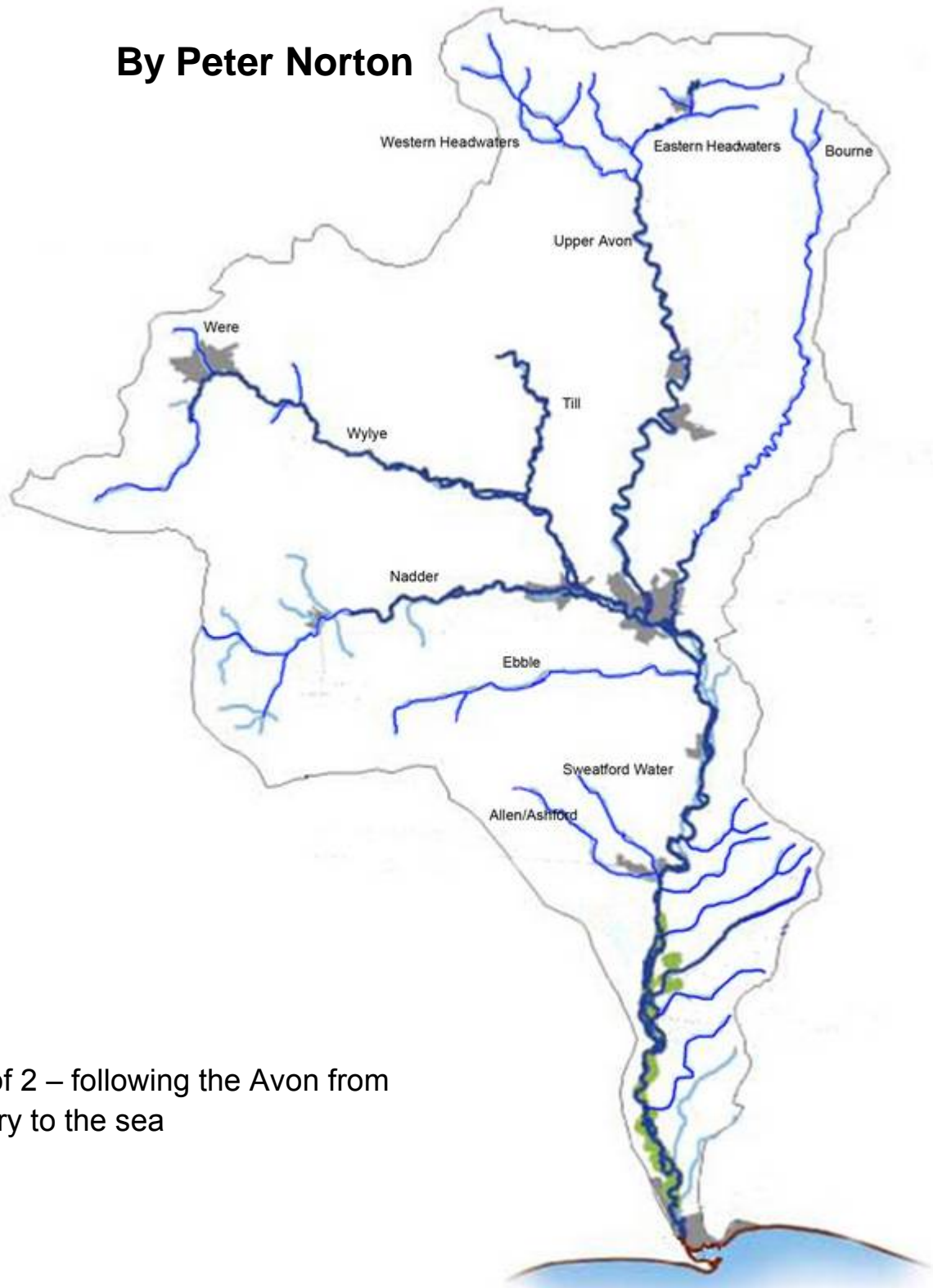


Wiltshire Yews

An Inventory of Churchyard Yews Along the Avon Valley

By Peter Norton



Part 2 of 2 – following the Avon from
Salisbury to the sea

Earliest records indicate a Saxon church in 800 which remained largely unaltered until 1330. Restoration took place in 1873.



