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ALES

ROBIN
HOOD AND
THE MONK
Newly Restored



THE MEDIEVAL AND EARLY MODERN RESEARCH INITIATIVE
AND THE PUPILS OF LLANISHEN HIGH SCHOOL

Sponsored by the School of English, Communication and Philosophy,
Cardiff University

‘Robin Hood and the Monk’ translated by Rob Gossedge, based on the text prepared by Stephen Knight and Thomas H. Ohlgren, in *Robin Hood and Other Outlaw Tales* (Kalamazoo: TEAMS, 1997)

Images and additional words: the pupils of Llanishen High School



School of English,
Communication and Philosophy

Ysgol Saesneg, Cyfathrebu
ac Athroniaeth



Cardiff University's Medieval and Early Modern Research Initiative, founded in 2009, is the research hub for staff and students working in medieval and Renaissance studies in the School of English, Communication and Philosophy (ENCAP). It runs a seminar series each year, featuring the latest research by national and international scholars, as well as a regular reading group for staff and postgraduates; it also hosts conferences and sponsors panels at national and international conferences.

Robin Hood and the Monk is the second in a series we have called 'Retelling Tales'. The aim of this project is to bring together ENCAP's staff and postgraduates working in medieval and early modern studies with secondary school pupils, developing a dialogue between local schools and Cardiff University.

We are, once again, very grateful to Mrs Eva Hazeltine-Rees and the students of Llanishen High School for making this 'lytel book' possible, and to Charlotte Pruce for assisting with preparation and teaching on the day.

Foreword



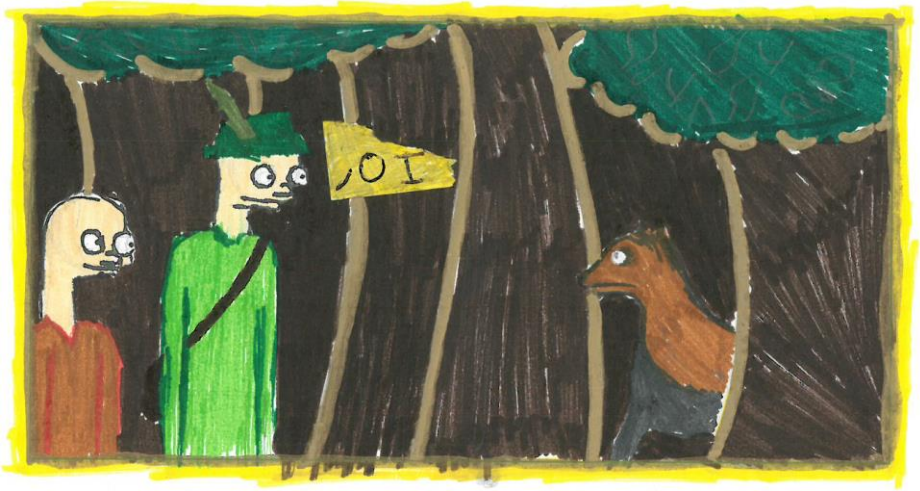
Erin Smith, Year 8

Of all the many outlaw heroes of the Middle Ages, Robin Hood remains the best known, his story adapted, rewritten and retold so frequently that he remains ‘our’ hero just as much as a medieval one. Much of the story’s success lies in its simplicity: it is a myth that relies on iconographic motifs – a longbow, Lincoln green, perhaps a feathered cap – rather than extended narrative episodes. So re-useable and re-deployable is the myth that not a week goes by without some newspaper referring to a modern-day Robin Hood.

Unlike many of the other medieval outlaw heroes – Hereward the Wake, Fouke Fitz Waryn, Eustache the Monk and others – no trace of a ‘real’ Robin can be discerned in the earliest ballads, play-games, proverbs and chronicles that feature the outlaw of Sherwood. In the absence of an historical subject, many different Robin

Hoods have been created. For some, he was a yeoman, outlawed for poaching the king’s deer; for others he was the Earl of Huntingdon, dispossessed of lands and title by the wicked Prince John; for a few writers, he was an unwilling soldier in the Crusades, who returned to find his people oppressed, and who took up outlawry as a means of resistance to unjust power. But these are all later – some, very recent – versions of the myth. Medieval Robin has no origin or backstory; he has no dynamising – and legitimising – cause for his banditry. His is just there in the forest, ready to rob rich abbots, frustrate the Sheriff of Nottingham, and evade the king’s justice.

