

## The Westbourne Yew Avenue, West Sussex

Tim Hills (2000) and Peter Norton (2013)

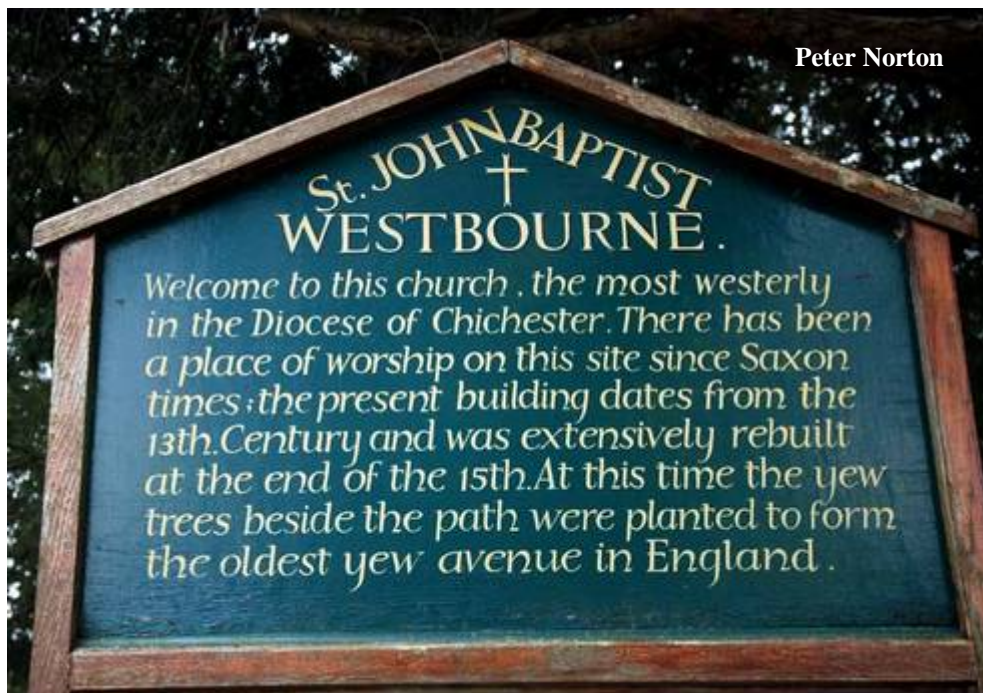


In the 1848 *Topographical Dictionary of England* the principal entrance to Westbourne church was 'approached by an avenue of eight yew-trees, remarkable for their size'. In the accounts that followed various dates were suggested for the planting of these splendid trees.

The 1864 *Gentleman's Magazine* described the churchyard as 'noticeable for its beautiful avenue of yew-trees, coeval with the tower' which was pulled down and replaced 'about the year 1450'. In other accounts the tower was rebuilt one hundred years later, in the middle of the 16th century.

According to the 1870 *Compendious history of Sussex* by MA Lower the venerable avenue of yew trees was 'said to have been planted in 1530 by Lord Maltravers' who was also the Earl of Arundel.

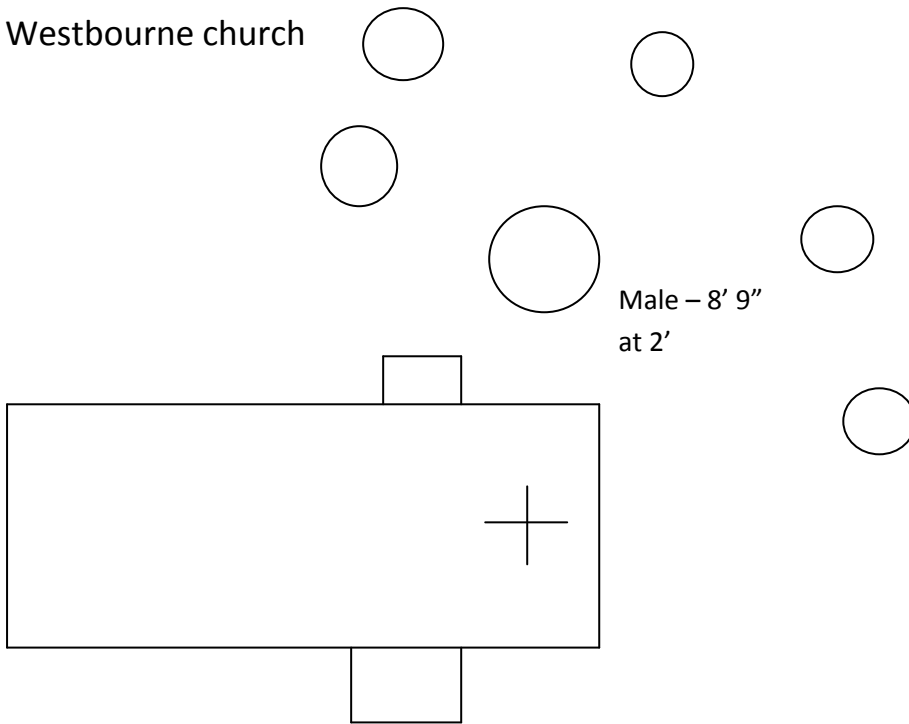
Arthur Mee's *King's England Series* of 1937 also credits the Earl of Arundel, but gives the planting date as 1544.



