

Wiltshire Yews
An Inventory of Churchyard Yews
Along the Ebbles Valley

By Peter Norton

Introduction:

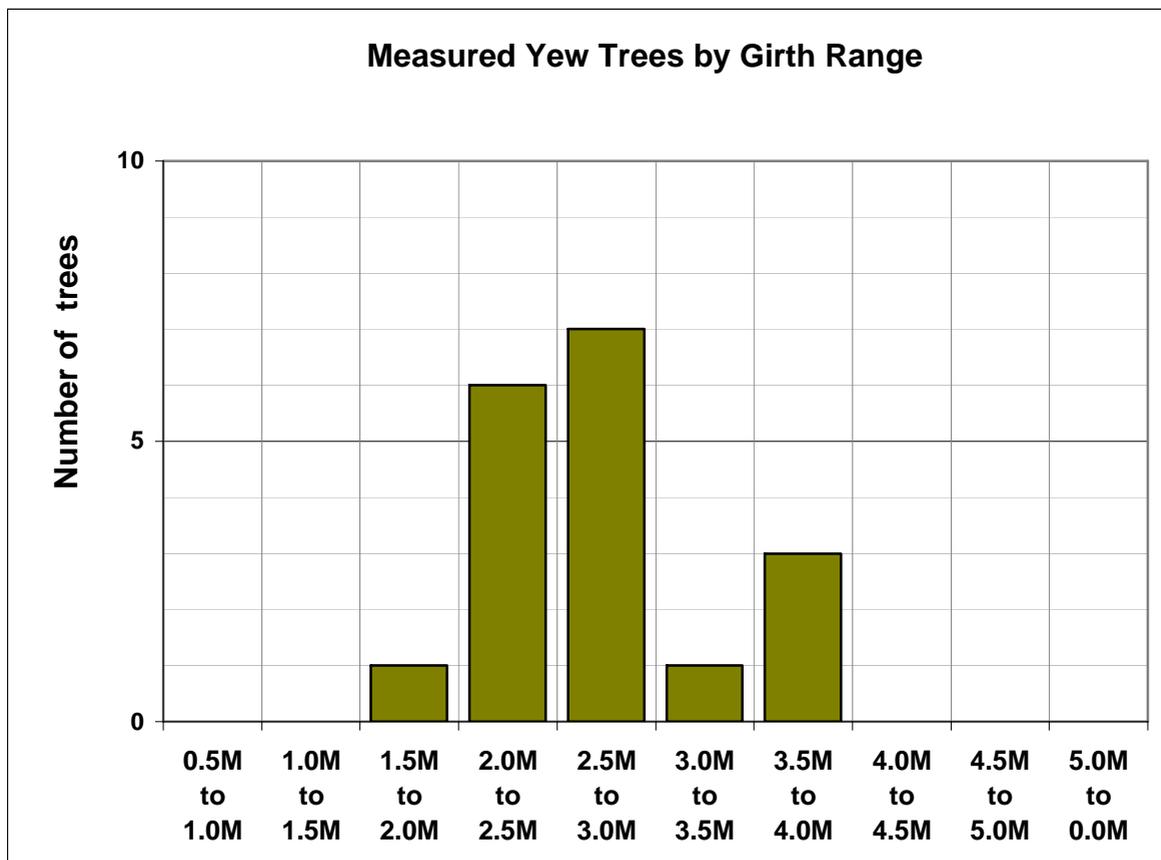
This report is the second of five observations of churchyard yews in and around the rivers Wylye, Ebble, Nadder and Bourne that converge with the Salisbury/Hampshire Avon as it flows through the Salisbury area.

The Ebble is a fine chalk stream rising to the east of Berwick St John and just above the village of Alvediston, some twelve miles to the west of Salisbury and then converging with the Avon two miles south of Salisbury at Bodenham.

Its major tributary the Chalke rises in Bowerchalke and converges with the Ebble at Mount Sorrel in Broad Chalke.

All of the villages along this route were included, with thirteen churchyards visited. Of these eleven contained yew trees, and although many of those mentioned are small in stature compared to some of the giants already recorded within the Yew Gazetteer, it was felt that as time progresses, these younger trees will become our future giants for the next generations of yew enthusiasts.

A total of twenty seven trees were noted at these sites of which eighteen had measurements recorded. (See graph below which has been grouped by girth and does not include any estimated* values.) Imperial measurements were taken during the recording exercise and converted to Metric. Please note that in multiple individual tree measurements only the lowest to the root/ground was used for this graph.



Where Irish Yews were significant in number at the documented churchyards, they are also included in this report.

Appendix I lists all the churches visited and those indicated thus * are detailed within the body of this report.

All recorded height measurements are taken above the root development if visible.

Berwick St John - St John the Baptist

Map 184 ST 946 223

15 miles SW of Salisbury

The church was built in the 13th century and restored during 1827 with an almost total rebuild in 1860-2.

