

Map 14 SHERWOOD FOREST

We left the coast and turned inland.

Going from somewhere created entirely by mankind to a place that has been wooded since antiquity made for a fascinating contrast. Sherwood Forest is everything you'd hope it would be, a huge expanse of birches and oaks, mixed in with heaths and grasslands. According to the visitor centre, there are over 1,000 oaks that are more than 500 years old, and the forest has a greater concentration of ancient trees than anywhere else in Europe.

We walked for several hours under the trees.

'There's something about oak trees, my boy. They speak to us. The country was covered in oak forests 5,000 years ago. It was oak that built the wells that first allowed us to farm. One of the earliest human carvings ever found is in oak. The druids were worshipping in oak groves when the Romans arrived. It was oak beams that first held up parliament. Oak hulls carried Cook on the HMS *Endeavour* and Nelson on the HMS *Victory*. It was oak struts that held the earth up as men hacked coal to power the Industrial Revolution.' She picked up an acorn. 'The greatest oaks have been little acorns.'

Of course, you can't even really think about Sherwood Forest without considering Robin Hood.



'I'm not talking about the sanitised cartoon version, green hat and tights, all that nonsense. Hood was already told as a legend by 1380 or so,' Aunt Bea said. 'There's a clear reference to people telling stories about him in a medieval poem called *Piers Plowman*. Just 20 years later, we have another poem, *Friar Daw's Reply*, that claims "Many men speak of Robin Hood but never shot his bow" as a common proverb. Unfortunately, neither source quotes any of the actual stories told about him at the time. Our earliest actual story is from around 1450, by which time who knows.' She gestured at the enormous, ancient Major Oak in front of us.

Even the posts supporting many of the larger branches seem to add to the effect, as if it were an old man bent low with a walking stick. You can easily see why people decided it had to be Robin Hood's original base. It's thought to be as much as a thousand years old too, so the timing would work. Just think, when Richard I was setting sail to begin the Third Crusade, this tree would have been already over a hundred years old.

'So much is forgotten,' she said. 'Time makes liars of us all.'

QUESTIONS

Easy

1. Who was Robin Hood's primary lieutenant?
2. What is the elevation of the highest ground survey point on the map?

Medium

3. Can you find two locations on the map whose names reference astronomical bodies?
4. What is the official name for the period Sherwood Forest dates from?

