# Two men charged after deliberate felling of iconic Sycamore Gap tree sparks £620,000 damage dispute



# Outrage Following the Felling of Sycamore Gap Tree

The felling of the iconic Sycamore Gap tree, a cherished landmark in Northumberland, has not only sparked a wave of public outrage but has also led to serious legal consequences for two men charged with the act. During a recent courtroom session at Newcastle Crown Court, prosecutors described the incident as a “moronic mission” that ignited a firestorm of anger both locally and globally. The defendants, Daniel Graham, 39, from Carlisle, and Adam Carruthers, 32, from Wigton, deny charges of criminal damage related to the 150-year-old tree and the adjacent UNESCO World Heritage Site of Hadrian's Wall.

In a dramatic opening to the proceedings, prosecutors presented video evidence allegedly showing the men in the act, underscoring the severity of the crime. The tree, which stood for over a century and was famously featured in the film "Robin Hood: Prince of Thieves," was described in court as "something so beautiful" that deserved protection, not destructive behaviour. Richard Wright KC, the prosecuting barrister, compared their actions to the “arboreal equivalent of mindless thuggery”, emphasising the public's sense of loss over the tree's demise.

Prosecutors also noted that a significant amount of damage had been inflicted, valued at over £620,000. This figure reflects not only the destruction of the tree but also the impact on Hadrian’s Wall, a culturally and historically significant site. The broader implications are underscored by Historic England, which confirmed damages to the wall and indicated plans for further archaeological assessments. The tree was a prominent feature for walkers and photographers alike, making its loss feel even more poignant.

Following the incident, the emotional fallout reverberated throughout the community. Local authorities, like Glen Sanderson, leader of Northumberland County Council, expressed profound sorrow and anger at the deliberate destruction of such an iconic landmark. The tree had long been a place for joyful gatherings—marriage proposals, family photo opportunities, and even the scattering of ashes—making its loss seem particularly tragic to residents and nature lovers.

In an unexpected twist, the court heard that the men had, in conversations post-felling, seemingly reveled in their actions and referred to the tree as "just a tree." While the defence lawyers contended that the motivations for destroying the Sycamore Gap tree were unclear, the prosecution has focused on the idea that the pair were “in the business” of cutting down trees, suggesting a premeditated act rather than a spontaneous lapse of judgement.

As the trial unfolds, the discussion has not solely centred on legal ramifications. Conversations about the future of the Sycamore Gap site are burgeoning. Local residents are advocating for planting new trees in memory of the iconic landmark, although experts cautioned that any replanting efforts would face complexities due to regulations surrounding the UNESCO site. Some have suggested that seeds from the original tree could eventually grow into new saplings, preserving its legacy in the area.

Despite the ongoing legal proceedings, the decision to display the remaining sections of the felled tree in a local tourist attraction highlights a desire to commemorate the Sycamore Gap tree rather than allow it to fade into mere memory. As its story continues to resonate with people across the globe, the hope remains that some remnants of its spirit will endure, encouraging further dialogue about environmental preservation and community values in the process.

The trial continues, and with so many questions still unanswered, the case of the Sycamore Gap tree exemplifies the profound connection that communities can have with their natural landmarks and raises important discussions about respect for nature in an increasingly urbanized world.

## Reference Map:

* Paragraph 1 – [[1]](https://www.bbc.com/news/articles/c1757x29lvro), [[3]](https://apnews.com/article/cfd4e6d5bec32f5b89fc40b459b89cb1)
* Paragraph 2 – [[1]](https://www.bbc.com/news/articles/c1757x29lvro), [[3]](https://apnews.com/article/cfd4e6d5bec32f5b89fc40b459b89cb1), [[2]](https://www.theguardian.com/culture/2023/oct/05/felling-of-sycamore-gap-tree-damaged-hadrians-wall-inspection-reveals)
* Paragraph 3 – [[1]](https://www.bbc.com/news/articles/c1757x29lvro), [[2]](https://www.theguardian.com/culture/2023/oct/05/felling-of-sycamore-gap-tree-damaged-hadrians-wall-inspection-reveals), [[6]](https://www.northumberland.gov.uk/News/2023/Sep/Council-s-shock-and-anger-at-Sycamore-Gap-tree-fel.aspx)
* Paragraph 4 – [[2]](https://www.theguardian.com/culture/2023/oct/05/felling-of-sycamore-gap-tree-damaged-hadrians-wall-inspection-reveals), [[6]](https://www.northumberland.gov.uk/News/2023/Sep/Council-s-shock-and-anger-at-Sycamore-Gap-tree-fel.aspx), [[5]](https://www.theguardian.com/uk-news/2024/mar/02/felled-sycamore-gap-tree-to-go-on-public-display-in-northumberland)
* Paragraph 5 – [[1]](https://www.bbc.com/news/articles/c1757x29lvro), [[4]](https://www.reuters.com/world/uk/uks-sycamore-gap-tree-mystery-two-men-charged-with-criminal-damage-2024-04-30/), [[7]](https://www.theguardian.com/environment/2023/oct/02/what-may-happen-next-at-sycamore-gap-tree-felling-site-age-of-extinction)