Three yews grow on this site. A male (below left) with a girth of 9' 10" at 1' and 3' grows near to the south west porch. South east of the church is a female measuring 8' 6" at 2', and next to this a male (below right) measuring 12' at the ground.



Evidence of Saxon earthworks has been found, which could indicate an earlier settlement and church close to the current site. The earliest record of this site is found in the Domesday Book. The present church was built in 1857 on the foundations of the old.

Seven yews grow within the churchyard with the most notable, female, growing south west of the church porch.

This 'ancient' yew consists of a substantial fragment (21' in girth) of the original tree and an internal stem which no longer grows inside the tree. Its branches are propped up on staves, while the tree itself is supported by a large iron band staked to the ground by a substantial iron pole.

In 1999 Tim Hills wrote in the article on Propped Trees in Churchyards *"The Wiltshire village of Alderbury came close to losing its ancient yew fragment in the 1990s when St Mary's Parochial Church Council applied for consent to fell it. Perhaps they were unaware that this was one of the oldest trees in Wiltshire. A successful campaign to save the yew was led by David Bellamy and the Conservation Foundation; a reduction of its top heavy crown and a few well placed props have ensured its survival."*



As you enter the churchyard by its south west gate the first yew is seen at the far south west corner, its girth 10' 4" at 2' and 10' 6" at 3'. Moving round the church to the far north east corner a female yew grows from a steep bank, its lower branches flowing down and touching the high ground behind the trunk. A girth of 7' 6" at the ground was noted.

Moving south along this east perimeter of the old churchyard is a female yew measuring 11' 1" at 1' and 15' 2" at 3' and a male measuring 11' 1" at 1' and 12' 3" at 3' (below).

Continuing south a further four yews are seen in an adjoining garden (perhaps indicating that the boundary has been moved). The last yew, female, grows at the corner of the south east perimeter, its girth 7' 6" at 1' and 7' 3" at 3'.



Standlynch church was originally built in 1147 and dedicated to St Mary, but in the 17th century Standlynch village disappeared and the church was used for private Mass by the lords of Standlynch Manor. It was rebuilt during 1677, keeping some of its medieval features.

Following an Act of Parliament in 1809 the manor and grounds were purchased in 1814 for the descendants of Lord Nelson, who had been created an earl posthumously on behalf of a grateful nation. It was renamed Trafalgar House. During 1859-66 the church was rebuilt and restored, and in 1914 was rededicated to Mary Queen of Angels and St Michael and All the Angels. It was again used as a private chapel until 1947 when, following the death of the 4th Earl, the estate had to be sold off and the church was closed.

The church can be reached by footpath from the nearby village of Charlton All Saints, crossing a magnificent weir over the river Avon from which the noise can be quite deafening. An alternative is to drive from Alderbury to Downton and park on the grass verge just past the entrance to Trafalgar House, near the footpath sign and a sharp L/H bend - then walking about 200 yards.



Four yews grow to the south and east of the church. A male (middle l/h) opposite the south west porch measured 15' 8" at the root crown and 13' 3" at 3'. Several fungi were noted on the main trunk.

Just to the east a female measured 10' 3" at 1' and 10' 0" at 3'. A male (bottom left) measuring 14' 11" at 1' grows against the perimeter fence while near to the church wall another male (below) measured 12' 11" at 1' and 13' 9" at 3'.

Many other yews found nearby and on the footpath were not recorded.



Charlton All Saints – All Saints

Map 184 SU 176 240

5 miles S of Salisbury

Charlton was founded in the Saxon period and early Christians worshipped at nearby Standlynch church. The present church was built and partially funded in 1851 by the then 3rd Earl Nelson.



Three yews grow in the churchyard, the largest being this female, south west of the church and with a girth of 7' 6" at 1' and 7' 3" at 3'. The remaining yews, one of each sex, grow at the north east corner of the church and are of young status.

