



Wiltshire Yews
An Inventory of Churchyard Yews
Along the Bourne Valley.

By Peter Norton

Introduction:

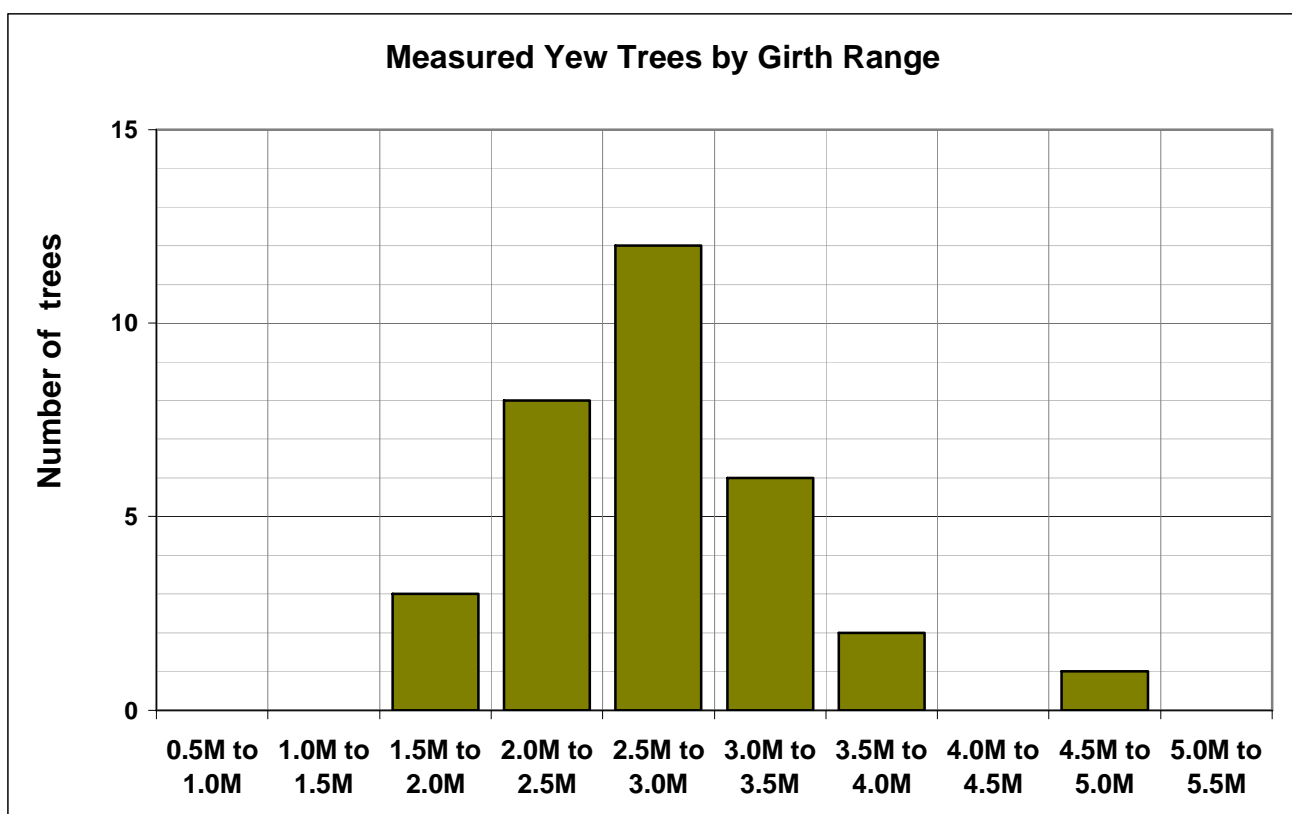
This report is the fourth of five observations of Churchyard Yews in and around the Rivers, Wylye, Ebble, Nadder and Bourne that converge with the Wiltshire / Hampshire Avon as it flows through the Salisbury area.

The Bourne's source is at the eastern end of the Vale of Pewsey and just south of the village of Burbage. The river cuts through the chalk escarpment at Collingbourne Kingston to flow south across Salisbury Plain before joining the Avon, near the trading estate that straddles the A36 on the eastern side of the city and some fifteen miles from its source. Due to its nature it may be referred to as a chalk stream but the river itself is normally a winter bourne, meaning that it only flows during the winter months, normally November through to April.

The Bourne valley is followed for its entire length by the main A338 road, which continues south of Salisbury along the Avon valley.

All of the villages along this route were included, with eighteen churchyards visited. Of these fourteen 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 seventy seven trees were noted at these sites of which thirty two 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.

Collingbourne Kingston – St Mary

Map 173 SU 239 558

21.5 miles NE of Salisbury

The church dates from the 12th century, with alterations during the 13th through to the 15th. Major restoration was carried out during 1861-2. Although originally dedicated to St John, by 1763 it had been re-dedicated to St Mary.



The churchyard overlooks the busy main road and is retained by a substantial wall.

Four yews grow within this churchyard. The first, shown here, is found north west of the churchyard entrance. It is male, with a girth of 8' 10 at 1' and 9' at 2'. Its crown was reduced in 2008.

