

Little Somborne

Wooded Downs

A survey of the yews

Peter Norton July 2013



Introduction

The geology of the downlands is comprised of Cretaceous Upper Chalk capped in parts by clay-with-flints. Most of the land is ancient semi-natural woodland and hedgerows, with some arable areas.

Greenwood's map of Old Hampshire 1826 indicates general woodlands, which by the 1830s contained several hundred acres planted with hazel (*Corylus*) coppice under oak (*Quercus*) standards. The hazel coppice is still worked, though not on an industrial scale as in the 19th century. Until recent times whole families from nearby King's Somborne maintained this coppicing tradition.

There is evidence (Greenwood and Milne) that a large park once existed on the lower slopes, but this has reduced in size as large areas have been sold off. Several yews (*Taxus*) grow along the park's north and east perimeters and were probably planted as boundary markers. Alongside this boundary is a significant track, though this does not appear on any of the early maps.

Other yews grow to the east in another hazel coppice under oak standards. These are of the same age as those described above and are therefore part of the planting that took place in 1830.

In both of these areas there would seem to have been a policy to retain some of the yews for aesthetic reasons - because they were significant features in the landscape.

A wide variety of ages is observed in this area – mostly between 100 and about 700 years. There has also been some seed regeneration, and two yews in the smaller copses have begun to branch layer, but no seedlings were observed.

Observation of the sex of the trees was carried out by examining the ground close to the tree for either seeds (female) or the remains of the pollen sacs (male). Where the evidence was inconclusive no sex was recorded.

Measurements were taken at the narrowest point to obtain the minimum girth, and excluded any branch swell which might inflate the readings. A total of twenty eight yews were observed of which twenty five had their girths recorded.

