KEMBLE All Saints Diocese of Gloucester ST98929698



The Kemble yew in 2011

1894: ‘The yew on the west side of the tower is probably older than the fabric - the trunk measures 18ft 6ins round at a height of 6 feet from the ground. It is hollow for some 9ft or 10ft high, and in the centre is the distinct stem of a smaller tree which has become merged into the main trunk. Local tradition says that the great yew tree by the tower dates from Anglo-Saxon times’. *The Wiltshire Archaeological and Natural History magazine*

1938: ‘The churchyard has a natural curiosity in the shape of a giant yew tree with a hollow trunk and the trunk of another inside it. The tree is 20ft round, though this includes the beams clamped round with iron bands. We can see the inner trunk through a little hole. About a foot thick it appears to rise straight from the ground, and may be quite a separate yew. Old yew must have been young when the tower was built 700 years ago’. *The King’s England*

In the 1950s half of the trunk was removed, allowing a clear view of the internal root or internal stem (A). This grows in what was the centre of the tree, beginning its life growing downwards from one of the branches through the tree’s decaying and hollowing centre until it roots in the ground. This phenomenon has only been recently understood.

1998**:** Being only 2m from the church, the male tree has been encouraged to grow upwards rather than outwards; even so it is not especially tall. Ivy had been recently removed and the presence of cyclamen beneath the tree demonstrates that brambles, nettles and elder are not the only plants capable of withstanding the yew’s deep shade. This tree provides evidence that a yew can grow for centuries within a few metres of a building without causing damage to foundations.
Meredith’s gazetteer records this as a female tree but it is certainly male.

Girth of the Kemble yew:

	Girth at 3’	Girth at 5’
1998	15' 8"	15' 9"
2011	16' 1"	16' 3"
2026	16' 7½"	16' 8"

Girth of internal stem

	Girth at ground	Girth at 3’	Girth at 5’
1998	4' 1"		3' 4"
2011	4' 6"		3' 7"
2026	4' 10"	4' 1½"	3' 10"

The Kemble yew in 2026









© Tim Hills - Ancient Yew Group - 2026