Downton – St Laurence

Map 184 SU 182 216

7 miles S of Salisbury

Owing to its position near to the river, Downton is regarded as one of the first tribal settlements in England, with Castle Meadow one of only a few Mesolithic sites in Wiltshire which continued to be occupied throughout the Neolithic and Bronze Ages. Prior to the Saxon invasion the tribe of the Belgae (whether the tribe was Celtic or Germanic is not clear) lived here and a most notable battle took place in 519AD at nearby Charford (Cerdices Ford), when Cerdic defeated and killed some 5,000 Britons (including their king, Natan-Leod) while on his way to be crowned King of the West Saxons at Winchester. There is speculative evidence that Cerdic was a Briton and he has even been referred to as Arthur (as in the Legend). Charford sits on an ancient path (Cloven Way) that links Totton to Old Sarum and is one of the earliest recorded fords across the Avon, although only bits of this Herepath are used nowadays.

Evidence of a Norman motte and bailey castle (probably a wooden structure as no stone remains) can be found in Moot Gardens, an ornamental garden created in about 1720 using the earthwork remains of the castle and overlooking the Avon. The garden also contains one of England's oldest Moots (local parliament), used by the Wiltshire Saxons. Moot Gardens are open to the public without charge. Several interesting yews are scattered around the gardens, the largest measuring 12' 8".



A very early Saxon church stood in Downton. Its status was probably one of a Minster church, dating from the 8th century and used up to the 12th, when a new Norman church was built. This was enlarged in the 13th century, with alterations during the 14th and 15th and partial construction in the 17th followed by restoration in 1859.

Fifteen yews of varying status grow within the churchyard, of which 9 were measured. The first four are female, one growing just east of the church porch with a girth of 10' 0" at 1' and 3' is shown here. The next was not measured due to ivy but an estimate* of between 7' to 9' could be given. The third measured 7' 0" at 1' 6" and had grass clippings piled high against its trunk. The fourth grows along the northern perimeter and near the church's west corner, its girth 8' 9" at 3'. A further six yews growing along this perimeter are of young status.

Downton – cont.



Along the west perimeter are two yews, a male measuring 10' 11" at 3', its branches hanging low with the ground forming an almost complete circle. Layering is in progress although I could not see any new growth. This fungus was seen on its trunk. The female nearby was estimated at between 6' and 8'. Finally on the south perimeter is a male (right) with a girth of 10' 0" at 3', another yew whose branches are in contact with the ground.

**Downton was the last church with recorded yews in Wiltshire.
The Avon continues south through Hampshire and Dorset.**

Hale – St Mary

Map 184 SU 178 186

8.9 miles S of Salisbury

It is thought that a church existed in Hale prior to the Norman Conquest; however during the 14th century the priory of St Michael in Breamore built a small church in Hale, of which some parts still exist. In 1717 it was rebuilt in the grand Baroque style that we see today, along with the manor house and the park grounds in which the church is found. Restoration was carried out during the 19th century with later modernisation.



One yew, male, with a girth of 12' 6" at 2', grows on a steep bank to the west of the church and just outside of the current perimeter. Recent removal of ivy and lower branches was noted.

Breamore – St Mary

Map 184 SU 153 188

9 miles S of Salisbury

This large Saxon church, thought to date from 980, could have been a minster on a royal estate, although no ruins for such a place have ever been found. An Augustinian Priory was built about a mile away in 1130, and excavations of the priory site in the late 19th century revealed some stone coffins, of which three were removed and placed near to the old yew tree to preserve them from damage.

The church is an almost complete example of a Saxon church, although it was partially rebuilt in the 14th century and had its western chamber removed during the 15th. Minor alterations were carried out during the remaining centuries, through to sympathetic restoration in 1896-7.

Within the churchyard grow twenty six yews, with a further twenty three outside the churchyard along the west perimeter and a further nine grow near to the north perimeter in an adjoining garden.

The most notable is this ancient female, growing close to the south west porch. It is recorded in the Yew Gazetteer with a girth of 36' 6".



At the churchyard entrance grow this pair of female trees, one with a hollow trunk inside of which are fine aerial roots. Its girth was 6' 5" at 1' and 6' 9" at 3', while the adjacent tree measured 8' 7" at 1'.

The yews along the outside of the west perimeter are all young trees with the exception of a male, with a girth of 11' 8" at 2', growing at a gateway into Breamore Park. This measurement excluded a large limb on the right and a truncated branch on the left. The fifteen yews on the north perimeter and the eight on the eastern could be estimated* at between 5' and 7'.