Proverbs (e.g. ‘many men speak of Robin Hood who never shot his bow’), play-games (short community dramas featuring simple plots performed in villages and small towns to welcome in summer and, often, to raise money for the community) and ballads (short narratives in verse) were the chief vehicles of the medieval myth. Each is a notably popular form of entertainment. And people were powerfully attached to the myth: when, for instance, Robin Hood festivities were banned in Edinburgh in 1561, rioters marched through the city, broke into the prison and jailed the local authorities, including the sheriff.



Scarlett Doherty, Year 9

Contemporary culture is similarly invested in the myth, particularly in moments of social and political resistance. Many US political cartoons have characterised the present US president as an anti-Robin Hood, stealing from the poor to pay the rich; but, conversely, he has also been portrayed as a 'real' Robin Hood, taking money from 'big government' to reimburse tax payers. Closer to home, 'Robin Hood' has frequently appeared at protests opposed to fracking in Sherwood forest, and elsewhere in Britain.



Taron Egerton and Jamie Foxx star in the latest Hollywood adaptation of the story – the first of series of recently announced big-budget retellings of the story. And new novels, many of them self-published, appear every year, many of which redirect his interest in social economic justice towards a new focus on gender politics: in a particularly popular modern trend, Robin is often transformed into a young, frequently troubled young woman.¹ So the tradition continues...



Robin Hood and the Monk

Robin Hood and the Monk is the earliest surviving Robin Hood ballad, usually dated to sometime between 1450 and 1470. It survives only in one manuscript – Cambridge MS Ff.5.48 – a miscellany that contains a large quantity of devotional material,

as well as comic tales and cautionary exempla, a short metrical history of England and, a touch ironically, a Latin charm against thieves.ⁱⁱ

As a ballad, *Robin Hood and the Monk* is a short narrative poem, usually simple in plot and metrical structure, divided into four-line stanzas, known as quatrains, with a regular ABCB rhyming scheme:

Insomer, when the shawes be sheyne,
And leves be large and long,
Hit is full mery in feyre foreste
To here the foulys song

The first and third line are 8-syllables (beats) long, usually in 4 pairs of unstressed (-) and stressed (/) beats:

- / - / - / - /
In somer, when the shawes be sheyne

The second and fourth lines are 6 syllables long, usually in 3 pairs of unstressed and stressed beats:

- / - / - /
And leves be large and long

However, medieval ballads did have some flexibility: some stanzas had 6 instead of 4 lines; and sometimes lines had 7 or 5 beats instead of 8 and 6.

Much of what we associate with Robin Hood today is absent in the text: there is no Maid Marian, or Friar Tuck; no Saxons are oppressed by wicked Normans; and Robin does not ‘steal from the rich to give to the poor’ – all are later additions to the evolving myth. Yet the ballad includes a number of key themes that remain major preoccupations of the tradition today. The natural world is celebrated in the ballad’s vigorous opening, and the forest is powerfully associated with potent ideas of freedom. The town clearly represents a danger to the outlaws – though it can be successfully infiltrated through cunning. And the ballad strongly values the collectivity of the outlaw band, which is set against Robin’s sometimes individualist pride. Another major theme is trickery: while Robin and Little John are frequently violent in the text – at least three persons are killed in the ballad – they achieve most of their victories through disguise, word-play and deceit, rather than through force of arms.

