin was simply a heroic individual, one who ages, who questions what he has accomplished in life, who fights against growing old, and who inevitably faces death?

As this article is not a work of literary research, I will refer to information from Wikipedia in terms of what is known about the history of the character Robin Hood. According to the website, “the first known reference in English verse to Robin Hood is found in *The Vision of Piers Plowman*, written by William Langland in the second part of the 14th century (shortly before Geoffrey Chaucer wrote *The Canterbury Tales*). In Langland’s work a poorly educated parson repents and confesses that he is ignorant of Latin:

*I kan noght parfitly my Paternoster as the preest it syngeth,
But I kan rymes of Robyn Hood...*

The Middle English translates roughly to “Although I can’t recite the Lord’s Prayer (Paternoster), I do know the rhymes of Robin Hood.” Putting Robin Hood’s name in an uneducated character’s mouth demonstrates that the legend would have been well known to most commoners, regardless of whether they could read or write.

The legendary Robin Hood lived for centuries in song and verse, but these things celebrated his extraordinary feats, not the everyday life of a human being. So it is perhaps the most humanizing element in a story about Robin Hood to bring it back to a basic need for human companionship and love. And it is the love story of Robin Hood and Maid Marian that provides the engine for this particular tale of the now middle-aged characters in the 1976 film *Robin and Marian* directed by Richard Lester and starring Sean Connery and Audrey Hepburn. But this is not a story of happily-ever-after. It deals with choices, regrets, the passage of time, and the acceptance of our eventual mortality.

The opening scenes of *Robin and Marian* show, in quick succession, three perfect apples, and then, three decomposing apples. The immediate feeling upon seeing this, having been raised Catholic, is “Mortal, know that you are dust and to dust you will return.”

This resonates with the legend of Robin Hood as part of his legend indicates that he was a loyal follower of King Richard the Lionheart, the Catholic king who brought chaos and bloodshed to Jerusalem in order to rid it of the Islamic rulers. Not that they were particularly kind nor understanding toward the Jewish population. Catholics were quick to venture forth to the glory of god, but, reticent to understand how god could work in mysterious ways, especially regarding other faiths.

We first see Robin and Little John immersed in the conflicts of the Holy Land at the end of the crusades, coming upon a desolate castle that is overseen by only a one-eyed old man and several women and children. King Richard has commanded Robin to find a “treasure” that resides there. After a short interaction, Robin and John realize that the orders were based upon only a rumored story of great riches. When King Richard himself manifests at the site, his greed, hubris, and obsession cause Robin to question his actions, and he openly defies his king. When Robin and John are taken into custody, Richard lays siege to the castle, and is wounded in the neck by an arrow shot by the half-blind old man. We later find out that everyone in the castle has been killed. As the barber attempts to remove the arrow from his neck, King Richard admits that the “treasure” was indeed a myth. But, he let the old man go because he liked him.

Robin and Little John are in captivity and attempting an escape, when they are brought before King Richard. The king is in poor health, severely wounded by the arrow and suffering from an acute infection. When he collapses, Robin rushes to his side, and as the King dies, he pardons both Robin and John. As the two former soldiers watch the funeral procession of the King pass by, Robin says to John, “Let’s go home John,” whereupon the two companions leave for England.

When Robin and John return to Sherwood, they walk around their former home, and Robin pauses to remember his particular tree. We then see both Friar Tuck and Will Scarlett attack Robin and John, before finally recognizing and warmly welcoming them. Things have changed greatly, and Will and Tuck are the only ones remaining in Sherwood. But, one question remains...what of Marian? Robin learns that she lives nearby and the four set out to visit her.

On arrival, they find a changed Marian. This is no longer a maiden of wealth and privilege, but, a seasoned woman of dedication and strength. When Robin left to join Richard as a Crusader, Marian was left with no choice but to go to the Catholic Church, as that path would afford her some protection from the world, and a small amount of self-determination.

Robin enters the nunnery with John, only to find Marian as the abbess in charge of the Priory. She now goes by the name of Mother Jenet. She takes a moment to recognize the older Robin, and then, shrugs



him off almost immediately. She renounced that life 20 years ago and will not return to it.

However, the Sheriff of Nottingham, under King John's orders, is set to take the abbess as a prisoner. King John is at odds with the Pope, and has ordered all higher-level clergy to leave England, as they would be more inclined to owe their fealty to the Pope instead of King John. Those who would not leave will be taken into custody. Marian is resigned to go with the Sheriff, as she will not leave England.

The sheriff shows up and confronts Robin, who lies to him that Marian has already left, only to have her walk out of the gate next to him. A small skirmish ensues, and Robin takes Marian to Sherwood. A somewhat bemused, but resigned Sheriff promises to go after Robin.

In Sherwood, Robin and Marian revisit their memories. We find out that the two essentially lived as a couple in the forest following their initial adventures. But Marian professes to have given up on her love for Robin after he left for the Crusades. "You never wrote," Marian tells him. "I don't know how," he replies.

Marian insists on returning to the Abbey in the morning, where they find that the Sheriff has indeed returned and taken several of the nuns who did not run off at his approach. Robin and Little John immediately leave to confront the Sheriff and bring the sisters back.

Robin and Little John arrive in Nottingham, and soon battle the Sheriff's men on the wall over the town gate. The captured sisters narrowly escape and, when all almost seems lost, one of the Sheriff's men is shot with an arrow. Robin and John look to see that Will Scarlett and Friar Tuck have followed them to the town. Marian is also there, and she tells the freed nuns to take the wagon as Robin instructed. Robin and John escape in a rather *Butch Cassidy and the Sundance Kid* leap from the wall into a wagon-load of hay, and the party make their way back to Sherwood Forest.

The rescue weighs heavily on Marian as she sees that while the two were in love, Robin always heeded the call of battle. She tells him she thought she saw him dead on the wall. When Marian looks at Robin's body to check for wounds from the skirmish, she sees countless battle scars and comments how perfect his body was before leaving for the Crusades. "So many. You had the sweetest body when you left. Hard, not a mark. And you were mine." Marian tells Robin that she attempted suicide by cutting her wrists after he left, then was brought to the abbey. Their bodies both carry the scars of time. Robin then says to her "I've never kissed a member of the clergy. Would it be a sin?" Marian takes off her headpiece. In spite of everything, she has relinquished the church for him.

Even though they know the Sheriff and his men will come to Sherwood, the couple slowly fall back into their old ways, spending time and making love. "I told them that this is my forest. That's all I want. I want to live here with you." Marian would gladly return to her past life, but she knows too well how the world, and Robin, works to let herself believe in this fantasy.

Following the Nottingham rescue, a number of villagers, old and young, arrive at Sherwood to pledge their support to Robin. "Robin's back in Sherwood," an older villager remarks. Marian can see that the tales of Robin Hood are coming between them to prevent any life together as Robin again becomes the champion of the people.

The old and young villagers spend time training for battle, when Robin sees that the sheriff has returned with recruits from King John and has set up camp in the adjoining field. And although Little John, Will Scarlett, and Tuck tell him that the sheriff is a madman for expecting them to come out on the field and meet him, Robin is still drawn to the battle. "He's out there, Marian. He expects me." "Let him," she replies. Marian knows that if Robin doesn't die fighting the Sheriff, he will die in the next battle, or the next. Robin muses "I've hardly lost the battle, and I don't know what I've won. 'The day is ours, Robin,' Richard used to say, and then it was tomorrow. But, where did the day go?" Marian tells him she will leave if he goes to fight. "No I won't see, or hear the songs about old Robin. I'll be gone."

In one last attempt to save him, Marian entreats Little John to prevent him from going to the sheriff. "Me? Say no to Rob? We've always been together. I'd be nothing without him." Marian says that John has never liked her. "You're Rob's lady," he replies. "Go on, say it." Marian pleads. "You're Rob's lady," John continues. "If you'd been mine, I never would have left." We now see another layer to the relationship of Robin, Marian, and Little John. But this is no Lancelot and Guinevere triangle. This is a true friend confessing an honest, but unapproachable feeling to his best friend's partner, further cementing how deeply they both care for Robin.

In the morning, despite the overwhelming odds, Robin rides out to battle the sheriff, indicating that he and the Sheriff will be the champions of the field. Should Robin fall, his men will be in the custody of the sheriff. Should the Sheriff fall, his men will leave the field and leave Robin's people unmolested. After a grueling exchange between the two men, the sheriff deals a major wound to Robin. However, he rallies and runs the sheriff through.

The sheriff's men don't honor the agreement and follow Robin's men into Sherwood, where they are captured. Marian runs out to Robin, and she and Little John return the wounded Robin to the abbey, where Marian has her medicines. In her chambers, she pours a large draught of liquid, drinks a good amount, then brings it to Robin, telling him it will help the pain. He says to John, "The years, they whittle at you. I should give it up you know. I doubt I'll have a day like this again, and yet..." John leaves to watch out for the sheriff's men.

Robin approves of Marian's medicine, saying, "We'll have a time in the forest. You'll tend me 'til I'm well again, and then, great battles. You'll have a life to sing about." But, Marian knows this will not happen. The medicine she has given Robin, and herself, is a powerful painkiller, meant to bring a fairly painless death. If we look back to the beginning of the film, as she is tending a sick sister in the abbey, she refers to her creation of and administering herbal medicines as "God's work." She had devoted her life to aid in the end of suffering, and now, she looks to end both hers and Robin's suffering in his endless quest to fight another day. Robin realizes too late that Marian has poisoned him and calls out to John. He confronts her, asking, why? She tells him how much she loves him, ending by saying, "I love you more than one more day. I love you more than God." Robin now understands, and says, "I'd never have a day like this again, would I?" Marian slumps next to the window.

As John bursts through the locked door, Robin tells him that it is alright, and tries to comfort him. Robin asks for his bow and an arrow. He says, "Where this falls John, put us close, and leave us there." The arrows flies out the window, into the distance.

Much like the opening shot, the final shot is of the three apples, two decayed, and one not quite past it's prime. They serve to represent the connection between Robin, Marian, and John. And so this tale ends.

It is important to note that the film's screenplay references both the more popular elements of Robin Hood, living with his men in Sherwood Forest, being a hero to the people, along with the characters of Little John, Will Scarlett, Friar Tuck, and Maid Marian, and also some elements from the earliest legends of Robin



Hood. Robin does indeed kill the Sheriff of Nottingham in one tale, and, he falls victim to a kinswoman, who happens to be a prioress. She has promised to treat Robin after he is injured when he is an older man, but betrays him and lets him die. According to Wikipedia, the fifteenth-century ballads relate that before he died, Robin told Little John where to bury him. He shot an arrow from the priory window, and where the arrow landed was to be the site of his grave.

In *Robin and Marian*, Marian does not betray Robin. She fulfills her deepest love for him, and for herself, by stopping him from harming himself, or her, ever again. The hero has died, but not from falling in battle. Rather, he is the victim of his greatest love and greatest regret. Marian provides the means to kill him as well as herself, and many may consider this a betrayal. However, Robin himself acknowledges both his and Marian's love for each other in accepting this inevitability. He knows he should never have left, and now he will never leave again.

We speak of the hero in terms of Robin Hood, but Marian is also an heroic character in this particular story. She attempts to kill herself after Robin leaves, then, she dedicates her life to the service of others. She has worked hard to make her own life, and then, after so many years, Robin simply shows up on her doorstep. She examines her lifelong sacrifice, and reluctantly gives in to the renewed feelings stirring within her. But, she will not lose Robin again, as that would break her as a person and make all her previous sacrifices in vain.

So we are left with time, love and loss as the humanizing elements for the heroes of this story. There is the expression, "Growing old is not for the faint of heart." This is especially true when, by growing old, we confront both what we did and did not achieve in life. Also, our ageing bodies constantly remind us of the ravages of time.

The hero lives on in tale and song, but this is of little comfort during a person's lifetime. One wishes to share one's days with family, friends; all those that the person loves and wishes to spend time with. If life continually pulls you into the future, you can't appreciate living it. To be fully human is to face, as Hamlet said, "the whips and scorns of time" and, our lives are filled with them. But as another, far more modern hero said, "how we face death is at least as important as how we face life." If it is done with courage, humility, and above all, love, we have made the heroic choice.



An Animated Robin Hood for Cartoon Lovers

Tina L. Jens

Cartoons aren't just a way to keep the kids amused. They serve multiple functions. For Warner Brother's Merrie Melodies and Looney Tunes and Walt Disney's Silly Symphonies, they were a way to boost sales of music in both record and sheet-music form. Along with promoting music you could buy, they often adapted—or spoofed—classic literature, children's stories, and movies, so they added to the young viewers' cultural literacy.

Like nearly everything aimed at children, they also have lessons about social behavior and morality. Don't pick on little kids is a popular theme, along with don't be a coward, and face your fears.

The best cartoons craft a story that speaks to kids of all ages, teens, and adults. It's a difficult trick, and not all cartoons aim so high, but the most memorable ones achieve it.

In 1938, a Technicolor swashbuckler from Warner Brothers debuted: *The Adventures of Robin Hood*, starring Errol Flynn, Olivia de Havilland, and Basil Rathbone. The story would soon become an ever-green cartoon theme, too. Morality lessons such as be brave, fight for what is right, don't be a coward, face your fears, and the evils of income inequality were built right in. All that, and sword fights and swinging through the trees! Morality lessons are much more interesting when swashbuckling sword fights are part of the story. It seems like every cartoon series did at least one adaptation, and some did several. I'm not sure I've even scratched the surface! There are more, so many more. Sometimes Robin is portrayed as a human. More often, he's portrayed as an anthropomorphized animal, and not always as a fox.

Here, in chronological order, are quick write-ups on animated Robin Hoods. Nine are cartoon shorts, two are TV series, four are movies, and one is an anime. All are based on that guy who dresses in tights and steals from the rich to give to the poor.



Robin Hood Makes Good—1939

Recurring Characters: None

Production and Distribution: Warner Brothers, Merrie Melodies

Run Time: 8 minutes

Director: Chuck Jones

Writer: Dave Monahan

Voices: Mel Blanc, Bernice Hansen, Margaret Hill-Talbot

Though this was made in the Golden Age of animation, this is the first (and least impressive) of Chuck Jones' three or four (more about that later) adaptations of Robin Hood to cartoons. He visited the story about every ten years. "Rabbit Hood" (Bugs Bunny) and "Robin Hood Daffy" are much stronger works, and appear to be aimed at an older kid audience than this one.

It starts with three squirrels reading *Robin Hood*, which inspires a game of make-believe. The youngest squirrel really wants to play the Robin Hood role, but, as usual, he's forced to play the bad guy so his two older brothers can beat him up. The brothers bully him while singing a song about the folk hero. The fight choreography is probably better than the lyrics, but, for some, this musical sequence is the high point of the cartoon. (Yes, I read YouTube response comments. Don't you?)

A fox sees what they're doing and crashes the game. He tricks them into thinking he's Maid Marian so he can eat them. The older squirrel brothers are captured, and we have a Hansel and Gretel scenario acted out, a theme often touched on by Warner Brothers 'toons.

The youngest brother sets out to save them. Using a conveniently-located fox-hunting horn and voice acting, he tricks the fox into thinking a fox hunt is underway and after him. He literally turns yellow, begs for

help, then flees in a classic body cut-out through the wall, a popular gag in many cartoons. His exit is one of the few truly funny bits in the piece.

When the two older brothers escape their bonds and come outside, whaddya know, the littlest brother is the ultimate hero.

It was discombobulating to see the fox as the villain in this one. In most of the others, the fox is Robin, taking after the feature-length Disney film.

This isn't a classic cartoon. It isn't jam packed with gags. And what gags there are come from a dark place. It's more a grim fairytale than comedy. The older brothers are just as predatory as the fox is, and their faces and emotions are ominous. The overall tone of the piece is, frankly, gloomy.

Themes: Bullies are actually just big cowards. And, stop picking on your younger siblings; they may save your hide some day.

