# Jury begins deliberations in Sycamore Gap tree vandalism trial



## The Fall of Sycamore Gap: A Community's Outrage and a Legal Battle

Jurors have begun deliberations in a high-stakes trial involving two men charged with the felling of the iconic Sycamore Gap tree, a beloved natural landmark situated along Hadrian's Wall in northern England. Daniel Graham, 39, and Adam Carruthers, 32, have pleaded not guilty to two counts of criminal damage, with the trial unfolding at Newcastle Crown Court since late April. As the case captured national attention, the legacy of the tree and the implications of its destruction resonate deeply with the local community and beyond.

The Sycamore Gap tree, although not the largest or oldest, held tremendous cultural significance. Featured prominently in Kevin Costner’s 1991 film “Robin Hood: Prince of Thieves,” it was cherished by locals and visitors alike for its striking backdrop amid the rolling hills of Northumberland National Park. Its value has been estimated at over £620,000, with additional damage to its surroundings, including Hadrian’s Wall—a UNESCO World Heritage Site—assessed at approximately £1,100.

Prosecutors have painted a vivid picture of the events leading to the tree's demise on September 28, 2023, describing the act as “mindless thuggery” carried out under the guise of a prank during a storm. “They woke up the morning after and soon realised… it must have dawned on them that they couldn’t see anyone else smiling,” remarked prosecutor Richard Wright during his closing argument. This sentiment underscored the disconnect between the defendants' intentions and the ensuing outrage that ensued from their actions.

The prosecution has presented compelling evidence, including grainy video footage taken from Graham's mobile phone, showing the tree being cut down. This video was sent to Carruthers shortly after the incident, with metadata linking it to the crime scene. Notably, messages exchanged between the two men the day after boasted of their actions, revealing a level of excitement about their newfound notoriety. In another twist, a wood wedge allegedly prized as a “trophy” was linked to Graham, further complicating the narrative of innocence both defendants wish to portray.

Yet, the two men maintain their innocence, with each attempting to deflect blame onto the other. Graham has accused Carruthers of being the mastermind behind the operation, claiming that he was framed through deceitful actions. Conversely, Carruthers downplayed the significance of the tree, suggesting the prosecution’s narrative was exaggerated. Their contrasting testimonies have led to a tense atmosphere in the courtroom, as the jury grapples with the conflicting narratives presented.

This incident is more than just a legal dispute; it is a reflection of societal values concerning nature and heritage. Local sentiment towards the Sycamore Gap tree is profound, as it has become emblematic of Northumberland's rich landscape and cultural identity. “Sycamore Gap is a Northumberland symbol, more than a piece of landscape, more than just a tree; it’s as instantly recognisable as the Palace of Westminster,” stated local resident Michael Palmer, encapsulating the collective grief over its loss.

Following the incident, the National Trust has expressed its intention to preserve the tree's legacy. Plans are in place to display the remnants at The Sill, an education and visitor centre with ties to the region's heritage. This effort aims not only to honour what was lost but to foster a dialogue around the importance of conservation and respect for natural landmarks.

As the jury deliberates, the outcome of this trial is poised to send ripples through the community. The case is not merely about criminal responsibility; it raises broader questions about the ethics of human interaction with nature and the ways in which individuals reconcile personal actions with their impact on cultural heritage. The eyes of the nation are watching, envisioning a verdict that might either heal or further divide a community that once rallied around a single tree.

