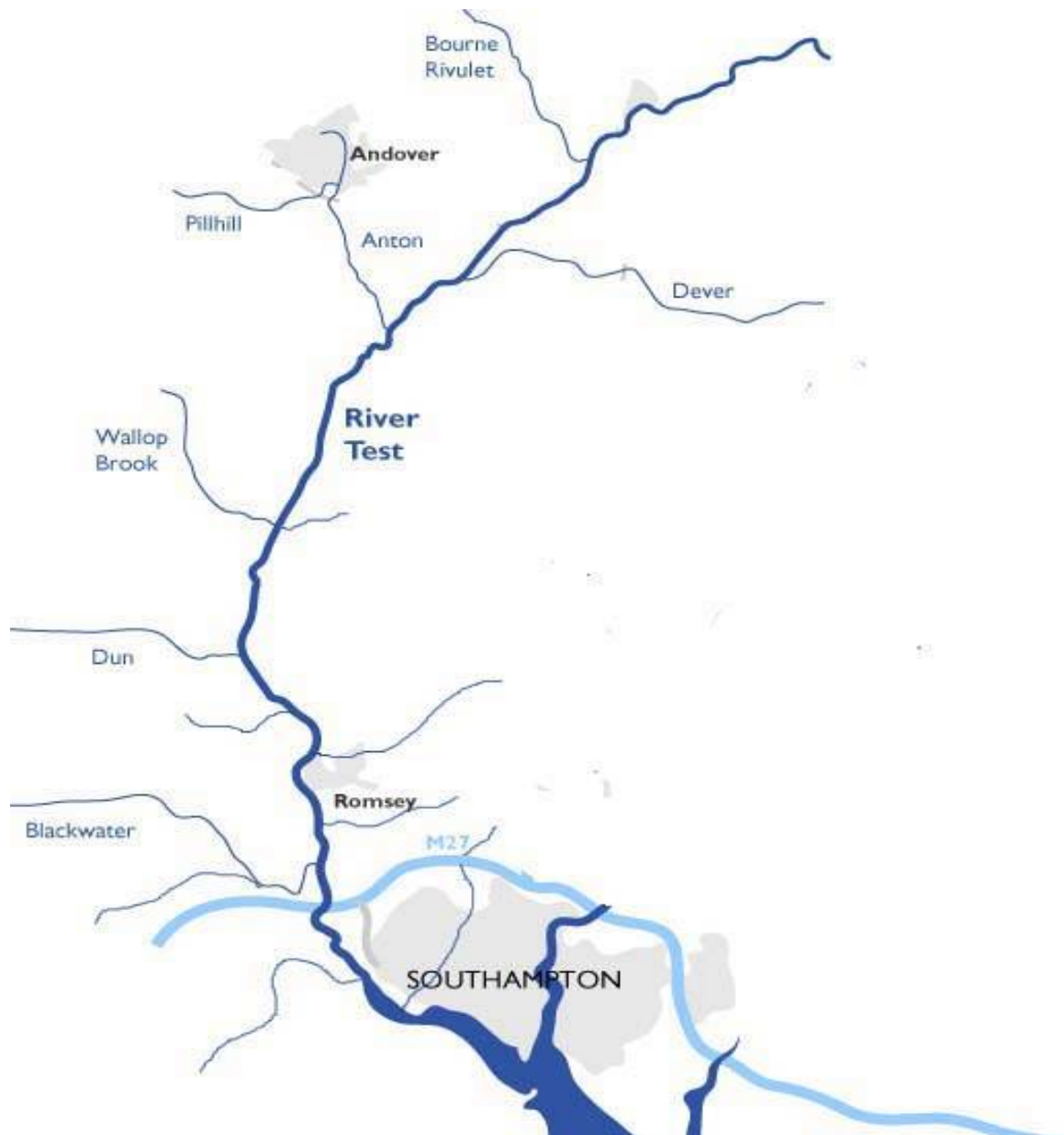


Hampshire Yews

An Inventory of Churchyard Yews along the Hampshire Test and its tributaries

Part 3 – The Lower Test

By Peter Norton



Introduction:

The Test rises at Ashe, just to the west of Basingstoke and on its way through Hampshire is fed from many streams and brooks emanating from the west and one main stream from the east.