Whitsbury – St Leonard

Map 184 SU 129 192

11.6 miles S of Salisbury

There is evidence of an earlier habitation in Whitsbury. At the northern end of the village is a fine example of a fortified Iron Age camp. Whitsbury Castle covers 16 acres and is surrounded by a triple circle of great banks with two deep ditches. Re-occupied after the Romans departed, it was from here that native Britons probably engaged the advancing Saxons in battle, holding them at the River Avon for over 50 years.

There has been a church on this site since the 12th century but no information can be found until the early 18th when repairs were carried out. The church was restored in the early 19th century and more work carried out in 1875 and 1963.



Eleven yews grow within the churchyard, with eight small girthed and unmeasured along the north perimeter. To the west of the church the female yew (left) has a girth of 7' 10" at 2'. Midway along the church's south wall another female (above) was recorded as 10' at 1' and 10' 5" at 3'. The final yew grows on the east perimeter and was not measured due to low growth.

Whitsbury – Baptist

Map 184 SU 128 192

11.6 miles S of Salisbury

One yew measuring 10' 6" at 1' grows near the south west corner of this small church,



Rockbourne Roman villa is well known as one of the finest examples of a villa complex found in the country. It sits at the southern edge of the village and was discovered by a farmer out ferreting in 1942. Excavations have uncovered up to seventy rooms to date including a pre-Roman circular hut.

Rockbourne sits alongside Sweatford Water, which rises just to the north west of the village and converges with Ashford Water at Fordingbridge. The church is approached by foot and up a high bank, with a sculptured yew hedge lining the way.

The church may be of Saxon origin but all that remains is in the 12th century style. Alterations followed during the 13th and 15th centuries with restoration in 1893.



Six yews are found within the churchyard. The first, by the church porch, is female and was not measured due to low twiggy growth. Midway from the church's east wall and the east perimeter is a young male, while midway along the east perimeter grows a male (above left) with a girth of 7' 5" at 2'. At the far west perimeter corner are two females, close enough to each other to suggest they might be from the same root stock, but ivy making it impossible to determine. Last of the six (above right) grows nearby on the edge of the site. It is male, measuring 8' 3" at 2' excluding a large side limb. Thick stemmed ivy had been removed.

Martin is the most westerly village along this route and sits at the head of the Allen River which flows eastwards through Damerham and on to Fordingbridge. Here its name changes to Ashford Water before converging with the Avon at Fordingbridge.

Nearby Martin Down is one of the largest areas of chalk grassland in the country and contains a four mile long earthwork known as Bokerly Dyke, which defines the border between Hampshire and Dorset.

The church was built between 1080 and 1100 with alterations and additions through the 13th, 14th, 15th and 16th centuries followed by restoration in 1857.



Six yews grow within the churchyard with the first (left), female, at the north west corner, its girth 11' 11" at 3'.

The second, female, grows near the north porch. Careful measurement through twiggy growth was 7' at 3'.

The third, female, is of young status.

The fourth (above right) grows towards the north east and has low sweeping branches. Its girth was 12' 7" at the root crown and 12' 8" at 3'.

The fifth (right) grows at the south east perimeter and has sparse foliage on the south side and heavy bushy growth on the north side.

The sixth yew is a female of young status. Measurements of these two trees were not taken.



Damerham – St George

Map 184 SU 107 158

11.4 miles S of Salisbury

The church dates from early Norman times and was possibly in existence in Saxon times when King Edmund of the West Saxons (939-946) held estates in Damerham. The oldest parts in the present church date from 1130 with alterations during the late 12th and again in the 13th and 15th centuries and a partial rebuild in the 18th.



Twelve yews grow within the churchyard. Four, two male and two female, grow along the path leading from the north east entrance and into the churchyard. The female at the south east of this path (above) had a girth of 7' 6" at 1' and 3'. Around the curved eastern perimeter grow a further seven unmeasured yews, of which four are female and three male.

The most notable (right) grows opposite the south west porch, a female with a girth of 11' 7" at 1' and 12' at 3'.