Tricky

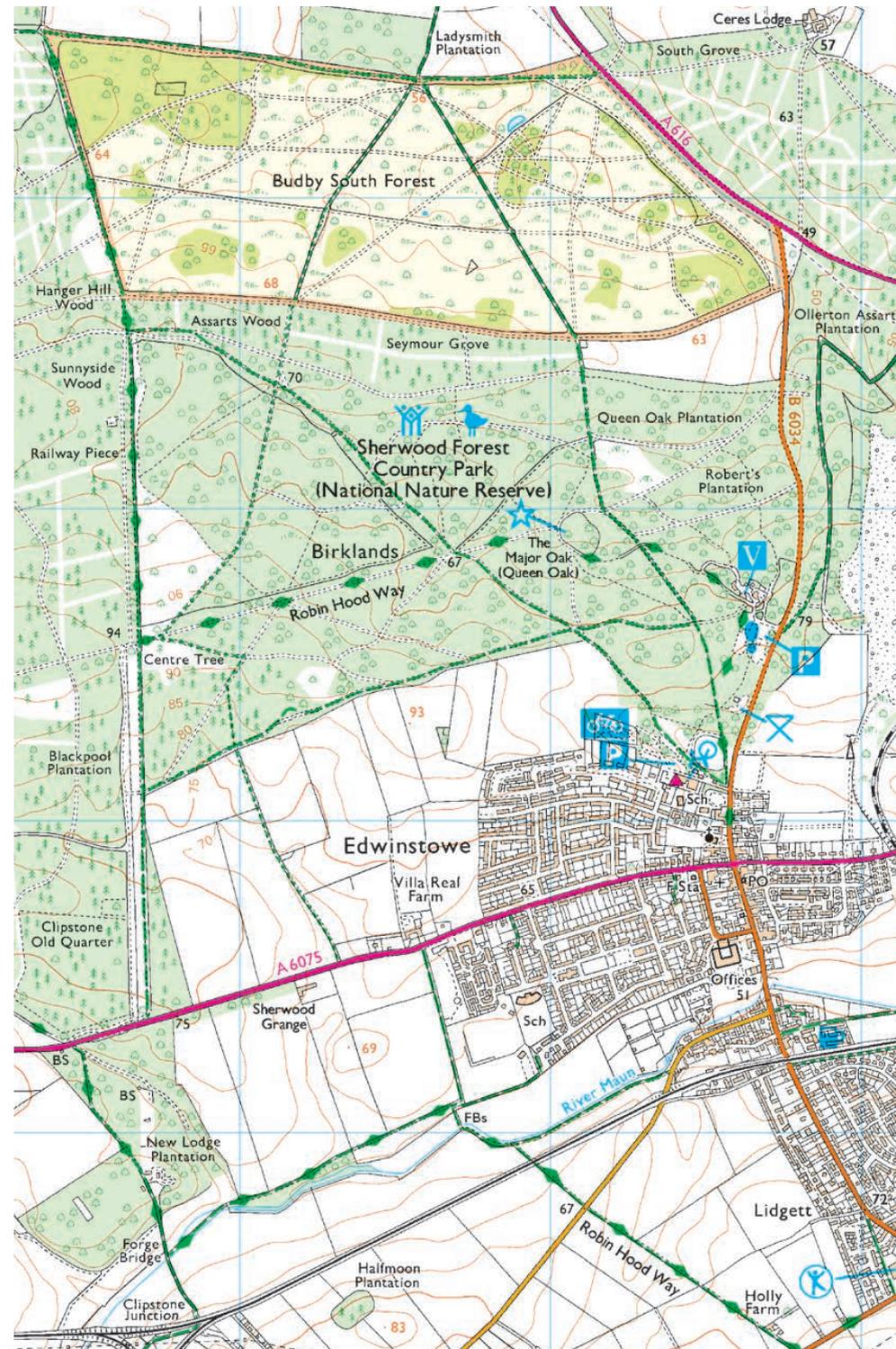
5. Head east from a Plantation that sounds like it should have a Tower, to the tip of a triangle. Heading north from there will take you to a track. Turn right onto the track and then, sticking to tracks, take a left, another left, a right, another right, a left, and then the third right. And keep going to a crossroads. What location is a short distance to your north-west?
6. The tales of Robin Hood are commonly held to be set in which century?

Challenging

7. Can you find locations that sound like the following:
 - a. the heart of the forest
 - b. a stand of trees where there is more to be witnessed
 - c. a location to store clothes
 - d. a place where multiple trimmed rocks meet
8. Can you discover which location on the map shares its name with a district of Buenos Aires in Argentina?

Key Puzzle

* What is the alternative name of the spot said to be Robin Hood's bower? It may help you to imagine a tree that could move any number of unoccupied squares, in a straight line vertically, horizontally or diagonally.



1. Little John
2. 94m (west of Centre Tree)
3. Ceres Lodge and *Halfmoon* Plantation
4. Prehistoric (the forest has been scientifically dated at around 12,000 years old)
5. Hanger Hill Wood (Blackpool Plantation to triangular patch of woodland near 93m peak, to track across bottom of larger forest area and follow directions along Robin Hood Way to Centre Tree, north past Sunnyside Wood, to Hanger Hill Wood)
6. The twelfth century (during the absentee rule of King Richard I)
7.
 - a. Centre Tree
 - b. Seymour Grove
 - c. Hanger Hill Wood
 - d. Clipstone Junction
8. Villa Real is a neighbourhood (*a barrio*) on the west edge of Buenos Aires

**Key Answer**

* Queen Oak