View: Amazon Prime Video and HBO Max



Robin Hood-Winked—1948

Popeye the Sailor series of cartoons

159th Popeye theatrical short

Continuing Characters: Popeye, Bluto, Olive Oyl

Theatrical release, later used in the TV series

Recurring Characters: Popeye, Olive Oyl, Bluto

Run Time: 7 minutes

Director: Seymour Kneitel

Writer: Larz Bourne, Tom Golden

Produced by Famous Studios

Distributed by: Originally Paramount Studios, now owned by Turner Brothers Entertainment and Warner Brothers

Voices: Jack Mercer, Mae Questel, Jackson Beck, Sid Raymond

Let me be honest: despite Popeye once being voted the most popular Hollywood cartoon character, I've never liked the Popeye cartoons. It's partly because the animation is of such inferior quality, but mainly because I've never liked any of the characters. Popeye smokes, eats the canned vegetable I hate most, and enjoys beating people up—but at least he's beating up the bad guys. Bluto, is frankly, a Neanderthal bully. That Olive Oyl sometimes can't decide between them as potential beaux annoys the heck out of me. Olive is a dithering, limp, dishrag who seems to be capable of only two modes: "Ooooh, Help Me!" and (batting eye-lashes) "My Hero!" She'd do better to take some self-defense classes and move to a place that's landlocked.

That said, this is the first of two Popeye cartoons I'll be covering in this article, and it's one of many cartoons that use more or less the same name. Sometimes the only variance is a hyphen. I've chosen to include two in this article.

At the beginning of this cartoon, I can almost like Olive. She's the owner and bar wench of Ye Hub Bub Pub. Robin Hood (Popeye), one of his very short Merry Men, and Bluto (the Sheriff of Nottingham, of course) wind up drinking there at the same time. There's lots of puns and sight gags and rhyming dialogue, all of which is amusing. The traditional archery contest happens in the pub. Popeye wins the first several rounds, so Bluto slips him a Mickey Finn in a mug of ale. Popeye's out like a light, and Bluto abducts Olive. The Merry Men sidekick dumps the can of spinach down Popeye's throat, and he awakes with his spinach-granting super-powers.

Themes: Spinach will make you strong, and bullies get their comeuppance.

View: Amazon Prime Video and a four-volume compilation set of Popeye cartoons



Robin Hoodlum—1948

Fox and Crow series, (later added to the Dreamtoons series)

Episode: 21 (of 24)

Recurring Characters: Fox and Crow

Run Time: 7 minutes

Production & Distribution: United Productions of America, Screen

Gems via Columbia Pictures

Directed by: John Hubley

Writers: Sol Barzman, Phil Eastman

Voices: Mel Blanc, John T. Smith (uncredited)

This short received an Oscar nomination and this is that secret, fourth Robin Hood cartoon that Chuck Jones produced. He, all the voices, and four story supervisors are uncredited, though IMDB has managed to track the info down.

As with several of the series we'll look at, it starts with the Recurring cast of the series being put into the story. In this case, it's Fox and the Crow. Crow plays the new Sheriff of Nottingham. Fox plays Robin, but he's a neer-do-well dandy who only succeeds at things because everyone else is even less competent. Still, it had great charm and wry humor.

The archery competition is highly amusing. The Merry Men mostly sit around sipping tea from their cups and saucers, which becomes an important plot point. It's mood and tone reminds me of some of the Rat Pack movies or Peter Sellers' Pink Panther movies.

Themes: If a friend misses teatime, they clearly need rescuing.

View: Not available for purchase at the moment.



Rabbit Hood—1949

Merrie Melodies

Recurring Characters: Bugs Bunny

Distributed by: Warner Brothers

Run Time: 8 minutes

Director: Chuck Jones

Writer: Michael Maltese

Voices: Mel Blanc and Errol Flynn

This is a Chuck Jones masterpiece, and, in my opinion, the best of his four Robin Hood cartoons. A clip of the Errol Flynn movie is incorporated into the cartoon. In return for the rights to use the clip, Flynn was gifted with a personal copy of the cartoon.

Bugs is poaching carrots in King John's garden. The Sheriff of Nottingham tries to dispatch him. Instead of Elmer Fudd in this role, we get a tall, be-tighted dandy who speaks in a pseudo-Shakespearian dialect. It's a delightful contrast to Bugs's witty patter.

Bugs, as always, torments his hapless opponent by doing his own brand of magic: fast-talking his opponent down wacky tangents to distract them from trying to catch or kill him.

In one instance, as the sheriff is trying to get Bugs out of the King's rose garden (where no one but the king is supposed to tread), Bugs turns it into a real estate pitch. He gets the sheriff to sign on the dotted line, and the Sheriff starts constructing a new house on the forbidden grounds. He's done a good deal of work by the time he realizes what happened, then hammers himself into the ground.

In another witty bit, Bugs masquerades as a royal herald and then as the king. Bugs knights the sheriff by bashing him over the head repeatedly with a large scepter and proclaims, "Arise, Sir Loin of Beef!" Little John is a hapless, but strong, idiot. His primary duties are to catch Bugs when he falls and proclaim, "Ahhh, don't you worry, never fear. Robin Hood will soon be here."

Unfortunately, Robin Hood doesn't show up the first two times. In the final time, we see a short film clip of Errol Flynn as Robin Hood. Bugs finally sees him, then decides that, "Nah, that couldn't be him."

Themes: Always have your lawyer look over the contract, just leave the rabbits alone; it's not like they eat that much.

View: collected in multiple Merrie Melodies DVD compilations, and included as bonus material in the DVD release of the Errol Flynn movie. It's available online at SuperCartoons.net.



Blake Edwards' Presents The Pink Panther: Pinkcome Tax—1968

The Pink Panther Show

Season 4, Episode #55

Recurring Characters: The Pink Panther and the Little Man

Production & Distribution: Mirisch Films, United Artists

Run Time: 6 minutes

Director: Arthur Davis

Writer: David Detiege

Theme music: Henry Mancini

Like all Pink Panther cartoons, this one is not a silent movie, but it has no spoken dialogue. Due to clever writing, excellent music and sound effects, and the occasional written note and superb slapstick, you forget there is no dialogue.

Odes should be written to Henry Mancini's theme song. When I hear just a few notes from it, I immediately flash back to a time I didn't know: 1960s Mod, women in their hip dresses and go-go boots putting some jazz on the hi-fi at an elegant cocktail party.

This 'toon starts with the tax collector shaking down village people. When he comes to a man unable to pay a thing, played by the Little Man, he's dragged off to the dungeon.

The Pink Panther sets out to save him. He makes the dubious decision to fly a note to the prisoner saying someone's coming to rescue him. (The note is signed: *The Merryman*.) Of course a guard intercepts it, and we have a delightful sequence as they battle and battle again.

The Pink Panther is caught and thrown into the same cell. The two soon get a note that says the sender will rescue them soon. It's signed: *Robin Hood (THE POOR MAN'S FRIEND)*. The note is again intercepted, and Robin Hood is soon tossed in there with them. After a shrug from Robin, PP takes his note and rips it into small pieces.

Themes: help your friends and fight tyranny—ideally with some actual skills. Also, taxes are bad.

View: Amazon Prime Video or Pink Panther compilations.

Robin Hoodwinked—1958



Tom & Jerry series

Episode 113

Recurring Characters: Tom, Jerry, and Tuffy

Producer/Distributor: Hanna & Barbera, MGM

Run Time: 6 minutes

Voices: Lucille Bliss, Bill Thompson

Like so many of the short cartoons, a series cast is dropped into the story. In this one, like "Pinkcome Tax," the creators decide to focus on a small plot element. Robin Hood—portrayed as a human but seen only in silhouette—is in prison, sentenced to hang on the morrow, Little John tells us in narration. Jerry and Tuffy (the diaper-wearing younger mouse) set out to save their hero. Standing between Robin Hood and freedom is Tom the cat, who is the jailer.

Most of the cartoon is the normal hijinks of cat-and mouse done in a different setting. After much slap-

stick, Tom swallows the cell door key to keep it safe while he sleeps. The sequence of Tuffy going down a sleeping Tom's esophagus to grab the key, is particularly enjoyable. Tuffy emerges victorious but drunk.

In the penultimate scene, we see a silhouette of Robin diving into the moat and escaping to safety.

It ends with Jerry carrying a tipsy, singing Tuffy suspended like a knapsack, from an arrow. Tuffy, the only one who talks after the opening narration, speaks in a slipshod British dialect and accent. He sums up the episode singing:

*We swiped the blinkin' key
Then Robin Hood went free
And it was you and me
Who done it (hic)*

I think that's a very fine way to end it.

This was apparently shot during the waning days of big-budget cartoons, but it still holds up quite well.

Themes: two small pals, working together can beat a big bully; we can all be heroes, no matter how small; Our heroes are not infallible.

View: Netflix, Disney+, Hulu, Amazon Prime Video, and HBO Max

Robin Hood Magoo—1964



The Famous Adventures of Mr. Magoo

Four episodes, #8-11; Also released as a movie: *Mr. Magoo in Sherwood Forest*

Reoccurring Characters: Mr. Magoo, and probably others

Run Time 80 minutes

Production & Distribution: United Productions of America, NBC

Writer: Walter Black

Voices: Jim Backus

The Mr. Magoo franchise has bounced between movies, kids' cartoon blocks, and prime-time TV. His personality, politics, social views, and careers changed drastically over the years as the franchise moved from one production company to another, but his near-sightedness and extreme good luck remained the same.

He was one of a scant few human characters in cartoons at the time. His character is based, in part, on W.C. Fields.

"Robin Hood Magoo" was part of a half-hour NBC prime time series, *The Famous Adventures of Mr. Magoo*, in which he played a stage actor telling tales of his days on the stage. The show was more serious than your average cartoon and was aimed at the whole family. All of the episodes retell classic literature stories. Many were handled in a single half-hour episode. But for Robin Hood, they went all out with a four-episode arc.

Mr. Magoo generally portrayed a secondary character; they have more leeway for comedy. Here, he's Friar Tuck.

Jim Backus, who had voiced Magoo in the original cartoons, returned for this series while still working on *Gilligan's Island*.

Themes: please go get your eyes checked, and wear your damned glasses.

View: Not currently available in English. Amazon Prime and YouTube have it in Spanish and Portuguese.

Robin Hood Daffy—1958



Merrie Melodies

Recurring Characters: Daffy Duck and Porky Pig

Producer & Distributor: Warner Brothers

Run time: 6:40

Writer: Michael Maltese

Director: Chuck Jones

Voices: Mel Blanc

Daffy plays Robin and Porky Pig plays Friar Tuck. It opens with Robin performing a song, like a wandering minstrel, that ends up dunking him in the drink. He takes offense at Tuck's laughter and challenges him to a quarter-staff duel. He loses.

The friar is looking to join up with Robin Hood's band, but can't believe Robin is Robin. He thinks he's a court jester...with good reason. Meanwhile, the sheriff, who rides on a bouncing donkey, has been collecting taxes and is returning to the castle. The rest of the cartoon is Daffy trying to rob him and prove his own identity. He fails, doing damage to both the forest and his duck bill. Having failed to rob the sheriff or convince Friar Tuck that he's Robin Hood, he dons monk's robes and says, "Never mind joining me. I'll join you. Shake hands with Friar Duck."

Themes: Perseverance is important, but know when to quit and try something else.

View: *Looney Tunes: Daffy Duck* collection, Amazon Prime Video

Walt Disney Productions Presents: Robin Hood—1973



Feature-length movie

No notable continuing Disney characters

Production & Distribution: Walt Disney, Buena Vista

Run time: 1:23

Producer/Director: Wolfgang Reitherman

Writer: Larry Clemmons

Voices: (we'll do this the way the opening credits did:)

Prince John, a lion, by Peter Ustinov (who also voices other roles)

Sir Hiss, a snake, by Terry-Thomas

Robin Hood, a (red) fox, by Brian Bedford

Maid Marian, a vixen (female red fox), by Monica Evans

Little John, a bear, by Phil Harris

Friar Tuck, a badger, by Andy Devine

Lady Kluck, a chicken, by Carole Shelley

Sheriff of Nottingham, a wolf, by Pat Buttram

(A wandering minstrel), The Rooster, by Roger Miller

The movie posters says: JOIN THE MERRIE MENagerie in the world's best-loved legend. ROBIN HOOD. The way it REALLY happened.

The movie opens with the big symphonic sound so often used in Disney animation. We see a book open to two pages of scant text, giving the basic concept of *Robin Hood* illustrated by a woodcut image. The music fades, and we get a change of tone.

Our minstrel rooster says, "The humans have a heap of myths and legends of Robin Hood...but we folks in the animal kingdom have our own version. It's the story of what really happened in Sherwood Forest." He bursts into the first of three songs written and performed by Roger Miller. Each of them help fill in back story and move the plot along. They're also catchy as can be. There are a few other musical interludes, by other

writers and performers, but none of them are as impressive as Miller's. During the song we have the full US credits. It's a nice touch to include animal species in there. It brings a bit more learning for the young ones, as the creators get their credit. It may seem odd to see a complete list at the beginning, but, at the end of the film, there are Voices credits for other languages.

Below the opening credits and the "Oo-De-Lally" song by Roger Miller, we have a continuing chase sequence that introduces us to all the named and un-named animals in the show. (Hint: There's a LOT of them.)

It's immediately apparent that most of the predatory animals, or big animals often used in battle, are on Prince John's side, including a wolf, a snake, vultures, elephants, rhinos, warthogs, and an alligator (the captain of the guard). The foxes (Robin and Maid Marian), the bear (Little John), and the badger (Friar Tuck) are all that stand between greed and the oppression of the many gentle woodland and farmhouse animals that live in Nottingham.

We first see our heroes in action as Prince John and his adviser Hiss are riding in a carriage through the woods, with a full contingent of protection and heralds—elephants and rhinos. They're escorting back a giant chest of money, along with the jewels and the prince's ermine robe. Even the carriage is bedecked with gold hubcaps. Our two heroes pose as female fortune tellers and discover that along with greed and selfishness, Prince John has mommy issues and is very insecure. He has a habit of sucking his thumb and crying for his mommy. I have no doubt that kids who have given up sucking their thumb find this hilarious.

It's a game of cat-and-mouse, or maybe fox-and-hen, as Robin Hood and Little John use their keen wits to repeatedly rob Prince John and give the money to the poor. The sheriff is so keen on his tax extortion job that the money Robin gives the peasants barely touch their hands before the sheriff is there to steal it back. When you have ninety minutes to work with, you can incorporate a more intricate plot, more music, and a larger cast of characters. There's time for some quieter moments and subplots, such as the one that centers around Skippy, a young rabbit just turned seven. His family has been saving to give him one gold farthing for his birthday. The sheriff barges in and steals it. Leaving tears in his wake, he starts to leave. But here comes a kindly blind beggar. The sheriff steals the few coins in his cup and exits. Robin Hood whips off his disguise, gives mama rabbit a small sack of farthings, and gives Skippy a small bow and arrow and his hat.

His young sisters swoon. Skippy and a couple of his siblings meet up with their turtle friend, Toby, to try out the bow. Unfortunately, their first arrow lands in the back garden of the castle. After making Toby swear he won't tattle, they venture into the garden, only to find Maid Marian and Lady Kluck playing a giggle-filled game of badminton.

Chase scenes and costumed-cons are interspersed with what's happening to the neediest of Nottingham. What is most glorious is that you see the deep, friendship-base community of Nottingham. They're mostly taking care of family and friends, with the occasional interruption by the sheriff, and with a helping hand of Robin and his growing band.

I also liked that the movie didn't end after Robin wins the archery tournament. There is a great celebration, and the lovers are reunited. There is an odd musical interlude, with the lovers strolling in the forest, that reminded me of the movie scene where Richard Harris croons the song "Camelot" to Vanessa Redgrave out in the woods. You can see them falling in love. Alas, the sequence in Disney's *Robin Hood* is not as powerful, and feels completely different from the rest of the film.

Still giddy with Robin Hood's success, the crowd makes up words to a song that are not complimentary to the prince. It's a big hit all over town, and the prince finally hears it when even Hiss and the sheriff start singing it. The prince sends his goons to triple taxes and imprison anyone who can't pay or is heard singing the song, which is everyone we've met from the village. This doubling down by an oligarch is true to life. In real life, we'd hear an outpouring of blame and hatred aimed at the hero for getting them into this mess. But the citizens of Nottingham place the blame where it belongs. Robin manages a scheme that frees everyone in jail while simultaneously stealing all the prince's ill-gotten gold.