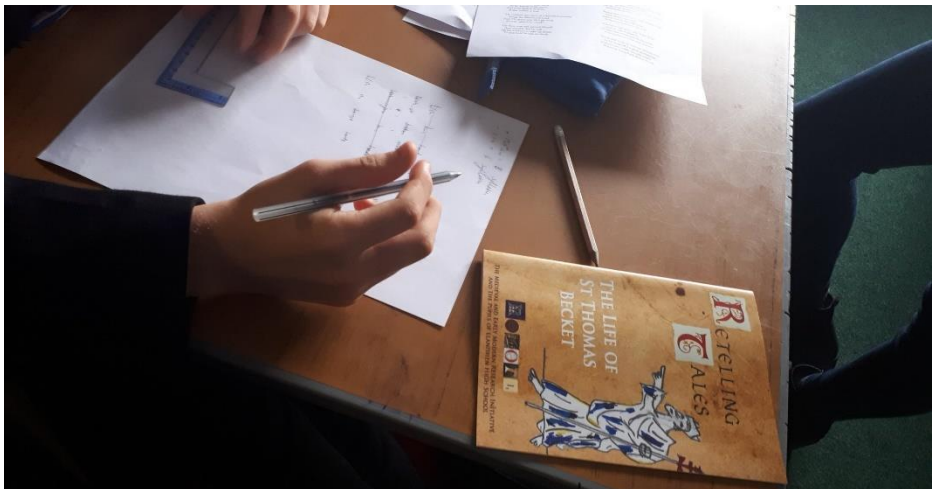
Enemies are easily recognisable: the ‘great-headed monk’ of the title appears to be more concerned with money than with the Church; and the Sheriff of Nottingham is a figure of mockery and antipathy throughout the tradition. On the other hand, the king – nameless here, though the line ‘oure cumly [or handsome] kyng’ (l. 331) suggests Edward III or IV – is never really opposed, even when he is tricked by Little John as he

engineers a complex plot to save Robin Hood. In fact, he even admires Little John's loyalty towards his leader.

Robin Hood and the Monk would have been around 400 lines in length, meaning that it would have been too long to have been sung: besides it has no refrain or suggestion of musical accompaniment. Nonetheless, its easy rhythm and relatively strict rhyming scheme, as well as its sometimes breathless narrative, would have made it easily performable. Unfortunately, one page in the manuscript – equivalent to around 40 lines – is missing.

Robin Hood and the Monk: Newly Restored

This little booklet is the result of our second collaboration with Llanishen High School. It retells – in a modernised version – the earliest surviving ballad, supplemented with the eye-catching illustrations of Llanishen's Year 8 and 9 students.ⁱⁱⁱ Drawing on the myth's extensive iconographic tradition, their images are instantly recognisable and fully in sympathy with the earliest texts.



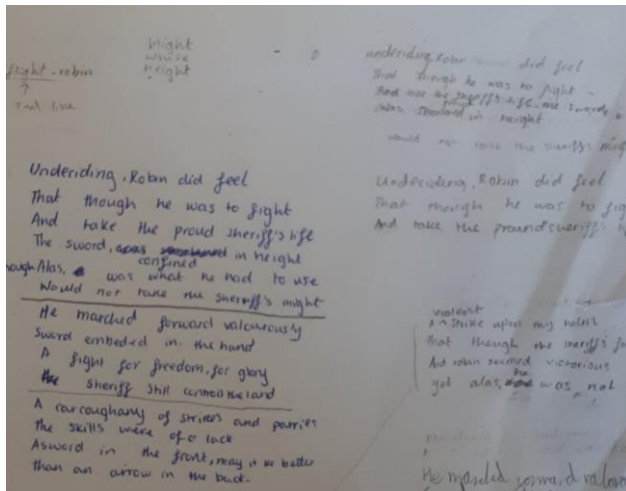
New ballad stanzas being created at Llanishen High

In addition, the lacuna in the text, caused by the missing 'leaf' in Cambridge MS Ff.5.48, has been filled by a series of new ballad stanzas, relating what *might* have happened in the tale had all the ballad survived. In composing these, the students have shown their careful understanding of the form and function of the medieval ballad, as well as the ballad's continuing ability to attract new readers and writers. Their bold illustrations and thoughtful compositions are all the more impressive given that the class only lasted 90 minutes.