Along the west perimeter are two female yews. The first was measured over slight ivy growth as 7' 6" at 2'. The second forms twin trunks just above ground. These measured 3' 5" and 5' 10" at 1' above the split.

The fourth yew, male, growing at the far end of the east perimeter, splits into three main branches at 3'. Girth at the ground was 10', while its three branches measured 4' 6", 7' 0" and 4' 6" at 1' above the split.

Collingbourne Ducis – St Andrew

Map 184 SU 242 536

18.8 miles NE of Salisbury

The church, initially recorded in the Domesday book, was rebuilt during the 13th century, altered during the 14th and restored in 1856. It was originally dedicated to St Mary but had been changed to St Andrew by 1786.

Two yews grow to the south west of the church. The first, female, had a girth of about 10' at 2'. It splits into four main branches at 3'.

The second, male, recorded a girth of 8' 11" at 2'.



North Tidworth – Holy Trinity

Map 184 SU 234 490

16 miles NE of Salisbury

The parish of Tidworth was only created in 1992 and contains North Tidworth, which has always been in Wiltshire, and South Tidworth, which was transferred from Hampshire.

The greatest change to the Tidworths came when the army bought the whole estate in 1897 for military training and from then it has changed into the garrison town we see today.

The earliest reference to the church is 1291. It was rebuilt in the 15th century and repaired in 1805 and 1859 followed by restoration in 1882.

Five yews grow within the churchyard with this male/female pair found on the raised bank to the south of the churchyard's east entrance. The female had a girth of 8' 9" at 1' 3" while the male was 10' 8" at 2'.



Towards the north west perimeter a male yew with many lower protrusions and much ivy growth was recorded with a girth of 10' at 3' 6". Another male midway along the north perimeter was so affected by ivy, twiggly growth and other vegetation that measurement was not possible.



The fifth yew, also male, grows away from the immediate confines of the church and near the car park, sandwiched between a new brick building and an adjoining fence (left). Girth was 12' at 1' and 11' 3" at 3'. At 3' 6" the tree splits into seven main branches, of which the largest (left branch in near left photograph) has a girth of 7' at 1' above the separation. Many lower branches have been removed from this tree.

South Tidworth – St Mary

Map 184 SU 235 476

15 miles NE of Salisbury

The mediaeval church of St Mary, originally mentioned in the Domesday book, was demolished in 1784, because the owner of Tedworth House thought it was too close to his Manor. Nothing of it remains on this site as the material was used to build the small burial church found just a few hundred yards along the road to the right at the top of Church Lane (see next location). The current site remained vacant for about one hundred years until the present church was built very close to the site of the old during 1879-80. It was declared redundant in 1972 and is now under the auspices of the Churches Conservation Trust. It sits alongside the busy A338 and the only access is from the nearby “South Drive” and parking up on the raised kerb edging.



There are some twenty six yews within this site, of which twenty form an avenue leading to the church’s south west porch. The largest of these, growing near to the porch, measured 7’ 9” at 1’. At the north east perimeter a young female, with a girth of 8’ at 2’, shows evidence of branch layering.

South Tidworth – St Mary

Map 184 SU 239 479

15.5 miles NE of Salisbury

This small family chapel, now known as the Burial chapel, was built from the stone of the mediaeval church, demolished in 1784.

It became South Tidworth’s parish church for the next 100 years. However when the new church of St Mary’s was finished in 1880, this one lost its status as the parish church and reverted to St Mary’s Chapel of Rest. It is now known as the Burial Chapel.

Seven young status yews grow along, but outside of the churchyard’s north perimeter and no measurements or photographs were taken.

Shipton Bellinger – St Peter

Map 184 SU 232 454

13.5 miles NE of Salisbury

There is evidence of a church on this site during the 10th century, but the earliest remaining structures date from the 14th. The present church dates from the 17th century with major restorations during 1879. Shipton Bellinger sits within a small finger of Hampshire that protrudes into Wiltshire, but has a Wiltshire post code.

To enter the churchyard the River Bourne, when flowing, is crossed via a small footbridge.



Nine yews are found at this site, the most interesting growing near the churchyard's south west entrance. This female yew has a girth of 8' 11" at 6" and 8' 8" at 2'. It splits into three main branches at 5' 6" along with its central trunk. An electrical junction box is attached to the tree and used over the Christmas period to light up the canopy with the star shaped lights that are also a permanent fixture.

The remaining yews grow alongside the west perimeter and are of young status.

Cholderton – St Nicholas

Map 184 SU 227 425

11.5 miles NE of Salisbury

The present church was built alongside the site of the old 12th century church during 1841-50. The material from the old church, which was demolished in 1851, was used to build a school on land donated by the Dowager Countess Nelson.

One male yew grows at the churchyard's west entrance. Heavy twiggy growth and ivy hampered measuring but a girth of 8' 9" at 4' was recorded.



The present church was built in 1844 on the site of the old church, whose origins are traced to the 12th century. The River Bourne, when flowing, passes in front of the churchyard.



Five yews grow within the churchyard. The first (left) is male and grows near the south west entrance. Girth was 11' 2" at 1' and 12' 7" at 2'.



