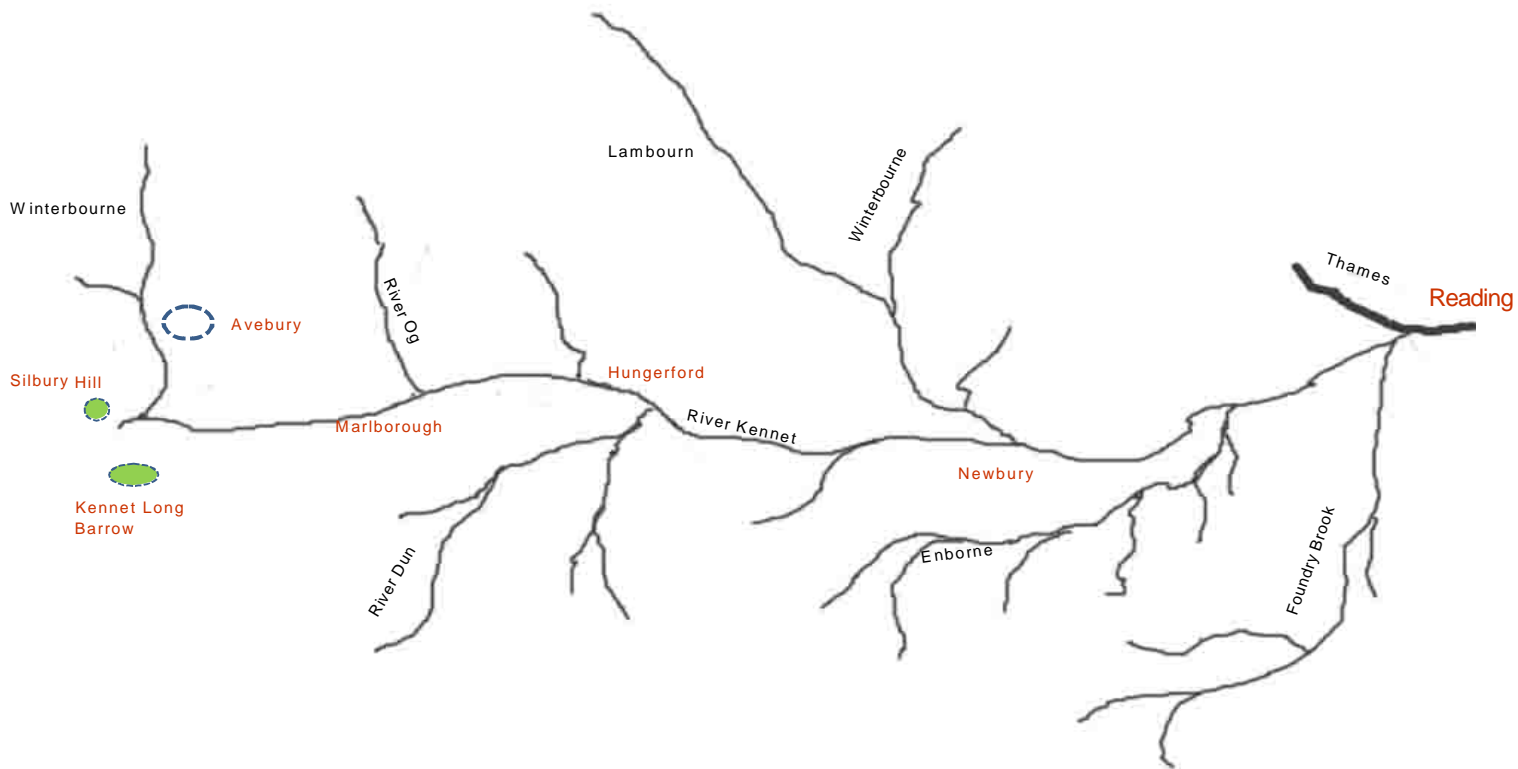


# Wiltshire, Berkshire & Hampshire Yews

## An Inventory of Churchyard Yews along the River Kennet and its Tributaries

part 1  
by Peter Norton



Part 1 of 2 describes the yews along the upper Kennet from its headwaters to Marlborough and the middle Kennet which is regarded as below Marlborough to Newbury.

## Introduction

The Kennet, a tributary of the Thames, is also associated with the Kennet and Avon Canal which links Bristol and London.

One of the Kennet's sources is Swallowhead Spring near Silbury Hill in Wiltshire. The other is a collection of tributaries to the North of Avebury near the villages of Uffcott and Broad Hinton which flow south past Avebury to join with the waters from Swallowhead Springs. In these early stages it passes close to many prehistoric sites including Avebury Henge and Silbury Hill.