Many different characters get to be a hero over the course of the movie. And the weapons are creative. You've got you basic swords, pikes, axes, and, of course, bow and arrows. But pies in the face serve their purpose, and Lady Kluck is featured in a football segment, with her squaring off against a squad of rhinos, and winning. Speaking of set pieces, the Punch and Judy show, featuring the prince and Hiss, is a big hit for the

kids in the forest.

I dearly love how multi-generational it is, and it's aimed at the whole family. Each character is heroic to the degree they're capable. In the Disney Princess movies, they still really bear down on moribund gender roles, which is why I can't enjoy most of those movies. But there are no "you're too young" or "girls don't fight" messages here.

In the final duel between Robin and the prince, the castle is burning and the prince spends as much time trying to beat Hiss over the head as he does trying to solve problems. Robin dives into the moat. He's believed dead, but he reappears.

We get a bit of a time jump to find that Prince John, Hiss, the sheriff, and the two vultures have been sentenced to hard labor at the Royal Rock Pile. Church bells ring, and we see Robin Hood and Maid Marion emerging from Friar Tuck's chapel. King Richard emerges as one of the wedding guests. There is much rejoicing.

The writing is superb, the story is sweet, the music is excellent, the animation is delightful.

Themes: trust your friends; listen to your advisers (even if they are a literal snake); high taxes are bad; when officials are corrupt, the people must act; even small, powerless people can, and should, act heroically; don't tattle; don't act like a baby...unless you're a baby; and find someone who makes gooey fox-in-love eyes at you.

View: Disney Plus, Prime Video, and Apple TV



Robin Ho Ho—1975

The New Tom and Jerry Show

Season I, Episode 9

Recurring Characters: Tom Cat and Jerry Mouse

Production & Distribution: Hanna-Barbera, MGM Television

Run Time: 8 minutes

Director: Charles A. Nichols

Voices: Frank Welker

Tom and Jerry revisit Robin Hood again, going far off-script with this one. It opens with a dweeb Robin coaching the Merry Men to laugh better. It isn't going well. Tom and Jerry are announced as interlopers, and request to join the band. This, the Merry Men heartily laugh at.

Tom and Jerry must pass a series of tests—given via the Merry Men Academy—to show their worth. The first is quality laughter, which they pass with flying colors. The second is hit a bull's-eye on the target with a long bow. This gag does flips the viewer's expectations. Jerry, shooting a full-sized bow, aces it. Tom, given a crooked arrow that couldn't possibly work, also aces it. Next they have to capture a fire-breathing dragon. No problem.

The last test, which seems the least difficult, to pluck the red plume from the sheriff's hat in Nottingham castle, is the only test that gives them difficulty, due to a pair of grumpy wolfhound guards, a shark in the moat, and a loud-mouthed, talking crow, who keeps tattling on them. But finally, they succeed!

They return to Sherwood Forest, only to have Robin Ho Ho doubt that the red plume actually came from the sheriff's hat. He quickly gets him comeuppance for doubting their accomplishment.

Themes: You don't know how hard a task will be, so give it a try! Also, don't be a patronizing bully.

View: Amazon Prime Video, *Tom & Jerry: Volume 4* compilation

Robin Hood's Great Adventure, aka Robin Hood—1990-92



Streaming series and compilation movie
Italian-Japanese (sic) Anime available in multiple languages around the world
Production: Tatsunoko Production and NKH
Distribution: Interfilm Company and Mondo TV
Run Time/s: 52 30-minute episodes in streaming series; 90 minute movie
Producer: Ippei Kuri
Director: Koichi Mashimo
English Cast voices: Kate Shannon, Regina Reagan, Stu Milligan, Stuart Organ

My comments for this one are based mostly on the movie. This being a busy season, I haven't committed to watching 26 hours of the show, though I have sampled a few episodes.

Both bear a lot of the hallmark traits of anime, without as many trippy musical interludes that seem tailored to little kids who want to get up and bounce around, and to college students and adults who like to get high and freak out about the awesome LSD-style visuals.

The movie is a compilation from the series. It covers the stretch of plot from when Robin was made homeless and, with his three cousins, goes to Sherwood Forest and meets Little John and his gang, on through to King Richard returning and setting things straight. The series has multiple story-lines that run concurrent to that plot, and then beyond that.

The movie sticks tightly to the original story. There are a handful of nuggets left behind that refer to scenes and events in the show where I responded, "Did I miss something, or did they leave something out?"

A spot check of the series cleared up the question.

The premise is similar to *Young Sherlock Holmes*, in that most of the characters on the heroic side are in their pre-teens. The bullies with their sinister plots, including the Sheriff of Nottingham character are adults of varying ages from perhaps 30-80. Prince John and Sir Gilbert are teenagers or 20-somethings. Both start out on the bad side, being manipulated by evil adults. One changes sides and the other accepts his punishment with grace. Friar Tuck, who comes across as a simple but wise man, having passed through adulthood and returned to an almost child-like simplicity, is somewhere between 50-70. Draw your own conclusion about the social commentary on adults vs. kids.

Friar Tuck is also the one who introduces the kids to the concept that some magical creatures are real, including hippogriffs (body of a horse, wings and head of an eagle), pixies, and the mythical white stag of the forest that if caught, can grant wishes. It felt like a non-integrated tangent in the movie, but plays a significantly bigger role in the series. And then there's Fang, a violet and white flying squirrel of chaos who can talk a bit and adopts Robin's gang because he appears to enjoy the adventures. He provides comic relief.

Content Warning: the Bishop Hartford, a slimy, ancient man, has a coerced harem of sorts, having girls and young women sent from each village for him to choose from. He's clearly a pedophile, but in the English version they tone that down. He's still creepy, but they claim that he's looking to adopt Marian to take over the control of her family's great wealth. Wikis tell me that in the Japanese version, he is looking to marry her, and not just for her money.

There are some very conservative comments about gender roles that, disturbingly, are mostly said by Robin. He shows little growth in that area in the film, but we see Marian already pushing the boundaries. Reviews of the series say she has the most phenomenal character growth arc of the whole cast, so I suspect Robin will get some schooling on the issue.

Another way the movie and the series differ from the original story is the set piece of the big archery competition. The movie sets it up, then skips the archery competition, doing a war of words, instead.

The quality of the animation and the writing is strong. The characters we're supposed to like are likable.

Themes: take care of the younger kids, do the honorable thing, we're better together, beware of adults who aren't your parents, and know when to ask for help.

View: Amazon Prime Video, Tubi, and YouTube: Cartoon Channel

Goofin' Hood and His Melancholy Men—1992



Season 1, Episode 19 of the TV series *Goof Troop*

Recurring Characters: Goofy & his son Max

Walt Disney Television Animation

Run Time: 22 minutes

Writers: Bruce Talkington & Dean Stefan

Voices: Corey Burton, Nancy Cartwright, Jim Cummings, Bill Farmer

Goofy is trying to inspire his son Max to continue with his violin lessons, despite being so awful it freaks out the cat. Goofy turns to the family history books. It seems their ancestor Sir Goofy of Knock Knees, a.k.a. Goofin' Hood, has a story that is as much about being a musician as it is about forming the Melancholy Men and stealing from King Freddy. The *Goof Troop* regular cast is dropped into the historic roles thinly disguised with wacky names.

“The Melancholy Men are melancholy because they’re rotten at being rotten,” the narrator tells us, as the historic portion of the cartoon begins. When invited to be the leader of the band, Goofin' Hood says yes not because he's looking to rob from the rich to give to the poor, but because he's always wanted to lead his own musical band.

Music, badly played, is an on-going theme throughout the sixteen-and-a-half minute cartoon.

The competition where Goofin' Hood dons a costume and steps up to challenge the Sheriff of Half-bakedham in a competition put together to capture the outlaw, includes archery, jesting, jousting, and a swimsuit competition. Goofin' is inept at all of them (except the jesting), but a book about how to be a hero gives step by step instructions. The snooty book narrator, a reoccurring role in perhaps fourteen “Goof History” episodes, is voiced by Corey Burton.

Themes: Some of the life lessons for kids are a little shaky. As an amateur musician, I heartily agree with “persistence pays off, so stick with your music lessons.” But, the repeated assertion that bad musicians can get very, very rich is not true (in most cases). Yes, the creators are winking at other artists who know it's hard to make a living doing any of the arts, for the vast majority of working creatives. But the Persistence Pays Off lesson is undercut by the repeated jokes in this vein.

Still, the awesome aggressiveness, can-do spirit, and “I'll save you!” assertions by Princess Pistol means she's the most badass interpretation of Maid Marian I've ever seen.

View: Amazon Prime Video, Disney+, iTunes, DVD compilations of the series



Popeye of Sherwood Forest—1978

Series: All-New Popeye

Episode 42

Recurring Characters: Popeye, Olive, Bluto, Wimpy

Production/Distribution: Hanna-Barbera, King Features Syndicate

Run Time: 7 minutes, 30 seconds

Producer: Alex Lovy

Writer: Larz Bourne

Directors: Ray Patterson and Carl Urbano

Voices: Jack Mercer, Marilyn Schreffler, Daws Butler, and Allan Melvin

Bluto is the Sheriff of Rottingham, Wimpy is a Merryman who's quick with a quarter-staff and a quip, Olive is the Maid Marian character, and Popeye is Robin Hood.

Popeye cartoons have never seemed to get the budget that other popular cartoons have, so the animation is crude and choppy. The puns, visual sight gags, and writing overall, are pretty good.

Bluto captures Olive and takes her as prisoner back to Rottingham castle, along with the latest batch of

taxes he's collected. To trap Popeye, he declares an archery tournament with the first prize the freedom of Olive. Commence with funny archery tricks, some spinach, and you already know who wins.

Themes: Spinach will make you strong, and bullies get their comeuppance.
View: Amazon Prime Video



Robin Hood and the Merry Mouse—2012

A direct to video film

Recurring Characters: Tom and Jerry, Spike, Droopy Dog, and other Hanna-Barbera cast members

Produced & Distributed by: Warner Bros. Animation and Turner Entertainment

Run Time: 60 minutes

Directors: Spike Brandt, Tony Cervone

Voices: Jamie Bamber, Grey DeLisle, Charles Shaughnessy, John Michael Higgins, and others

Tom and Jerry revisit the Robin Hood story again, this time in film length. It borrows quite a lot from “Robin Hoodwinked” and “Robin Ho Ho,” including the set piece of the mouse going down the esophagus to fetch a key the cat has swallowed. This time, though, it's Jerry mouse doing the fetching; Tom didn't mean to swallow it; and Tom, having changed allegiances, cooperates with Jerry in the key retrieval. Robin and the Merry Men are freed.

This is an out-and-out musical, and they lined up some marvelous singers.

It covers the same slice of the Robin Hood plot as “Robin Hoodwinked.” Robin and his Merry Men are in jail and need help escaping. Most of the Robin Hood plot is conveyed in song, but that's just background and setting. The movie's really about the conflict of Jerry and Tom, and Tom's ultimate redemption. Jerry is the smallest member of Robin Hood's gang. Tom is a squire to Maid Marian and a spy for Prince John.

Robin Hood, most of the Merry Men, and Marion are portrayed as humans. Most of the other cast members are portrayed by animals, many from within the cast of Hanna-Barbera cartoon stars, including Droopy Dog and Spike.

This Marian is more Mata Hari than lady-in-waiting who's waiting to be rescued.

In the end, King Richard returns, Robin and Marian are married, and Tom is adopted into the Merry Men.

Themes: True Love will win out.

View: Rent or purchase from YouTube, Amazon Prime Video, and Apple TV



Robin Hood: Mischief in Sherwood—2016

Originally a French TV series

Production & Distribution: Method Animation & DQ Entertainment, in participation with Walt Disney Company France

Directors: Sandra Derval, Stéphane Mit, Olivier Derynck

Run Time: 13 hours, it's been edited and released by a couple different companies, so in some cases there are 75 11-minute episodes and in others 52 15-minute episodes, and another package with 23-minute episodes

Voices: Tom Wayland, Bryce Papenbrook, Eli James, David Nelson, Sarah Natochenny, Cristina Vee, Eileen Stevens, and others
Dubbed into English

I've only sampled this charming French TV series, but I quite like it. It does a fairly faithful adaption of the full Robin Hood story, but it builds on that with more Girl Power! and the introduction of mythical creatures (including a fire-breathing dragon). The girls are as badass as the boys, with Marian adding magic to the mix in spells, potions, and a wand, though the wand work doesn't always work right.

Robin and his friends, Marian, and Prince John are all about ten years old. The cast is multi-generational. This is another adaption where the kids clean up problems the adults can't seem to manage.

The animation is beautifully stylized, the characters are likable or at least compelling, and the action sequences are cleverly plotted.

Themes: Girls can be as clever and badass as boys, help your community, and always stand up straight (or the governess will make you walk around with a book on your head).

View: Amazon Prime Video (I originally got a search answer saying it's not currently available in English). May be available on some of the smaller streaming platforms.

Th, th, th, that's all folks!

Well...not quite. There are plenty more where these came from. I didn't even touch on the amateur versions available on YouTube and I'm sure other cartoon franchises have done at least one take on Robin Hood.

No matter which version you choose, no matter whether the cartoon tells the full story or focuses down on one moment in the plot and then riffs on it, the moral themes may stress different lessons on occasion but all of them have this: Fight against injustice and take care of your neighbors. Those are life lessons you'll never outgrow, and that will never get old.

<Cue the Merry Melodies closing theme music>



The Woman in the Carriage (车中女子)

Huangfu

Translated from the Mandarin Chinese by Yilin Wang

Note: This is the oldest Chinese folktale to ever feature a female thief or bandit.

In the Kaiyuan era of the Tang dynasty, a young man from the county of Wu traveled to the capital city of Chang'an to take part in the imperial exams. After he arrived in the city, he spent his free time wandering around in Chang'an's narrow alleys and walled neighborhoods. Suddenly, two unfamiliar youths approached him, bowing deeply with respect and humbleness. The scholar didn't recognize them, however, and so he continued onward, assuming they had mistaken him for somebody else.

Several days later, the scholar ran into the two youths again.

"As locals who call this city home, we haven't had a chance to welcome you properly after your arrival," they said. "We were planning to invite you over today, so our chance meeting here must have been arranged by fate."

The two youths asked him to go with them.

Swayed by their enthusiasm, the scholar pushed aside his doubts. He trailed them through the streets until they entered a narrow alley in the East Market, arriving at a clean, polished residence. The youths led him to a raised seat in the main hall, where more than twenty other well-mannered youths were already gathered for a feast. The youths glanced repeatedly at the entrance, as if waiting for the arrival of an important guest.

As noon passed, someone shouted that the one they had long been waiting for had arrived at last. The creaking sounds of carriage wheels grew louder. An elegant carriage, which was followed by several youths on foot, pulled up to the courtyard outside the main hall. The curtain covering the carriage entrance swung open, and a gorgeous young woman stepped out.

She appeared around seventeen or eighteen years old, her hair adorned by flowers and jewels, her robes simple and refined. She didn't reply to the bows of respect from the two youths. When the scholar bowed as well to her, she finally greeted the three of them and invited them into the hall.

The young woman took the seat of honour at the center of the feast, facing the entrance. The two youths and the scholar all bowed to her before they returned to their seats. Another dozen youths dressed in new robes each bowed to her before they sat down in the seats reserved for those with lower ranks. After more dishes were added to the banquet, and several rounds of drinking, the woman turned to the scholar and raised her cup. "The two youths told me about you, and I'm delighted to meet you at last. I hear you're highly skilled. Can you show us your talents?"

"I have studied nothing but Confucian classics for most of my life," the scholar replied humbly. "I don't know how to sing or play any instruments."

"No, that's not what I mean," the young woman said. "Think carefully. What is the skill you have been known for in the past?"

The scholar pondered for a moment. "Once, at school, I walked a few steps up the side of a wall. I haven't performed any other feats."