Again, we were only able to use a small selection of the images and words produced that day in making this booklet – in particular, it was a pity that so few of the excellent ballad stanzas could be used when stitching together a ‘complete’ version of the text.

The full range of images, worksheets and slides are available at the Cardiff MEMORI blog: <http://cardiffmemori.wordpress.com>.

Rob Gossedge
Director of the Medieval and Early Modern Research Initiative



Drafts of the missing ballad stanzas by Lona Watts and Rebecca Clayton

Robin Hood and the Monk: Newly Restored



Sophie Morris, Year 9



Jaimee Adams, Year 8

Original Version

*In somer, when the shawes be sheyne,
And leves be large and long,
Hit is full mery in feyre foreste
To here the foulys song:*

*To se the dere draw to the dale,
And leve the hilles hee,
And shadow hem in the leves grene,
Under the grene wode tre.*

*Hit befel on Whitson
Erly in a May mornyng,
The son up feyre can shyne,
And the briddis mery can syng.*

*"This is a mery mornyng," seid Litull
John,
"Be Hym that dyed on tre;
A more mery man then I am one
Lyves not in Cristianté.*

*"Pluk up thi hert, my dere mayster,"
Litull John can sey,
"And thynk hit is a full fayre tyme
In a mornyng of May."*

Modernised Version

In summer, when the trees are green
and full,
And leaves be large and long,
It is very merry in the fair forest
To hear the birds' song:

To see the deer draw to the dale
And leave the high hills
And shade themselves in the green
leaves
Under the greenwood tree.

It befell on Whitsun
Early in a May morning:
The sun up fair did shine
And the merry birds did sing.

'This is a merry morning', said Little
John
'By Christ who died on a tree,
I am more merry than
Any man in Christianity.

'Pluck up your heart, my dear master'
Little John did say,
'And think it is a full fair time
In a morning of May.'

'Yes, but one thing grieves me', said Robin,
Robin,
'And does my heart much woe;
That on no solem day can I
To mass or matins go.'

'It's been a fortnight or more', said he,
'Since my saviour I did see;
Today will I go to Nottingham,' said Robin,
Robyn,
With the help of mild Mary.'

Then spoke Much the Miller's son -
May his life be always charmed!
'Take twelve of your strong yeomen,
Make sure each is well-armed.
With such a merry band
You'll surely come out unharmed!'

'Of all my merry men', said Robin,
Not one shall go!
Only Little John shall come
To bear my great long bow!

'Thou shall bear your own!', cried Little John,
Little John,
'And I shall carry mine,
And we will shoot for pennies
Under the green-wood line.'

Little John aimed his arrows well
And five shillings he soon won;
But proud Robin would not yield
For little he liked to be outdone.

A fair old strife between them fell
When Robin would not pay
For Little John had won five shillings
But Robin said only 'nay'.

With that Robin Hood smote Little John
John
Who was quickly floored.
Then John waxed wroth and hot
And pulled out his bright sword.

'Were thou not my master', said Little John,
John,
'Thou should pay for that for sure.
Get thee another man to serve:
For you get me no more.'

Then Robin went to Nottingham,
Himself mourning alone.
And Little John to Sherwood went,
The paths he knew, each one.



Sophie Williams, Year 9



Lilly Hughes, Year 8

When Robin Came to Nottingham,
 The Sheriff's fast domain,
 He prayed to God and mild Mary
 To bring him out safe again.

He went into the church of St Mary's
 And kneeled before the rood;
 All who were in the holy church
 Beheld well Robin Hood.



Stephen Rooney-Dyke, Year 8

Beside him stood a great-headed monk
 - I pray to God, woe unto he!
 He noticed the outlaw Robin
 As soon as he did see.
 Out of the door the monk did flee
 As fast as he could run:
 All the gates of fair Nottingham
 He had bolted - each one!

