

# The History of



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This account of the ***living*** history of Sherwood Chapter is dedicated to all the people who have been members, full or associate, since its inaugural meeting in 1998 to the present day.

# Acknowledgments

I wish to thank all the many Sherwood Chapter members, past and present, who have given their time to talk to me or have loaned me either photographs, magazines, newsletters or committee minutes, in order that I could piece together the history of our Chapter.

My thanks are also extended to members of Barwell Branch who have given me valuable information about the background as to how Sherwood Chapter came into existence, and to the employees of Big Rock and Robin Hood for their knowledge of the involvement these two Harley-Davidson 'sponsors' have had in the development of the Chapter.

Due to the large number of people involved, and to the fact that I would disappoint anyone who I accidentally forgot to include, I have decided not to name individuals. However, written reports have the author's name(s) attached, and all photographs used have the owner's initials by them.

My final thanks must go to everyone who in the past has written reports for the Quill and Quiver or other magazines. By allowing me to copy them here, their efforts have been responsible for allowing us an insight into the spirit and commitment of the Sherwood Chapter members over the years. Please note that I have ensured that the articles have been reproduced exactly as they were written in the original accounts.

I am sure that, when the time comes for someone to replace me as Historian, you will continue to give them as much support as you have given me.

Vincent Fellows

Historian (May 2008 – October 2009)

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# Chapter One

## Introduction to Sherwood

When you are situated in and around Nottingham, then you automatically become associated with the legends of Robin Hood and Sherwood Forest. It was, therefore, inevitable that once a Harley-Davidson shop opened in Nottingham, its associated chapter would be called Sherwood Chapter.

It seems like Sherwood Forest has been around forever. The foundations to the mighty forest were set down in the Permo-triassic period, 220 million years ago, when Sherwood was part of a massive river system which deposited coarse sandstones and quartzite pebbles. These were compressed to form what is now known as Sherwood Sandstones.



**Figure 1.1 Sherwood Forest. (VF)**

The soil produced was dry and acidic, making it difficult to work.

Around 10,000 years ago, as the Ice Age glaciers melted, simple plants arrived (mosses), followed by low growing shrubs (heather) and finally bushes of willow and birch. With time, a pine and birch woodland developed. Flint tools show that hunter gatherers were present in the area at this time.

Further warming during the Mesolithic and Neolithic ages saw oak, elm and lime appear in the already existing woodland. Due to

the poor quality of the land, little human activity was taking place, so this mixed woodland was allowed to grow and mature at its own pace.

It was the Romans who began clearing areas of the forest, so creating heathlands where grasses and low shrubs could grow. After the Romans, the whole area was subject to repeated visits from invading Vikings and Danes. As a result, the area returned to a mainly unpopulated state, allowing the forest to redevelop into woodlands of oak and birch, broken up with heathlands of rough grassland, heather and gorse.

The name we now take as Sherwood was first recorded in 958AD as 'Sciryuda' meaning the woodland belonging to the shire. Just over 100 years later, after the Norman Conquest, Sherwood became a royal hunting forest, covering over 100,000 acres, about 1/5<sup>th</sup> of the county. It was recorded in the Domesday Book as the woodlands of Birklands and Bilhaugh.

(Birklands is an old Viking name meaning 'birch land'). The Great North Way, the main London to York road, ran straight through Sherwood, with travellers often being at the mercy of men living outside the law. Hence the name 'outlaws'. Later, monastic estates began to appear, gaining great wealth through sheep farming. This was also the time when legend says that Robin Hood was carrying out his activities.

During the Thirteenth and Fourteenth Centuries, many of the original old trees were cut down for timber to build new towns and villages, but it was when Henry VIII dissolved the monasteries in the Seventeenth Century that the greatest changes occurred. Much of the Crown land was sold or given to nobles and court favourites, who, as powerful landowners, created large estates with landscaped parklands. They collectively became known as the 'Dukeries'.

In the Georgian period, cotton and corn mills appeared, being driven by water power. This resulted in the formation of lakes and reservoirs, such as that built by the 4<sup>th</sup> Duke of Portland to serve the seven water mills of Mansfield.