"That's what I'm referring to," she replied. "Would you show us?"

The scholar ran up the side of a wall, walking a couple steps before landing back on the ground.

"That's indeed a difficult feat," the young woman replied.

Turning to the seated youths, she gestured them to show their skills as well. Each of them rose and bowed to her in turn. Some scuttled up and down walls. Others swung around in mid-air while gripping ceiling beams. They flocked about like birds, performing dexterous feats with speed and grace. The scholar

gasped, stunned and unnerved by their skills. A moment later, the woman rose, saying farewell before she departed. The scholar sighed as he left, his heart heavy with unease.

A few more days passed. The scholar met the two youths on the street once again.

“May we borrow your horse?” They asked.

“Yes,” he said.

On the next day, the imperial palace announced the news that it had incurred a theft. The guards couldn’t catch the thieves, but they managed to track down the horse that carried the stolen goods on its back. After searching around for the horse’s owner, they found the scholar and arrested him, dragging him to the Palace Affairs department for questioning.

A guard led the scholar through a prison cell gate and shoved him in the back. He rolled over and fell into a deep pit. He climbed back onto his feet and glanced up. The ceiling of the cell was more than seven meters tall. The only opening was a tiny gap at the edge of the ceiling, barely a few inches wide.

On the next day, at breakfast time, a rope dropped down through the tiny opening, holding a small container of food. Feeling famished, the scholar devoured the food quickly. The rope withdrew immediately as soon as he finished eating.

Night fell. The scholar whimpered alone in the darkness, but no one was here to listen to his rants about all the injustices he had suffered. Suddenly, he glimpsed a movement in the shadows. Something dived towards him like a swift bird. The faint outline of a person neared him, reaching out with a hand.

“You must be terrified.” The voice belonged to the woman in the carriage that he had met day ago.

“But you don’t need to worry as long as I’m here.

“I’m here to rescue you,” she said, as she lifted him up and tied him onto her back with pieces of silk.

Then she leaped into the air, soaring upwards, flying higher and higher, across the rooftops of the palace and over the city walls.

When they were finally more than ten miles beyond the city gates, she landed back onto the ground.

“You should go back to Jianghuai,” she told him. “Your plans to take the imperial exams and earn a government job will have to wait.”

The relieved scholar escaped back to Wu County on foot, begging for food and shelter along the way.

He never dared again to return to Chang’an for the imperial exams, forever giving up his aspirations of winning a scholarly title or official post.

Adam Bell: Who Came First?

David Stein

We cannot have a conversation about “Robin Hood” without including a glance at Adam Bell.

I will preface this by saying that my father’s people going back were Bells and the family tree leads back to the real life Bell family of Inglewood Forest in the Carlyle area of northern England, very near the Scottish border, so Bell is a Nth-great cousin of mine.

Bell was an actual person, but had a series of unsubstantiated myths spring up around him. These myths bear rather surprising similarities to the Tales of Robin Hood and His Merry Men.

Robin Hood is first mentioned in literature in the mid-1300s and suggests his birth sometime in the late 1100s.

Bell’s biographical data can be traced back to the late 1100s and the first mention suggesting he was an outlaw appear in the late 1300s.

It should also be said that more “modern” version of both the stories of “Robin Hood” and of “Adam Bell” appear in a collection called the *Child Ballads*, a collection of over 300 translated tales and ballads and snatched of songs from English and Scottish history, edit by Francis James Child and first published in the mid-1800s. Further expanded additions have been published over the years, the latest in the late 1960s

The tales of Bell vary depending on who’s telling them and their relationship with the English Monarchy, also much like Robin Hood.

The tales go that Bell turned to the life of the outlaw while fleeing conscription for failure to pay his taxes. His outlaw exploits were much less heroic than those of Robin Hood, being a very equal opportunity bandit. Those who saw Bell and his men as “Sticking it to the Man” claimed him as their own...bold, proud Englishmen. Those who saw him as horrid villain said he was actually Scottish who had tried to better himself living in England. The story of Bell and his gang are linked to the real life criminal activities of the Folville and Coterel gangs

Robin was surrounded by his Merry Men, whose names became legend beside his...Little John, Much the Miller’s Son, Will Scarlett.

Bell had his “Archers of the Englewood” and is always mentioned in connection with William of Cloudsley and Clym of the Clough.

William of Cloudsley was historically named as one of the finest archer in all of English history. His first mention of note was when he famously shot an arrow into an apple resting on the head of his son, which was later was attributed to “William Tell,” who may just have been a mutation of the original Cloudsley tale. Cloudsley, famously, was married to a well-liked woman of the area name Alice and had two children with her. As part of the ballads, she was detained by the local authorities in an attempt to lure the outlaws out of hiding, but thanks to a devious plan devised by Clym, who always seems to be the “brains” of these tales, they were able to rescue Alice and the children and ran laughing back into the woods.

The literary history of Bell

Perhaps the first publication that connects Bell and Robin Hood was by William Dunbar in his poem “Of Sir Thomas Norray” (c.1500). Dunbar identifies Bell as “Allan” rather than “Adam” but scholars agree Adam is correct. Dunbar is a proponent of the idea that Bell was actually a Scotsman.

The most complete early collection of the Bell tales was in 1505, printed by Wynkyn de Worde, the famous Dutch printer.

A series of fragments about Bell’s adventures from 1500-1530 are mentioned in papers by J. Payne Collier.

A fairly complete collection of Bell tales by Iohan (John) Bydell was published on 2 June 1536.

Famed poet, William Copeland, c.1556, wrote a surviving epic poem centering on Bell and his exploits.

Most likely inspired by the William Copeland writing, a piece gleaned from Copeland and Norray is included in "Robin Hood's Birth, Breeding, Valour, and Marriage" in 1586.

The 1432 census rolls for Wiltshire, England, given a wink of satire, lists Robin Hood, John Little, Much, Scathelock (Will Scarlet) and also lists Adam Bell, Clym O'Clough, and Willyam Cloudesley, going to show that characters from both tale were well known at the time and were joked about with.

In 1600, Shakespeare is thought to be referring to Bell in *Much Ado About Nothing*: "...and he shoots me, and he hits me, let him be clapp'd on the shoulder and call'd Adam."

The biggest question is: who inspired whom? The simple answer is "No one knows for sure." The parallels between the two tales are undeniable. Were the Robin Hood tales a daring-do retelling of the real life adventures of Bell? Or were the tales of Bell "enhanced" by attributing Robin Hood exploits to him and his followers? We don't know. Scholars are going so far as to compare the writings in the original stories to try and determine which tales are older.

All we can say is that we all benefit from such amazing stories regardless of their origins...or truth.



Joaquin Murrieta

Christopher J Garcia

I grew up hearing stories of old California. My great-grandmother was raised by a pair of Californios. Those two go back a long way in this state, and they had stories. My Dad, an absolute sponge for stories, heard so many of them from his mom and grandma that he had a ton loaded up for when I was born. And there is nothing I love as much as a good story.

When I was a kid, I heard about what California was like during the Gold Rush from stories my Dad told me that originated with his grandparents, both born in the 1860s. In fact, they moved to Watsonville, California in the late 1870s, when there had been an influx of former Confederates to the area. The other side of my father's family, all Ohlone, had lived there for a bunch of centuries. The stories ranged from simple two-to-a-bedtime tales of weirdos to multi-night stories of things like the Fremont Expedition and the Donner Party.

And then, there was Joaquin Murrieta.

Now, the version of the story my dad told me was likely half stories that were inspired by the actual Murrieta mythos and half the film stories of Zorro and Robin Hood. They wouldn't hold up to any sort of historical scrutiny, but they were *great* stories.

And thus, I now recount, as best I can after 40-something years, the tale of the Mexican Robin Hood: Joaquin Murieta, as told to me, with historical clarifications...of a sort.

Joaquin Murrieta Carrillo was a bandito, but he was a kind hearted man who stole of the landed Anglos and gave back to the Californios.

(This, almost certainly, was not actually the case. He was probably a horse thief, and probably didn't care who he stole from.)

Joaquin was from Sonora, Mexico, and like so many others, he came to California in search of the gold nuggets that people said lay like acorns on the ground across the Sierras. He came as a young man of 16.

(OK, this part kinda jibes with the historical record. He was almost certainly about 20, he was likely born in Sonora, and he came for the Gold Rush. The claim about nuggets like acorns is also real. In fact, there were newspapers in Pennsylvania that made that exact claim about gold on the ground.)

He came to California to join his older step-brother, also named Joaquin, and along the way to California, he met a beautiful woman whose family was driving a wagon towards Sacramento—Rosa Feliz. He wooed her by writing poetry, though it was actually poetry he had been taught in school back in Sonora that he passed off as his own.

(This part is something of a jumble. Yes, his step-brother was Joaquin Manuel Carrillo Murrieta, and he was already in California when the Gold Rush started and had written home trying to get the rest of the family to cross over into California. He was apparently married to Rosa back in Sonora, and he came across with as many as twenty other family members and friends. In fact, several of Rosa's family made the trip as well, which may be where this particular story had its origin. The poetry thing is just an embellishment, and likely simply an invention of one of my more colorful relatives as I've not seen that anywhere else.)

They arrived and staked a claim which turned up gold. There was so much gold that Joaquin's family became incredibly rich incredibly quickly. Joaquin took to wearing fancy clothes, the kind that could only be made in San Francisco for a small fortune and sold in Sonora, California, for a large fortune. This flamboyance led the Anglo miners in the area to become very jealous. Some accused him of stealing other miners' take, and even murdering them to get the precious gold.

(Again, this was likely a familial embellishment as it doesn't appear anywhere I've seen.)

One day, while the Murietta family was tending to their large gardens, a group of Anglo miners rode in and confronted Joaquin, demanding that he give them the gold he had stolen from the miners he had killed. He said he had never killed any miners and that the gold he had found had been because he found a productive stream. The gang did not believe him, but they saw a mule that had a double brand. They claimed that he had taken it from a miner who had disappeared, but Joaquin claimed that he had purchased it from him before he left. The truth was he had stolen it in the days before he had made his fortune. The gang whipped him asking for the gold, but he refused. When they'd found that they wouldn't be able to break him that way, they changed their tactic. They grabbed his wife and they whipped her half to death. She called out to him to not tell them, nor did she tell them what they wanted to hear. The gang hated that, and they amped up the threat. They grabbed rope and tied it around the neck of Joaquin's brother Jesus. They threw the rope over a tree limb and pulled him just a little higher every time Jesus refused to answer. Joaquin finally gave in and told them where they could find their strong-box, and the gang took it from them, but once they had it, they pulled Jesus up off the ground, tied the rope to the mule and fired a gun, sending the mule running, pulling Jesus up and breaking his neck, killing him, when he came into contact with the branch that had thrown the rope over.

(This one is a sanitized for bedtime telling version of John Rollin Ridge's 1854 novel, The Life and Adventures of Joaquín Murieta: The Celebrated California Bandit, which claimed that Murietta and Rosa had been attacked while panning. Murietta had been horse-whipped while Rosa had been raped, and Jesus was lynched. The historian Frank Forrest Latta claimed that Anglo miners had lynched Jesus and whipped Joaquin.)

This left Joaquin shattered, and so, now penniless and mourning the loss of his brother, Murietta swore revenge on those that had wronged him. He took his most trusted family members and formed a posse to search out and kill the men who had lynched his brother and whipped him and his wife. They managed to track down the first at a saloon, where they laid a trap. One of Joaquin's sisters-in-law waited until the man had drunk his fill and wandered out of the saloon to get his horse. Joaquin's sister approached and offered him another drink, a special drink. The man accepted, and when he did, he immediately fell dead. The rest of the gang emerged from their hiding place, stripped his body, taking everything of value he had on him, and Joaquin rode the man's horse off himself. The gang had begun their vengeance.

The next month, they tracked another down to a mining camp high in the mountains. Joaquin laid a simple trap; they set an oil lamp above the door of his cabin, then then fired a shot and when he ran out with his gun to investigate, the lamp fell, hitting him on the head and covering him with flaming oil. Joaquin emerged and poured more oil on him, ensuring he would die of his burns.

The next three were killed quickly, simply, a single bullet into each. This left the ringleader, and Joaquin wanted him to himself. He set the rest of the family into several bands and instructed them to steal horses while he stalked and killed the man who had led the miners to kill his brother. Over the course of several months, the band stole horses from all over California, drove them in great herds to Mexico where they sold them. Joaquin finally tracked the man down to Sacramento, where he had taken the gold and was living like a king. Joaquin found that he was staying at an hotel, the fanciest in all of Sacramento. Across the street was a warehouse, and he climbed on to the roof with a rifle, expecting to pick him off when he came out on to the street, but a minute after he took up his position, he saw that the window in front of him was opening, and it was the ringleader, pulling back the curtains. Joaquin took no pause, put simply aimed his gun and pulled the trigger, the bullet shattering the window on its journey into the heart of the man that Joaquin had come to set his accounts closed.

(Latta mentions that Murietta organized a gang, with multiple teams that worked under strict orders, each moving horses from California into Mexico. Supposedly, they went as far north as Contra Costa county, more than 400 miles from Mexico. He did mention that the gang did seek revenge and killed six of those that had lynched his brother.)

His need to revenge satisfied, Joaquin returned to the gang and they ramped up their thievery, focusing on the rich horse and cattle owners near the border. They would take from the rich ranchers and take their horses into Mexico. They'd give the horses to relatives who would then sell them, and distribute much of the money to small villages that were having hard times.

(Horse trade happened, the redistribution of wealth? Nope.)

The horse trade went well, but to make it possible to help more of the poor Mexicans, they needed more money. They began hanging around in small towns along the trails, usually stationing someone in a saloon. They'd wait for a miner who struck it rich and was heading to San Francisco or back East where they came from, and they'd follow them, rob them, and sometimes, even kill them. They all became rich, but also gave a great deal of money to the villages back home, raising them out of poverty.

(This is not at all true. Yes, Murietta and company did take to the highwayman life, killing many miners and taking their money. This is what led to the State of California wanting them dead. They did not, however, merely stick to the rich, or even to Anglos. He killed at least twenty-eight Chinese and only thirteen Anglos.)

The California legislature could not have such lawlessness as that perpetrated by Murietta and several other gangs. They named "Five Joaquins" as enemies of the State, and organized the California Rangers, paying them one hundred and fifty dollars a month to hunt them down. Near Coalinga, the city of earthquakes, Captain Harry Love led the rangers on a mission to take down Murietta. He found him taking a rest by a stream, washing up. He was the only one not keeping an eye out for trouble, and Love and his Rangers snuck up and fired all at once, coming out of the bushes. Most of the bandits fled, unharmed, but three had been killed. One was Joaquin Murrieta, shot through the right eye.

The details of the actual attack that took the lives of three men, including Three-Fingered Jack (Manuel Garcia) and Joaquin, and captured two others are fairly murky, but as evidence of the event, Love took Jack's hand, easily identifiable as his because it only had three fingers, and the head of Joaquin. He put these in a jar, and took it to the Governor, who paid the bounty and set up those Rangers involved for the rest of their lives.

(And head and hand thing are true, though some think it wasn't actually Murietta's. It supposedly survived until it was destroyed in the 1906 San Francisco earthquake.)



So, that's the story I was told as a kid. Even then I knew it couldn't possibly be true. It didn't, and really doesn't, matter if it was true or not. It was a legend, a myth, and it told me about the values of those who created it. Murietta was doing bad things, but wasn't doing them to good people, or at least not a group that treated Mexicans well. The miners were greedy only for his gold, and they created a lie to justify the murder of Jesus and the beating of Joaquin and Rosa, while Joaquin was doing his crimes to support the poor people back home in Sonora. Revenge was taken for the grave slight, but Joaquin took the proper revenge, and it was about the life of the man who had taken the life in his family, and not the gold, which he did not even try to recover. Joaquin was flashy, flamboyant, and it cost him dearly. These are messages that the story told, and quite well, that the actual events they talk about didn't happen isn't particularly important—as I once said to Karina Longworth, “you don't need to determine the exact angle of Sisyphus' hill.”