After flowing through Stockbridge and Romsey, it converges in Southampton with the Itchen some 40 miles from its source. At this point it becomes Southampton Water which flows into the Solent before reaching the open sea.

The west tributaries include the Bourne Rivulet, Anton, Wallop Brook, Dun, Blackwater and Bartley Water.

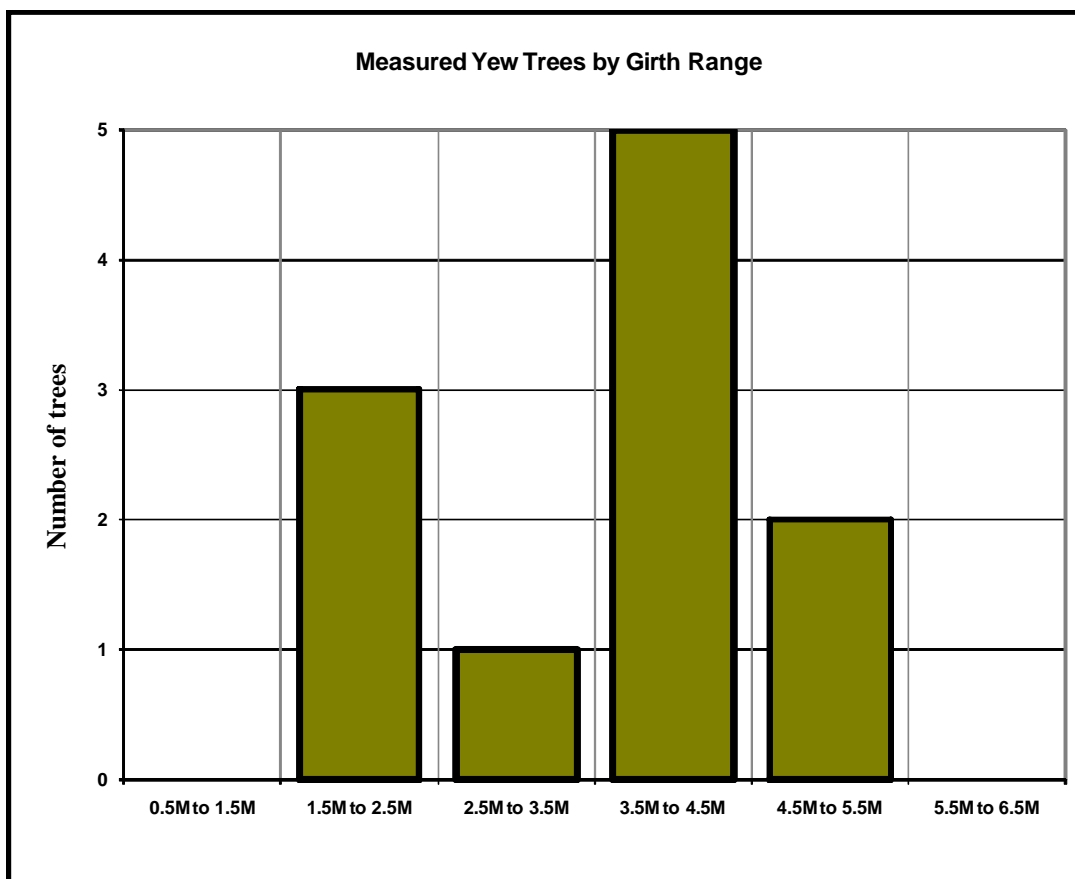
The east tributaries include the Dever, Tadburn and Tanners Brook.

The Lower Test

This is the last of three reports that split the River Test into three sections; Upper, Middle and Lower. The Lower Test is described as from just north of Romsey to its confluence with the Itchen, covering a distance of some 12 miles by road. Along its path it is joined by the Tadburn, Blackwater, Bartley Water and Tanners Brook.

All of the towns and villages along this part of the Test and its tributaries were included, with 18 churches visited, of which 12 contained yews. All churches are in Hampshire unless otherwise stated.

Of the 26 yews noted at these sites, 11 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 Test flows into Romsey and is joined by many small streams which are man-made carriers of the Test. The main stream is run off from Tadburn Lake to the east of the town.*

Romsey – The Abbey Church of St. Mary and Ethelflaeda

This was the church of a great Benedictine nunnery founded in Anglo-Saxon times. Construction of the present building began in 1120 and was completed by 1250.

