

ROBIN HOOD and his Merry Menace

*A Murder Mystery Party Pack
By Steve Clark, David Lovesy and Dave Pibworth*



in association with



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Customer Taster

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A Robin Hood themed dinner for the Historical Re-enactment Society descends into chaos as a member is murdered. It seems that everyone had a possible motive, but who committed the heinous crime? Luckily one of the members of the committee is also a Police Constable and with his help the case can be solved...

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About this pack

This is a taster pack, containing extracts from the full pack.

The full pack should provide everything you need to produce your very own murder mystery event.

The pack is intended to be used at a sit down meal where the principal characters will act out a set of events and arguments to the assembled guests.

Please remember from the outset that this is intended for an **improvised performance**. There is no script or set lines included for the cast to learn. Instead, your cast is expected to use the information included in this pack, develop their 'back stories' further and, staying completely in character throughout, improvise the action, dialogue and arguments themselves. This means that your performers are less constrained and restricted, can react and interact with the audience and guests at will and should have a lot more fun!

This document includes:

- A **Plot Overview**.
- **General Staging Notes** on how best to plan and stage your Murder Mystery event.
- **Overview of the Characters** (including suggested costumes and 'props').
- An extract from the **Plot Narrative** to show the plot flow and how events should be woven in.
- An Appendix containing an example of one of the detailed **Character Back Stories**.

The Downloadable Resources pack that accompanies the full pack contains Adobe Acrobat .pdf image files and allows you to produce additional materials and resources that will help bring the event to life and enhance the plot.

These include:

- Printable **Table Cards** listing the key characters to assist the audience.
- Printable **Promotional Poster** for Rockin' Hood.
- Printable **Name badges** for the characters.
- Printable 'who dunnit' **Solution Sheets** for your guests to complete.

You can feel free to customise the details of the scenario. Names and titles of the characters are more fixed if you choose to use the resources provided but should not cause any problems for you.

This murder mystery is a light hearted affair and is intended to be as daft and silly as possible; a comic entertainment rather than a serious Agatha Christie style detective story.

The plot subject, the secret pasts of the characters and the characters themselves are designed for laughs! **All** the characters have been given motives and reasons to commit murder and in fact it could have been any of them that did the deed. As such there are no complicated or involved clues for the audience to have to try and deduce or follow!

Plot Overview

These are difficult times for the local **Historical re-enactment Society**. After a disastrous portrayal of the Battle of Trafalgar on a local boating lake, the group's funds are all but depleted. Then, a wonderful opportunity comes their way, and the Chair has called the members together tonight at the venue to reveal this exciting opportunity...

- **Barry Island:** The Chairman
- **Tracey Island:** Barry's wife – a stickler for historical details and accuracy.
- **Gill Ingham:** A flirtatious and recent new member of the group.
- **Brad Ford:** The society treasurer.
- **Gerrard Cross:** Wannabe pop musician and member of the committee.
- **PC Layton Buzzard:** Local Police Constable and society member (arriving late).

Everyone from Lincoln Green has been asked to come, and the committee themselves are dressing as characters from the tales of Robin Hood. Sadly, due to a breakdown in communications not only were the other guests not told about the costume theme but also the two ladies on the committee both come dressed as Maid Marian – and they're not friendly at the best of times!

Barry reveals that despite recent setbacks they now have a major opportunity to act as extras in a new 50's Hollywood Musical of Robin Hood (hence the theme chosen for the evening) to be filmed locally later this year. The fees they promise will be enough to rejuvenate the finances and sort everything out! The general excitement and elation is soon wrecked when Tracey announces that she spoke to the film company earlier today and told them 'where they could stick' their historically inaccurate drive! Squabbling and bickering leads to threats, anger and revelations of dramatic secrets, which in turn spill over into murder! It is left for late arrival, PC Layton Buzzard to work with the other guests to identify the murderer. The killer is finally revealed to be... *[someone who can be revealed by buying the full pack or attending a performance!]*

General Staging Notes

Casting / rehearsal

Your chosen performers should be issued with a copy of the whole pack.

You should hold as many rehearsals as required depending on experience of performers (3 to 5 recommended).

The first rehearsal should concentrate on reading through this pack and getting a feel for how the event is structured and the role that each character has to play in the plot.

Before the second rehearsal the performers should further prepare their back stories. We provide example stories in the Appendix and you can use these or write new ones. At the second rehearsal these should be read out by each performer in character.

As it is impossible to rehearse the whole event without that all important audience to react to, you should concentrate on cementing motives and the order and content of the arguments. These can be rehearsed by the performers, more to prove they can improvise and keep up a convincing performance than word for word content!

Facilities required for the performers

The performers need a separate private room for their use. They will use this prior to the event to get changed and prepared and will use the room during the event where they can exchange notes and discuss any change of tactics. The murder victim will also use this room once deceased!