Robin of Sherwood

James Bacon

The clarity of the synth cutting through and then joined by a brace of guitars, the harp, flute, and then the harmonic and haunting “Robin” made the hairs stand on your neck and that was Clannad bringing the distinctive sound of a TV show to viewers. The music added to what was an incredibly realistic fantasy yet amazingly eighty-fied program, which was utterly anti-establishment, broody, and loaded with sexual tension and violent in intent if not visuals and all on ITV in the evening on a Saturday. It was brilliant, a fabulous mix of the Legend of Robin Hood, adding Celtic mysticism, British folklore, a dash of Norse and Arthurian legends, and sufficient supernatural and magic to place it more in the realms fantasy than historic, but in a clever and gentle way. There were three seasons, and Robin of Loxley, a woodsman, was our Hooded Man in the first two seasons, being replaced by a noble Robert of Huntingdon in the third season, thereby giving various versions of Robin to the viewer.

Richard Carpenter had an appreciation of the mystical, and yet the realism with which he delivered these series was amazing, albeit there were occasions where it was heavy such as when the devil appears, but generally the mysticism just added to the questioning and wondering of what was going on, all the time the action felt ferocious, the horses charging, the bowmen skilled and accurate.

Robin Hood was well known to us, in the sense that the myth or legend was known loosely, that we had seen a cunning fox portray him in the Disney animated “Oo-de-lally Golly what a day way” film and Errol Flynn in an even more gallant Americanified version of Sherwood. Stories permeated children’s books, Lady-bird books, school books, and the films would have gone by, but this was really something very different. This perhaps one of the real advantages that Robin Hood has, for it is a legend but with little that one can say is canon or necessary, and so, as with tales by voice, it is embellished and adjusted and made to suit the por-trayer or teller.

The early ballads are very different. Robin is no thief who looks after the poor, he is a tricky outlaw, with no Merry Men or Maid Marian, but he is of the forest, armed with a bow. So many aspects will be added later, the story will time shift to the Time of Crusades and Prince John. Robin is no Lord, he is a freeman. In the 1370s or 1377—The rhymes of Robin hood were mentioned in *Piers Ploughman* by William Langland, although it is clear at this stage that these rhymes are somewhat unacceptable to the church, perhaps the corruption of the church, or maybe the popularity of the concept of Robin Hood, who is just a tricky outlaw are an issue, either way at this time and later the issue is that men would rather drink in taverns and listen to rhymes of Robin Hood than attend mass.

“Lythe and listin, gentilmen, That be of frebore blode; I shall you tel of a gode yeman, His name was Robyn Hode.”

“Whyles...outlaw”: supplied from the Wynkyn de Worde text. Robyn was a prude outlaw, “Whyles he walked on ground; So curteyse an outlaw as he was one, Was never non yfounde.”

By the time ballads are recounting the story of Robin Hood many years have passed, and so the *Gest of Robyn* and “Robin Hood and the Monk” are tales that we have. The connection with unruly masses seems to be consistent and Whit Sunday parties in the 1500s featured Robin Hood games and drinking events, some of which were more connected to the church, raising funds, but also which caused issue and complaint. It is fascinating how strong the legend was when we consider now it is just a fiction.

Britain in 1984, looking on from Ireland, saw Margaret Thatcher at war with unions, the IRA and especially working people, be it GCHQ staff being banned from joining Unions or the miners who started striking in April. The Battle of Orgreave in June saw horrendous action by the police, who lied about what had happened. Mounted Police charges, police snatch squads, baton beatings, then there was calm, and then later the police decided to disperse the pickets, marching banging on their shields, the snatch squads and another

mounted charge, as men fled or fell they were beaten and the town was no refuge as miner and local felt the wrath of a crazed, vile, and violent force out of control. Described as “Medieval” it is as if the corrupt wealthy use the same tactics throughout time.¹

The situation in Ireland was not good, although you would not know from how British history is captured, sixty-nine people were killed, riots, violence, intimidation, state sponsored terrorism, all reigned, and then the IRA attempted to kill Margaret Thatcher, when they set a bomb off in the Grand Hotel in Brighton. One might consider that the Anglo-Norman Invasion of Ireland in the 12th century may have had a legacy impact.

Control is everything, and some 8,000 Normans controlled Britain once William the Conqueror had succeeded in his conquest. Nottingham Castle was about enforcement of the law, and ensuring that there is no insurrection, William the Conqueror’s man William Peverel built the castle in 1068 and it was a popular castle, one used by kings. Sherwood Forest went from Nottingham to Sheffield, about forty miles deep and a Royal Forest so killing food to survive was illegal, and the forest was overseen and protected by a Sheriff.



Into this we had a Saturday afternoon TV program, *Robin of Sherwood*. The cast were incredible, full of life and energy. Judi Trott stole everyone’s heart, she was quick witted as Lady Marion of Leaford, intelligent and a fearsome fighter, adept with a bow and fiercely able, yet so delightful and fun without being in any way disrespectful, she was fabulous. Clive Mantle was grounded, reasonable, grateful to Robin for releasing him from a spell but willing to add his voice, a real right hand man, who was a great contrast then with Ray Winstone’s Will Scarlet, who was belligerent, angry, bitter, and vengeful, murderous, and tough, he added a darker side to the group, never known as merry men, and was realistically hard given how brutally his wife had been treated and murdered. Much the Miller’s son was perfectly naive, a teenager willing to fight for what was right albeit not always certain of his own abilities and skill and yet so bravely portrayed

by Peter Llewellyn Williams. Phil Rose played a Friar Tuck who was at odds with the corrupt and greedy abbot, brother of the sheriff, and also considerate and thoughtful, Nasir, or Nasir Malik Kemal Inal Ibrahim Shams ad-Dualla Wattab ibn Mahmud to give him his full name, played by Mark Ryan, was a Saracen who, like Little John, had been under the magical control of Simon de Belleme, a European crusader, Nasir joined the group out of respect, and was quiet, but added an element to the legend that would later be continued. Then we had Michael Praed: so strikingly beautiful, his long hair, rock star looks, and broody, thoughtful, and whimsical demeanor. Occasionally frustratingly poor at communications, he was athletic, full of charisma, and just a delight to watch and enjoy, perfect as Robin of Sherwood. He was able to deal with, and manage, the supernatural and mystical with ease, following Herne’s wisdom, and becoming the prophesized Hooded Man, while also leading his group against the Sheriff and other enemies.

The socialist guerrilla aspect to Robin Hood cannot be missed, but also there was an active effort to confront issues. While legends and magic were weaved through the stories, there was also intrigue, relationships, and politics. Difficult subjects are touched upon, the expulsion of Jews from Nottingham in “Children of Israel,” the challenges of invasion, and then a harder portrayal of King Richard, in “The King’s Fool,” only interested in his own victories and personal targets and not the worries or concerns of those colonized. These were fresh looks at the legend, it resonated and resonated at the time, England was a country engulfed with greed in the eighties, a country that was totally divided between north and south and in many respects at war with its own. The lack of merriness, the rustic and realistic settings, the filming used real castles, it was shot in the finest English countryside, the weather feeling right, mixed with such incredible stunt and horse work, and it all was very brilliant.

There was a beautiful innocence to it also. For instance, when Robin bursts into Marion’s chambers, fleeing Guy of Gisburne, and there is a Love at First sight moment, which by the end of this double episode story, they were brought together by Herne. Relationships, the rights of people, and the abuse of power and

position are very strong themes. The Sheriff prepared to marry a child to increase his wealth, so dreadful in its very realistic portrayal of the situation. The enemies were brilliantly played, Nickolas Grace was excellent as Robert de Rainault, the Sheriff of Nottingham, while there was something so intrinsically upper class English about Robert Addie's Sir Guy of Gisburne, who continually demonstrated reprehensible traits and characteristics. With the abbot, adding the corruptness of the Church and a continual desire for more land, it made for quite a dastardly group. There was little Frenchness to these Norman colonizers, it felt more like aristocracy and wealth. Added to this we had mercenaries, and villains, mystics and sorcerers, and at one point the Devil. These magical and supernatural elements were done well, and with the oddness of Herne accepted, other mystical elements were not unsettling. Richard O'Brien's sorcerer, Gulnar, was superb, and he was one of so many brilliant performers who came into the series. Richard the Lionheart, King of England was played by John Rhys-Davies of Lord of the Rings fame, while Boba Fett actor Jeremy Bulloch played Edward of Wickham, village leader who was sympathetic to Robin. Some of the actors who got their starts on *Robin of Sherwood* went onto more prominent careers, both Rula Lenska who played Morgwyn of Ravenscar, and Stephanie Teague, who played Mildred de Bracy, went onto very successful careers in the longest running British soap opera *Coronation Street*.

Visually, it's phenomenal shooting for TV, so much effort seems to have been made to give an real sense of place, an accuracy and sense of action. From the very start, the moment we see horse bound soldiers on a raft heading to Loxley, and then we see them commit such a brutal attack on a village, slaughtering and burning, the action is incredible. It is filled with details, which I may often have missed, but here we learn that the Sheriff has killed Ailric, who is Robin's father, indeed it is the first thing we see the Sheriff do.

The inspired ability to add new dimensions and give the legend a fresh feeling was brilliant. Carpenter skillfully drew in other legends and added the supernatural, so a Silver Arrow is mentioned in the first episode and while it was of the legend, here it is something that is protected and protected. We get to meet Herne. Herne the Hunter is a legendary Ghost of Windsor Great Park, a British legend, albeit perhaps related to the Celtic Horned God in look, with a shamanic and guiding hand, a seer with magical abilities who points Robin towards a path but allows him to take it himself. I was always very frustrated that Herne, who probably knew things, didn't always share them, and let Robin find his way. Robin comes upon a sword named Albion which has runes upon it. This leads to Morgwyn of Ravenscar, who is not the Abbess we expect, but really an evil witch leader of the coven of the Cauldron of Lucifer, who seeks out the Seven Swords of Wayland to use their power. This developments, drawing on various legends, stories and ideas, permeate the series and add such a wealth to the program.

We want to see Robin, Marion, and the group develop, and that is crucial and achieved, there is not always harmony. But as a ten year old, I was keen on simpler solutions, all going well for the characters, less brooding, and more success and love. I really enjoyed the two series, and we all made bows and it was very popular. There were nuances and subtleties to the episodes that one can see now, the despicable nature of the Sheriff and Guy being so much more clearer now, and with a modern watching, appalling characters, brilliantly portrayed.

When Robin was killed at the end of Season 2, I was gutted, absolutely horrified, like surely he was destined to be with Marion and beat the sheriff. The nuance of the new Robin was lost on me, initially, and I was no fan of this blonde bombshell replacement, fired in to fill the breach, and while cleverly given a new aspect to draw upon, somewhat inferior in my mind. I had hoped that somehow, it would not be so, but Michael Praed was off to work in Broadway, so this was what had to occur, and Jason Connery was a fine actor and, while in a similar mold as Praed, was his own character and instead of being the son of a nobleman like Robin of Loxley, he was actually of the aristocracy, Robert of Huntingdon. Herne made the choice, and in fairness there was some good dovetailing, but I was gutted, and then it ended at the end of that season. No one realized that it was going to end, so it didn't really end. It became one of those program forever to be disappointing, with no satisfactory conclusion and then drifted away.

Throughout the series, the music was consistent, you knew where you were, "Together We" and "Now is Here" would often be used as a scene was coming together, and "Battles" might be forthcoming. "Herne" was perfect in its sound, seeping through, mystical gentle and then then rising and the synth giving the impression of horns, and the harp plucked perfectly. "Battles," the bodhrán perfectly played, giving that

shift and then an electric sense to the guitar and the beat of the drum and its quick and aggressive pace, you knew what was going down, and it was swords, bows, and death. *Legend* is an amazing album, and well worth listening to. Clannad are a superb band, and they had become so well-known with their Top Ten single “Theme from Harry’s Game” which was released in 1982 for the TV series set in the Troubles, and will give you the chills up and down the spine, and like so many commercial things, captures the Troubles so well. They knew what they were doing and how to give emotion, feeling, and strength to a theme, and they succeeded with *Legend* and *Robin of Sherwood*. Clannad were Ciarán, Pól, and Moya Brennan and their twin uncles Noel and Pádraig Duggan, a folk band formed in Gweedore in 1970 and who were joined by Enya Brennan on synth, who went on to find considerable fame herself as Enya.

The fandom is strong. Mark Orton has written two books which are very highly sought after about the series, fiction has seen a life of its own, there are a number of excellent [fan websites](#), there have been conventions over the years, and [The Hooded Man events](#) had a con this year, and are successful in bringing together the actors.

The fourth Season, well that is a story in itself, Carpenter wanted to do a film, or another season to finish it, and between the jigs and the reels it never occurred, although one might consider that into this vacuum industry and ingenuity have come good, but we did not get another series or film. The three seasons are uploaded on You Tube, and free to see, and contemplate should you wish.

It is hard to contemplate a better version of Robin Hood, and now nearly forty years later, with a BBC series come and gone, films galore, and all the great actors, it is saying a lot.

“Feel the sadness inside.”

1 - Tristram Hunt. “[The charge of the heavy brigade.](#)” *The Guardian*, September 3, 2006.



When Things Were Rotten vs. Robin Hood: Men in Tights

Bonnie K. Jones

Mel Brooks is as persistent as a dog with a chew toy. When he gets an idea, he doesn't let go of it. For example: *The Producers*—it was a movie about a play, then it was a musical adapted from a movie about a play, then a movie of a musical that had been based on a movie about a play. Anyway, he did the same thing with *Young Frankenstein*—first a movie and then a stage production. But sometimes he went the other way. He started in television with *Your Show of Shows* writing satire. So he did a television satire about spies—*Get Smart* from 1965-1969, a big hit.



Which led him to a television satire of Robin Hood, *When Things Were Rotten* in 1975.

The first episode covered the basic story of Robin Hood, Maid Marian and the gang hiding out in Sherwood Forest, foiling the plot of Prince John while waiting for King Richard to come back from the Crusades. Actually, pretty much all of the episodes have Robin and the Gang foiling the plots of Prince John and his henchmen.

The cast had players that Mel had worked with before—like Dick Gau-

tier, from *Get Smart*¹, who played Robin Hood and Bernie Kopell², as Alan-A-Dale. Many of the episodes had a well-known guest star, like Sid Caesar, playing the French Ambassador. Mel had worked with Sid when he was a writer on Sid Caesar's *Your Show of Shows*. Gags came fast and furious—*New York Times* critic, John O'Connor said there was a new gag every 15 seconds. Many different kinds of jokes and gags were used. People hanging on walls, dancing to jazz music, modern language—anything to get a laugh.

It was very expensive to film. Mel wanted a certain look, solidly built sets and costumes, filmed using one camera. A laugh track was added later. Paramount wanted him to use a three camera system, like *I Love Lucy*, a much cheaper way to work because you get the scenes shot from three angles at once. More like filming a play. Mel was unwilling to change the way he worked and so the studio canceled it after 13 episodes. Too bad, spoofs are fun and were very popular in the late 1960s and 1970s. *Batman* and *Hogan's Heroes* proved that.

In 1993, Mel came out with *Robin Hood: Men in Tights* to the big screen with a big budget. It has a cast of actors to match the budget. Robin Hood was played by Cary Elwes, hero of *The Princess Bride*. In part, Mel's movie followed the plot of the 1991 the movie *Robin Hood: Prince of Thieves*, which had done well at the box-office. For example—*Prince of Thieves* had a black character called Azeem. Mel called his character Asneeze and his son Ahchoo.

Gags borrowed from the TV show? Robin Hood firing six arrows at once and Robin's winning arrow from the archery contest flying all around before it hit the target. Hawkeye coulda done it, or Green Arrow, ordinary mortals need not apply.