The river flows through Marlborough, Hungerford and Newbury before reaching the Thames on the reach above Sonning Lock at Reading, some 45 miles from its main source.

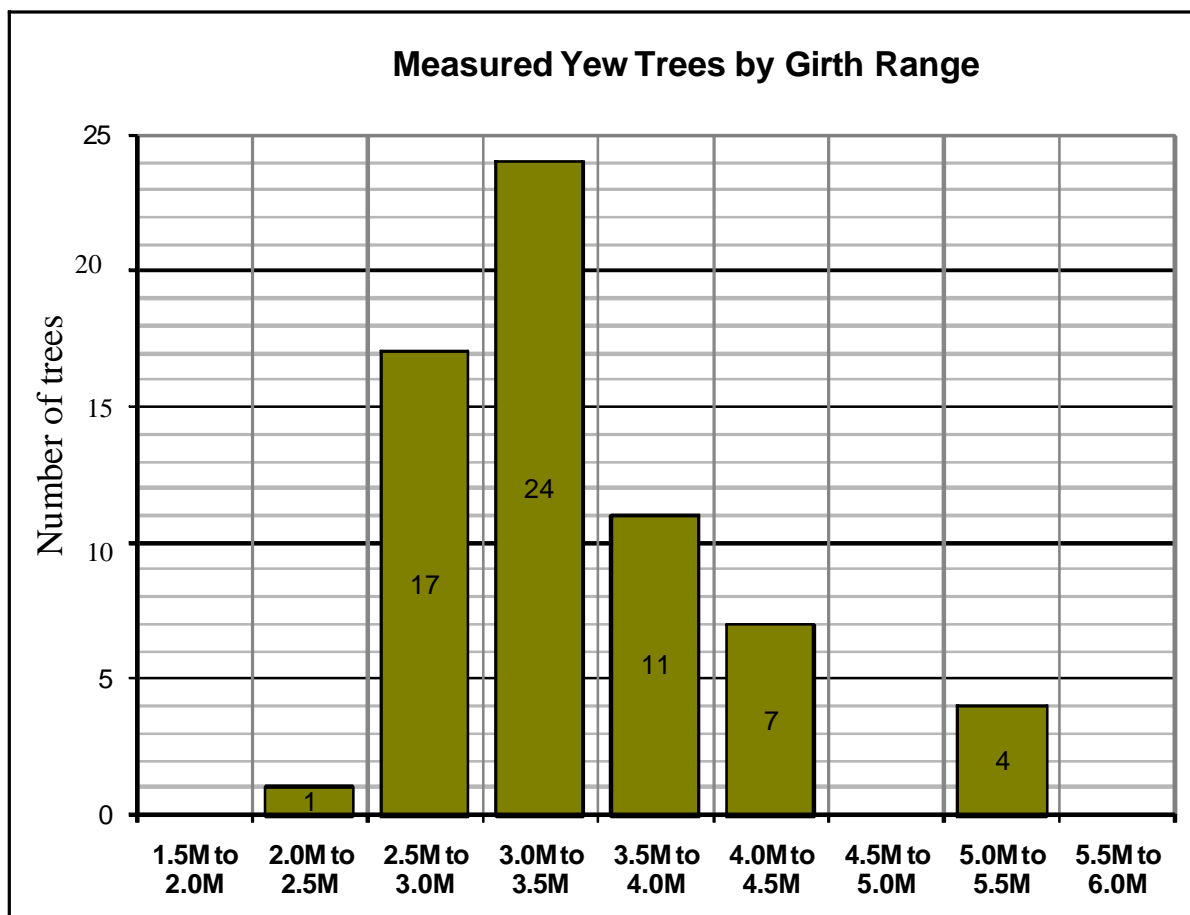
The canal runs adjacent to the river between Hungerford and Reading. There are numerous interchanges of water between the canal and the river, and a shared channel in several places.

The upper reaches of the River Kennet are served by two tributaries. The Og flows into the Kennet at Marlborough and the Dun enters at Hungerford. The Kennet's principal tributaries below Marlborough are the Lambourn, Enborne and the Foundry Brook along with many unnamed streams.

All of the towns and villages along the Kennet and its tributaries have been included. Seventy five churches were visited, of which fifty seven contained yews.

A total of 220 trees were noted at these sites of which 64 had measurements recorded. The graph below groups the measured yews according to their girth, presented here in metric form. It does not include yews whose girth was estimated\*. Where a tree has been measured at different heights, the measurement taken closest to the root/ground is used for this graph.