One young male yew, growing north of the church, girthed 8' at 1'.

- *The Blackwater rises to the east of Salisbury near the Wiltshire village of Redlynch and converges with the Test between Totton and Redbridge. On its way it is fed by many small streams and brooks, the largest of which is the Cadnam, which rises south of Cadnam Common and runs NE through Paultons, under Ower Bridge, to meet Blackwater at Busheylease Farm.*

Redlynch – St Mary – Wiltshire SU211201

The new church was built in 1837 at Lover (thought to be a derivation of Lower Redlynch) and its churchyard contains seven female yews. An eighth was struck by lightning in 1996 and became unsafe. This curved memorial bench was made from some of the wood and is sited close to the stump south east of the church. Two of the yews grow to the north and east of the church, while the remaining five are found to the south and west. Ivy was rampant and prevented girth recording.



Whiteparish – All Saints – Wiltshire – SU246235

Originally built around 1190, the church retains some of the early Norman fabric as well as detail from the 13th and 14th centuries. Improvements were made in 1853 with major restoration in 1870.

The single yew is a female, growing north east of the porch and girthing 7' 5" at the top of the earth pile.

Landford – St Andrew – Wiltshire – SU261201

This is possibly a Saxon site. The 11th century church has a Norman doorway arch. The church was almost entirely rebuilt in 1858.

Two young male yews grow close to the east perimeter, the largest with a girth of 9' 4" at 1'.



Plaitford – St Peter – SU277202



The church is of 13th century origin with extensive restoration in 1856.

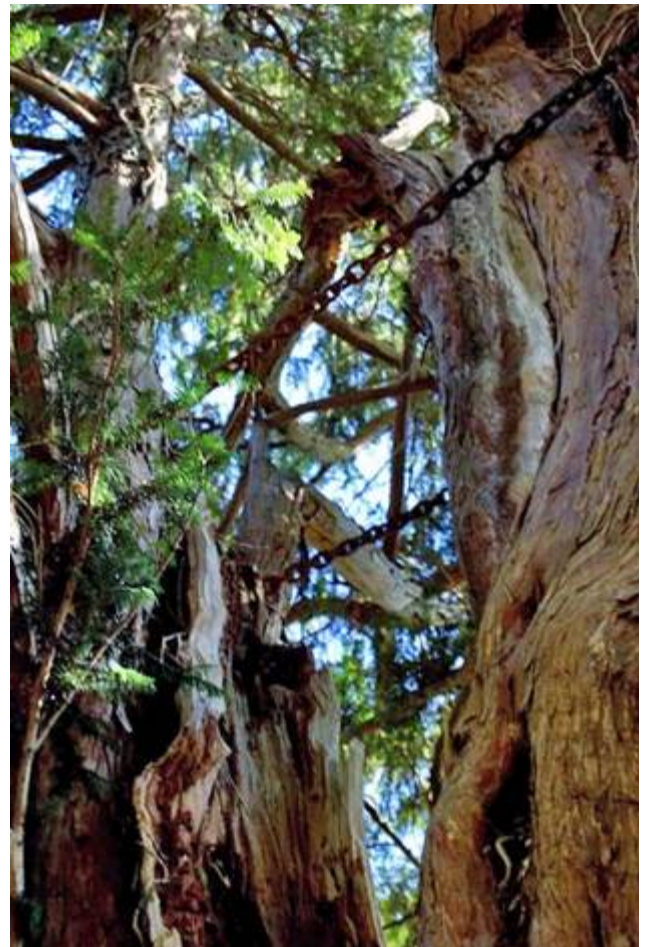
Of the two male yews found here, the largest grows at the north west perimeter corner. Its girth of 12' 2" at 1' reduces to 11' 10" at 3'.

The smaller yew grows east of the church.

Bramshaw – St Peter – SU265166

The earliest identifiable features in the church are 13th century. It was rebuilt in 1828.

The single yew that grows in the churchyard is this hollowing male, with a chain wrapping around the branches to hold it together. Its girth in 2009 was 13' 5" at 3'.



Sherfield English – St Leonard (Old church site) – SU292229

The original church of St Leonard, built in the 13th century, was situated about ¼ of a mile north of St Leonard (New Church) along Church Lane. The site is opposite Manor Farm and some gravestones are still visible. The building became unfit for use in the mid 19th Century and the nave was pulled down in 1859 and the chancel in 1907.