Mel loves recycling: many of the gags in the movie have references to others of his movies like *Young Frankenstein* and *History of the World: Part I*, including having a black sheriff at the end of the movie—Dave

Chappelle—who says it worked in *Blazing Saddles*. There were also many jokes referencing current pop culture, some of which I'm sure I missed looking at the movie 30 years later. In the movie you will see many actors he had used before, like Dom DeLuise³ as a *Godfather* type character. Mel also put himself in the movie as Rabbi Tuckman, replacing the Friar Tuck role. By the way, one actor was in both productions. Dick Van Patten played Friar Tuck on TV and the abbot in the movie.⁴

To sum up—the TV show is full of current cultural references (for 1975) and much juvenile humor. You couldn't have adult humor on network TV at the time. The movie came out in 1993, also full of cultural references but much more smut and adult language. There's overlap, but Mel didn't have to keep the censors happy.

When Things Were Rotten: Main Cast

Dick Gautier	Robin Hood
Dick Van Patten	Friar Tuck
Bernie Kopell	Alan-a-Dale
Richard Dimitri	Bertram and Renaldo
Henry Polic II	The Sheriff of Nottingham
Misty Rowe	Maid Marian
David Sabin	Little John
Ron Rifkin	Prince John

Robin Hood: Men in Tights

Cary Elwes	Robin Hood
Richard Lewis	Prince John
Roger Rees	The Sheriff of Nottingham
Amy Yasbeck	Maid Marian
Mark Blankfield	Blinkin
Dave Chapelle	Ahchoo
Megan Cavanagh	Broomhilde
Eric Allan Kramer	Little John
Matthew Porretta	Will Scarlet O'Hare
Tracey Ullman	Latrine



1 - Gautier played Hymie on *Get Smart*.
 2 - Kopell played Siegfried on *Get Smart*.
 3 - DeLuise had previously appeared in Brooks' films *The Twelve Chairs* (1970), *Blazing Saddles* (1974), *Silent Movie* (1976), *History of the World: Part I* (1981), and provided the voice of Pizza the Hutt in *Spaceballs* (1987).
 4 - Van Patten also appeared in *High Anxiety* (1977) and *Spaceballs*.

A Very Special Episode of Robin Hood

Michael A. Burstein

What keeps a legendary story going and in the forefront in the mind?

There are many stories and legends that have been told over the centuries. Some of them become very popular and then fade into semi-obscurity, while others persist for generations. How many people still read stories of Mose the Fireboy? Who today is eager for new stories of Nick Carter?

The legend of Robin Hood is one of the stories that has had a lot of staying power. In some ways, it's easy to see why. Robin Hood is a hero for the everyday person, and his stories are filled with adventure, romance, camaraderie, and a delightfully evil villain. It is no wonder that Howard Pyle in 1893 published a collection of the tales based on the oral legends and that this book has stayed in print in various editions until this day. But the story of Robin Hood has not been limited to print.

Over the years there have been many adaptations of Robin Hood for stage and screen. If you ask people to name a screen adaptation of Robin Hood, whether a movie or television show, they are likely to think of something specifically devoted to Robin Hood in whole, whether it is the 1938 movie *The Adventures of Robin Hood* starring Errol Flynn; the 1973 Disney cartoon in which Robin Hood is an anthropomorphic fox; the 1980s TV show *Robin of Sherwood*; the 1991 movie *Robin Hood: Prince of Thieves*; or the 1993 parody *Robin Hood: Men in Tights*.

And the above is of course by no means an exhaustive list.

However, there have also been adaptations of the Robin Hood story that were not explicitly designed to be purely Robin Hood but instead as a way to tell a story within a framework of another one, such as an ongoing television series. Robin Hood lends itself to adaptation for many reasons: there are two main characters who can be featured plus a variety of supporting roles, all of whom are distinct in some way.

Two particular uses of the Robin Hood story might not be as familiar to fans of the outlaw, but both of them serve not only as explorations of the character but also to exemplify the legend in their own way. It is instructive to examine both of these and see how these two TV episodes make good use of the legend. The first was an episode of a TV show broadcast in 1982; the second, an episode of another TV show broadcast nine years later, in 1991.

From 1982–1983, NBC broadcast a time-travel show aimed at kids called *Voyagers!* (yes, including the exclamation point). The premise of the show was that there exists a group of people called Voyagers who travel through time to help history along. One of these, an adult named Phineas Bogg, accidentally loses his guidebook in 1982 but picks up a 12-year-old kid, Jeffrey Jones, whose father was a history professor. Jeffrey joins Bogg as the two visit what are essentially alternate universes where history went wrong or is going wrong, and then they interact with historical figures as they repair the timeline.



The episode “An Arrow Pointing East,” written by show creator James D. Parriott along with Jill Donner and Nick Thiel, was typical of the show, as it had Bogg and Jeffrey working to fix two different historical periods within the hour. One of the historical events they needed to fix was Charles Lindbergh’s solo flight across the Atlantic Ocean in 1927. The other was the legend of Robin Hood.

“An Arrow Pointing East” establishes as its premise that the legends of Robin Hood were based on a real person, a man named Robert Hood. Bogg and Jeffrey first encounter him in the woods in England, in the year 1194. An ailing man shoots arrows at them and frightens them away. A few hours

later, they encounter Little John and Friar Tuck and discover that the ailing man is Robin Hood, who was originally called Robert Hood. Robin apparently ran off during an attack from Prince John because he was wounded and went off by himself to die. Robin's men have disbanded and Lady Marian will be forced to marry the Sheriff of Nottingham in four days. Jeffrey's knowledge of germs leads him to use a bottle of ale provided by Friar Tuck to clean Robin's wound, but Robin is still too weak to fight. Bogg disguises himself as Robin Hood to inspire Robin's men to come back. Bogg and Jeffrey attempt to rescue Marian in the woods but find themselves under crossbow fire, and so they use their time machine, a pocket-watch-like device called the Omni, to escape. Which is when they end up in 1927 with Charles Lindbergh. They help Lindbergh as he prepares to fly the *Spirit of St. Louis* across the Atlantic Ocean.

When they return from helping Lindbergh, they find Robin all better and about to attempt to rescue Marian along with Little John and Friar Tuck during an archery contest, which is part of the celebration for the upcoming wedding. Robin's men are supposedly coming but have yet to arrive. Bogg joins Robin, John, and Tuck as they crash the contest, while Jeffrey waits nearby for Robin's men to show up. The four men manage to rescue Marian from the sheriff but are stopped at the gate by the guards. Just when all seems hopeless, Jeffrey shows up with Robin's men and they force Prince John and the sheriff to let them all go.

And that's it for the story of Robin Hood. After the commercial break, the tag takes Bogg and Jeffrey back to 1927, where they watch Lindbergh land in Paris but can't congratulate him as he would wonder how they made it there before him from New York.

The legend is somewhat bare-bones in this retelling. Although Robin's other men do show up, it is brief and they are not identified. Robin makes a brief reference to King Richard, but there is no indication where Richard is, presumably off on the Third Crusade. As the show was meant for kids, there's a platitude about Robin spoken by Marian to explain further the legend: "He's a hero to anyone who cherishes freedom and liberty." Viewers didn't really get to see Robin steal from the rich and give to the poor, although it is mentioned. The episode mostly serves as an introduction to the story and little else.

Although that was in fact the point of *Voyagers!* At the end of every episode, during the closing credits, actor Meeno Peluce, who played Jeffrey, would advise viewers to go to the library to learn more about the historical figures of that week's episode. At the end of this episode, however, Peluce clearly refers to "the legend of Robin Hood," hedging the question of whether or not Robin Hood was based on a real person. But despite that, the use of Robin Hood on *Voyagers!* is that of a historical nature. The historicity of Robin Hood is debated even today, but within the context of their fictional universe, *Voyagers!* assumes that Robin Hood was a real, historical figure.

Nine years later, the TV series *Star Trek: The Next Generation*, set in the 24th century, also adapted the Robin Hood legend for their own purposes. This sequel to the original *Star Trek* shows the adventures of the crew of the *USS Enterprise*, a spaceship of exploration. The captain of the ship, Jean-Luc Picard, tries to hold himself a little bit aloof from his crew, even the senior officers, usually eschewing sharing details of his personal life. But an episode called "Qpid," written by Rande Russell and Ira Steven Behr, used the Robin Hood legend to delve more into Picard's personal life and his interactions with his crew.

Some background is needed but provided to the viewer. A year before this episode, Picard met an archeologist named Vash in an episode called "Captain's Holiday," and the two of them had an adventure that included a romantic connection. In this episode, she surprises him with a visit to his ship. She soon discovers that Picard hasn't mentioned her to his colleagues, which irks her. Furthermore, the two of them get into an argument about how she earns her living profiting off of items she steals from archeological sites, and in the end, Picard walks out on her.



Vash is not the only repeated visitor to the Enterprise, though. An omnipotent trickster alien who goes by the designation Q decides to have a little fun at Picard's expense, although he claims he is doing something nice for Picard. He places Picard and the Enterprise crew into a Robin Hood scenario, where Picard is Robin Hood, his crew are each assigned a role as one of the Merry Men, and Q himself becomes the antagonist the Sheriff of Nottingham. Vash, of course, is cast as Maid Marian and is a prisoner who has been sentenced to die. Q apparently intends for this scenario, which is not predetermined but set to run on its own, to test Picard's love for Vash and to show Picard how his love for Vash makes him weak. From what Q says, it appears that he expects Vash to wait around for rescue and for Picard and his crew to attempt said rescue.

But Vash, who is at first confused by her circumstances, turns the tables on the scenario when she realizes that her life is at stake. She pretends affection for Sir Guy of Gisbourne, a traditional romantic rival of Robin Hood's, and when Picard shows up to rescue her, she rejects the idea that she needs to be rescued. Instead, she helps capture Picard for Sir Guy but then tries to get a message out to the crew that it is Picard who is now in need of rescue. Q intercepts her letter, leading Sir Guy to try to execute both Vash and Picard. But the Enterprise crew shows up and in the end, the heroes triumph over the villains.

The feel of "Qpid" is very different from the feel of "An Arrow Pointing East." In the first case, the Robin Hood legend is used specifically as a tool to teach the viewers history. But the second case uses the Robin Hood legend to shine a light on the characters of the series.

Furthermore, the second case deliberately delves into the romantic aspect of the legend, the love between Robin Hood and Maid Marian. It also presents the Robin Hood legend as a source of humor, as viewers are invited to laugh at the Enterprise's crew attempts to fit themselves into the legend. By this time, the series was in the fourth season and the characters of the crew were well established. Putting the characters into Sherwood Forest and in the costumes of the Robin Hood characters was amusing for the audience, and one hopes that actors enjoyed it as well. First officer Will Riker is Little John, Klingon security officer Worf is Will Scarlett, the android Data is Friar Tuck, and engineer Geordi LaForge is minstrel Alan-a-Dale. Interestingly, the two women of the crew, medical officer Beverly Crusher and counselor Deanna Troi, don't get identifications as anyone specific, just generic members of Robin's band.

The humor is illustrated throughout the story, starting from when Worf says, to the amusement of the audience, "Sir, I protest. I am not a Merry Man!" When Geordi attempts to play his mandolin badly, Worf grabs it and smashes it against a tree, and then utters a curt, "Sorry," presumably meant to evoke a similar scene from the 1978 movie *Animal House* involving a guitar. Troi's attempts to do archery leads to an arrow fired right into Data, who is fortunately unharmed as he is an android. Another presumed movie reference happens when during their sword fight, Sir Guy claims to be the greatest swordsman in all of Nottingham, which prompts Picard to say, "There's something you should know...I'm not from Nottingham!" The dialogue evokes a similar exchange from the 1989 film *The Princess Bride*.

There is one actual, interesting connection between these two episodes. The actor and director Jonathan Frakes, who is probably most well-known for playing Commander Will Riker in *Star Trek: The Next Generation*, was the guest star on *Voyagers!* who played Charles Lindbergh. It was an early role for him, but it displayed his acumen playing a heroic figure. One is led to wonder why Frakes was never cast as Robin Hood, as it seems an obvious role for him. But perhaps he is too tall for the role, as who would they cast as Little John?

Throughout the years, Robin Hood has proven itself to be a timeless story that lends itself to adaptation. Different tones can be brought out from the legend, showing the many ways writers and directors can put their own spin on the tale, thus keeping it relevant and entertaining for all time.

Ha, Ha, Ha!—Robots of Sherwood

Alissa Wales

Spoilers ahead

In the Peter Capaldi era of *Doctor Who*, there's an episode in which Clara asks to be taken to meet Robin Hood. The Doctor initially refuses because Robin Hood is "made up...there's no such thing." Eventually, he concedes, and they end up in Sherwood Forest around A.D. 1190.

Of course, with it being *Doctor Who*, the very first person they run into is the very person they were intending to find: Robin Hood...or is it? The Doctor is hardly convinced. Due to the TARDIS appearing out of thin air, Robin is convinced it is a trick (with mirrors, perhaps), laughs about it, and lets the Doctor know that the TARDIS will now be claimed by Robin himself. The Doctor is annoyed with Robin's antics already (especially his laughing), besides the fact that no one will ever take his TARDIS from him. Out pops Clara from the TARDIS, in medieval garb, and she is completely struck silly, almost shy. She can't believe they actually found Robin Hood.

"That is *not* Robin Hood," says the Doctor.

Robin draws his sword and declares that he will take the "magic box." The Doctor has no sword, instead he pulls out a spoon. They duel on a tree trunk bridge crossing a running river. It starts playfully, but then Robin cuts a button off the Doctor's coat and tensions are high. Robin lunges and the Doctor blocks it, so they are back-to-back. The Doctor knocks Robin off the tree trunk into the river. Clara runs over to see where Robin went. There are no signs of life in the river. Robin pops up and knocks the Doctor into the river. Robin and Clara laugh. Ha, ha, ha!

Because the Doctor is convinced Robin is not real, when they get back to their camp, at each person's introduction, the Doctor is taking some sort of sample (hair, blood, etc.) and analyzing it with the sonic screwdriver. He mutters to himself about if things were real ("all those diseases. If you were real, you'd be dead in six months"). Throughout all this, there's intermittent merriment and laughter (*ha, ha, ha!*), much to the irritation of the Doctor. He is convinced there is something amiss, he just can't put his finger on it. In the meantime, Clara is having a moment with Robin about his story. He tells her about losing his titles, but it



seems she already knows everything, including his losing his most precious Marian. He never questioned why she knew everything, but just assumed all was normal. Robin went on to talk about the archery contest, which Clara exclaimed was a trap. Of course, they all know it's a trap, and the whole band of Merry Men laugh (*ha, ha, ha!*). Again, the Doctor was truly annoyed.

Once the archery contest commences, the Doctor then feels he has to interfere. He really must get to the bottom of what is going on. The Sheriff of Nottingham has his guards arrest everyone, but since the Doctor is trying to figure everything out, he blows up the target, that's when the guards turn out to be... robots!

Robin, the Doctor, and Clara are put in the dungeon together. Robin and the Doctor are clearly trying to one up each other constantly. Clara is fed up with their behavior.

"Shut up!"

She has to tell them twice to get them to listen, and she tries to talk sensibly and logically to both of them (*ha, ha, ha!*). A guard comes in.

"The sheriff himself commanded me to listen, to find out which of you is the true ringleader."

Both Robin and the Doctor expect to be taken to the sheriff, and the guard unlocks Clara and takes her away. This is one of my favorite things that happens in this show to date. After she leaves, the Doctor and Robin come up with a plan to get the guard to come back. They argue about who is to fake being sick, but they finally get there, Robin moans and groans. The guard comes in and enquires about what ails Robin. He knocks the guard out with a head-butt. They get his keys, but since they can't stop bickering about who will get them, the keys go down the drain.

Meanwhile, Clara is being "questioned" by the sheriff. But, as it turns out, she is getting more information from him than he is from her. As it turns out, she is quite clever and knows how to stroke his ego to get him to tell his story.

Robin and the Doctor escape from the dungeon to come across a mysterious metal doorway that does not belong in the castle hallway. Of course, the Doctor upon entering is familiar with a spaceship, but Robin is confused and bewildered. The Doctor investigates the data banks of the spaceship, and he learns about the radiation that is causing the surrounding climate to be too warm for the season, for the ship to be disguised as a castle, and the mystery of Robin Hood. Images of various Robin Hoods flash across the screen, from book illustrations to film adaptations, including Patrick Troughton (the Second Doctor) portraying the character in 1953. The Doctor sees that the radiation is from the damaged ship's engines. If the engines aren't fixed, they will blow the ship up like a giant bomb and it's going to kill everyone.