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## Bibliography

1. <https://www.bbc.com/news/articles/c1757x29lvro> - Please view link - unable to able to access data
2. <https://www.theguardian.com/culture/2023/oct/05/felling-of-sycamore-gap-tree-damaged-hadrians-wall-inspection-reveals> - The 300-year-old Sycamore Gap tree in Northumberland was felled, causing damage to Hadrian's Wall. Historic England confirmed the damage and plans for further archaeological appraisal. Northumbria Police arrested a 16-year-old boy and a man in his 60s on suspicion of criminal damage, both released on bail pending further inquiries. The tree, featured in the 1991 film 'Robin Hood: Prince of Thieves,' was a beloved landmark and the most photographed spot in Northumberland National Park.
3. <https://apnews.com/article/cfd4e6d5bec32f5b89fc40b459b89cb1> - Daniel Graham and Adam Carruthers appeared in Newcastle Magistrates' Court facing charges of criminal damage after allegedly felling the 150-year-old Sycamore Gap tree, a beloved landmark on Hadrian's Wall in northern England. The prosecution valued the damage caused to the tree and the adjacent UNESCO World Heritage Site wall at over £620,000 ($785,000). Graham pleaded not guilty, while Carruthers did not enter a plea. Both arrived at court in disguise but had to reveal their faces inside. The case will proceed to Newcastle Crown Court on June 12. Both defendants were released on bail.
4. <https://www.reuters.com/world/uk/uks-sycamore-gap-tree-mystery-two-men-charged-with-criminal-damage-2024-04-30/> - Two men, Daniel Graham and Adam Carruthers, have been charged with criminal damage after the iconic Sycamore Gap tree, one of Britain's most photographed trees, was cut down last September. Located alongside Hadrian's Wall in Northumberland National Park, the tree was a popular site for photographs, hiking, marriage proposals, and the scattering of ashes. The tree also appeared in the 1991 film 'Robin Hood.' Following their arrest in October, Graham and Carruthers have been released on bail and are due to appear at Newcastle Magistrates' Court on May 15. The tree's stump remains with hopes it will eventually regrow.
5. <https://www.theguardian.com/uk-news/2024/mar/02/felled-sycamore-gap-tree-to-go-on-public-display-in-northumberland> - The largest section of the Sycamore Gap tree unlawfully cut down last September is to go on public display, Northumberland National Park has announced. The tree, which stood in a dip next to Hadrian’s Wall, will be exhibited at the Sill, a tourist attraction in Hexham, not far from where it once stood. The national park said it had received 2,000 “heartfelt” messages from people from all around the world expressing sorrow after the tree’s toppling, labelled by Northumbrian police as a “deliberate act of vandalism.”
6. <https://www.northumberland.gov.uk/News/2023/Sep/Council-s-shock-and-anger-at-Sycamore-Gap-tree-fel.aspx> - The leader of Northumberland County Council has expressed his shock and anger at the felling of the tree at Sycamore Gap on Hadrian’s Wall. Council Leader Glen Sanderson said: “Today is a very sad day for our county. I am finding it difficult to express the shock, anger and hurt I feel at the destruction of this iconic landmark. The Sycamore Gap tree has stood for centuries and is known throughout the world. For it to be felled in what is clearly a deliberate act is absolutely terrible and I’m sure I speak for everyone in the county when I say how upset I was when I heard the news this morning.”
7. <https://www.theguardian.com/environment/2023/oct/02/what-may-happen-next-at-sycamore-gap-tree-felling-site-age-of-extinction> - Following the felling of the Sycamore Gap tree, discussions have emerged about potential future actions at the site. Local residents express a desire for a new tree to be planted, with some suggesting the original tree be made into a memorial. However, replanting is complex due to the proximity to Hadrian's Wall, a UNESCO World Heritage Site. Experts propose planting seeds from the original tree to grow a sapling, which could be planted next to its predecessor in the future.