Fordingbridge – St Mary the Virgin

Map 195 SU 145 138

11.6 miles S of Salisbury

A Saxon church originally stood on this site. It was rebuilt by the Normans in 1150 and reconstructed less than a century later in 1230. During the 14th century the size of the church was increased and between 1840-2 it was restored.



Three yews grow on this site. Two males grow near the north west entrance, sharing the path to the porch with twelve old lime trees known as the Apostles. The first yew (left) measured 10' 1" at 2', the second 8' 4" at both 1' and 2'. Growing near the south entrance is a female yew (below) with a girth of 10' 11" at 1' and 11' 3" at 3'.



Staying on the west side of the A338 for the next three locations then moving back to the north to look at the east side along the boundaries of the New Forest

Alderholt – St James

Map 195 SU 104 126

14.8 miles SW of Salisbury

Alderholt (Dorset) sits just to the north of Sleep Brook which converges with the Avon at Ellingham. This is just south of a small tributary of the Ashford Water which converges at Alderholt Mill (still working).

The original church has long disappeared, probably in the mid 17th century, but its replacement was built between 1841-9 and dedicated to St. James the Greater, Apostle and Martyr. Two yews grow just to the north of the west entrance. One is an Irish Yew while the other has the appearance of a Common Yew (I could be mistaken) and owing to its multi-stemmed appearance and low twiggy growth girth could only be estimated at between 7' to 9'.

Harbridge – All Saints

Map 195 SU 145 101

14.3 miles S of Salisbury

The church was rebuilt in 1838 in a 15th century style. One large female yew grows north east of the church and has three major limbs and a much hollowed trunk. Thick stemmed ivy covers the tree and reaches high into the canopy. No measurements or photographs were taken, but there is an entry in the Yew Gazetteer.

Ellingham – St Mary and All Saints

Map 195 SU 144 083

15.1 miles S of Salisbury

The present building dates from the 12th century. It was originally a priory for (Alien) Benedictine monks (1160-1414). The chancel was probably the Chapel of St Mary and the nave the Parish Church of All Saints. The porch was erected in 1720 and the west wall rebuilt in 1746.

Two male yews growing near to the north west entrance were not measured due to a busy wasp nest in the hollowed trunk of the nearest tree.



Hyde - Church of Holy Ascension

Map 195 SU 165 124

13 miles S of Salisbury

Hyde sits high above the Avon valley and the Latchmoor Brook flows south west from the lake at Eyeworth and past Hyde Common. Here it changes its name to Hucklesbrook before converging with the Avon near Harbridge. A Roman settlement was found nearby when gravel was extracted from Gorley Common, although only tools and ancient kilns were found.

The church is a new site built during 1854-5 on land donated by the lord of Bickton and Hyde who lived at West Park in Rockbourne.

Six yews grow on this sloping site. A male at the east entrance consists of two main trunks measuring 6' and 5' 9" respectively. Towards the south a second male could not be measured because of low foliage and 3' of grass clippings. A female yew (below left) at the south west porch measured 9' at 1' and 8' 10" at 3'. Near the south west boundary is a young status female yew. Two males (below) grow either side of an ornate wall and gate (no longer in use and in disrepair) and marks the west boundary. The south yew measured 7' 6" at 3' while the north yew was 8' 7" at 2'.



Ibsley – St Martin (Art and Craft Centre)

Map 195 SU 149 093

14 miles S of Salisbury

This post reformation church was built in 1654 and restored in 1832 following a fire which partially destroyed the building. It was deconsecrated in 1986 and was in a derelict condition before being bought in 1988 and turned into an art and craft centre.

Two female yews grow on this site, the first (right) at the north west entrance measured 9' 8" at 3', the second to the north east was not measured due to twiggy growth and ivy. Six clipped Irish Yews lead from the north west entrance to the porch.



Ringwood – St Peter and St Paul

Map 195 SU 145 053

17.5 miles S of Salisbury

Ringwood was a royal Saxon manor and at the time of the Domesday Book the settlement consisted of a mill and a church. The church was rebuilt in 1290 and during later restorations was so badly damaged that a new church was constructed in 1853.

A single young male yew grows at the north west corner of the church, with its branches hanging over and near to the busy A31 trunk road. An estimate* of between 5' and 7' could be given. Twelve Irish Yews also grow within this site.

