

In the past:

1848: *A Topographical Dictionary of England* noted 'two fine yew-trees, one of which measures twenty-two feet in circumference at three feet from the ground'.

1871: *Saturday afternoon rambles round London: rural and geological* by Henry Walker wrote about an afternoon pilgrimage to the 'ancient yews at Hambledon churchyard..... The famous trees are two in number.....This venerable yew at Hambledon impressed us more than any single tree we had looked on, whether chestnut, beech, or cedar. Its trunk is vast and stately, but it is visibly hollow, though this you would hardly infer from the foliage that still shadows it'.

1884: Black's *Guide to Surrey* states 'there are 2 very fine yews, one 30 feet in girth'.

1897: *Lowe Yew Trees of Great Britain and Ireland* referred to the reference in Black's *Guide* as a 'casual notice', adding that 'casual notices of this kind are, as a rule, by no means reliable, but if the account is to be trusted, this tree shows an extraordinary growth in the last ten years. From some measurements, for which I am indebted to the Rev.R.Phillips, it appears that this tree, which is on the south-east side of the church, now (January 1895) is at the ground 36 feet in circumference, and at 3 feet, 39 feet. There is a great cavity in the centre and an opening of irregular oval shape about 5' from the ground. The external shell is hard and shows vigorous growth, and in my recollection (twenty years) has increased in size. A curious circumstance occurred in the winter of 1886 in connection with this remarkable tree. The weight of snow broke down several large boughs from both trees. One from the older tree was 38 feet long and very heavy, and although the gravestones were packed very closely round, not a vestige of damage was done in the fall'.

It is the Rev Phillips measurements that are not accurate, whereas Black's so-called 'casual notice' would seem to be correct.

1903: Cox's *Little Guide* recorded a girth of 30' 6" at 4'.

1911: *Victorian History of the County of Surrey volIII* says 'the trunk of the larger, which must be of an immense age, measures about 30ft. in circumference and is hollow'.

1912: Walter Johnson recorded a girth of no more than 29' at the base and 30' at 4'.

1936: Mee *The King's England* described 'two great yews of which any place would be proud. One is a fine straight tree 18' round, the other is a mighty veteran of 30'. 12 people could get inside it, it may well have been growing when Magna Carta was signed'.

1955: Swanton's *The Yew Trees of England* contains the following notes sent by G. O. Allen and Arthur Jewell. 'Very dilapidated. Height about 60'. Trunk completely hollow and at present used as a store for birch-brooms, etc. There is a fair amount of spray, and quite a good central lead. Girth at 2' (where branches begin to arise) 28' approx. We were careful to get the tape inside the spray'.

They also remarked on the proximity of graves to the tree, and suggested that this had led to excessive root pruning; in their opinion there was little doubt that its growth was checked in the 18th and early 19th centuries.

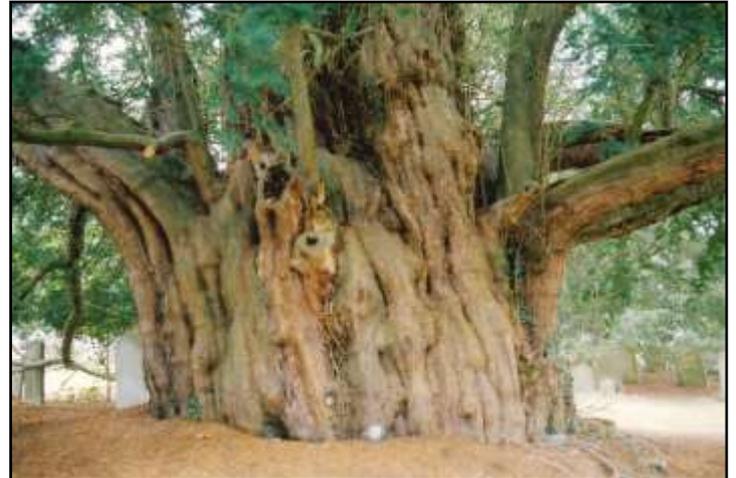
1991: Hal Hartzell Jr. writing in *The yew tree - a thousand whispers*, muddied the waters considerably. Taking an Alan Mitchell girth measurement of 31' and Rev R.Phillips 39' that was used by Lowe in 1897, he deduced that since there was no longer a 39' yew, the larger of Hambledon's two yews had 'met its demise', leaving only one yew at this site, the smaller 31' as the survivor. !!!!!

19th December 1998: This tall, male tree contains a large bright hollow space filled with light from at least 11 holes. A substantial stem (4'/5' girth) grows inside the hollow; it did not seem like a true internal stem. The outer skin comes together to form a main riser at a height of about 12'. Circumference at this height is still in the region of 20', while girth at the ground was 31' 4". Branches have been allowed to dip to the ground and among the gravestones. One substantial limb, on the left in the photo, is pulling away from the tree and could mark a point for future separation. Close to the tree is a pipe, presumably for taking oil supplies to the storage tank.

1998 - Tim Hills



2010 - Steve Young



18<sup>th</sup> May 2013 Peter Norton: The yew is completely hollow which can be seen from the large cavity on the southwest side of the tree. It has a break of crown at around 5' from which many thick branches emerge. With the tape slightly undulating a girth of 31' 10" was recorded at about 6" from the top of the sloping ground. Girth has increased by 6" in 15 years.





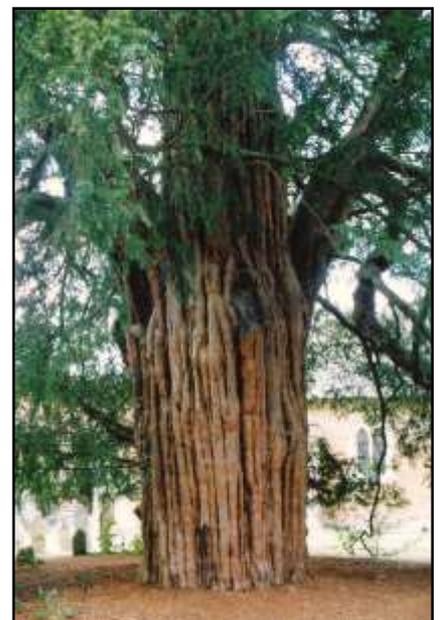
Hambledon's younger yew grows south of the porch of the church. In 1897 it was recorded as follows: Height 44 feet; circumference at ground line 18'; 17' 9" at 3'; circumference of foliage 112 feet; height of bole 15 feet.

In 1911 *Victorian History of the County of Surrey vol III* it was given a girth of 17' at 5'.

Hal Hartzell Jr (1991) described it as 'a perfect specimen of the columnar yew'. In 1998 I counted more than 47 of these 'flutes'. The bole, which is intact to a height of 8/10', had only one small crack into which I could push my arm. Branches dip to the ground. Girth was 19' 10" at the ground; 20' 2" at 3' and 21' 3" at 5'.

1998 - Tim Hills

2010 - Steve Young



2013 Peter Norton: The yew has a break of crown at a height of about 9' from which one main leader and several branches emerge. Six six of these have been allowed to sweep to the ground. A girth of 20' 4" at 1' 6' from the top of the slope, was noted. Girth has increased by 6' in 15 years.



© Tim Hills/Peter Norton - Ancient Yew Group - 2019