# Two men convicted for felling iconic Sycamore Gap tree in Northumberland



In an extraordinary case that has captured national attention, two men have been found guilty of felling the beloved Sycamore Gap tree in Northumberland National Park, a crime that many are describing as a senseless act of destruction. The tree, iconic for its silhouette alongside Hadrian's Wall and featured in the film *Robin Hood: Prince of Thieves*, stood as a symbol of natural beauty and historical significance. The court’s decision, delivered at Newcastle Crown Court, marks a sobering reflection on how a rooted piece of history can evoke such deep collective sorrow.

Daniel Graham, 39, and Adam Carruthers, 32, were sentenced for their involvement in the tree’s demise, which occurred on the night of September 28, 2023. The trial unveiled a web of conflicting narratives and dubious alibis, as both men denied culpability despite significant evidence presented by the prosecution. Central to the case was a video recording found on Graham's phone, which showed the act of felling, alongside GPS data that tracked their movements to the area in the hours leading up to the crime.

The jury deliberated for roughly five hours before reaching a conviction on two counts of criminal damage: to the tree itself, valued at approximately £620,000, and to Hadrian’s Wall, which sustained an estimated £1,100 in damage when the tree fell. Reports noted that experts and officials, including those from the Forestry Commission and Historic England, expressed profound sorrow over the loss, highlighting its significance as a cherished landmark. These sentiments were echoed by members of the public, who mourned the tree as not merely a part of the landscape but as an integral part of their collective memory.

Throughout the proceedings, the courtroom witnessed a remarkable display of emotional detachment from the defendants. While they were once close friends, Graham and Carruthers sat apart, avoiding eye contact throughout the trial. During cross-examination, they offered inconsistent testimonies that failed to persuade the jury. Carruthers, a mechanic with experience in chainsaws, contradicted himself over his knowledge of the tools and his whereabouts on the night in question. Prosecution counsel Richard Wright KC aptly summarised the absurdity and disconnection of their defences, questioning, “Does this sound like the truth or manufactured, arrant nonsense?”

As the trial unfolded, it became increasingly evident that their motivations for such a drastic act remained shrouded in ambiguity. Prosecutors suggested the act was carried out for amusement, an assertion that has sparked outrage from environmentalists and community leaders alike. The tree was not just any tree; it was a location where life events unfolded—a backdrop for marriage proposals and memorials, further deepening its significance in the public consciousness.

The Sycamore Gap tree's destruction has ignited discussions about conservation and the valuation of nature within a society that often prioritises economic gain over ecological integrity. Experts note that trees like the Sycamore Gap are vital to biodiversity, serving as habitats and fostering ecosystems that would be irrevocably altered by such acts of vandalism. The public's response reflects a growing recognition of the cultural and emotional capital embedded in natural landmarks, highlighting the need to protect these historical vestiges from mindless acts of destruction.

The aftermath of the trial also raises poignant questions about justice and society’s values. While Graham and Carruthers now face potential sentences of up to ten years, there is an ongoing debate about whether such a high-profile prosecution for the felling of a tree is a worthy use of public funds. Critics point out that the economic implications of their trial, estimated at around £20,000 per day for the court proceedings alone, might seem excessive compared to the crime of harming a non-human entity.

As preparations for sentencing on July 15 continue, the case remains a grim reminder of the complexity of human interactions with nature, the indifference towards the environment, and a stark look at what drives individuals to commit irreversible acts. While the men have been punished, the true impact of their actions reverberates through society, challenging us to reconsider our relationship with the natural world and the legacies we leave behind.

In time, perhaps the Sycamore Gap tree will bear witness to regrowth, serving as a symbol of resilience even amidst loss. It stands to reason that, as society contemplates this incident, we must strive to cultivate a deeper respect for our environment, ensuring that future generations will have their own enduring memories intertwined with the stories of our shared natural heritage.

### Reference Map

1. Paragraph 1, 3, 6, 7, 9, 10
2. Paragraph 2, 4, 5, 6
3. Paragraph 3, 4, 5, 8, 10
4. Paragraph 2, 3
5. Paragraph 2, 3
6. Paragraph 1, 2, 4, 5, 10
7. Paragraph 5, 6

