

## DEVON - churchyard sites with younger yews

**BROADCLYST** St John the Baptist SX98769728 12/4/2009 Barry Saich

Three trees, one male on S side of church, two more (male and female) either side of NW entrance. The tree on the south side has recently been topped, probably due to damage from weather conditions. There is also evidence of much earlier attempts to prevent spreading of upper branches, by placing a chain around the trunk at about 1.5 metres.

All three were measured at the ground. The tree on the south side girthed 8' 6", the two either side of the NW entrance girthed 9' 4" and 10' 8".

**BUCKERELL** St Mary and St Giles ST123004 29/5/2000 Tim Hills

The rector of Buckerell informed Vaughan Cornish, for his book *The Churchyard Yew and Immortality*, of 'a yew of considerable age'. I recorded 5 yews here, of which the largest were (1) male SE of the church measuring 11' 2" at 3' and (2) female SW measuring 10' 2" at 3'.

**BURLESCOMBE** St. Mary ST07591663 22/9/2008 Barry Saich

Here is an example of spreading nature of a yew trunk on a younger tree.

**CHRISTOW** St.James SX 836851 11/5/2009 Barry Saich

Tree 1: Well fluted trunk to 3' then spreads to 9 trunks. Signs of old and new surgery. Ground measure of 11' 4½". Female.

Tree 2: Nicely proportioned and fluted male tree. Girth 10' 7½" at the ground.

Tree 3: Small but bushy tree, trunk has already split in two at ground level, each about 1' diameter at the ground. Girth 12' 6".

Tree 4: Female, splits into 4 major trunks with several large lateral branches from 6' high. Girth 12' 6" at the ground.

Tree 5: Male, splits into 7 trunks at 6' but 2 have been removed. Girth 10' 8½" at the ground.

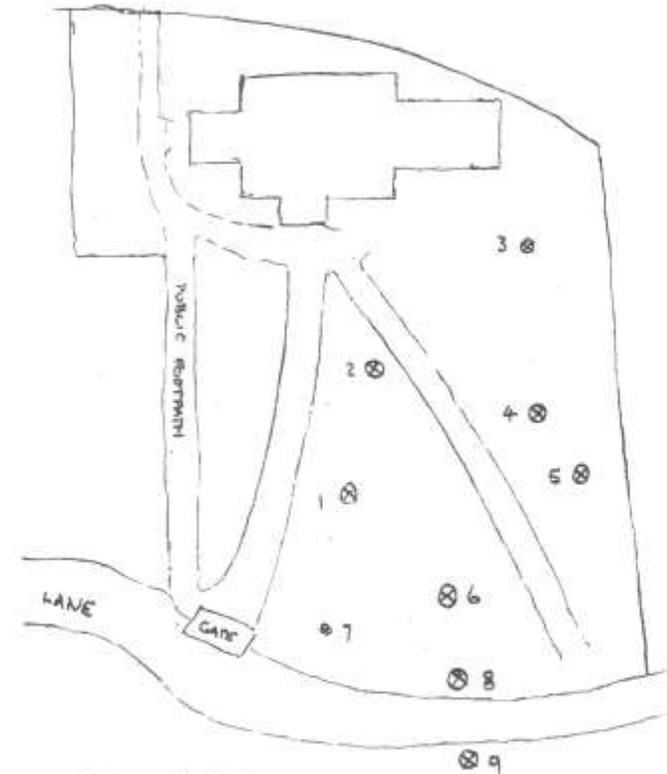
Tree 6: Fluted main trunk to 8' then splits into 3, one of which has been removed, together with several largish lateral branches, the lowest of which would have been about 6'. Girth 8' 9". Female.

Tree 7: no information

Tree 8: Evidence of bole cut down at ground level. Probably 10' girth when cut down, due to close proximity of retaining wall adjacent to lane.

Tree 9: Female tree of similar size and age as the larger trees in churchyard is found in the grounds of the cottage opposite. Thick ivy growth extended into its lower crown and there were extensive sideshoots to its trunk.

The earliest mention of yews here is found in Bell's *Devon* 1929.



CHRISTOW - DEVON  
St. James Parish Church

**DALWOOD** St Peter ST248006 29/5/2000 Tim Hills

Here is a fine looking younger tree measuring 11' 10" at 5'. It is female with dipping branches all around its straight trunk. It is very tall with no low branches emerging and grows SE of the church.

**FAIRMILE** St Phillip and St James SY087975 25/2/2007 Tim Hills

Yew topiary in the shape of a bell.

**FENITON** St Andrew SY1090799397 29/5/2000 Tim Hills

In *The Churchyard Yew and Immortality* Cornish (1946) was informed by Rev A.G.Chapell of 'three old yews'.

The yew NW of the church, according to a tradition still current in the parish, was planted in A.D. 1349 over the spot where parishioners were buried in a common grave during the Black Death.

