

Old Wardour Castle Yews

Old Wardour Castle ruins are situated on the southern edge of the Vale of Wardour, near to Tisbury in Wiltshire. It is well signposted after taking the Tisbury turning off the A30, seventeen miles west of Salisbury. The site is managed by English Heritage and open to the public seven days a week.



The original Wardour Castle, built by Lord Lovell in 1392 was hexagonal in shape. The castle was confiscated from the Lovells and passed through several owners until it was bought by Sir Thomas Arundell in 1544.

During the first Civil War the Parliamentary Army laid siege to the castle. After five days the castle was surrendered. Some months later Lord Arundell led a Royalist assault on Wardour and the siege lasted until March 1644 when he blew up much of his ancestral home and the parliamentary garrison surrendered.



The castle was never occupied again and in about 1680 the family started to renovate the old estate outbuildings. In the 18th century they built New Wardour (private) which is visible from Old Wardour. By the mid-18th century old ruined castles were in fashion and the Arundells laid out their new formal gardens to include Old Wardour as an ornamental folly. In 1792 a grotto and stone circle were added for interest at the edge of the woods.

Interestingly these stones were removed from a henge monument near Place Farm near Tisbury and could have been part of a larger stone circle or chambered tomb. Unfortunately no other trace remains.

In August 1836 J.C. Loudon (1783-1843) wrote in his *Gardening Tours – The ruins exhibit a mixture of Gothic and Grecian, the latter probably being added in the time of Elizabeth. Many of the old yews and hollies, which were formerly, it is said, cut into the forms of soldiers on guard, still remain. Near the ruins is an extensive piece of grotto scenery, put up by the same individual who executed the grotto at Fonthill and that at Oatlands. His name was Josiah Lane, and he was a native of the adjoining parish of Tisbury.*

Old Wardour Castle Yews



The yews as described by Loudon have since disappeared, but either side of the stone steps that lead up to the Grotto yews can be seen growing on the edge of the raised bank.

To the north east of the Grotto are six mature trees of which four are female and two male, as well as one very young female yew which grows at the drip line of the previous mature female



Measurements starting near to the steps and then moving north are as follows:

- (1) Male - 13' at 1'
- (2) Female - 10' 8" at 1' and 10' 10" at 2'
- (3) Female - 12' 3" at 1' and 11' 10" at 3'
- (4) Female - 13' 2" at the ground and 11'3" at 1'
- (5) Male - 14' 6" at 1' 6" and 11'3" at 2'
- (6) Female - 14' at 1' and 14' 3" at 2'
- (7) Female - 1' 10" at 2'

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To the south east are these four yews, three female and one male exhibiting the aerial root shown below right. Lastly in this group is a male growing away from the bank edge and near to the south east perimeter.



Measurements starting near to the steps and then moving south as follows:

(8) Female – 9' 2" at 1' (9) Male – 13' 2" at 1' and 13' 6" at 2' (10) Female – 11' 1" at 1' and 12' 3" at 2' Stump,
(11) Female – 9' 11" at 1' and 10' 4" at 2', Five stumps (12) Male – 13' 8" at the root crown.

Two further young males are found, one behind the ticket office (not measured) and another in the lawn near the north perimeter measuring 7' 10" at 1' and 7' 7" at 2'.

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