The performers will eat the same as the audience. Food for the deceased victim can be brought to the main table and then sent away (and taken to the private room!) for extra comic effect.

Recommended event format

The evening works best if structured round a sit down meal. If the event is being staged in hotel this may be a formal served multi-course meal, but if this was being staged in a hall or private venue you could lay on a simpler meal or even a table buffet. However guests should have a table to sit at to watch and enjoy the action.

Pre-dinner drinks

Before moving to the seated area, we recommend pre-dinner drinks. This gives an opportunity for the guests to mingle and more importantly to meet the characters informally before the action begins (see **Meet and Greet** below).

Dining area:

- **Top table:** set for 6 places, used by the principal characters. Positioned in a central location so that all the other guests can see the action. Ideally a clear area in front of this table should be provided to give space for the actors to perform freely.
- **Tables for the other guests.** Depending on facilities and space it is recommended that the tables are spaced to give room for the actors to move around and between them and so be able to interact with the guests.

Although structured around a meal, there is no predefined timing for the action and the courses. If this is a restaurant based event then the serving staff should just be instructed to serve the courses as normal and not wait for any events / action (this saves upsetting the chef!).

As a broad guide your event should run as follows:

7.30 to 8.00	Meet and greet - <i>Pre-dinner drinks</i>
8.00	Sit down and Barry's speech
8.15 to 8.40	First set of Arguments - <i>Starters</i>
8.40	Tracey storms out of the room
8.50	Layton joins the party - <i>Main course</i>
9.00 to 9.30	Ongoing revelations - <i>Dessert</i>
9.40 to 9.55	Wrapping up!
10.00	Solution sheets distributed - <i>Coffee</i>
10.15	Prize giving and denouement

Improvisation

As already explained, there is no set script for this Murder Mystery scenario. Your performers are expected to improvise their dialogue, interactions and behaviour based on their back stories and knowledge of the plot and their interpersonal relationships. This is not as daunting as it sounds! Your performers need to get into character and remain in character throughout. All conversations with guests should be as the character they are playing.

You are bound to get some comments about ‘who dies first?’, ‘are you the murderer?’ at the start of the evening. The trick is to act confused and surprised! What are they talking about? This is a special occasion!

If guests start asking you questions that you don’t know the answer to then you can simply make excuses and walk away or steer the conversation in a different direction.

You don’t have to admit your feelings outright, but can hint at your relationships with the other characters, make passing comments about your reaction to something to trigger a response and a question.

The most common difficulty is when someone slips up and gives the wrong info from their back story (and guests will sometimes probe into your ‘past’ in depth). Sometimes this is not of consequence but other times it could be important, a date, a place or something that your character should know too. If when quizzed you give the wrong corroborating account of events, this can lead to red herrings as the guests think you are lying deliberately. Therefore, if possible, if you realise you have let slip something on the spur of the moment that is nonsense, try and draw the other character (s) aside in time and tell them the new story. And if you don’t have time to do so, and you get ‘caught’ out, make light of the situation and play for a laugh; ‘Have we really been married for 5 years and not 8, well it seemed like even longer to me...!’

You will find there is plenty of opportunity to whisper in corners with the other performers (and when out of the room) to check tactics, prompt actions and arguments (‘right, we need to reinforce our hatred of one another, let’s go and have a fight in the middle of the room’). This is often necessary to keep things on track!

The Arguments

The arguments that are used to move on the plot, reveal motives and skeletons in the closet and the complexities of the characters’ inter-relationships can be split into two types:

Public: The confrontational / explosive challenge as one character rounds on another to contest something that has been said or announced. These can be very public and devoid of subtlety and a slanging match over the tables and even across the room often develops. Once these start the guests will quickly fall silent and pay attention.

Private: These are the type that build from a quiet conversation into a row as things are said that should not be or revelations are made. These can be more subtle. The characters start talking together, beside a table of guests and get louder and more heated as things develop. Gradually the whole room is drawn into the conversation.

In general the arguments only need to be staged once but if the venue is very large or there is a lot of back ground noise from the guests you can stage the argument and then move to another area of the room to continue the quarrel (repeating the salient points once more).

Overview of the Characters

Barry Island

Male: Playing age 30's / 40's

Costume: Robin Hood

Chair of the Historical re-enactment Society. Officious and organised, maybe a bit of a bully when it comes to the Society's direction. He has a serious gambling problem.

Tracey Island

Female: Playing age 30's / 40's

Costume: Maid Marion / medieval lady.

Barry's wife – although not the driving force behind the Society, she is definitely the biggest stickler for historical accuracy.

Gill Ingham

Female: Playing age 30's.

Costume: Maid Marion / medieval lady.