'Rise up, proud Sheriff, and quickly
 dress:
 For far from the greenwood
 And at prayer in the church
 Is the outlaw, Robin Hood.

'I have spied the false felon
 As he kneels at his mass;
 And your fault it shall be
 If this outlaw is lost.

'He robbed me once of a hundred
 pounds
 Along the Sherwood road.
 And I'll never rest 'til I get back
 Exactly what I'm owed.'

Up then rose this proud Sheriff
 And quickly did he call
 All his soldiers to take up arms,
 To put bold Robin in thrall.
 They burst apart the church's doors
 With staves for everyone.
 'Alas! Alas!' cried Robin Hood,
 'Now I miss Little John!'

Robin took out a two-handed sword
 That hung down to his knee,
 And charged at where the men stood
 thickest
 Hoping he could break free.

Three times he charged them in that
 place
 Truly I do say;
 And many a man was wounded there
 And twelve were slain that day.

His sword upon the sheriff's helm
 - Alas! - he broke in two.
 'Cursed be the smith that made thee'
 Said Robin all in woe.

'For now I am without my weapon
 Against my will
 And unless I flee these traitors now
 I know they will me kill.'

**[Here a page in the manuscript is lost.
 The pupils of Llanishen High have
 supplied the missing lines]**

With just bare hands and no longbow
 And pure hate on his face,
 He placed his hands upon foe
 In that most holy place.¹

He struck the sheriff upon the helm
 And his bloody face ran red;



Sophie Williams, Year 9

Yet, though Robin seemed victorious
 The sheriff was not dead.²

Robin now stood as the victor
 A grin shone on his face.
 The men screamed in a fit of rage
 And quickly did give chase.

Assaulted by the horde he was
 And did him soon surround;
 He tried to stand full of valour,
 Yet he fell to the ground.³

Robin was captured and taken.
 Off to the castle they go.
 Here, put in the castle's prison
 For how long he doesn't know.

Sitting still in his prison cell,
 Robin wished he was free.



Georgia Dargie, Year 9

¹ Morgan Thomas, Year 9

² Lona Watts and Rebecca Clayton, Year 9

³ Luke Flemming, Year 9

Lonely and lost after all this time,
He thought of what his life could be.⁴

With an angry stare, he walked away
Not a shilling to his name;
'My friend is lost, thought John,
And felt a bit of shame.

'Robin Hood is in danger
His pride has got him good.
Alas! Alas!' cried Little John.
'Now I miss Robin Hood!'⁵

Little John knows of the bad news,
As will the merry men;
And now all of them have the blues
'Whatever shall we do?''⁶

[Here the manuscript resumes]

Some swooned as if they were dead
And lay as still as stone;
All were out of their minds
Save only Little John.

'Stop your wailing', said Little John
'By Christ who died on the tree,
Ye that should be doughty men
Are a shameful thing to see.

'Our master has been hard beset
before
And has always broken free.
Lift up your hearts, and leave this
lament
And listen to what I say.

'Robin has served the Virgin many a
day
And always very well.
And so I trust she will assist
In freeing him from his cell.

'Therefore be glad', said Little John
'And let this wailing be.
I'll find this monk and be his guide
Who knows to what end unseen?'



Fletcher C

⁴ Eve, Year 9

⁵ Guilherme Moreira

⁶ Alice Thomas, Erin Smith and Lilly
Hughes

'Look that ye keep well our trysting-
tree
At the heart of the great greenwood
And prepare a feast for our return
When we bring back Robin Hood.'

Forth then went these two outlaws,
Little John and Much,
And stayed in a house by the highway
Owned by Much's uncle.

Long did John keep his watch
On the outside passage
Before he saw the fat-headed Monk
And with him a little page.

'By my faith', cried Little John aloud,
'The tidings are good,
For it must be the monk
I can tell by the size of his hood!'

John and Much, like gracious young
men,
Soon joined the monk and page.
They asked them, like long-lost friends,
What brought them this way.