Ha, ha, ha! Merriment ensues, or does it? Might you'll find out? Clearly, if you're reading this, you appreciate the story of Robin Hood. Maybe you'll give this episode of Doctor Who a go. It's from series 8, and it's episode 3.



The Real Robin Hood

James Bacon

Crisis was a concerted attempt to bring politically conscious and socially aware stories to comics, making use of the near future, superheroes, and other comic aspects of the time, working to present well-thought-through and mature stories that could then be packaged neatly for the U.S. market. *Crisis* was published by Fleetway and was a spin off from *2000AD*. There was a boom in the late eighties of mature comics in the UK, readers got *Deadline*, *Strip*, *Toxic*, *Blast*, and *Revolver*, which merged into *Crisis*, and there were some great stories in these comics.

The anthology format allowed for experiments, bringing new or different art and styles to the reader, but the stories quickly developed from the SFnal to include current affairs. It had created a home for some more unusual concepts or unexplored ideas and issues but also a place to take government and corporate aspects to task. A whole issue was dedicated to Tiananmen Square, and the breakout work *Troubled Souls* by Garth Ennis, which brought the Troubles to comics in their most realistic form, remains seminal.

Today the stories resonate more strongly than ever while also making one consider where such issues get aired now in comics, these were ground breaking stories from a comic publisher that had *2000AD* in it's stable.

The Real Robin Hood began in issue 56 in March 1991, and ran for six episodes, written by Michael Cook and with art by Gary Erskine and Bernie Jaye. Set in the then current time of 1990, it sees the Nottingham Tory Council deciding to support the building of a highly commercialized-for-the-time, Robin Hood theme park, where health and safety is a notion in a file. It includes some utilization of the terrible Youth Training Scheme which took young school leavers of 16 and 17, who were unemployed and on the dole, and made them cheap labor for employers

We meet carefree Danny, getting by with his mates, on the dole, but living, and despite being on a campsite, the government gets a letter to him. He has to go report to Legend Holdings PLC as a trainee leisure transport mechanic...but as Robin has broken his leg falling out a tree that morning, Danny gets the job.

One of the best parts is the introduction to each episode.

O gather all ye round about and hear my tale of good.

The legend and the history of mighty Robin Hood.

The year is 1991 and Nottingham the place,

Where rich men built a theme park, men with more cash than taste.

For Hood's the local legend a chap with fire and dash

And most of all, potential, for generating cash.

But though the site was ready bad luck was due to call.

One week before the park's doors opener Robin had a fall.

And so the search was started for a brand new hero,

Which led to Danny Campbell whose job prospects were zero.

Summoned back from holiday by the feared D.S.S.,

Our Danny reached the theme park and promptly passed the test.

So now the tale is up to date and off to work Dan's gone.

It's the week before the opening, what happens next? Read on...

This is a gift as Danny wants to be an actor but has no equity card, and this might be a route to one. He meets Claire, a very conscientious and strong spoken Maid Marian, Stew, who has a reputation as the most loyal employee while also syphoning off fuel, and Mr Windishmann, who with his little moustache is very corporate. The language does date the comic but only in a fascinating way, the concern of Acid Rain, seems not of the now, while a bully at the theme park calls Claire "Pinko Pants," pinko being a pejorative of the time, indicating a leftist, socialist, or communist supporter.

It's a lovely story. Danny is naive and youthful and Claire, who he likes, is strong and energetic. There is a lot of humor, small and realistic, how people are gits, yet human, and the inconsistencies that we all have, are threaded neatly through it.

Out for a few beers, Danny mentions he is a pacifist, but then is challenged about his ANC shirt, as the African National Congress had been fighting a 30-year armed struggle, and he says "I only bought it cos I liked the colours." and the retort from Claire is "you should join the Labour party with principles like that." and it's a beautiful sequence.

The political figure who opens the theme park is quickly asking how long it will be for the first performance to be done, as he is bored, having seen the story of Robin Hood so often and working with the public is very, very hard. Into this, Danny queries why there is such an inconsistency with the actual legend of Robin Hood, and when he gets a moment on the radio, says that the company intends to research the historical aspects. Mr. Windersmann heads to London for an emergency meeting and Danny worries about his job a little, but luck is at hand and the company decides to send him off to do the research, which will be cheap and create more press coverage. This leads Danny to Oxford and the students greet him as one would expect such an exclusive hole of the wealthy and privileged would. Danny meets an expert, an academic who is a bit wild and enthusiastic, and leads Danny to all the works on Robin Hood. While Danny learns a little, the academic explains that what is actually known is a blank page and a mass of half-truths and contradictions which above all else, is good versus evil, and stealing from the reach to help the poor.

Back at the theme park, safety matters come to a head, in a very bad way. As the press head to the park to see how bad safety really is, Danny enlists help from the other employees and comes up with a plan.

It was so relevant, so of the time and of the moment. The YTS scheme was continually criticized, saw discrimination towards black people and women, and was a way to force those on benefits to work, or lose the benefits. Meanwhile capitalism was unpleasant in its pursuit of money, greed and profit being everything, and championed and cherished in Britain over all other considerations by many. It resonates with the now, where the corporate look has not only become so normal, but the company polo shirt has permeated through society, the importance of uniformity and blandness trampling on uniqueness and ingenuity. While one of the concepts of Robin Hood could be said to be a form of anarchic socialism, this story approaches the legend very differently. In that, there is a lovely freshness and unusualness to it, set in Nottingham and using real life issues of the time, there is a real effort to make this a fun and humorous story, if dealing with unfortunate situations and ordinary people.



Parke Godwin's *Sherwood* and the Chronological Location of Robin Hood

Steven H Silver

I first read Parke Godwin's Robin Hood novel, *Sherwood* when it was first published in 1991. To this day, it remains one of my favorite versions of the Robin Hood story, partly because Godwin elected to jettison much of the traditional tale.

Godwin did keep many aspects of the story, otherwise it would not be a tale of Robin Hood, but set in the years following William of Normandy's conquest of England, Robin is actually Edward Aelredson of Denby, who finds himself on the losing side of history as an Anglo-Saxon living in a country that is having the foreign Norman ways imposed upon it. A student of the old laws, Robin fights the Norman powers that are appointed to rule over him and his fellow Normans, unable and unwilling to bend to the newer ways of doing things.

Opposing Robin is the Sheriff of Nottingham, Ralf Fitz-Gerald, whose job is to impose William's will on the kingdom. Despite his own opinion of Robin, whose cousin, Judith, Ralf married as part of the process of integrating the Normans and Anglo-Saxons, Ralf must do his duty, which includes attempting to hunt down Robin and bring him to justice.

Although Walter Scott depicted Robin as a stalwart of the Saxons fighting against their Norman overlords in *Ivanhoe*, Godwin's decision to set the struggle in the years immediately following the Norman Conquest makes more sense, giving the battle between the Saxons and their customs and the Norman invaders more urgency. It makes more sense that a dispossessed Saxon thane would fight against the Normans in the 1070s rather than 130 years later when, separated by the reigns of six monarchs as well as a civil war between two French factions, the Norman culture and polity was more established.

Godwin's Robin takes on this historical mantle of men like Hereward the Wake, who led a popular revolt against the Normans in East Anglia and whose deeds were recounted in the early twelfth century *Gesta Herewardi*, which claims to be a Latin translation of an earlier Anglo-Saxon text. Similarly, the Harrying of the North in 1069 and 1070 was William's response to an uprising by Anglo-Saxon earls against his rule. Although that was caused by more personal issues and power plays than those depicted by Godwin, it does show the tensions between the Normans and the Anglo-Saxons which Godwin embraces.

While the novel is set in a different period, it doesn't jettison all of the additions made to the legend over the years. Robin is in love with Marian. Over the course of the novel, he acquires a collection of friends to support his activities and they are clearly based on the traditional band of merry men, including Little John, Friar Tuck, Will Scatloch, and Much, even if each of them is not quite the stereotypical version of the characters that so often appear.

In many of the versions of Robin Hood, his band comes together from disparate places over time, unknown to each other until they come into Robin's circle. In *Sherwood*, the novel opens with Will Scatloch, ten years older than Robin, already known to him, one of Robin's father's slaves. Will helps teach forestcraft to Robin and gives Robin his first bow. Much, the Miller's son, is a local lad, also a couple years older than Robin, and John Littlereade, the village blacksmith, was one of Robin's father's comrades in arms. Their growth as a band is organic.

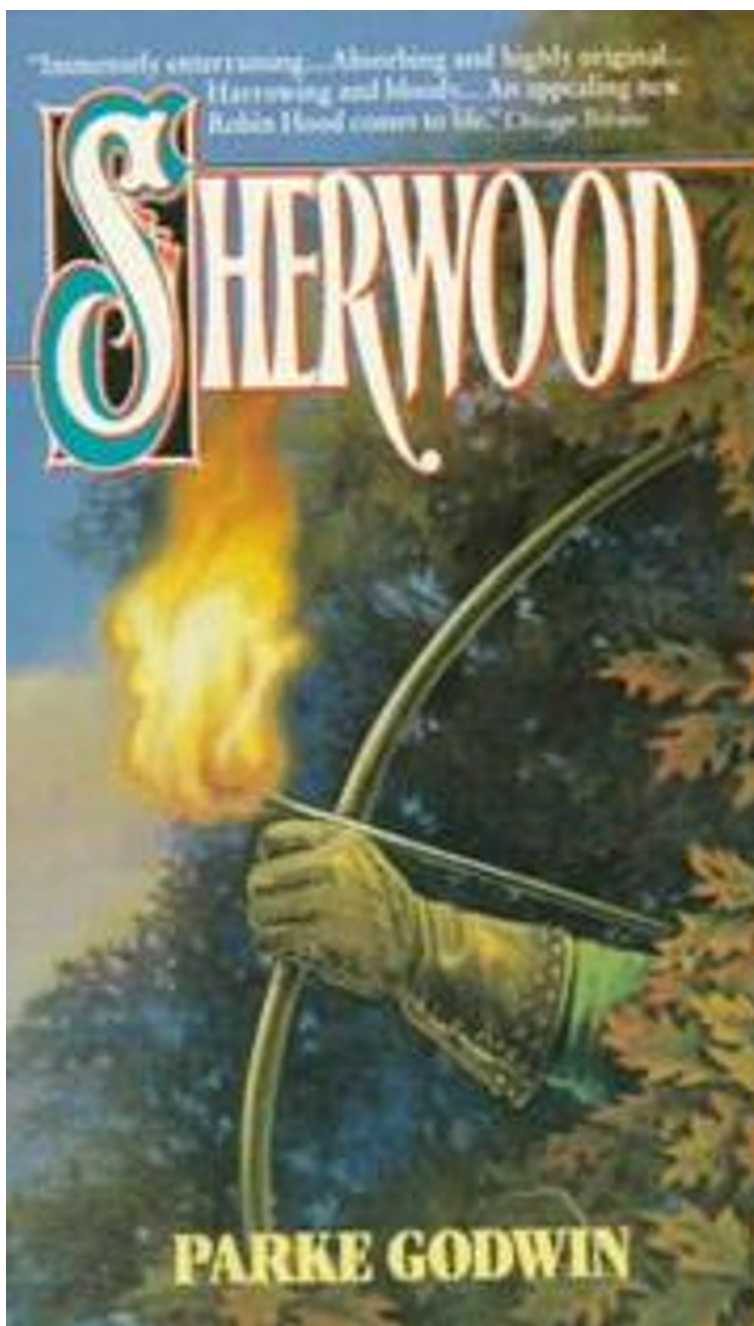
Ralf Fitz-Gerald, as the Sheriff of Nottingham, is also much more fleshed out than the typical Sheriff. Just as Godwin follows Robin from his juvenile years, Ralf's life is also explored in parallel. As a bastard son, he has tied his fortunes to William of Normandy and for him the invasion of England is the opportunity to make something of himself and find his fortune. His appointment as sheriff is not just about collecting taxes, but also about ensuring that the lands over which he has jurisdiction follow the laws and the new culture that

William and his Normans are bringing in to England while also making sure the traditional Anglo-Saxon ways are no longer being followed.

By untethering his version of the Robin Hood saga from many of the traditions that had grown around it over the years and grounding it in a more historical milieu, Godwin was able to create a Robin Hood story with the feel of historical fiction, albeit with some fantastic elements. His characters are fresh and interact with each other in different ways than from the traditional telling of the stories and their motives are more complex.

Even though the earliest versions of the Robin Hood legend that referred to a monarch placed his adventures during the reign of King Edward (which could have put it during the reign of Edward the Elder, 899-924; Edward the Martyr, 975-8; Edward the Confessor, 1042-66; Edward I, 1272-1307; Edward II, 1307-27; or Edward III, 1327-77), and the post *Ivanhoe* tradition places him firmly in the middle years of Richard I's reign (1192-4), moving Robin to the years immediately after the Norman Conquest permits Godwin to retain the later accretion of the Anglo vs. Norman conflict in a manner which makes more sense than the later stories as well as explore a culture in transition and upheaval.

Godwin would return to this material in *Robin and the King*, set several years after the events of *Sherwood*.



FREDERICK WARDE'S

SUPERB
PRODUCTION
OF



FREDERICK WARDE
AS
ROBIN HOOD

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RUNNYMEDE

An Interview with Robin Hood

Graeme Davis

Graeme Davis sat down with Tim Pollard, the official Robin Hood for the City of Nottingham, and learned more about the job of embodying a hero.

How long has Nottingham had an official Robin Hood?

To be honest I'm not sure—I know it goes back many decades though, so I'm part of a long and (mostly) distinguished line of outlaw impersonators. There were certainly official Robins going back to the middle of the last century. Having said that, one of my more recent predecessors was arrested and jailed for having a huge amount of drugs in his car—which, as you can imagine, led to his swift replacement. There's pretending to be an outlaw, and there's taking it all a bit too far! After that the Council decided to run an annual competition to be “Robin for a year” that was open to everyone—but sadly, the people who applied were mainly “lads” doing it for a laugh and weren't really suitable from a publicity and marketing point of view. When I took on the role it was because I'd already been playing the character for years at a couple of medieval banqueting centres in Nottingham, so the Council knew I was committed (and I certainly should have been), capable of stringing a sentence together, and was happy to promote the city and tourism rather than just myself.

Does the “Official” status mean that there are other, unofficial ones?

The “official” moniker came via my working as *the* Robin at Nottingham Castle, which until relatively recently was run by the City Council. Rather than have a plethora of different people playing Robin, the Castle management decided to have just the one for continuity—and as I mentioned earlier they'd rashly concluded I was family-friendly, presentable, and reliable. This means that whenever there's an official event in the City, like the Lord Mayor's Parade, St. George's Day, St. Patrick's Day, etc., I'm there representing the City. It's even more fun at special events and occasions, though, where I get to meet people I otherwise wouldn't: for instance, when the Queen visited Nottingham in 2012, Sal (my Maid Marian) and I met Will and Kate. I've also carried the Olympic torch in the Market Square in front of 17,000 people, started legs of the Tour de France, and travelled abroad widely. I'm great friends with the official Pied Piper of Hamelin and Switzerland's official William Tell, for instance. In fact, we're founder members of the International Legion of Legends, which is like a very low-rent version of The Avengers!

How did you get the job?

I've always been into games, board games, RPGs, and live role-playing. In the 80s, that got me into Viking reenactment with a group of friends. I was working in the Games Workshop Design Studio at the time but after I left there I took over a small “hippy shop” in the city centre, very close to the recently opened “Tales of Robin Hood,” a tourist attraction with a “ride” that took you through a series of rooms with the animatronic sights, smells, and sounds of some of the Robin Hood legends. They also did medieval banquets, and several of the staff used to come into my shop to buy Celtic brooches, leather pouches, and other bits of kit. I ended up chatting with some of them, and when it transpired I spent my time dressed up and sword fighting, I was asked if I wanted to take part in medieval banquets, to which I enthusiastically agreed. There were actually two medieval venues in Nottingham at that time, the other being “The Sheriff's Lodge” and the entertainment was provided by the same chap in both cases. When the Lodge's Robin retired very soon after I'd started (although it was nothing to do with me—honest!) I was asked if I wanted to be their new Robin, and I very eloquently answered “Duh!” So I played Robin there for many years (nearly 17, if I recall correct-

ly), swinging down a rope from the balcony, fighting the Evil Sheriff, and rescuing Maid Marian before turning a “formal” medieval evening into a fun party. Good times.