A male and a female yew still guard what was once the north entrance into the churchyard. The male to the east girthed 13' 5" at the root crown and 12' 10" at 2'. The female to the west had much lower growth and young shoots, making measurement difficult. The 15' 7" at 2' obtained is probably a slightly exaggerated figure. Both trees had no crown reduction and carried healthy foliage on branches that sweep to the ground.



Sherfield English – St Leonard (New church) – SU290223

The modern church was built on donated land alongside the main road in 1859 but by 1902 was declared unsafe. A new church was erected by 1904.

Two yews are found to the east of the church. The largest was recorded in 2005 as male, with a girth of 15' 9" at 2'. The existence of a 400/500 year old yew indicates that the site was in use before the 1859 construction.

A younger female yew also grows here.



East Wellow - St Margaret of Antioch – SU303203

The present building, consecrated in 1215, stands on earlier foundations. It was extended in the 13th and 15th centuries and was relatively untouched by the Victorians. As the final resting place of Florence Nightingale (1820-1910) it is a well visited church.

Two young males and a female sapling yew grow along the west perimeter. The largest, west of the church, has a fine healthy crown and low sweeping branches.

- *Bartley Water appears to have its source just north of Lyndhurst (as does Beaulieu River) before it meets the Eling Channel about 1½ miles south of Bartley village.*

Netley Marsh – St Mathew – SU332130

This new church, built in 1855, has one young male growing to the east of the south gate.

Eling – St Mary the Virgin – SU367125

Here is the tenth oldest church in England, a small chapel being built on this site around 850 A.D. All that remains of the Saxon workmanship are the arch in the north aisle and a small window opening onto the altar.



The present church contains some features from the 11th century, and was added to in each of the centuries up to the 15th, with some minor Victorian restoration.

Two yews grow in the churchyard. The largest, south east of the church, is this male with a girth of 13' 1" at 2' and 14' at 3'. Below 2' the girth increases dramatically due to exaggerated root growth. Hollowing is in progress and aerial roots are visible.

To the south of the porch a younger female girthed 8' 1" at 1'

- *Tanner's Brook is a stream that rises near North Baddesley then flows south and flows into the River Test at Millbrook.*

Chilworth Old Village – St Denys – SU406187

The church is of Saxon origin. By 1801 it was in total disrepair and described as 'an ivy clad ruin'. It was rebuilt in 1812 by the then Lord of the Manor.

Two yews are found here. Close to the south west gate is an unmeasurable male, while to the east of the church is this female with a girth of 12' 3" at the root crown.



Dibden – All Saints – SU397086

Dibden's 13th century church was the first to be destroyed in the War. It was struck by incendiary bombs in the early hours of Thursday morning, 20th June, 1940, and completely wrecked by fire. Amongst the objects destroyed or damaged were yew communion rails with twisted baluster shafts dated from about 1660.

Most writers of the period mention the old yew tree which then stood in the churchyard. One stated that "the immense yew tree in the churchyard ranks, both for age and size, among the fathers of the forest. It is about thirty feet in girth." (Notes from a Companion in a tour round Southampton, 1799.) Mudie's "Hampshire" 1838 has the following note about Dibden, that "The Church is an ancient structure, but has little to recommend it, save the remains of a most venerable yew tree in the churchyard." The tree was blown down in 1836 and from it a small polished yew table was made. This is now in the rectory.

Historical references have been obtained but not directly copied from:

University of London and History of Parliament Trust <http://www.british-history.ac.uk/>
The Churches of Hampshire <http://southernlife.org.uk/churchin.htm>
Hampshire churches <http://www.baxian.org.uk/churches/hants.htm>

The following sites were also visited. None had any yews.

Nursling – St Boniface – SU360164

Copythorne – St Mary – SU304145

Marchwood – St John the Apostle – SU385102

North Baddesley - St John the Baptist – SU402208

Millbrook – Holy Trinity – SU385130

Summary:

Over the three reports into the churchyard yews that grow along the River Test and its tributaries, we have visited 80 churchyards, recorded the positions of 182 yews and taken measurements of 62 trees. The histogram below groups the measured trees according to their girth. The pie chart shows the percentage of yews in each girth range, while the column graph compares the statistics for each of the three areas visited.