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## Bibliography

1. <https://www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-14697257/JAN-MOIR-Sycamore-Gap-Tree-trial-guilty.html?ns_mchannel=rss&ns_campaign=1490&ito=1490> - Please view link - unable to able to access data
2. <https://apnews.com/article/517a911bc158fc04b1013ea8dcb79a29> - Daniel Graham and Adam Carruthers were convicted of criminal damage for felling the beloved Sycamore Gap tree in Northumberland National Park, England. The iconic tree, made famous by the film 'Robin Hood: Prince of Thieves,' was known for its picturesque setting along Hadrian's Wall and held deep sentimental value. The men were found guilty by a jury at Newcastle Crown Court based on compelling digital evidence, including metadata, GPS tracking, and a video of the tree being cut down with a chainsaw. Although both denied involvement and offered conflicting accounts, the prosecution argued they committed the act together for amusement. The chainsaw and a suspected 'trophy' wedge of wood remain missing, but images on Graham’s phone linked him to the scene. The tree's destruction has been condemned as a 'mindless act of destruction.' Sentencing is scheduled for July 15, and both men face potential sentences of up to 10 years in prison. The tree was valued at around £620,000, with additional damage to the wall estimated at £1,100.
3. <https://www.reuters.com/world/uk/men-guilty-felling-much-loved-british-sycamore-gap-tree-2025-05-09/> - Two men, Daniel Graham (39) and Adam Carruthers (32), were found guilty of criminal damage for cutting down Britain's iconic 'Sycamore Gap' tree in September 2023. The beloved sycamore, around 200 years old, stood near Hadrian's Wall in Northumberland and was featured in the 1991 film 'Robin Hood: Prince of Thieves.' Its destruction provoked national grief and anger. Prosecutors described the act as a deliberate and 'mindless vandalism,' supported by video evidence from Graham's phone. The felling also damaged a portion of Hadrian's Wall, a UNESCO World Heritage Site. The men denied involvement but were convicted after the jury was shown evidence, including footage and messages that revealed they celebrated the global reaction. The motive for their actions remains unclear. They are set to be sentenced on July 15. Despite the loss, signs of regrowth were observed at the tree's base, giving hope for natural recovery.
4. <https://elpais.com/cultura/2025-05-09/un-tribunal-condena-a-dos-hombres-britanicos-por-talar-el-famoso-arce-de-200-anos-sycamore-gap-en-una-mision-estupida.html> - Un tribunal en Newcastle, Inglaterra, ha declarado culpables a los británicos Daniel Graham (39 años) y Adam Carruthers (32 años) por la tala intencionada del árbol centenario Sycamore Gap, famoso por su aparición en la película 'Robin Hood: príncipe de los ladrones' y símbolo icónico del Parque Nacional de Northumberland. El acto vandálico, ocurrido en septiembre de 2023, fue descrito por el fiscal como 'una misión estúpida'. Durante el juicio, se presentó un vídeo grabado por los acusados mientras talaban el árbol con una motosierra. También se aportaron pruebas del uso del coche y el teléfono de Graham en la escena del crimen. Se descubrió que después del hecho compartieron noticias del suceso burlándose de la situación. El árbol, de casi 200 años y 35 metros de altura, estaba junto al Muro de Adriano (Patrimonio de la Humanidad), también dañado. Serán sentenciados el 15 de julio por daños valorados en más de 735.000 euros. Ambos intentaron culparse mutuamente, pero el jurado concluyó que la acción fue planeada y deliberada.
5. <https://elpais.com/cultura/2025-04-30/un-video-muestra-el-momento-en-que-dos-vandalos-talaron-el-famoso-arbol-sycamore-gap.html> - En el tribunal de Newcastle, Inglaterra, se ha presentado un vídeo crucial en el juicio contra Daniel Graham, de 39 años, y Adam Carruthers, de 32, acusados de talar el icónico árbol Sycamore Gap hace dos años. Este majestuoso arce sicómoro, de casi 200 años y 35 metros de altura, se encontraba en el Parque Nacional de Northumberland, junto al histórico Muro de Adriano, y alcanzó fama internacional tras su aparición en la película 'Robin Hood: príncipe de los ladrones' (1991). El fiscal Richard Wright calificó el acto de 'vandalismo insensato' y reveló que el vídeo muestra a uno de los acusados cortando el árbol con motosierra, mientras el otro graba. Pese a negar su implicación, las pruebas contradicen su versión: herramientas, restos del árbol y evidencia digital vinculan a ambos hombres con el incidente. El árbol era un símbolo emocional para muchas personas, utilizado como escenario de propuestas de matrimonio y despedidas simbólicas. La fiscalía sostiene que los acusados actuaron con premeditación y hasta disfrutaron del acto vandálico.
6. <https://www.bbc.com/news/articles/c0661ndny82o> - Adam Carruthers, 31, from Wigton, leaves Newcastle Crown Court, where he denied causing criminal damage following the felling of the Sycamore Gap tree. A second man has denied illegally felling the UK's most famous tree. Daniel Graham, 38, and Adam Carruthers, 31, are accused of causing £622,191 damage to the tree at Sycamore Gap in Northumberland, which was cut down in September. The pair are also accused of causing £1,144 damage to Hadrian’s Wall, a Unesco World Heritage Site, which was hit by the falling tree. Mr Graham, from Carlisle, had previously denied both offences. Appearing at Newcastle Crown Court, Mr Carruthers, of Wigton, Cumbria, entered not guilty pleas. Daniel Graham (left) and Adam Carruthers leaving Newcastle Upon Tyne Magistrates' Court after appearing in connection with the felling of the Sycamore Gap tree. Daniel Graham (left) and Adam Carruthers, both wearing masks, appearing at a previous court hearing, will stand trial in December. Mr Graham did not attend the hearing as he was “unavoidably detained”, his barrister Christopher Knox said.
7. <https://www.theguardian.com/uk-news/article/2024/may/15/man-pleads-not-guilty-northumberland-sycamore-gap-tree> - A man has pleaded not guilty to felling the Sycamore Gap tree in Northumberland and causing damage to Hadrian’s Wall last September. Daniel Graham, 38, of Carlisle and Adam Carruthers, 31, of Wigton attended a hearing at Newcastle magistrates court on Wednesday after being charged with criminal damage for allegedly cutting down the 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.