## Reference Map:

* Paragraph 1 – [[1]](https://www.independent.co.uk/news/sycamore-gap-england-london-newcastle-crown-court-unesco-world-heritage-site-b2747254.html), [[2]](https://apnews.com/article/b8d55c84fdd96d25f9349f038620fbc8)
* Paragraph 2 – [[1]](https://www.independent.co.uk/news/sycamore-gap-england-london-newcastle-crown-court-unesco-world-heritage-site-b2747254.html), [[3]](https://apnews.com/article/a7a57a2cd4dba12661405b1786a63192)
* Paragraph 3 – [[2]](https://apnews.com/article/b8d55c84fdd96d25f9349f038620fbc8), [[4]](https://apnews.com/article/afd8f5d99b67f4daf434c4ff085654fa)
* Paragraph 4 – [[3]](https://apnews.com/article/a7a57a2cd4dba12661405b1786a63192), [[6]](https://www.reuters.com/world/uk/men-felled-much-loved-british-tree-moronic-mission-court-told-2025-04-29/)
* Paragraph 5 – [[6]](https://www.reuters.com/world/uk/men-felled-much-loved-british-tree-moronic-mission-court-told-2025-04-29/), [[5]](https://www.itv.com/news/tyne-tees/2025-02-10/new-trial-date-set-for-pair-accused-of-felling-sycamore-gap-tree)
* Paragraph 6 – [[4]](https://apnews.com/article/afd8f5d99b67f4daf434c4ff085654fa), [[7]](https://www.theguardian.com/uk-news/article/2024/may/15/man-pleads-not-guilty-northumberland-sycamore-gap-tree)

Source: [Noah Wire Services](https://www.noahwire.com)