Information provided on the church notice board has taken the mid point between 1450 and 1544 and gives the end of the 15th century as the time of planting. Whichever date we take these are very slow growth rates, and this would seem to be confirmed by comparing measurements taken in 2000 and 2013 which appear later in the article.

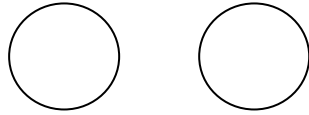
The plan below also shows a further 6 younger yews growing on the south side, but there are no known planting dates for these trees.

Westbourne church



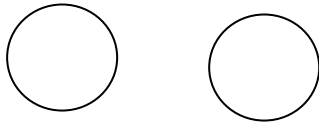
Male - 8' 9"  
at 2'

#1 Male - 13' 6" at  
2' 6", Hollowing



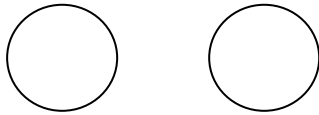
#2 Male - 11' 7"  
at root crown

#3 Male - 11' 4" at 1'  
6" + internal growth



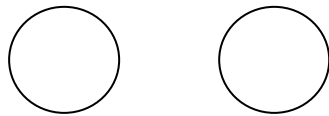
#4 Male - 10' 9"  
at 2'

#5 Male - 11' 8"  
at root crown

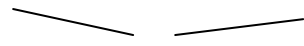


#6 Male - 10' 10"  
at root crown

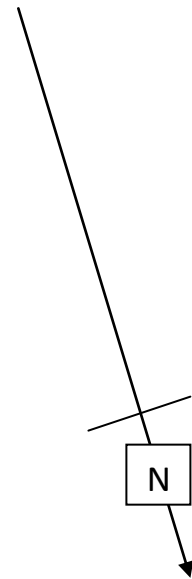
#7 Female - 9' 5"  
at root crown



#8 Male - 10' 2" at  
root crown



North Gate



The trees were measured in 2000 and 2013.

Tree number	July 2000 Tim Hills	April 2013 Peter Norton	March 2013 Peter Norton
1	14' 2" at 5'	14' 4" at 5'	13' 6" at 2' 6"
2	11' at 5'	11' 2" at 5'	11' 7" at root crown
3	11' 10" at 5'	12' 4" at 5'	11' 4" at 1' 6"
4	11' 3" at 5'	11' 3" at 5'	10' 9" at 2'
5	11' 6" at 5'	11' 10" at 5'	11' 8" at root crown
6	11' at 5'	11' 1" at 5'	10' 10" at root crown
7	9' 4" at 5'	9' 6" at 5'	9' 5" at root crown
8	10' 4" at 4'	10' 7" at 4'	10' 2" at root crown

The measurement heights of 4' and 5' were taken from path level. The figures show girth increases ranging from zero to 6 inches in about 12¾ years. The average increase in that time is 2½" - slow growth indeed, equating to only an inch in 5 years or a foot in 60 years.



Tree 1, the largest of the 8 yews is seen on the left in 2013, tree 2 is on the right.

The yew avenue in 2013 looking from the church towards the lych gate. On the left are trees 2,4,6 and 8 and on the right are 1,3,5 and 7.



The same view more than 100 years ago. Postcard supplied by Christian Wolf.



Yew avenue in 2000 - on the left trees 5,3 and 1 and on the right trees 6,4 and 2



© Tim Hills and Peter Norton  
April 2013