

Woolland was an outpost of Middleton Abbey in the 10th century. In the *Civil Engineer and Architect's Journal of 1857 (No.277)*, both church and yew were noted: 'Altogether this church is, in its way, a gem of art, reflecting the highest praise on all concerned in its erection. In the church-yard is one of, probably, the largest yew-trees in England'.

According to Baxter in *The Eternal Yew* 'the old Yew tree which dominates the small churchyard at Woolland is probably the only Yew to have given shelter to three or possibly four churches.....the Yew has a twin trunk; it is sometimes referred to as a split trunk, but this is a natural type of growth. In 1871, its girth was 23 feet; it is now almost 32 feet. With a height of over 60 feet and an umbrage 58 feet in diameter, the Woolland Yew overshadows one half of the church'.

The 23' girth reported in 1871 came from Hutchins' *History and Antiquities of Dorset*. About 70 years later RCB Gardner reported a girth of 31' 4". Since no ancient yew increases its girth by 8' 4" in such a short time, there needs to be an explanation for the low 1871 girth. Misprints and incorrect copying from one source to another are one possibility. It might also be that Hutchins' measurement did not include branch (A), which would have been considerably smaller 140 years ago and was perhaps thought to be a separate tree and therefore was not included in his measurement.

1998: Today the substantial bole consists of 5 large branches, the central 3 of which grow vertically and are held together at 18/20' with a metal bar. The other two lean symmetrically outwards, with that nearest to the church appearing to be almost separated from the main body of the tree. However, closer investigation showed that it is well connected close to the ground. Apart from this wayward branch, the bole is intact to a height of 6/7'. Andrew Morton pays tribute to this yew as 'one of the best specimens in Britain, growing quietly in the corner of the churchyard'.

Girth

1944: 31' 4" - Rev. R.C.B. Gardner for Cornish *The Churchyard Yew and Immortality*

1998: 31' at 1' - Tim Hills

2012 31' 1' at 1' - due to the nature of the tree the tape was slightly angled to obtain the minimum girth - Peter Norton

1998