'From where d'ye come?' asked Little
John
'Tell us tidings, I you pray,
Of that false outlaw, bold Robin,
Who was taken yesterday.'

'He robbed me and my fellows
both
Of twenty marks and seven;
If that traitor be taken
It would be heaven.'

'So did he me!' cried the monk,
'Of a hundred pound and more;
I was the first to get hands on him
You may thank me therefore.'

'I pray God thank you', said Little John
'And we will when we may;
We will go with you, with your leave,
And help you on your way.'

'For Robin Hood has many a wild
fellow,
I tell you in certain.
If they knew you rode this way,
In faith, you would be slain.'



Finley Coates, Year 8



Luke Rossers, Year 8

John took the monk's horse by the head,

As they chatted on the way,
And so did Much the little page
So that he could not run away.

By the gullet of the hood
John pulled the monk down;
And fearing him not, he
Let him fall on his crown.

Little John was so aggrieved,
He then drew out his sword;
The monk saw he would be killed
And cried 'Have mercy, O Lord!'

'He was my master', said Little John
'Whom thou hast put in fetters.
You shall never come to the King
With your legal letters.'

John smote off the monk's head
No longer would he dwell;
So did Much the little page,
For fear that he would tell.

Hurriedly, they buried them both,
Near a bubbling spring;
And Little John and Much then took

The letters straight to the king.

Little John came before the king
And bent down upon his knee:
'God save you, my liege lord,
Jesus watch over thee!'

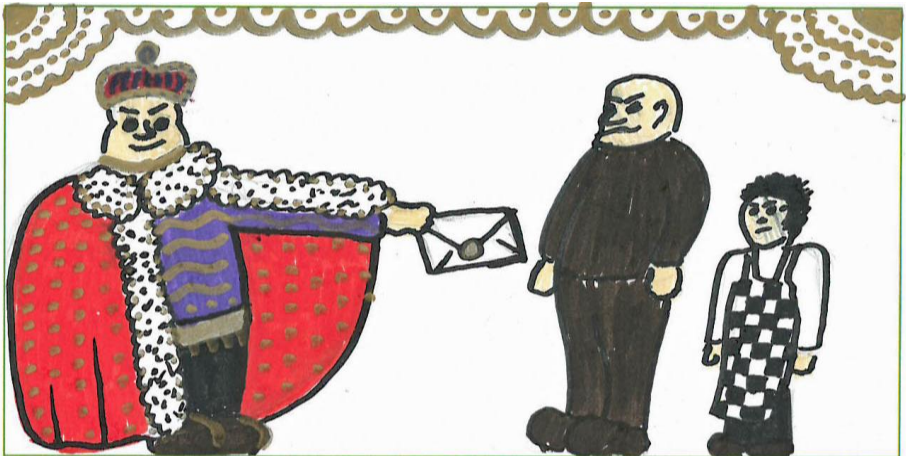
'God save you, my liege king!'
To speak John was truly bold;
He gave him the letters in his hand,
The king did them unfold.

The king read the letters at once
And said, 'I say to thee
There was never a man in merry
England,
I did so long to see.

'But where is the monk these should've
brought?'

The comely king did say;
'By my truth', said Little John
'He died along the way.'

He gave John a letter
To place in the sheriff's palm
Telling him to send the outlaw Robin
To him, unharmed



Georgia Dargie, Year 9

The king gave Much and Little John,
Twenty pounds right away
And made them yeomen of the crown
And bade them go on their way.

John took his leave from the king
And quickly fled London
And made his way to Nottingham
To free his master from the
dungeon.

When John came to that old city
He found all the gates barred;
He demanded them opened
And called out for the guard.

'What is the cause,' said Little John,
'Of the gates being locked?'
'So that the outlaw' replied the porter
'Will find his escape blocked'.

'For John, Much and Will Scathlock
Stand ready to break in
And slay the guards upon the walls

To save their master's bacon.'

Little John asked for the sheriff
And showed him the king's seal.
At the sight of King Edward's mark
The sheriff solemnly kneeled.

'But where is the monk who bore the
letter?'