## Bibliography

1. <https://www.independent.co.uk/news/sycamore-gap-england-london-newcastle-crown-court-unesco-world-heritage-site-b2747254.html> - Please view link - unable to able to access data
2. <https://apnews.com/article/b8d55c84fdd96d25f9349f038620fbc8> - Jurors have begun deliberating in the UK trial of Daniel Graham, 39, and Adam Carruthers, 32, accused of felling the iconic Sycamore Gap tree near Hadrian's Wall in northern England on September 28, 2023. The men deny two counts each of criminal damage. A jury at Newcastle Crown Court began deliberations but has yet to reach a verdict, with proceedings set to continue. The felled tree, though neither the largest nor oldest, was a beloved landmark featured in the 1991 film 'Robin Hood: Prince of Thieves' and valued for its picturesque setting. Prosecutors allege the act was committed as a prank during a storm, causing over £620,000 in tree value damage and £1,100 to the historic wall. Evidence includes a video taken from Graham’s phone at the scene and shared with Carruthers, along with digital data linking Graham’s car to the site. The prosecution argues the defendants carried out a 'moronic mission' and later reveled in their notoriety. The defense claims innocence and mutual blame, with each trying to deflect responsibility onto the other. The trial began on April 28, and jurors are under direction to reach a unanimous verdict.
3. <https://apnews.com/article/a7a57a2cd4dba12661405b1786a63192> - In a high-profile trial in London, prosecutors accused Daniel Graham, 39, and Adam Carruthers, 32, of deliberately cutting down the iconic Sycamore Gap tree near Hadrian's Wall in northern England. Referred to by the prosecution as the 'arboreal equivalent of mindless thuggery,' the act allegedly committed for amusement sparked widespread national outrage. The tree, a cultural landmark valued at over £620,000, was destroyed on September 28, 2023. Prosecutor Richard Wright pointed to damning digital evidence, including a video of the tree's felling taken from Graham's phone and sent to Carruthers, with metadata placing it at the scene. Further messages between the accused seemingly showed them boasting about the act. Though both men denied involvement and blamed each other, with Graham suggesting he was framed and Carruthers downplaying the tree's significance, forensic analysis linked a wood wedge in Graham’s possession to the felled tree. The iconic tree's destruction also caused damage to the adjacent UNESCO World Heritage Site. Jurors are set to deliberate on the charges of criminal damage, as both defendants plead not guilty.
4. <https://apnews.com/article/afd8f5d99b67f4daf434c4ff085654fa> - The Sycamore Gap tree, a renowned and cherished natural landmark in Northumberland National Park near Hadrian's Wall, was felled in under three minutes on September 28, 2023, despite taking over a century to grow. The act, described by prosecutors as 'deliberate and mindless criminal damage,' is now the subject of a trial at Newcastle Crown Court. Defendants Daniel Graham, 39, and Adam Carruthers, 32, pleaded not guilty to criminal damage charges, though evidence including metadata from photos and videos allegedly links them to the crime. The tree, valued at over £620,000 (~$830,000), held cultural significance, having appeared in the 1991 film 'Robin Hood: Prince of Thieves.' The incident stirred national outrage. Prosecutors detailed how the accused, both experienced with chainsaws, left digital and physical evidence and exchanged celebratory messages post-destruction. Despite both men denying involvement and blaming each other, the prosecution argues their joint participation in the act. A key detail includes a missing wedge of wood believed to be kept as a 'trophy.' While the chainsaw used remains undiscovered, prosecutors emphasized that assisting or encouraging the act represents equal culpability. The trial is expected to continue for two weeks.
5. <https://www.itv.com/news/tyne-tees/2025-02-10/new-trial-date-set-for-pair-accused-of-felling-sycamore-gap-tree> - A judge has set a new trial date for the pair accused of illegally felling the famous Sycamore Gap tree. The trial was originally scheduled for December last year at Newcastle Crown Court but was adjourned. At a short pre-trial hearing at the same court on Monday (10 February 2025), Mrs Justice Lambert confirmed the new trial date. Daniel Graham, 39, of Milbeck Stables, Carlisle and Adam Carruthers, 32, of Church Street, Wigton, Cumbria are set to stand trial at Newcastle Crown Court on 28 April this year. The pair are jointly charged with causing criminal damage worth £622,191 to the much-photographed Northumberland tree. They are also charged with causing £1,144 of damage to Hadrian’s Wall, a UNESCO World Heritage Site, which was hit by the tree when it was felled overnight on 28 September 2023. The land at Sycamore Gap is cared for by the Northumberland National Park and the National Trust.
6. <https://www.reuters.com/world/uk/men-felled-much-loved-british-tree-moronic-mission-court-told-2025-04-29/> - In a court case in Newcastle Crown Court, two men, Daniel Graham (39) and Adam Carruthers (32), are accused of deliberately chopping down the iconic Sycamore Gap tree in September 2023, a landmark near Hadrian's Wall in northern England. The nearly 200-year-old tree, featured in the 1991 film 'Robin Hood: Prince of Thieves,' was a beloved tourist attraction and cultural symbol. Prosecutors described the act as 'mindless vandalism' executed during a 'moronic mission' and supported their case with video evidence from Graham’s mobile phone, including footage of the felling and a wedge of the tree allegedly taken as a trophy. The felling also caused damage to Hadrian's Wall, a UNESCO World Heritage Site. The National Trust later reported signs of life at the tree's base, offering hope for regrowth. Both men deny two charges of criminal damage, and the trial is ongoing.
7. <https://www.theguardian.com/uk-news/article/2024/may/15/man-pleads-not-guilty-northumberland-sycamore-gap-tree> - Graham entered pleas of not guilty, while Carruthers entered no plea. The 300-year-old sycamore was named England’s tree of the year in 2016. It featured in the 1991 film Robin Hood: Prince of Thieves and was a popular site for stargazing and marriage proposals. The criminal damage caused by chopping down the landmark has been valued at more than £620,000, according to court charges. The defendants are also accused of causing £1,144 worth of damage to Hadrian’s Wall, a UNESCO world heritage site, which was hit by the falling tree. The district judge, Zoe Passfield, declined jurisdiction, saying: “This case is too serious to be heard in the magistrates court.” The pair will attend Newcastle crown court on 12 June for their next hearing and they were both granted unconditional bail in the meantime. Sycamore trees are native to continental Europe. Claims for exactly when they were introduced to the UK range from as early as the Roman empire to the Tudors in the 16th century. A local man, Michael Palmer, told the Guardian: “Sycamore Gap is a Northumberland symbol, more than a piece of landscape, more than just a tree; it’s as instantly recognisable as the Palace of Westminster or the Liver Building.” Northumberland national park has said the trunk of the sycamore will be put on display at the Sill. It has called on artists to come up with ideas for an exhibition to preserve the tree’s legacy.