The next three (above), also male, grow along the south perimeter. The first measured 7' 4" at the ground and 7' 8" at 2', the second, swallowing the headstone, was 9' 1" at 2', while the third, which appeared to be dead, measured 6' 2" at the ground.

The fifth yew, growing along the east perimeter, was not measured. I observed deep cuts in some of the trunks where thick stemmed ivy had recently been removed.

Allington – St John the Baptist

Map 184 SU 203 393

8.6 miles NE of Salisbury

The church was rebuilt in 1841-51 and contains a few features from the original 12th century building.

From 1st February 2010 the church was closed for worship and the members of its congregation now travel along the road to Boscombe.

One female yew grows to the north of the church. A girth of 9' 5" at 2' was recorded over lower twigggy growth. Above this height the tree becomes very bulbous due to branch development.



Boscombe – St Andrew

Map 184 SU 200 385

8 miles NE of Salisbury

There are references to a church on this site during the 12th century, and some of the original walls can still be seen. Additions were made in the 15th and 16th centuries with some rebuilding in 1755.



One male yew, with a girth of 11' 7" at both 1' and 2', grows to the south east of the church and adjacent to the village road. Recent sympathetic removal of ivy was evident.



Winterbourne Gunner – St Mary

Map 184 SU 180 353

5.5 miles N of Salisbury



The church has its origins in the 12th century, with alterations during the 14th. Due to its poor condition it was closed in 1876, but after major works was re-opened in 1886. It is approached along a footpath from the A338.

Three yews are found within the churchyard. Two young females growing at the south west entrance were not measured. Towards the north east perimeter is a male with a girth of 8' 6" at 3'. Heavy lower growth prevented further measurement.

Winterbourne Dauntsey – St Edward

Map 184 SU 173 346

5 miles N of Salisbury

The church, originally consecrated in 1326, was demolished in 1867. The grounds were restored as part of a project to celebrate the millennium and are now known as St Edward's Wildlife Refuge, Gater's Lane.

An information board just inside the churchyard entrance indicates that a yew grown from seed was planted at the western perimeter with permission from the owners of the adjoining property. The seed originated from a churchyard yew in Leybourne, Kent,

In 2000 Tim Hills noted, "*It has a fluted red/grey bark. It appears as if part of the crown had been removed, to be replaced by vigorous new growth.*"

This large male grows to the north of the site and had a girth of 15' 6" at 2' and 15' 9" at 3'.



Winterbourne Earls – St Michael

Map 184 SU 174 344

4.5 miles N of Salisbury

The full name of this church, which originated in the 12th century, is St Michael and All Angels. It was rebuilt in 1485 and enlarged in 1553. Along with St Edward's church at Winterbourne Dauntsey, it was demolished in 1867 and rebuilt a year later with much of the building materials coming from the original two churches.

It is thought that carrying out major repairs to two churches at the same time would prove very expensive and that it made economic sense to build one new church.

Two yews grow within the churchyard. A female near the north west entrance measured 6' 9" at both 1' and 2'. A male, growing near to the south east perimeter, had a girth of 5' 10" at 2'. Much churchyard debris, including soil and rocks, was piled high against the trunk.

Laverstock – St Andrew

Map 184 SU 159 309

1.7 miles N of Salisbury

An early 13th century church that may have been on the site of a Saxon church. It was rebuilt in 1410 following a fire and then demolished in the mid 19th century. A new church was built during 1857-58 using material from the old church. Parts of this can be seen to the west of the present building.

The Laverstock Church Discovery Project is now in its third year and during July 2009 a team of local volunteers, under the auspices of Winchester University, undertook an archaeological excavation of the medieval foundations

Ten yews grow within the churchyard with six along the southern perimeter. Starting at the south east and moving south west the following girths were obtained:

Male, 9' 5" at the ground. Male, 8' 9" at the ground. Male, 7' 3" at 1'. Male, ivy covered. Male, 8' 2" at 1'. Female, 9' 2" at root crown (below left).

A further three grow west of the church as follows: Male, 7' 4" at 1'. Female, 10' 1" at 1' and 2' (below right). Female, 8' 3" at 1'.

The tenth, female, grows north east of the church. Excessive lower growth meant an estimated girth of 7 to 8'.



The Bourne converges with the Avon approximately one mile south of Laverstock so this is the last churchyard within the Valley.

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Appendix 1:**Churches visited**

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

Burbage	All Saints
Collingbourne Kingston	St Mary*
Collingbourne Ducis	St Andrew*
North Tidworth	Holy Trinity*
South Tidworth	St Mary*
South Tidworth	St Mary* (Burial Chapel)
Shipton Bellinger	St Peter*
Cholderton	St Nicholas*
Newton Tony	St Andrew*
Allington	St John the Baptist*
Boscombe	St Andrew*
Idmiston	All Saints – Churches Conservation Trust
Porton	St Nicholas
Porton	Baptist
Winterbourne Gunner	St Mary*
Winterbourne Dauntsey	St Edward* - Wildlife refuge
Winterbourne Earls	St Michael and All Angels*
Laverstock	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/>