Gill is a fairly new member of the group – less of a soldier, more of a camp follower – basically a tart! Has a poorly concealed crush on Barry.

Brad Ford

Male: Playing age late 40's.

Costume: Friar Tuck

The Group's Treasurer. Doesn't take life too seriously, this larger-than-life character hides a lot of personal problems behind the laughter. One of these problems is that as his mother would say "he never seemed interested in girls". He has never had a relationship with anyone either, but is always doing everything he can to please Barry...

Gerrard Cross

Male: Playing age late 40's.

Costume: Alan A'Dale

One time pop musician, he is long past his sell-by date. Still trying to get the band back together, and is wont to break into song at the simplest opportunity. Has a kazoo and depending on genuine musical skills can bring a guitar or other instrument to play along with. Only does the re-enactments to impress women – but is utterly unable to impress Gill. Has been having a passionate affair with Tracey, behind Barry's back, which means more to him than it does to her. Has a cocaine habit and is supplied by PC Buzzard.

Gerrard should also have a musical instrument – a guitar, recorder, trumpet or similar. It doesn't matter if the actor can't actually play anything with it – since Gerrard is such a failure it makes it even more authentic – he just thinks he can play well!

Layton Buzzard

Male: Playing age 30s.

Costume: The Sherriff of Nottingham

Not the sharpest knife in the drawer, but by day is the local constable for the area. He's always wanted that one big case to get promoted. Perhaps tonight could be that night...! Not as squeaky clean as first appears, running illegal gambling events, dealing in drugs and up to his neck in crime!

Plot Narrative

Meet and Greet

All the guests are local historical re-enactment enthusiasts and members of the society. They have been invited along tonight to hear a special announcement about future plans for the society which has been going through a tough time recently. The invite was supposed to mention the Robin Hood theme and encourage members to come in costume, but due to an admin oversight that never happened so the committee feel a bit overdressed! These committee members need to introduce themselves and each other to the assembled guests before the event really kicks off (see **General Staging Notes** above for how best to do this).

The characters should arrive over the space of 15 minutes during this informal section (Recommended order: Barry and Tracey, Brad, Gill and Gerrard). Layton will arrive later in the evening. He is busy on police duties and sends his apologies.

They should introduce themselves to the guests, and interact with one another. They can make throwaway remarks about the other characters, sowing the seeds for any mistrust, dislike and personal conflicts. It is important that during this opening session the characters get to mingle and introduce themselves with all of the guests to ensure that everyone feels involved and gets a feel for what is going on! There should be much nervous anticipation about what Barry has to say to the group, considering recent misfortunes – and some tantalising hints from those characters who think they know what's going on!

Guests should then be invited to take their seats for the meal.

The speech

Once the guests are seated for the meal, **Barry** opens with a speech to the assembled guests welcoming them to the meeting. His speech must include:

- A welcome to the guests.
- An introduction of the other principal characters for anyone who's missed them.
- A mention that Layton is running late but should join them shortly
- He recaps on some of the recent, rather disastrous events. These include staging the Battle of Trafalgar on the local boating Lake, and how an oversight on the insurance meant that the Society had had to pay for fourteen dinghies, the unfortunate incident when (the late) Sid Fairclough demonstrated his replica guillotine, and the solicitor's letters that are still coming in following the food poisoning at the Viking and Saxon Fish and Chip festival night.
- The exciting news of the Hollywood Offer. An American production company is coming to the local area to film a musical about Robin Hood, called "Rockin' Hood" It's a kind of historical drama with fifties rock 'n' roll numbers, and the group are being offered quite a good sum to provide extras for some of the scenes. This will put the group back on it's feet and really put the group on the map.
- Barry has mentioned this to Gerrard already and Gerrard has already penned a song which he performs with Barry. It is hardly authentic but not to worry! Think of the fame and fortune!

Song - “When We’re in the Greenwood” (To the tune of George Formby’s “When I’m cleaning windows”)

Now we go robbing Merchants, to earn the poor a bob
For an honest outlaw it’s an interesting job
We beat the Sheriff on our raids
We get to meet some comely maids
We’d like to lay them in the glade
When we’re in the Greenwood

We drink mead and make home brew
It’s potent when you’ve had a few
It does down well with rabbit stew
When we’re in the Greenwood

In our leggings we work hard
Heroes never stop
We rob the rich and help the poor
- The Sheriff’s in a strop!
The villagers have naught to fear
As we ride past whilst hunting deer
We’re Merry Men – not that way dear!
When we’re in the Greenwood

Our shady life relies on luck
Our souls are cleansed by Friar Tuck
But do we really give a f... ig
When we’re in the Greenwood

These lyrics start to sound the same
As we begin our last refrain
But Robin’s shot his bolt again
When we’re in the Greenwood
When we’re in the Greenwood!