Two of the 3 yews were recorded as: (1) NW – male - 8' 8" at 5' (2) NNE – male - 9' 1" at 3'.

**HAWKCHURCH** St John the Baptist ST344004 25/2/2007 Tim Hills

A male yew grows east of the church on a slight mound. Here was nothing to suggest vast old age, in spite of the large girth of 16' 7" close to the ground. Several limbs had been sawn off close to the ground.

**HONITON** St Michael SY16659995 17/10/2009 Tim Hills

The church was outside of the town when it was built in the 15th century.

Eight yews lead to the north door were supposedly planted in the early 18<sup>th</sup> century. Other records show some yews with a planting date of 1760. There are also younger trees whose planting dates are reported to have been documented, as well as a report of a 17ft girthed yew.

#### What we found

The eight yews leading to the north door show a remarkable variety of form and size, suggesting that some from the original planting had failed to thrive and were replaced.

Those on the left hand side approaching the church girthed 9' 7", 9' 10", 10' 3" and closest to the church a stump of about 10'.

Those on the right approaching the church were 7' 4", 5' 2", unmeasurable due to twiggy growth, and 8' 4".

There were many other yews in the churchyard, and some may well have been up to 15ft in girth, but they were multi stemmed.

The information below from 1793 was not known at the time of my 2009 visit, so the yew on the east side was not recorded.

#### The Andrews Pages : Gentleman's Magazine Library – Devon (Honiton)

[1793, *Part I.*, pp. 393, 394.]

Inclosed I send a drawing (Plate I.) of St. Michael's church, Honiton, together with the inscription.

The yew-tree which is at the east end of the church is the only monument of Mr. William Baker, attorney-at-law, and his wife, who planted it from his garden, a few years previous to his death, at the feet of his wife: it is about thirty years standing. The spiral yews, which adorn the walk, were planted about seventy years since by Mr. Serjeant Sheppard, some time member for Honiton, from his garden, now belonging to Mr. Edward Carter, attorney-at-law. His monument described as above referred, was principally composed of a marble slab, which used to decorate his hall, as being thought more durable than any then to be procured.

**HUNTSHAM** All Saints ST00132045 22/9/2008 Barry Saich

A very well kept small country church with some interesting cast iron gravestones. There are several other yews in the village especially around the entrance to Hoyte Hall.

Two male yews in the churchyard as follows:

1: SE of church. Its trunk splits into 4 at about 1m. Girth was 383.5 cm (12' 7") at the ground and 378 cm at 1m. Height was 18.64 m.

2: SW of church. Girth 370.84 (12' 2") at the ground / 373.38 at 1m. Height was 17.399m.

**NEWTON FERRERS** Holy Cross SX550482 6/6/2006 Tim Hills

In *The Churchyard Yew and Immortality* Cornish (1946) was informed by Miss R.C.Brooking of 'some very old yews'. There was nothing here of great note.

**SALCOMBE REGIS** St Peter SY 148 888 17/10/2009 Tim Hills

A sketch in Cornish's *The Churchyard Yew and Immortality* (1946) shows this yew with the following description: 'Salcombe Regis, near Sidmouth in south-east Devon, where my family have long been landowners, provides a suitable example of the relation of the churchyard Yew to the situation and people of an ancient and secluded parish.....West of the church, on the way from the lych gate which is the sole entrance to the churchyard, stands the sacred Yew, a well-grown tree of which the age was reckoned by the historian of the parish to be about two hundred and fifty years.\*

\*John Y.Anderson Morshead. One copy of his MS. History is in the keeping of the Vicar of Salcombe Regis; another is in the Exeter Public Library. A summary is contained in a paper on "The History of Salcombe Regis" in *Trans. Devon Association, 1898.*"

The yew is female and grows WNW of the church tower. Girth was 9' 4" at 2' and exactly 10' at 3'. Above this height it bulges considerably and this has led to some branch removal.

**SIDBURY** St Peter and St Giles SY140917 29/5/2000 Tim Hills

The largest yew here 9' 9" in girth.

**SIDMOUTH** St Nicholas SY126874 17/10/2009 Tim Hills

In *The Churchyard Yew and Immortality* Cornish (1946) was told of 'a yew tree' at this site. It is puzzling why only one should have been mentioned, since there are at least 9. As well as the male/female pairing of 6' girth at the west gate, there is a trio on the north side with a further four individuals. Largest is a female with a girth of 11' 10" at 3'.

**TEIGNGRACE** St Peter and St Paul SX850739 15/5/2004 Tim Hills

The female yew grows W of the church, outside the churchyard and in the centre of a large grassy 'roundabout'. Girth 9' 1" at 3'.

**WITHYCOMBE RALEIGH** St John 29/05/2000

This location has been quoted as the site of an ancient yew. The tree in question grows in the churchyard of St John in the Wilderness at Withycombe Bystock, which is about a mile north east of Withycombe Raleigh.