The sheriff asked slyly.
'The King', said John, 'made him
abbot
Of Westminster Abbey!'

John was soon invited inside
And together they dined
On venison pasties
And the finest old wines.

After the sheriff fell asleep,
Drunk on wine and ale,
Little John and Much made their way
Down to the castle's jail.



Alyssa Gully, Year 9



Sophie Lee, Year 8

Little John called up the jailer
And many of the sheriff's men
Crying, 'Robin Hood has broken free
And is making his way to the trysting
tree!'

The jailer ran out from his cell
As soon as John did call,
But John was ready with sword
And pinned him to a wall.

'Now I will be jailer,' said Little John



Lydia Francis, Year 8

'And shall take up the key.'
He found his way to Robin's cell
And quickly set him free.

He gave good Robin a second sword
And quietly they did creep;
When they reached the lowest wall
They took a running leap.

By then the cock began to crow,
The day began to spring;
The sheriff found the jailer dead



Libby Pritchard, Year 8

The town bell did he ring.

He made a cry throughout the town:
'Whether ye be yeomen or knave
Whoever brings me Robin Hood
Great treasure shall ye have.'

'For I dare never,' the sheriff thought,
'To come before the king;
For if I do, I know for certain,
He'll soon have me hung.'

The sheriff then searched through all
the town

Houses, streets and alleys.
But Robin was in merry Sherwood
As light as leaf on tree.

I have brought you back to the
greenwood.
Farewell, and have a good day.'

'Nay, by my truth,' said Robin Hood
'So shall it never be;
I make thee the master,' said Robin
'Of all my men and me.'

'Nay, by my truth,' said Little John,
'So shall it never be;
Let me be but a fellow,' said John
'Nothing else do I want to be.'

When his men saw him safe and sound
They toasted a great wassail.
And feasted long on venison
And copious draughts of ale



Katie Gill, Year 8

And then arose good Little John
To Robin Hood did say:
'I've done thee a good turn for an evil
one:
Repay me when thou may.

'I have done thee a good turn', said
Little John,
'Truthfully, I do say;

Then word came to our king
Of bold Robin's escape.
And of how the sheriff was left
In the deepest disgrace.

Then bespoke our comely king,
In an anger all could see:
'Little John has beguiled the sheriff
And, in faith, so has he me.'

'I made them yeomen of the Crown,
And paid them from my purse;
I gave them the freedom of the land
And now they'll mock me in verse.'

But the king's anger soon abated:
'True to his master, is John,
And he loves Robin Hood better
Than he does us, each one.'

'Robin Hood is ever bound to him,
In street, forest or stall.
Speak no more of this matter', said our king
John has beguiled us all.'

*Thus endys the talkyng of the munke
And Robyn Hode i-wysse;
God, that is euer a crowned kyng,
Bryng vs all to his blisse!*



Alice Thomas, Year 8



Tasmia Mamun, Year 8



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Website: <https://cardiffmemori.wordpress.com/>

Twitter: @CardiffMEMORI

NOTES

¹ For a comprehensive introduction to Robin Hood – both medieval and modern – see Stephen Knight, *Robin Hood: A Mything Biography* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell, 2003).

² For an overview of contemporary trends in the Robin Hood tradition, see Rob Gossedge, “‘We Are Robin Hood’: The Outlaw Tradition in Contemporary Popular Culture”, in *Medieval Afterlives in Contemporary Culture*, ed. Gail Ashton (London: Bloomsbury, 2015), 251-62.

³ For details on the manuscript see Thomas H. Ohlgren, *Robin Hood: the Early Poems, 1465-1560* (Newark: University of Delaware Press, 2007), pp. 28ff.

⁴ A scholarly edition of the fifteenth-century ballad, edited by Stephen Knight and Thomas H. Ohlgren, can be found here: <https://d.lib.rochester.edu/teams/text/robin-hood-and-the-monk>



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Communication and Philosophy

Ysgol Saesneg, Cyfathrebu
ac Athroniaeth