A fairly major spanner is then thrown into the works as **Tracey** casually announces that she had spoken to the company that day and told them where they could stick their offer. After “Robin Hood – Prince of Thieves” it was clear that the Americans could not handle the Robin Hood myth!

There is much consternation! Barry is furious, the group’s finances will take a serious knock. Gill is angry – she loves the idea of potentially famous actors coming over for seduction. Gerrard was loving the thought of maybe impressing the Director with his musical abilities – now dashed. Brad is not especially bothered either way at this point – but is still keen to get Barry on his own at one point.

Arguments before the murder

After Barry's speech, the performers should feel free to move about and work the tables and not stay sat at the top table. The characters should mingle and engage in dialogue with the other guests, expressing their outrage and concern at what Tracey has done.

While this is going on, the following predefined arguments / heated discussions should take place. This can be done at the top table, in the area in front of the table or anywhere around the room (if the venue is very large then the arguments can be held twice or more at different points around the room if necessary). Barry attempts to call the Hollywood studio and all he gets is a secretary telling him that, since Tracey's very blunt words, they are now dealing with another historical group – their arch rivals!

- **Barry** argues with **Tracey** over the rejected offer. Tracey brings up the gaming Creditor causing them so much misery.
- **Brad** argues with **Barry** over the state of the finances... is there more to it?
- **Tracey** and **Gill** continue the Maid Marian debate, spilling over into Gill's obvious play for Barry.
- **Gerrard** tries to flirt with Tracey, but she has had enough of him by now. The sex was okay but his tedious music was giving her a headache. She admits to the affair to Barry and the others but publicly ridicules Gerrard.

[From this point on, arguments develop, leading to two murders! A large chunk of the plot has been cut here for the purposes of this taster!]

Who Dunit?

PC Layton announces that it is clear that the murderer is in the room and he has a pretty good idea who it is... but the audience / guests can help point the finger!

Solution forms (and pens) are distributed to the guests and the performers retire to their room to give the guests time to complete their forms. After giving the guest 10 minutes or so to make their deductions, the forms are collected and the characters in the privacy of their room select the winner and the booby prize!

Denouement and prize giving

The surviving characters return to the dining area.

A summary of the events of the night is repeated and the real murderer is invited to step forward from the line up (you can milk this for tension and laughs by all characters twitching and almost stepping forward).

The victim is brought back from the dead (bringing the prizes).

The chosen winner is announced (and the solution they gave read out) and a prize awarded (A bottle of wine / champagne).

The booby prize is announced (and the solution they gave read out) and a prize awarded (a suitably silly gift (magnifier glass etc) or an item on a Robin Hood theme). If there were a number of amusing sleuthing answers you can read out a shortlist of howlers. The audience is thanked for their sleuthing skills. The cast take a bow and a get a rousing round of applause.

Appendix A - Detailed Character back stories

Your performers can use these as the basis for their stories. Feel free to embellish, modify and personalise (use your own birthday to save having to learn a new one etc).

Your performers should learn these, both their own and each others. In particular they should be familiar with information that they would know about the other characters (wife's background etc).

Barry Island

Barry has been the driving force behind the local Historical re-enactment Society for many years and is passionate about the hobby. Not only is he a bit of a history buff, but he loves any excuse to dress up in a period costume. A long-standing member of the committee, and now chairman, he is the one that has dragged the group into a catalogue of expensive, ill-thought and potentially fatal (for the society itself and members of the public!) events.

While once he was a stickler for detail, accuracy and realism (Tracey and he met and married because of their shared love of history) , he has a gambling problem that has rapidly spiralled out of control and he has recently been leading the club in a more erratic manner deviating from the original historically true aims, trying to make events increasingly commercial so that he can embezzle the profits to feed his habits.

Unfortunately due to poor organisation, inept marketing, plain stupid ideas and bad luck, it has been an ongoing fiasco and all have ended in failure, with Barry becoming more and more desperate to find a way to pay his debts and creditors. The strain of his financial straights, which he has kept a secret from his wife Tracey, has also affected his relationship with her and he has become increasingly distant – and as a result Tracey has been fulfilling her sexual needs with Gerrard. Barry does not know this.

He has also been desperate to keep the state of the heavily plundered society finances a secret from the rest of the committee, in particular from Brad (the treasurer) , who he has been fobbing off with excuses about the account books which he is keeping a hold of. But now things are on the up – the offer from the Hollywood film company will put the group on the map and they are prepared to pay handsomely for the group's involvement – if he plays the figure down a bit, there'll be plenty to pay off his debts and keep everyone else happy. Okay it isn't quite accurate historically but who cares? Not when the thick-set men with baseball bats want to have a word with him about their overdue payments...!