Crow Hill – Methodist

Map 195 SU 170 040

19.5 miles S of Salisbury

This small church between Ringwood and Burley stands away from the road at the head of a small gravel track. Two young yews, male and female, grow along the north perimeter, each with an estimated* girth of between 4' to 6'. Six tall cypress trees line the path from the churchyard entrance.

Sopley – St Michael and All Angels

Map 195 SZ 156 967

22.7 miles S of Salisbury

Just north of the village is Tyrell's ford where in 1100 Sir Walter Tyrell crossed the Avon on his way to France after killing King William Rufus in the New Forest. At the gate house to Sopley Manor is St Michael's Well, where water drips from an ornate head.



The church, which sits on a mound overlooking both the village and the Avon, was built in about 1050 by Earl Godwin (1001-1053). The Saxon church was replaced in 1137 and then enlarged in the 13th century and partially rebuilt in the 14th, with additions in the 15th. There is a record of the church roof being destroyed by a storm in 1893 and replaced.

One male yew measuring 9' 5" at 2' grows at the north east entrance.

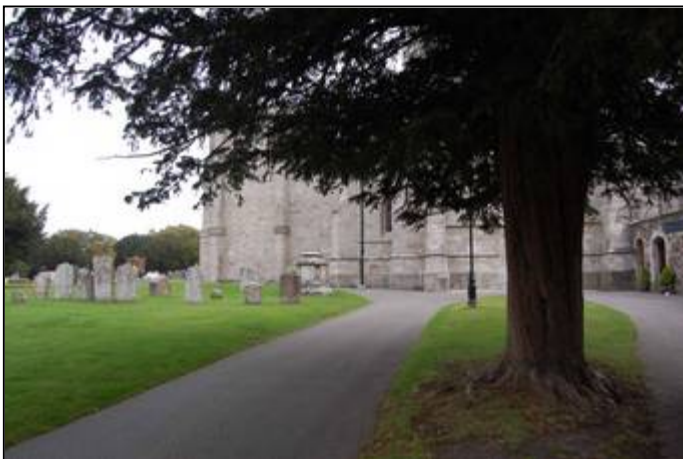
Christchurch (Twynham) has a long history as a settlement. There are Bronze Age Barrows on St Catherine's Hill, to the west of the present town, and during the Iron Age, Hengistbury Head became an important trading centre dominating the area around what is now Christchurch.

A Saxon Minster was built around 650 AD and in the Domesday Book of 1086 mention is made of the Saxon Monastery of The Holy Trinity. The Normans began the building of the magnificent Priory Church in 1094. At around the same time that the Priory was being constructed, Twynham Castle was built as a stopping place for journeying forces. The castle, standing on an artificial mound or motte, dominated the countryside, and the ruins which remain today and open for public viewing.

Christchurch was once called Twynham, but during the construction of the priory a 'miracle' occurred and the building became known as Christ's Church Twynham, with the eventual reduction to Christchurch.

Two miles away at nearby Stanpit is an ancient well known as Tutton's Well and during medieval times the spring water, known as The Christchurch Elixir, was transported around the country as a cure for eye diseases. In 2009 a planned restoration of this historical site was agreed.

In 1539 King Henry VIII ordered the priory church to be demolished. Following a petition he allowed the priory to remain as a parish church but demolished all other associated buildings, of which a few walls still remain near to the castle and adjacent to the mill stream. The current church is the longest parish church in the country and is known as the parish and priory church of the Holy Trinity.



Five yews grow within the grounds of this historic site. The first (left) grows to the west of the church. It is male, with a girth of 9' at 1' and 9' 5" at 3'. Moving north west is an unmeasured female and a male, 9' 6" at 1', straddling the diagonal path to the north west porch. At the north west churchyard entrance the fourth yew, female, could not be measured due to the thick ivy reaching far up into its canopy. Lastly is a young status male growing along the north to east perimeter.