Because I was doing that, the management of the then Council-run Nottingham Castle decided to use me as their Robin too, for events like the annual Robin Hood Pageant (and indeed, the Robin Hood Beer Festival!), and that’s how I became the City’s official Robin.

What does it entail?

I’ve done lots of fun events, sometimes (but not always) in the company of the real Sheriff of Nottingham. Yes, there still is one: Nottingham and 16 other cities across the country still have a Sheriff but Nottingham’s is allegedly the oldest civic position in the country. Luckily, these days the sheriff and Robin get on famously—indeed a few years ago I was made official “Under-Sheriff of Nottingham” by the then the sheriff so we could team up to try and raise £24m to help renovate the Castle—which we did! Other things I’ve done include appearing at sporting and charity events, lots of overseas travel, TV and radio work, school visits, parades, dinners, and openings. At the annual opening of Nottingham’s world-famous Goose Fair I get to visit with all the local civic dignitaries and have a go on some of the rides. The civics (or “the chain gang” as they refer to themselves as they all wear large and very expensive chains of office) only normally go on the sedate stuff like the Ferris Wheel or Merry-Go-Round but a couple of times I’ve persuaded a Sheriff to try more exciting rides—although it was probably a mistake to persuade a Lady Sheriff to have a go on the “Reverse Bungee,” where we were strapped into an spherical open metal cage and then catapulted several hundred feet into the air! She hated it, was quite poorly, and had to leave very shortly afterwards!



Do you have to be (or have you become) an expert on the Robin Hood legends?

Not really, although obviously knowledge of both the history of the time, the legends and knowing the TV series and films helps a lot. One of my favourite books when I was young was Lady Antonia Fraser’s excellent retelling of the stories; also I do watch, and for the most part enjoy, TV and movie versions—indeed my “look” is based on Michael Praed’s seminal Robin from the 1980’s TV series *Robin of Sherwood*. In fact I did a medieval banquet for Mr. Praed at the Sheriff’s Lodge one time when he and his crew were performing in a play at one of the city’s theatres. They booked the place for a private banquet late in the evening and I had the joy of performing as Robin Hood for my favourite screen Robin!

(Only if you want to) You married your Maid Marian. Tell us about that.

Best thing I ever did...One of the great things about having my little hippy shop was the meeting people (I was rubbish at the stuff I was supposed to do, like clean, tidy, restock and, ironically, pay taxes) but it was *fab* for meeting people, and one of the people I met there was Sal, who came in to buy some jewelry. We struck up a platonic friendship and kept in touch on and off for years, including when she went off to university. I met her again in person back at Nottingham Castle as she was running a medieval reenactment group, “The Dogs of War,” with a group of other friends. I needed a Maid Marian for some of my Robin Hood appearances so asked Sal if she’d play the part and it was without doubt the best chat-up line in the world! Not that I’d intended it to be: we were both with other people, and frankly Sal was out of my league anyway! So, we spent years working together, getting to know each other really well without any pretence or intentions, until one day we both found ourselves single and said to each other “You know that ‘pretending to be in love’ thing that we do? Well actually...” and we were a couple. It was the most wonderful relationship—although Sal had a proper job (Lecturer in Molecular Biology at Nottingham University: she had a career, I had a dressing-up box) it worked splendidly, and when we decided to have a baby it meant Sal could carry on working and I could do a lot of the daytime parenting.

The pregnancy even made the papers—“Robin and Marian Having a Baby” screamed the local newspaper headline, and people constantly asked us if we were thinking of a Robin Hood themed name. No, we



said, the name will be nothing to do with Robin Hood—and we meant it. So when our beautiful baby girl was born we chose Scarlett, safe in the knowledge that was nothing to do with our legendary alter-egos. “What, like Will Scarlet?” people asked, and you should have seen our astounded face-palms! But it really suits her and she loves it, so it’s all good. Sadly when Scarlett was just one year old Sal was diagnosed with breast cancer which despite all treatment spread throughout her body, she died two years later when Scarlett was only three. We both miss her terribly every day but Scarlett knows how happy her arrival made Sal, and how much she was loved.

What other things have you done along the acting/re-enactment line?

I’m rubbish at learning lines, so although I’ve done a fair bit of TV and radio work as well as live events I work best if I’m ad-libbing; as long as I can get from A to B without swearing (unless it’s funny and not being recorded or live) it’s all good. But I spent a lot of time guiding cave tours of under Nottingham Castle as well as around the Castle itself. Perhaps even more fun was taking people on brewery tours of the county’s biggest brewery, Castle Rock—they always ended up in a private bar with free beer at the end too, so I know for a fact I *can* organise a piss-up in a brewery!

I have to ask: as the official Robin Hood, which of the screen Robin Hoods do you think did best?

As I said earlier, I really liked the Michael Praed *Robin of Sherwood* TV series, but the best has to be Errol Flynn in the timeless classic *The Adventures of Robin Hood* (1938)—although Sean Connery (father of Jason, who appeared as Robin in the later seasons of *Robin of Sherwood*) did a fantastic job playing an older Robin in Richard Lester’s excellent *Robin and Marian* (1976). Sadly, I’m now 12 years older than Sean Connery was when he played that part...

And come to that, have you been involved in any screen adaptations?

Alas, not any drama productions, but a lot of TV recreations—the most fun ones being some great TV filming in Sherwood Forest which did involve a particularly fun fight sequence and my having to shoot a real arrow into a tree between two people standing either side of it...And there was a lovely sequence for the BBC where (before we were married in real life) Sal and I were “married” as Robin and Marian in Edwinstowe church by the genuine vicar of Edwinstowe. It was because a new theory had emerged that Robin, apparently a very pious man, worshipped Saints Mary and Ann the names had been conflated into one, Marian, in the stories—because even a hero can’t have two ladies on the go at the same time, it appears! The BBC used some fabulous camera trickery to have me stand in the centre of the screen and not one but two Sals stood next to me. That was fun!



Robin Hood and His Merrie Men

Steven H Silver

The following list of actors who have portrayed the eleven major characters in the Robin Hood saga over the course of 64 films, television series, and cartoons between 1908 and 2018. Robin appears the most often and Much, the Miller's son appears least frequently, in only 16 of the projects. Richard I makes cameo appearances in 20 of the projects. Maid Marian, Little John, and Friar Tuck have the most appearances after Robin. This list is not meant to be complete or definitive.

Some notes:

Interestingly, Robin Hood does not appear in every film based on Robin Hood. Some of the stories are set after Robin's death, for instance.

Patrick Troughton, Tom Baker, and Peter Cushing have all played the Doctor in *Doctor Who* and have appeared in Robin Hood adaptations, although only Troughton has portrayed Robin Hood.

Patrick Troughton and his grandson, Sam, have both appeared in Robin Hood projects, with Patrick playing Robin Hood and Sam playing Much, the Miller's Son, the standard character who appears in the fewest adaptations.

Both Sean Connery and Jason Connery (father and son) have portrayed Robin Hood.

Sean Connery has portrayed both Robin Hood and Richard I (in *Robin and Marion* and *Robin Hood: Prince of Thieves*, respectively)

Mel Blanc has voiced Robin Hood (in the form of Bugs Bunny or Daffy Duck) three times and Friar Tuck (in the form of Porky Pig) once.

James Hayter played Friar Tuck twice, in 1952 and 1967.

Roddy McDowell portrayed Prince John in 1968 in *The Legend of Robin Hood* and again in 1984 in *The Zany Adventures of Robin Hood*.

Peter Ustinov has portrayed Prince John and Richard I (both in the animated Disney production).

Alan Hale, Sr. portrayed Little John in the 1922 Douglas Fairbanks led *Robin Hood*, the 1938 Errol Flynn *The Adventures of Robin Hood*, and in the 1950 John Derek film *Rogues of Sherwood Forest*, over a span of 28 years although the projects were not related to each other.



Robin Hood

Dominic Anderson
Jonas Armstrong
Joy Badlani
Lex Barker
Brian Bedford
Patrick Bergen
Thor Bishopric
Mel Blanc
John Bradley
Jason Braly
Keith Chegwin
Robert Clarke
Robert Coleby
Jason Connery
Sean Connery
Kevin Costner
Russell Crowe
Peter Dinklage
John Derek
Robin Dunne
Taron Egerton
Cary Elwes
Douglas Fairbanks
Erroll Flynn
Robert Frazier
Ben Freeman
Richard Gautier
Giuliano Gemma
Aden Gillett
Clive Graham
Richard Greene
Jon Hall
Brian Heidik
Russell Hicks
Barrie Ingham
Ralph Jenkins
Harry Agar Lyons
Jack Mercer



Don Messick
Adam Morris
Hugh Paddick
A. Brian Plant
Matthew Porretta
Martin Potter
Michael Praed
Prashant
David Robb
William Russell
Devon Sawa
George Segal
John T. Smith
Don Taylor
Richard Todd
Calvert Tooley (Calbert Hunter)
Patrick Troughton
Harold Warrender
David Watson
Stuart Wilson

Maid Marian

Leigh Beery

Enid Bennett

Bhavana

Cate Blanchett

Sarah Branch

Sarah Chalke

Parveen Choudhary

Sophie Craig

Hannah Cresswell

Olivia de Havilland

Erin Dee

Silvia Dionisio

Patricia Driscoll

Caroline Duncan

Erica Durance

Monica Evans

Marie Everett

Morgan Fairchild

Anna Galvin

Barbara Griffin

Lucy Griffiths

Gay Hamilton

Mary Hatcher

Audrey Hepburn

Eve Hewson

Gerda Holmes

Amanda Jones

Diane Keen

Dee Lockwood

Kate Lonergan

Diana Lynn

Liz MacRae

Ivy Martinek

Mary Elizabeth Mastrantonio

Anik Matern

Patricia Morison

Helen Morse

Bernadette O'Farrell

Mae Questel

Joan Rice

Josée Richard

Misty Rowe

Barbara Tennant

Uma Thurman

Judi Trott

Mandy Tulloch

Rita Webb

Amy Yasbeck



Little John

Richard Ashton
Conrad Asquith
John Baldr
Nick Brimble
Wade Crosby
Archie Duncan
Nicholas Dunn
Kevin Durand
John East
Mike Edwards
Jamie Foxx
Mark Gibbon
Nigel Green
Leon Greene
Alan Hale, Sr.
Kevin Harkness
Phil Harris
Mitchell Horner
Charles J. Hunt
James Robertson Justice
Jamie Kenna
Scott Knoblach
Eric Alan Kramer
Phil Kramer
Tyler Labine
Leslie Linder
Harry Lorraine
Kenneth MacKintosh
Clive Mantle
David Morrissey
Frank Nathan
David J. Nicholls
Nello Pazzafini
Jon Lee Pellett
Side Raymond
David Sabin
Walter Sande

Terrence Scammell
Jason Schnuit
Wendell Swink
Ray Teal
Bill Thompson
Nichol Williamson
George Woodbridge
Bruce Yarnell



Friar Tuck

Mark Addy
Mario Adorf
Harry Ashton
Roger Ashton-Griffiths
Ronnie Barker
Reginald Beckwith

James Bell
Mel Blanc
Brian Blessed
Mel Brooks
Edgar Buchanan
Tony Caunter
Ken Davitian
Andy Devine
Ron Donachie
Bill Dow
Martyn Ellis
George Foley
Alexander George
M.E. Hannefy
David Harewood
Harry Harrold
Tony Haygarth
James Hayter
Billy House
Roy Kinnear
Willard Louis
Niall McGinnis
Mike McShane
Tim Minchin
John Neely
Eddie Nova
Jeff Nuttall
Eugene Pallette
Wensley Pithey
Alan Rebeck
Ernest Redding
Phil Rose
Andrew Sachs
Walter Slezak
Harry Standjofski
Hunt Tooley
Dick van Patten
Ben Welde

Will Scarlet

John Abbott
Miles Anderson
Sonja Ball
Billy Bevan
Robert Bice
Richard de Klerk
Cecil Dereham
Jamie Dorman
Edouard Durand
Paul Eddington
Denholm Elliott
Anthony Forwood
Bud Geary
Scott Grimes
Philip Guard
Harvey Jason
Keith Jayne
Patric Knowles
Jack Lambert
George Larkin
Brad Letson
Crispin Letts
Harry Lloyd
Douglas Mitchell
Robin Nedwell
James G. Nunn
Billy O'Sullivan
Matthew Porretta
Syd Saylor
Bernard Sharpe
Christian Slater
Paul Smith
Owen Teale
Austin Tooley
John Van Eyssen
Ray Winstone
Manuel Zarzo



Sheriff of Nottingham

Keith Allen
John Arnatt
Steve Barker
Jackson Beck
Pat Buttram
Nicholas Clay
Melville Cooper
Lloyd Corrigan
Bob Cryer
Colin Cunningham
Peter Cushing
Paul Darrow
John Webb Dillion
Peter Finch
Steve Forrest
Alec B. Francis
Nickolas Grace
Ron Haddrick
Neil Hallett
A.J. Henderson
David Kossoff
William Lowery
Matthew Macfadyen
Malcolm McDowell
Ben Mendelsohn
Henry Polic II
C.S. Poole
Roger Rees
Tony Robinson
Alan Rickman
Leonard Sachs
Robert Shaw
Tiny Stowe
Harris Tooley
David Trevena
Alan Wheatley
James Oliver Wheatley



Prince John

Andrew Bicknell
Ralph Brown
Forbes Collins
Phil Davis
Sam De Grasse
David Dixon
Daniele Dublino
Edward Fox
Hubert Gregg
James Groom
Ian Holm
Jonathan Hyde
Oscar Isaac
Joshua Jackson
Andrew Keir
Gordon Kennedy
Richard Lewis
George Macready
Roddy McDowell
Ronald Pickup
Donald Pleasance
Tim Preece
Claude Rains
David Richmond-Peck
Ron Rifkin
Guy Rolfe
Michael Rudder
Peter Ustinov
Steve Vincent (as Lawrence Adams)

Alan-a-Dale

Joe Armstrong
Harry Benham
John Breslin
Douglas Byrd
Richard Coleman
George Coulouris

Al Cranston
Leslie Denison
Alan Doyle
Eric Flynn
Noel Harrison
Elton Hayes
Peter Hutchinson
Saran Kolankaya
Bernie Kopell
Bruce Lester
Dennis Lotis
Roger Miller
Michael O'Reilly
Lloyd Tatman
John Troyano

Richard I

Patrick Barr
Wallace Beery
Lars Bloch
Sean Connery
Rory Edwards
Douglas Fairbanks, Jr.
Walter Gibbs
Julian Glover
Robin Gould
Robert Hardy
Richard Harris
Arthur Hollingsworth
Patrick Holt
Ian Hunter
Danny Huston
Michael J. Jackson
Mike Pollick
John Rhys-Davies
Patrick Stewart
Peter Ustinov
Steve Waddington
Norman Wooland



Guy of Gisbourne

Robert Addie
Paul Anderson
Richard Armitage
Tom Baker
Adam Benwell
James Brand
Victor Buono
Pierre Cressoy
Paul Daneman
Paul Dickey
Mark S. Faulkner
Ramsay Gilderdale
James Groom
William Marlowe
Lamar Johnstone
Maurice Jones
Basil Rathbone
Brent Stait
Michael Wincott

Much the Miller's Son

Michael Adams
Norman Bishop
Charlie Hiett
Arte Johnson
Dudley Jones
Reg Lye
Scott Meyers
Herbert Mundin
Guy Oliver
Christopher Sandford
Richard Speight
Sam Troughton
Danny Webb
Jack Wild
Peter Llewellyn Williams
Philip Wright

Sketch of Robin Hood. P. Dada. 1952.