By the 19<sup>th</sup> Century, the forest had passed to the Pierrepont family at Thoresby. Also, the 1830s saw Victorian writers renewing interest in Robin Hood and so tourism came to Sherwood Forest, aided by the new steam railways. Industrial activities followed, such as the discovery of coal, resulting in deep coal mines littering the landscape with colliery buildings and huge spoil heaps.

After the Great War, large pine plantations were developed for timber. These plantations are now being managed in order to return them to mixed woodlands, broken by the characteristic Sherwood heathland.

By the early 1950s, the Dukeries were being opened to the public, resulting in 1969, with Nottingham County Council opening the now world famous Sherwood Forest Country Park. The ancient Birklands forest of today represents a wonderful fragment of the great forest of

Sherwood, with over 200 hectares being managed as a National Nature Reserve. This woodland is dominated by native oaks along with other native trees such as silver birch, holly and hawthorn. Scattered amongst the bracken-filled glades are more than 1000 large oaks, most of whom are over 500 years old. The most



Figure 1.2 Sherwood Forest National Nature Reserve. (VF)



famous, the Major Oak, is the largest and possibly twice that age. It is estimated to weigh 23 tons, have a trunk circumference of 10 meters (33 feet) and its branches spread over 28 meters (92 feet).



Figure 1.3 Major Oak. (VF)

By briefly seeing how Sherwood Forest developed through time, we have now reached the point where the great Forest gave its name to a great Chapter.

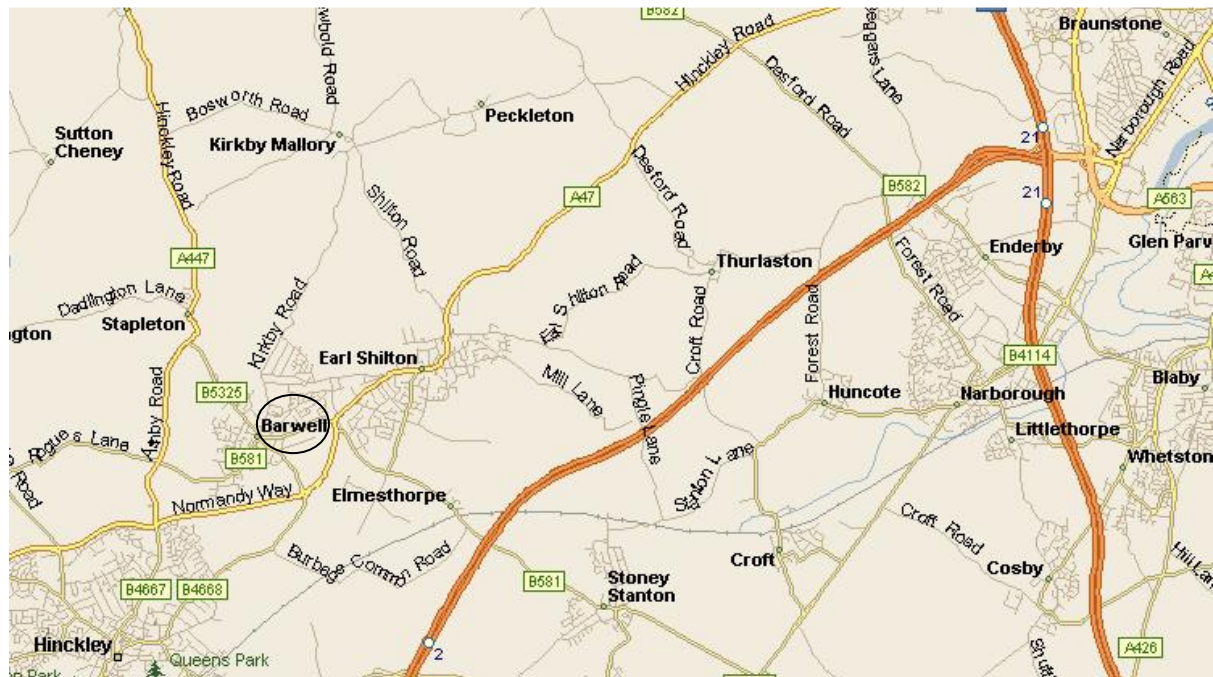


Figure 1.4 Map of Barwell, Leicestershire. (VF)

