



Who was Robin Hood? Was he a real person or merely a legend? If a real person, when did he live? If he lived, was he an outlaw? Could his name have been Robin Longstride?

Two official records survive which link the name ("Hod") with the description ("outlaw"). Dr Mike Ibeji, writing for the BBC, [tells us more](#):

On 25th July 1225, the royal justices held an assize [a criminal court, periodically in session, held for centuries throughout England and Wales by Judges of the King's Bench] at York. When the penalties were recorded in the Michaelmas roll of the Exchequer [that is, during the first term of the judicial season], they included 32s. 6d. for the chattels of one Robert Hod, fugitive. The account was carried forward into the following year, when he had acquired the nickname of 'Hobbehod', and indicates that he had been a tenant of the archbishopric of York.

This is the only possible original bearing the name of Robin Hood who is known to have been an outlaw (there are other Hoods in Wakefield, but none of them seem to have been fugitives).

The second surviving reference, potentially relating to Robin Hood, is dated nearly four decades after the first reference:

The King's Remembrancer's Memoranda Roll of Easter [another of the four terms of court] 1262 notes the pardoning of the prior of Sandford [a religious leader at an Augustine priory in Sandford, Berkshire] for seizing without warrant the chattels of one William Robehod, fugitive. This case can be cross-referenced with the roll of the Justices in Eyre in Berkshire in 1261, in which a criminal gang is outlawed, including William son of Robert le Fevere, whose chattels were seized without warrant by the prior of Sandford.

This William son of Robert - and William Robehod - were certainly one and the same, and some clerk during transcription had changed the name. It follows that the man who changed the name knew of the legend and equated the name of Robin Hood with outlawry.

Those two original sources could help us to construct a possible time frame for Robin Hood. Dr. Ibeji continues his analysis:

On this flimsy evidence [the surviving court records], it is possible to construct a chronology [although Dr. Ibeji "wouldn't stake my reputation on it"]: Robin active in the 1190s, an outlaw by 1225, dead by 1247 and a legend by 1261. . . *On this basis, I think we would be fully justified in saying that Robin Hood was active during the reign of King John, but that his fame and popularity were such that within a generation his true identity had been obscured by legend.*

So ...whether Robin Hood was a real person remains one of history's mysteries. Meanwhile ... he is commemorated by this statute in the town made famous by his exploits - [Nottingham, England](#).

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Photo of the Robin Hood Memorial, in Nottingham, by Olaf1541. Image online, courtesy Wikimedia Commons.

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