

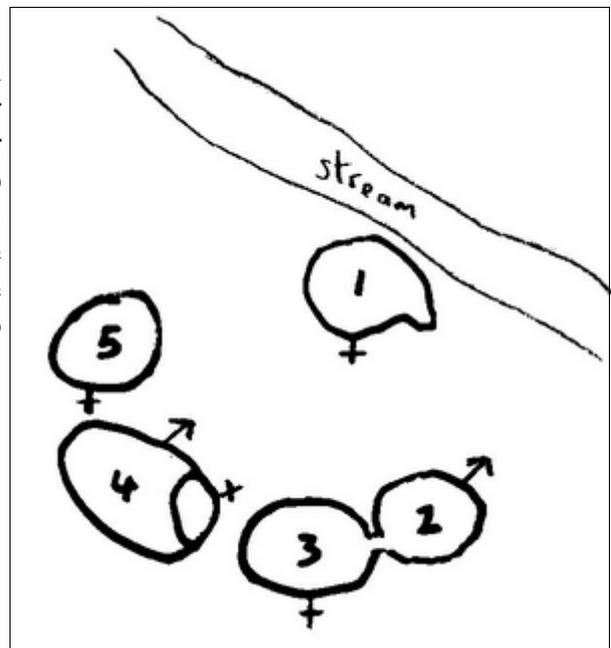
A NOTABLE YEWE GROVE at TIDDINGTON Oxfordshire



At this tranquil spot, adjoining open countryside, is found an unusual circle of old yews. Photographs suggested that these might be fragments of an ancient tree, so a site visit was carried out in the autumn of 2009.

At this time of the year ripe arils adorned the female branches, while the male pollen sacs were well developed, making it easy to determine the sex of individual trees. Close examination revealed both male and female trees, with no suggestion that these were fragments of an ancient yew.

However, yews found in unexpected places often have a story to tell, perhaps marking a well or spring, a parish boundary, earthworks, or a former religious site. While it is possible that this group was planted to create a garden feature, it is also possible that a church once stood close to this site before the plague struck in the 17th century, and that these yews were planted close to a burial ground to commemorate those who died in the plague.



The 5 yews

Tree 1 is female. It girths about 8' and grows close to a stream which has undercut its root system. The stream was about to have its course diverted by local authority contractors and the tree should benefit from new soil piled against its roots.



Tree 2 is male and tree 3 female, each having a girth of just over 8'. They have grown so close to each other that roots from tree 2 already cover a portion of its neighbour's trunk.



Tree 4 is largely male with a flattened bole, girthing about 9' 6", however at (A) a female section, presumably once a separate tree, has completely fused with and become part of the male tree.

Tree 5, female, is the smallest girthed of the group at about 6'.



The reason why this extraordinary and unusual circle of yews should be growing at this site remains



a mystery. Some would argue that girths of 6'8' suggest a maximum age of 200 years, however there are trunk features, particularly of decay and regrowth, that indicate they could be considerably older. Others might speculate that the female trees 1,3 and 5 (as well as the female trunk that has become attached to male tree 4) have grown up from the common root system of a still older yew that once grew at this site.

It might be possible to get closer to the answer if we could trace the ownership and use of this land over the past centuries. On the other hand it might only serve to make this fine circle of yews even more of an enigma.

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