

Burghill churchyard contains yew trees in abundance. 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 that it is the policy of local churches to allow the burial of babies and young children beneath the branches of this fine veteran tree.

It 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 observed a male yew in need of some attention. Parts of its crown resembled an ivy tree, many branches were dead and much of its foliage was brown. There was however 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 be partly responsible for its current poor state of health. A large rectangular sheet of metal has now been placed to cover the entrance to the large hollow of this thin shelled yew. Girth was 21' 7" at 1' swelling to 24' 3" at 5'.

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 is estimating the ages of other trees'.

Had this grove been allowed to thrive Burghill would now be boasting an exceptional 300 year old yew avenue. Sadly the trees were so badly damaged by over-exuberant trimming they had to be felled. The replacement avenue were measured in December 2014 and found to have an average girth of 4' 10".

A further 9 yews grow on the south and east sides of the churchyard. In 2014 average girth of these was 10' 10".

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