

Burghill churchyard contains an abundance of yew trees. A sign pinned to one these bore the message: 'The place whereon thou standest is holy ground. Do not injury to tree or flower. They are dedicated to God and to the memory of the departed'. I was informed in 1999 that it was the policy of local churches to allow the burial of babies and young children beneath the branches of this fine veteran tree, which was first noted in *The Woolhope Papers* of 1866 with a girth of 17' 6".

In 1938 *The King's England* reported that 'Wordsworth, Coleridge and Southey have all admired the stalwart fellow in the churchyard, a yew measuring 25' round the trunk', an identical measurement to that contained in *Kelly's Directory* of 1929.

In 1999 I found the male yew (right) in need of some attention. Parts of its crown resembled an ivy tree, many branches were dead and much of its foliage was brown. In spite of this there was plentiful new growth around the lower bole, especially where it bulges at a height of 3'. Fire damage to the tree's interior surface may have been partly responsible for its poor state of health. A large rectangular sheet of metal (A) blocked the entrance to the large hollow of this thin shelled yew. Girth was 21' 7" at 1' swelling to 24' 3" at 5'.



By 2003 ivy almost covered the bole, but by 2009 it had been removed.

2003 Geoff Garlick



2009 Tim Hills



2016 Paul Wood

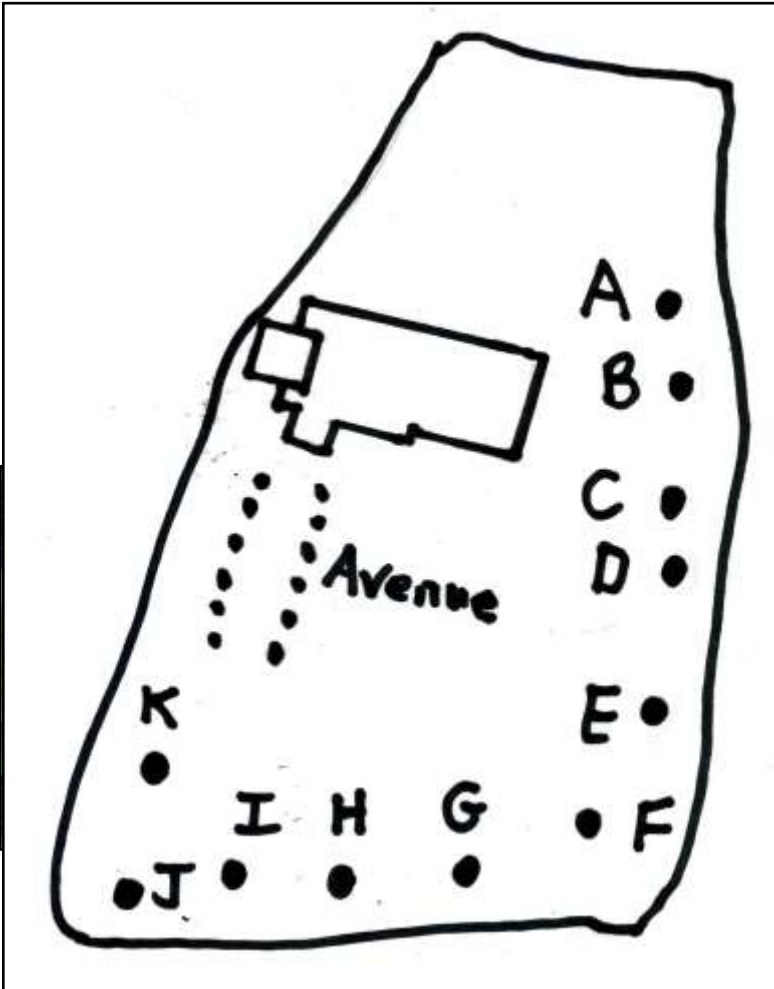


2016 Paul Wood



The 1866 *Woolhope Papers* also noted a 'fine grove of yews leading up to the south door of the church. From enquiries he (Edwin Lees) had found that these latter trees are about 150 years old. They are about the thickness of a man's body; and he had found that fact useful in estimating the ages of other trees'.

Had this grove been allowed to thrive Burghill would now boast a rare 300 year old yew avenue. Sadly the trees were so badly damaged as a result of over-exuberant trimming that they had to be felled. Trees in the replacement avenue were measured in December 2014 and found to have an average girth of 4' 10". Photos of the avenue were taken by Paul Wood in 2016.



Other yews in the churchyard were recorded by Paul Wood in 2016 as follows:



Tree A (left) 11' 0" (3.35m) at root crown.

Tree B (right) 8' 4" (2.54m) at root crown.

Tree C is the ancient yew seen on pages 1 and 2.



Tree D (below) is male. Girth at its narrowest point, 6" above the ground, was 12' 3" (3.73m). A small amount of ivy was encroaching and a little twigggy growth was starting to cover the bole.



Tree E (below left) has a girth of 10' 4" (3.15m) at the ground.

Tree F (centre) is male with a girth of 13' 1" (3.99m) at the root crown. A solid tree with a small covering of ivy on the north side of the tree.

Tree G (right) is female with a girth of 10' 4" (3.15m) at exactly 2', its narrow point. A thin covering of ivy.



Tree H (left) is female, with twigggy growth on its south side and a girth of 8' 6" (2.59m) at 8".
Tree I (centre) is female with a girth of 8' 4" (2.54m) at the ground.
Tree J (right) is female with a girth of 13' 10" (4.22m) at the root crown.



Tree K (below) is female with a girth of 10' 4" (3.15m) at its narrowest at a height of about 5'.