Just south of the original Sherwood Forest you will find a place called Barwell. It is in the county of Leicestershire and is situated quite close to Birmingham, Coventry and Leicester. There you will find a motorcycle dealership called Windy Corner. During the middle to late 1990s, this dealership sold Triumph and Harley-Davidson motorcycles, and sponsored a HOG chapter called Barwell Branch. In 1997, Harley-Davidson UK wanted Roger Winterburn, the



Figure 1.5 Barwell Branch logo.

chairman and managing director of Windy Corner, to only sell Harley-Davidsons and move either to Leicester or Nottingham; something he was not willing to do. As a consequence, Windy Corner ceased to be an 'authorised' Harley-Davidson dealership on the 31<sup>st</sup> December 1997.

During 1998, whilst there was no other Harley-Davidson dealer in the area, Barwell Branch was sponsored by Harley-Davidson UK. Eventually, it became known that a dealership was going to open on the 7<sup>th</sup> November 1998, in Nottingham. This was to be known as Big Rock Harley-Davidson, situated in Church Street, Stapleford,

Nottingham. At Barwell Branch's AGM, held on 2<sup>nd</sup> November 1998, it was announced that, after consultation with Harley-Davidson UK, HOG UK and the new dealership, the Barwell Branch name would no longer exist after the new shop opened. It was considered that the name Barwell was too specific to one place and had no connection to Nottingham or the surrounding area. The members were also told that the local management of Big Rock / Carnell, (actually part of the Dixon Motors Plc), wished the members to have a lot of input on how the shop and Chapter should progress, asking for three committee members to advise them on what a new HOG Chapter would like to see from its sponsoring dealer. The three members nominated were Kev Taylor, Russ Timbrell and Terry Beesley. A meeting was to take place in about three week's time, when, amongst other issues, the name of the new Chapter was to be considered.

The opening of Big Rock was announced in the Motor Trader on 23<sup>rd</sup> November 1998 and is quoted below:

## MOTORTRADER

23 Nov 1998

**BETWEEN A ROCK AND A HARLEY PLACE:** Dixon Motors' chief executive Paul Dixon is riding easy after being awarded the new Harley-Davidson franchise for Nottinghamshire, Derbyshire and Leicestershire. Dixon, which claims to be Britain's biggest motorcycle dealer following its acquisition a year ago of the Carnell car and bikes group, will operate the franchise under the "Big Rock Harley-Davidson" name from newly designed premises in Nottingham. To emphasise the point, Dixon had an eight-tonne boulder placed outside the new business - Dixon said 2,000 people showed up for the grand opening, which had been advertised in enthusiast's bible Motorcycle News.

Figure 1.6 Motor Trader's announcement of Big Rock opening.



The first Harley-Davidson motorcycle to be sold at Big Rock was a silver coloured Dyna Sport. The sale was made by Patrick Yates to Stuart Mills from Nottingham.

As has been said before, you cannot talk about Nottingham without thinking of Robin Hood and Sherwood Forest, so it was not long, therefore, before Sherwood was put forward as the name for the new Chapter. This name was acceptable to all the parties concerned as it would, in future, allow the Chapter to retain its name even if the dealership moved elsewhere in the Sherwood area. HOG records show that **Sherwood Chapter** (number 9794) was officially established on **1<sup>st</sup> December 1998**.



Figure 1.7 Big Rock Harley-Davidson. (SC)

Ian Groves, who had been appointed by Carnell as the first General Manager of Big Rock, was also selected to be the first Director of the new Sherwood Chapter. However, he was only at Big Rock for a couple of months so a change had to be made. The second page of the very first Sherwood Chapter Newsletter, sent out in February 1999, states that the founding committee had been elected in January 1999. They were Tim Lee (After-Sales manager) – Director, Simon Garrett (Sales manager) – Assistant Director, Kev Taylor – Second Assistant Director, Martin Fairley – Secretary, Terry Beesley – Treasurer, Marie Beesley – Membership Secretary and Mick Penny – Editor.

The scene was now set. A new Chapter had been born and those elected to develop its future were in place. To see how they and future Chapter officers have progressed, please read on!!