

Maid Marian – wife of Robin Hood

There's an old saying that behind every great man is a great woman. Meet Maid Marian. She is Robin Hood's true love and truly a great woman.

Local legend says Robin and Marian were married in St. Mary's church in the village of Edwinstowe.

Marian's a late-comer to the legend, and she doesn't appear in many of the traditional ballads. No matter, she is a very important part of the legend.

True, she can be merely a damsel-in-distress. Sometimes she's a Norman noblewoman, daughter of Lord Fitzwalter or Sir Richard at the Lee, a knight who was helped by Robin Hood. She meets Robin when he ambushes a group of Norman knights. However, in other stories, she's a Saxon who's known Robin since they were children.

Other times she is the ward of the sheriff or Prince John. And her unwanted suitors include the sheriff, Guy of Gisborne and even Prince John. Our hero will have to rescue her from these men.

There are times when Maid Marian is merely the hero's girlfriend. In some tales the happy couple refuse to marry until the Merry Men are pardoned, hence she is called - *Maid Marian*.

But Marian (or Marion, as her name is often spelled, but not in the presence of Mr. Hall) is not always a weak character in need of rescuing. Even cloistered away in Nottingham, she acts as a spy, passing information to the rogues in Sherwood. The sheriff only suspects her ties to Robin Hood. And in a time when women were forced into unwanted marriages, Marian chose to love Robin. She'll also speak her mind.

And in many stories, she's an even stronger character. Sometimes she lives as an outlaw with Robin and is as good an archer and swordsman as he is. In these stories, she's usually just called Marion or Marian. The maid part of her name is dropped, or she is called Lady Marion instead.

In one ballad, she is Robin's childhood sweetheart. Disguising herself as a male page she heads to the forest to find her outlawed partner. Unfortunately, when she comes across Robin, he is also in disguise. Not recognizing each other, they start a fight. Marian fought him to a standstill. It was Robin Hood who called the fight off. When they recognized each other, there was much rejoicing and she entered the band.



Sadly, some writers at the end of the 19th century and the beginning of 20th century weakened Marian. She gets one tiny mention in a classic children's book. In another book, her fight



with Robin ends when she sees blood and faints. Yet another says Robin overcame her easily.

Forget about it! There have always been strong women in history, and some of them were warriors. I prefer the strong Marian who can beat Robin in a fight. Marian doesn't take crap from anyone, Robin included.

Recent writers have restored Marian to her rightful place in the band. Sometimes she is even the brains behind the Merry Men. In one novel, it's Marian disguised as Robin Hood who shoots in the famous archery contest for the golden arrow.

One young adult novel says Marian is the "Forestwife", a pagan priestess with magical healing powers. She is often the mythic Green Woman to Robin's Green Man.

Don't underestimate this "Lady Wolfshead"!