The graph below relates to the trees in both part 1 and 2 of this paper. At the end of part 2 are Appendix 1, containing a full list of all churches visited, including those where no yews were recorded. Appendix 2 presents a more detailed breakdown of the information shown below.



- **North of Swallowhead Spring is a winterbourne which rises near to Broad Hinton and flows south for some five miles, through villages that take on its name, to then flow into the spring. On the way it is joined by an unnamed stream rising near to Yatesbury and converging at Avebury.**

**Broad Hinton - St Peter ad Vincula (St Peter in chains) - SU105763 - Wiltshire**



Possibly a 13<sup>th</sup> century church on a Saxon site. It was rebuilt in the 17<sup>th</sup> century and restored in the 19<sup>th</sup>.

Two male yews grow here, the larger near to the north east gate measuring 11' at the root crown and 12' at 2'.

**Avebury - St James - SU099699 - Wiltshire**

A Saxon church once stood on this site. Features from the 11<sup>th</sup>, 12<sup>th</sup> and 13<sup>th</sup> centuries survive. The tower was built in the 15th century and restoration of the church was carried out in 1884 and 1931.

Of the four yews in this churchyard, the female shown here is found SW of the church. Its girth was 10' 11" at the root crown. Two further yews grow south of the church and a smaller male on the north side.



**Yatesbury - All Saints - SU063714 - Wiltshire**



The church is thought to have been built between the 12<sup>th</sup> and 13<sup>th</sup> centuries. It was restored in 1854.

Two yews are found in the churchyard. This female had a girth of 11' 10" at 1' above the root crown and grows near to the south porch. A smaller yew grows nearby.

- ***The Kennet flows past the great chambered tomb at West Kennet and on through East Kennet to Marlborough, covering a distance of some seven miles.***

**East Kennet - Christ church - SU116674 - Wiltshire**



The church was rebuilt in 1863 on the site of a 12<sup>th</sup> century church.

This young male yew grows north west of the church. A plaque indicates that it was planted in 1935 to celebrate the silver jubilee of King George V. Girth was 7' 5" at 1' and 7' 11" at 3' from the ground.

**Preshute - St George - SU179685 - Wiltshire**

There has been a church on this site since the 12<sup>th</sup> century. With the exception of the tower it was rebuilt in 1854.

Three yews grow in the churchyard. The first, near to the south west entrance on Preshute Lane is female with a girth of 10' 1" at 1' and 11' at 3'.

The second (right) grows north west of the church. It is male with a girth of 16' 11" close to the ground. It is a classic example of re-growth, either from the stump of a felled yew, or from adventitious growth on the lower part of a damaged or decaying tree.

The third tree grows to the east alongside an Irish yew.



- ***The Og rises near Draycot Foliat and flows some seven miles before converging with the Kennet at Marlborough. It has passed through three villages that use its name,***

**Ogbourne St George - St George - SU195747 - Wiltshire**



A church at this site dates back to 1148. It was altered in the 14<sup>th</sup> and 15<sup>th</sup> centuries and restored in the 19<sup>th</sup>.

Two yews are found in the grounds. This male with a girth of 8' 9" at 1' grows north west of the church and a young female grows east of the church.

### Ogbourne St Andrew - St Andrew - SU188723 - Wiltshire

As with Ogbourne St George, there are records of a church dating back to 1148. It too had alterations carried out in the 14<sup>th</sup> and 15<sup>th</sup> centuries. Major work was carried out in around 1873 and the porch was rebuilt in 1914.



Within the churchyard boundaries to the north east of the church is a large bowl barrow 11ft high. Along with the church it is aligned and positioned on a further 'substantial but low' east-west earthwork which extends beyond the churchyard. When excavated in 1880 several burials were found which included both medieval and Saxon remains. The church is built on a foundation of Sarsen stones and others can be found on the perimeter.

Three yews grow in the churchyard. South east of the porch is the twin trunked male shown above with a girth of 12' 2" at 1'.

A female yew to the east of the church measured 8' 8" at 1' and a young male grows to the north east.

### Marlborough - St Mary the Virgin - SU189692 - Wiltshire

The Norman church was built in 1150. It was extended during the 15<sup>th</sup> and 16<sup>th</sup> centuries and partially rebuilt in 1653. Additions were made in 1873 and it was restored in 1955-7.

A single male yew grows here, opposite the south porch. Girth was 11' at about 1', but low spray hindered accurate measurement.