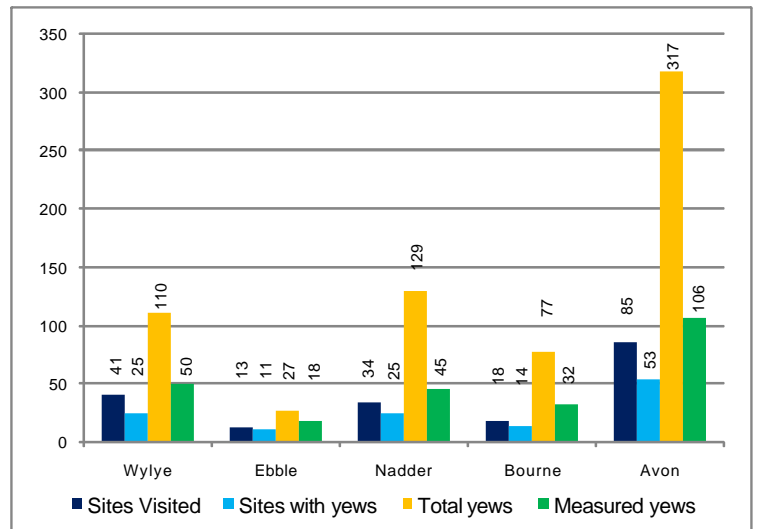
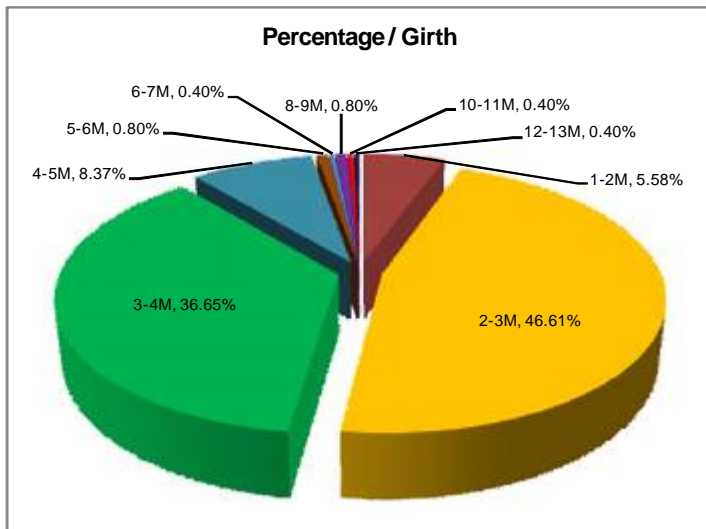
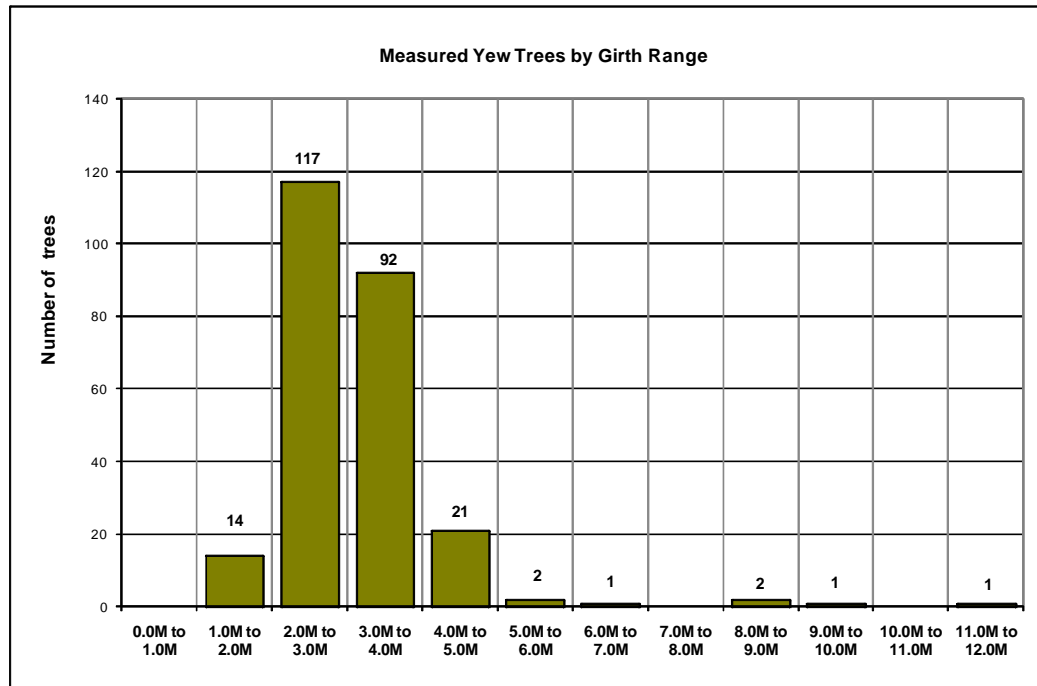
Twenty Irish Yews grow around the perimeter and along the various pathways leading to the church.