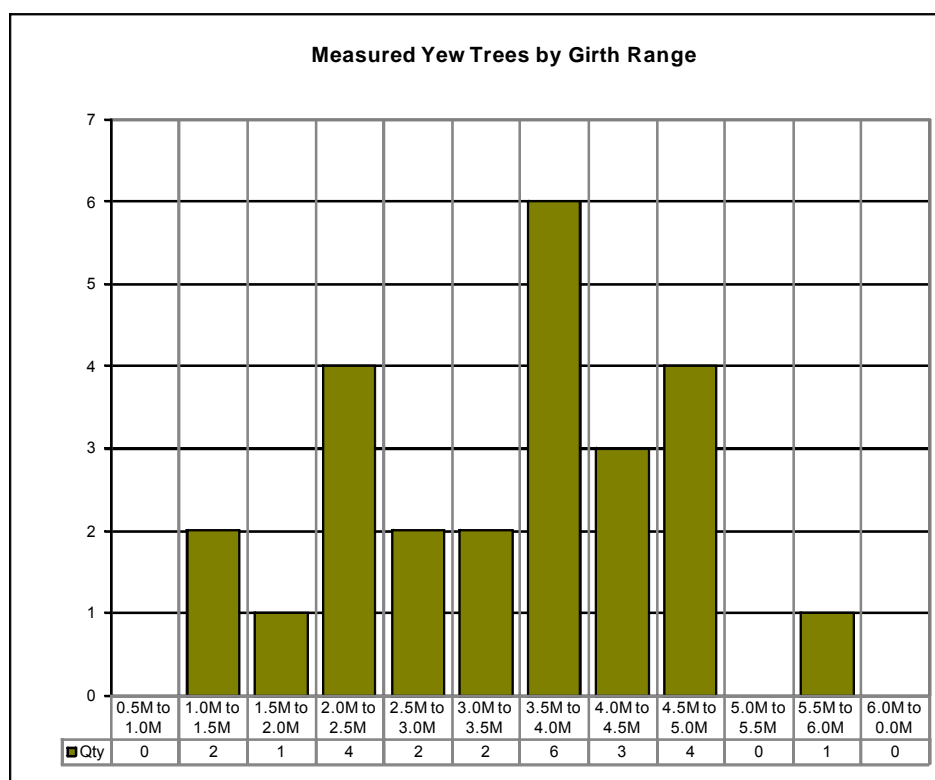


Table of Recordings

No	No of trees	Sex	Girth			Height measured	Comments
			Ft	Ins	Mtrs		
1	1	Female	15	4	4.674	Root crown	Close to the road as you enter the gate. Break of crown at about 3' with eight leaders, spray on the lower bole.
2	3				0.000		Young Taxus along the same track
3	1	Female	6	9	2.057		Trees 3 & 4 are close to each other
4	1	Female	3	7	1.092		Regeneration by seed
5	1	Female	8	4	2.540	2'	8' break of crown with two leaders
6	1	Male	8		2.438	1'	Obvious signs of fire damage along with the loss of one main branch. New wood (secondary wood growth) starting to flow over the damage to the second branch.
7	1	Female	15	6	4.724	1'	7' break of crown with the central leader hollowing. Needle drop evident.
8	1		4	5	1.346		This is natural regeneration by seed
9	1	Male	12	11	3.937	2'	Needle drop evident
10	1	Female	6		1.829		
11	1	Female	7	10	2.388		
12	1	Male	18	5	5.613	Root crown	Girth increases to 19' at 3'. An approximate 8' break of crown and the main central leader has evidence of hollowing. The oldest yew observed
13	1	Male	12	3	3.734	Root crown	A 4' break of crown, with loss of the outer shell, internal growth can be observed.
14	1	Female	13	8	4.166	1'	
15	1		9		2.743		
16	1	Male	9	11	3.023	2'	Trees 16 & 17 are close to each other, also a 6' girthed tree at the drip line which may be regeneration from seed.
17	1	Male	12	5	3.785	2'	
18	1	Male	14		4.267	6"	Twin trunk yew with one being hollow. A lot of damage evident but remaining foliage looked satisfactory
19	1	Female	7	4	2.235	1' 6"	
20	1	Male	11	4	3.454	2'	This is the last yew noted along the perimeter
21	1	Male	12	11	3.937	Root crown	This yew is on the other side of the road, but included in this survey. Informed of another but unable to find.
22	1	Male	15		4.572		Unable to measure due to dense lower growth. Previously estimated at 15' by the Forestry Commission during Aug 2008.
23	1	Female	12	6	3.810	1' 6"	
24	1	Male	16	3	4.953	Root crown	Hollowing on the north side of the tree with evidence of old wood in the basal cavity, Much epicormic growth on the lower bole
25	1	Male	12	2	3.708	1'	The branch growth curves towards the ground with one possible branch layer - unable to confirm due to bramble. Epicormic growth on the bole.
26	1	Male	14	5	4.394	2' 6"	Measured at this height to avoid exaggerated lower growth. One branch has successfully layered.

Yew 1 – Female with a girth of 15' 4" at the root crown. Short 3' bole with eight leaders



Yew 6 – An enigmatic male tree with a small girth of 8' and having obvious signs of fire damage along with the loss of one main branch. Note the new wood (secondary wood growth) starting to flow over the damage to the second branch.



Yew 7 – Female with a girth of 15' 4" at 1', having a 7' break of crown, with the central leader hollowing. Needle drop was evident. Note the young tree which is natural regeneration via seed.



Yew 9 – Male tree with a girth of 12' 11" at 2'. Needle drop was evident.



Yew 12 – Male with a girth of 18' 5" at the root crown (1') which increases to 19' at 3'. An approximate 8' break of crown and the main central leader has evidence of hollowing. Needle drop was evident along with sparse foliage. The oldest yew observed.



Yew 13 – Male having a girth of 12' 3" at the root crown. It has a short bole of about 4' and partial loss of the outer shell which allows some internal growth to be viewed.



Yew 14 – Female with a girth of 13' 8" at 1'



Yew 15, 16 & 17 – Three close to the above with the largest (17) on the left measuring 12' 5" at 2'. Out of shot in this view was a young yew (6' girth) at the drip line of the largest yew, which may be regeneration from seed.



Yew 18 – Male with a girth of 14' at 6". Twin trunk yew with one being hollow. A lot of damage evident but remaining foliage looked healthy.



Yew 21 – Male with a girth of 12' 11" at the root crown



Yew 23 – Female girthing 12' 6"



Yew 24 – Male girthing 16' 3" at the root crown. Hollowing on the north side of the tree with evidence of old wood in the basal cavity, much epicormic growth on the lower bole.



Yew 25 – Male girthing 12' 2" at 1'. The branch growth curves towards the ground with one possible branch layer. Epicormic growth on the bole.



Yew 26 – Male girthing 14' 5" at 2' 6". Measured at this height to avoid exaggerated lower growth. One branch has successfully layered.