### Marlborough - St Peter & St Paul - SU185687 - Wiltshire



Little remains of the Norman church, which was possibly preceded by a Saxon structure. It was re-built in 1460 and restored in 1862. It was declared redundant in 1974 and is now used as an outlet for selling locally made craft items.

One female grows to the east of the church, its girth 8' 10" at 1'.

- *The Kennet now continues to flow eastwards and on in to Ramsbury*

**Mildenhall - St John the Baptist - SU209694 - Wiltshire**



Some parts of the church tower are Saxon. Much of the present building dates from the thirteenth century. In 1816 the interior was refurbished and the church was restored in 1876.

This female yew, growing north of the church, had a girth of 8' 10" at 1'.

**Axford - St Michael - SU233700 - Wiltshire**

The church was built as a chapel of ease in 1856 and contains two young trees to the south east of the church, one male the other female.

- *At Knighton, just east of Ramsbury, the Kennet is joined by another unnamed winterbourne rising to the south of Aldbourne and converging some four miles later. The Kennet continues its journey to Hungerford in the county of Berkshire some 16 miles east of its source where it's joined by the Dun.*

**Chilton Foliat - St Mary - SU319705 - Wiltshire**



The origins of the church are probably 12<sup>th</sup> century, with major reconstruction in 1629 and restoration in 1845. A fine avenue of 12 pollarded lime trees lead the way to the porch.

Three yews are found here. The first grows south west of the church, a twin trunked male with a girth of 11' 4" at 1' 6".

Shown here is a female growing west of the church, its girth 10' 2" at 1'.

A young male grows to the north west.

- *The Dun rises near to Great Bedwyn and flows about six miles into the Kennet at Hungerford. An unnamed shallow stream west of Froxfield and a further stream rising near to Shalbourne and Ham also join the Dun just before its confluence with the Kennet.*

**Great Bedwyn - St Mary the Virgin - SU277642 - Wiltshire**

Building of this church began in 1092 on the remains of an earlier Saxon church dating back to AD905. Alterations and additions are recorded in the 12<sup>th</sup>, 13<sup>th</sup>, 14<sup>th</sup> and 15<sup>th</sup> centuries along with major restoration between 1853 and 1855.

Three male yews grow in the churchyard. The tree shown here grows west of the church and on the boundary, its girth 10' 8" at both 8" and 3'. The yew south east of the church had a girth of 9' at 1'. The third yew grows at the north west gate.



**Little Bedwyn - St Michael - SU291661 - Wiltshire**

A 12<sup>th</sup> century church with a tower added in the 13<sup>th</sup>. This tower was rebuilt and a spire added in the 15<sup>th</sup> century. There was extensive restoration in 1868.



Ten yews grow on the churchyards perimeters. Seven are along the west perimeter, the most southerly of these a female girthing 8' 4" at 1'.

One female grows to the north, and a male and female on the east and south perimeters. All had a mass of grass clippings piled to a height of almost three feet around the base of the trees. None were larger than the measurement recorded above. A very young female grows near the south entrance.

**Shalbourne - St Michael and all Angels - SU315635 - Wiltshire**



The church, which still retains some of its 12<sup>th</sup> century features, was extensively restored in 1873.

One female yew grows south east of the church. Its girth was 9' 7" at 1' and 9' at 3'. Note the embedded headstone.

## Ham - All Saints - SU329629 - Wiltshire

All Saints was built in the 13<sup>th</sup> century and extensively altered in the 18<sup>th</sup>.

15 yews grow in the churchyard to the north east of the church. The most significant is this female, near to the porch, with a girth of 14' at 1' and 14' 6" at 3'. The remaining yews are much younger.



- *The Kennet continues to flow through Berkshire from Hungerford to Reading, a distance of some thirty miles. It is joined by the Lambourn, Enborne, Foundry Brook and many unnamed streams.*

## Hungerford - St Lawrence - SU334686 - Berkshire



St Lawrence was rebuilt in 1816 on the site of an earlier church that had collapsed.

Four yews grow here. Two male and a female grow adjacent to the south east boundary. The largest, shown here, is the most southerly of this trio, measuring 9' at 1' from the top of a small mound

A younger female is found just to the west of the church.

## Kintbury - St Mary the Virgin - SU383670 - Berkshire

Here is the site of a Saxon Minster, though the present church dates from the 12<sup>th</sup> century. Additions were carried out in the 15<sup>th</sup> and 18<sup>th</sup> centuries.

Six yews grow in the churchyard, as follows:  
Two females near to the south gate, the largest of which is shown here, with a girth of 9' 7" at 1'.  
A male on the south west perimeter.  
Two males west of the church.  
A female east of the church.