Three yews are found within the churchyard with the first two growing near the churchyard entrance and to the west of the church.



The female yew in the front (above) had a girth of 7' 10" at 1', 7' 6" at 3' and 7' 9" at 4' 6".

The female yew to the rear measured 8' 2" at 1' and 9' at 3'.

The third yew (right) grows north west of the church porch and had a girth of 8' 7" at 1' and 9' 5" at 3'.



One further yew was located to the rear of the church, growing out from a steep bank on a private drive and having a girth of 9' 7" at about 2'.

Alvediston - St Mary

Map 184 ST 977 239

12.6 miles SW of Salisbury

The church is originally 12th century with additions during the 13th and 14th centuries, followed by extensive rebuilding during the 17th century and full restoration in 1866.

Two female yews grow north west of the church and appear to be from the same root growth.

The yew on the right (nearest the church) had a girth of 8' 8" at about 1' and 9' 1" at 2', while the yew on the left had a girth of 9' 3" at about 1' and 9' 8" at 2'.

Further recordings above these heights were discounted due to limb development.

Also note that both lower height measurements are approximate due to various protrusions



Bowerchalke - Holy Trinity

Map 184 SU 018 230

10.5 miles SW of Salisbury

The oldest parts in the church date from the 13th century with additions during the 15th. The church was restored and enlarged during 1865-6.

Entering the churchyard from the road two large impressive Irish Yews guard the entrance, while in the churchyard three yews can be observed. The first, a fine fluted female (below left) on the east perimeter had a girth of 11' 8" at 1', 10' 6" at 2' 6" and 10' 5" at 4' 6".

Close to the south west perimeter two female yews (far right) are very close together and could be from the same root stock.

The larger of the two had a girth of 8' 1" at 1' and 8' 6" at 2', the second measured 5' 9" at 1'.

When travelling through this village towards Broadchalke, you can observe a number of large yews within private residences that line the road.



Broadchalke - All Saints

Map 184 SU 040 253

8 Miles SW of Salisbury

Initial building of this church possibly began in 1258 with additions during the 14th century. It had a partial rebuild during the 16th century and extensive repairs during the 17th. Full restoration followed in 1846-7.

Five yews grow within this churchyard with the first, male, multi-stemmed and extremely difficult to measure, growing against the western perimeter. Girth of the three main limbs was recorded as follows: The centre limb as seen in the photo below, measured about 4' 3", the limb behind about 5' 5" while on the left about 4' 6". All heights were just above the separation point. A final measurement of 9' 7" was obtained at ground level.



Broadchalke – cont.

The second yew, female, (below left) has a girth of 7' 1" at 1' and 8' 1" at 2' and is located midway along the north side of the church.



The third yew, female, grows north east of the church near the churchyard perimeter. Chalk rubble has been piled up against one side of the tree and therefore measurements were limited to just one large limb (centre) where a girth of 7' 8" at 1' above the branch development was recorded. Thick stemmed ivy growth had been cut through which allowed the recording.

Along the south perimeter are a further two young status yews and ten Irish Yews.

Broadchalke - United Reform

Map 184 SU 039 256

8 Miles SW of Salisbury

A small chapel built in 1862, situated very close to the village public house and having three young yews growing along the eastern perimeter. Girth measurements were not undertaken due to low foliage, ivy and brambles but estimates* of around 5' to 7' could be given. (No photographs taken)

Bishopstone - St John the Baptist

Map 184 SU 084 265

5 miles SW of Salisbury

The first evidence of a church is seen in the 12th century masonry. It was extensively rebuilt during the 14th century with further additions during the 15th. It was restored between 1826-9 and finally its porch was rebuilt in 1884. The church sits outside the village boundary towards the east and is well signposted from the road.

Eight yews grow within the churchyard with the most notable, female, near the south east perimeter corner.



Although heavily covered with young ivy, girths of 12' 5" at 1' and 12' 11" at 2' were recorded. Measurement higher up the trunk (14' 1" at 4') were distorted due to heavy limb development and discounted. Note that several large branches have been removed.

Along the north east perimeter are four young yews but measurement was hampered by brambles, ivy and low foliage, while along the west perimeter and just to the north of the churchyard entrance a further three yews are found. An estimate* of between 5' to 7' girth could be given for all these.

Stratford Tony - St Mary and St Lawrence

Map 184 SU 091 263

4.5 miles SW of Salisbury

The church is no longer used and now under the care of the Churches Conservation Trust. It is approached by foot across a footbridge spanning the Ebble, and then up a steep bank.

One male yew grows south west of the church and has a girth of 11' at 1", 11' 5" at 2' and 11' 9" at 3'.