This is the last recording of yew trees within churchyards along the River Avon Valley.

Summary:

Over the five reports into the churchyard yews that grow along the River Avon and its tributaries we have visited one hundred and ninety one churchyards and other places of worship, recorded the positions of six hundred and sixty yews and taken measurements of two hundred and fifty one trees.

The histogram below groups the measured trees according to their girth. The pie chart shows the percentage of yews in each girth range, while the column graph compares the statistics for each of the five areas visited.



Appendix 1:**Churches visited (Wiltshire)**

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

Easton Royal	Holy Trinity*
Milton Lilbourne	St Peter*
Pewsey	St John the Baptist*
Wilcot	Holy Cross
Alton Priors	All Saints*
Alton Barnes	St Mary*
Woodborough	St Mary Magdalene
Maningford Abbots	No Dedication*
Manningford Bohune	St Peter*
Manningford Bohune Common	All Saints – redundant in 1973 and now a private dwelling
North Newnton	St James*
Bishops Cannings	St Mary the Virgin*
Horton	Chapel
Coate	Chapel and no longer in use
Etchilhampton	St Andrew*
All Cannings	All Saints*
Allington	Chapel
Stanton St Bernard	All Saints*
Patney	St Swithin – Redundant and since 1997 a private dwelling
Chirton	St John the Baptist*
Beechingstoke	St Stephan*
Marden	All Saints
Wilsford	St Nicholas*
Charlton	St Peter*
Rushall	St Mathew
Upavon	St Mary*
Endford	All Saints*
Fittleton	All Saints*
Netheravon	St Mary the Virgin*
Figheldean	St Michael and All Angels*
Milston	St Mary
Durrington	All Saints*
Bulford	St Leonard
Amesbury	St Mary and St Melor*
Wilsford	St Michael*
Great Durnford	St Andrew
Middle Woodford	All Saints*
Stratford sub Castle	St Lawrence*
Salisbury	Cathedral of St Mary + the Close*
Salisbury	St Thomas Beckett*
Salisbury	St Edmunds – now an Arts Centre*
Salisbury	St Martin's*
Britford	St Peter*
Alderbury	St Mary the Virgin*
Charlton All Saints	All saints*
Trafalgar Park	St. Michael and All the Angels*
Downton	St Laurence*
Morgan's Vale	St Birinus

Appendix 1:

Churches visited (Hampshire & Dorset)

Hale	St Mary*
Woodgreen	Methodist
Woodgreen	St Boniface
Breamore	St Mary*
Whitsbury	St Leonards*
Whitsbury	Baptist*
Rockbourne	St Andrews*
Martin	All Saints*
Damerham	St George*
Sandleheath	St Aldhelms
Sandleheath	Methodist
Fordingbridge	St Mary the Virgin*
Fordingbridge	Our Lady of Sorrows
Alderholt (Dorset)	St James*
Alderholt (Dorset)	Congregational
Harbridge	All saints*
Ellingham	St Mary and All Saints*
Gods Hill	St Giles
Stuckton	Evangelical
Frogham	Congregational
Hyde	Church of Holy Ascension*
Mockbeggar	Cross lanes Chapel
Ibsley	St Martins* - now an art and craft centre.
Poulner	St John the Baptist
Poulner	Baptist
Ringwood	St Peter and St Paul*
Crow Hill	Methodist*
Bisterne	St Paul
Avon Causeway	Hurn Chapel
Sopley	St Michael and All Angels*
Burton Green (Dorset)	St Luke
Burton Green (Dorset)	United Reform
Christchurch (Dorset)	Parish and priory church of the Holy Trinity*
Christchurch (Dorset)	Elim church
Purewell (Dorset)	St Johns

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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/>