

In the past:

1865: *Handbook for travellers in Surrey, Hampshire, and the Isle of Wight* by King and Murray tells of a yew 21 feet in girth, a figure repeated in *A Parochial History of St. Mary Bourne* 1888, which added: 'The larger yew-tree was probably introduced at the consecration of the church, and if so its age must be about 800 years.....it is hollow, the space in its interior furnishing a convenient receptacle for the implements used in preparing man's last resting place'.

The tree was also noted by writers in the 20th century, being described in Bell and Varley's 1909 *Hampshire* as 'one of the finest and most venerable yews in all Hampshire' and in Mee's *King's England* (1939) as 'a big decrepit fellow, gnarled and hollow'.

In 1981 Meredith made the following notes: 'One large yew in the churchyard in pretty wrecked condition, described as hollow some 100 years ago, it is a hollow shell but there is new bark on the SE side of the tree. The girth measurement of this tree is 16ft 3 ins at 3ft from the ground, and 21ft 1inch at 5ft from the ground, the tree is SE from the church'.

1998 and 2006: I recorded a male yew, formerly of greater size, that will become smaller still when the prominent white sapwood section decays. It has lost its covering of bark, and over the course of centuries will either decay and disappear altogether, or will act as a frame for new living wood to be laid down. For now it will continue to be the focal point of the tree.

Of the living section, a hollow main branch emerges from the bole at a height of 10' to 12'. Inside the tree an internal stem was seen. This yew can help in our understanding of some of the wide discrepancies in recorded girth of yew trees over the centuries. In this instance girth will be significantly reduced when the sapwood section decays. I found foliage sparse and unhealthy in 2006 - but by 2012 Peter Norton reported that the tree appeared to be recovering.

Girth records :

1947: 19' at 4' 6" - Gardner

1981: 16' 3" at 3'; 21' 1" at 5' - Meredith

1998: 22' at the ground; 20' 10" at 3'; 20' 3" at 5' - Tim Hills

2003: 6.05 (19' 10") at 1.1m - Russell Cleaver

2006: 21' 8" at 1' and 20' 4" at 3' - variety of girths at 3' suggest it is unmeasurable at this height - Tim Hills

2012: 21' 9" at 1' was recorded (height taken from the east side of the tree) where an embedded nail and then four others undulate around the bole - Peter Norton



Photos below - Peter Norton - 2012





There is a younger yew growing close to the old yew which, according to the church leaflet was planted in 1759. In 1982 Meredith recorded a girth of 8' 10" at 4'. In 2006 I recorded 8' 8" at 1' and 8' 10" at 3'.

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