Coombe Bissett - St Michael

Map 184 SU 108 263

3.7 miles SW of Salisbury

Although St Michael and All Angels is first mentioned in the Domesday Book, the oldest part of the current stone building is 11th century with further additions during the 14th and 15th and an extensive restoration in 1845.

Two yews are clearly visible from the road along the northern perimeter and according to church records were planted in 1845.



The first yew, female, grows near to the churchyard entrance and had a girth of 11' 11" at the ground. Above ground level is a large protrusion which would distort further recordings. The tree then splits into two main branches and measurements at about 1' above the separation point indicated girths of 7' and 6' 2" respectively.

The second yew (above photo - right) is an Irish Yew.

Homington - St Mary the Virgin

Map 184 SU 122 260

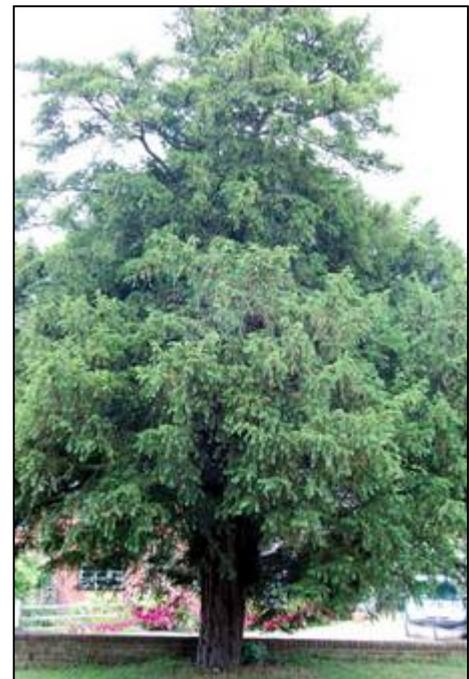
3.7 miles SW of Salisbury

The oldest part of this church dates to 1250 with additions during the 13th, 14th and 15th centuries. It was partially restored in 1794 and followed by major work in 1860.

Two female yews grow within the churchyard with the largest (right) at the south east corner of the church with a girth of 9' 4" at the ground, 12' at 3' and 12' 5" at 4'.

The second yew (far right) grows midway along the northern perimeter, with a girth of 6' 11" at 1' and 7' at 3'.

Although only a young tree, the Electricity Board has already "notched" the crown so that the tree does not damage the power line that runs through it.



Odstock - St Mary

Map 184 SU 151 260

2.6 miles S of Salisbury



The church originally dates from the late 13th century.

A sparsely foliated yew is located near the south west corner of the church with a girth near the base, avoiding small protrusions, of 9' 10". A second measurement was taken of the main trunk just above the cut limb protrusion and 8' 1" was recorded. In between the protruding limb and the main trunk a large embedded flint can be seen.

At the church is the grave of Joshua Scamp, who, to protect his daughter, took the blame for his son-in-law's theft of a horse, and was hanged in 1801. Legend has it that after Joshua's death a curse was put on the church and that those who lock the door are doomed to a sudden death. The church is open 24hrs a day.

Nunton - St Andrew

Map 184 SU 159 260

3.5 miles S of Salisbury

The church dates from the 13th century with major restoration in the mid 19th. A single yew tree is found near to the south east corner of the church with a girth of 8' 9" at 1' and 8' 11" at 3'.

The Ebble converges with the Avon just a mile further east within the grounds of Longford Castle (home to the Earl of Radnor) at Bodenham, so this is the last churchyard yew recorded along the "Chalke" Valley.



As a final note, just 2 miles south of the last four villages lies Great Yews, an SSSI containing over 300 yew trees. During 1955 English Nature surveyed this area and recorded 300 trees with girths larger than 3mtrs and 16 with girths above 4.6mtrs. The site is owned by the Radnor Estate but is regularly used by both Salisbury Schools and Scout Clubs for recreational purposes.

Great Yews features in the article *The Ancient Yews of Cranborne Chase* by Peter Andrews <http://www.ancient-yew.org/cranbornechaseyews4.shtml>

Great Yews – taken from alongside the public foot path.



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Appendix 1: Churches visited

Those indicated thus* are detailed within the body of this report.

Berwick St John	St John the Baptist*
Alvediston	St Mary*
Ebbesbourne Wake	St John the Baptist
Fifield Bavant	St Martin of Tours
Bowerchalke	Holy Trinity*
Broadchalke	All Saints*
Broadchalke	United Reform Chapel*
Bishopstone	St John the Baptist*
Stratford Tony	St Mary and St Lawrence*
Coombe Bissett	St Michael and all Angels*
Homington	St Mary the Virgin*
Odstock	St Mary*
Nunton	St Andrew*

Historical references;

Historical date references have been obtained but not directly copied from;

Wiltshire County Council - http://www.wiltshire.gov.uk/community/church_search.php

University of London and History of Parliament Trust <http://www.british-history.ac.uk/>