### Hampstead Marshall - St Mary - SU420667 - Berkshire



The church was built in the 12<sup>th</sup> century and renovated in 1893 and 1929.

One male yew grows here, south east of the church. Its girth was 11' at 1'.

- *The river Lambourn rises near Lambourn and flows over 13 miles to converge with the Kennet east of Newbury. Its major tributary is the Winterbourne which rises near to Chieveley and converges at Bagnor.*

### Lambourn - St Michael and all Angels - SU326789 - Berkshire

Lambourn Church was a Saxon Minster, and Lambourn Minster is still its official title. The present building is mostly Norman in origin, and was added to in the 13<sup>th</sup>, 14<sup>th</sup> and 15<sup>th</sup> centuries. It was repaired in 1849 and between 1949 and 1951.

Eight yews grow in the churchyard, and all except one are female. The only male grows with three females on the western perimeter. Of the others one grows west of the church, another south west of the church and close to it, another in the south east corner of the churchyard (this one characterised by thick lower growth) and the last north west of the church. This one, comprised of four stems emerging from the top of a small mound, had a girth of 10' 10" at 1' (over a slight covering of ivy).

### Eastbury - St James the Greater - SU345771 - Berkshire

A small church dating from 1851, with four young yews growing along the north east perimeter.

### East Garston - All Saints - SU361770 - Berkshire

A 12<sup>th</sup> century church, extended in the 14<sup>th</sup> and restored in 1876.



12 yews grow in the churchyard. The largest, shown here, is north east of the church. It is male, with a girth of 10' 6" at 2'. In the background of the photo, west of the church, is a female girthing 9' 2" at 1'. Along the east perimeter are two males and one female. Along the western perimeter are 3 much younger yews, one male and two females. To the south of the church are two females and one male.

Most of the yews have had major crown reduction at some time. Adjacent to the path leading to the church a small millennium yew seemed to be struggling.

### Great Shefford - St Mary - SU380753 - Berkshire

A 12<sup>th</sup> century church with a Norman round tower. It was much altered in the 15<sup>th</sup> century and restored in 1870. The church is approached through an old avenue of 19 tall lime trees.

One male yew grows on a bank opposite the south porch and close to an old preaching cross. The tree measured 13' 2" at 1' from the top of the slope. It is a fine healthy yew having a 'break of crown' at about 6' from which several large branches grow.



### Welford - St Gregory - SU408731 - Berkshire

A church site since Saxon times. The Norman round tower is all that was retained when the church was rebuilt between 1852 and 1855.



Fourteen yews grow in the church grounds. Ten of these are along the north east perimeter (to the rear of the church) of which the largest, female, girthed 9' 8" at 1' and had a much reduced crown. West of the porch is a young female, while to the south west and near the path is a twin trunked male.

The largest yew (shown here) is found at the south east gate. It is male with a girth of 16' 5" at approx 1' and 17' 1" at 2'. Four nails hammered in at a height of about 1' were used as a marker for measurement. Break of crown was at approximately 10', where the tree separates into two main leaders. Just to the north west of this tree is another large male, unmeasurable because of dense low branch growth, but estimated at between 10' and 14'.\*

### Boxford - St Andrew - SU428716 - Berkshire

The church is Saxon in origin. The west tower collapsed in 1657 and was rebuilt in brick around 1692. The church was added to in 1841 and the interior much altered in 1908-09.



Two yews grow here. East of the church is this male with a girth of 12' 2" at 6". There is a nail hammered into the tree at this height.

South of the porch and next to a large tomb is an ivy covered female.

**Chieveley - St Mary - SU474741 - Berkshire**

A Saxon site with a late Norman church. This was rebuilt in 1872-73.

Eleven young yews are scattered about the perimeters as follows: a group of seven close to the south east gate, three to the west and one at the main east gate.

**Winterbourne - St James the Less - SU450719 - Berkshire**

A small 12<sup>th</sup> century church, added to in the 18<sup>th</sup> century and restored in 1895.

Three young male yews grow close to the gate.

**Speen - St Mary the Virgin - SU455678 - Berkshire**

A medieval church built on Saxon foundations. It is reported as the oldest church in Berkshire although in 1860 and 1878 it was almost wholly rebuilt, and the appearance is largely Victorian. It has a holy well (the Lady Well) about 50 metres away.

This one male yew, with a girth of 10' 9" at 1' and 11' 1" at 2', grows near to the north east corner of the church.



- Continued in Part 2 -