

The 12th century church stands in a raised churchyard in Old Bedhampton. The Saxon church which preceded it was noted in the Domesday Book.

1896: Lowe was the first to record these two yews; the female east of the church he described as 'hollow', while the male to the south had a 'central dead trunk'. *Yew Trees of Great Britain and Ireland*

1939: *The King's England* described 'two old yews in the churchyard, one leaning on a staff when we called, though his sturdy mate needs no support, being over 20 feet round and still growing'.

1999: Some time after 1896 it was considered necessary to fill the hollow spaces in both trees with concrete and bricks. This is more obvious in the female tree, and we have to wonder whether the weight of the filling contributes to it leaning at an angle of almost 30 degrees. It is now realised that this practice can be harmful to trees, and that a hollow cylinder which can bend in the wind is structurally more sound than a solid cylinder. While we can point to several examples of concrete filled yews that survive, for example at Tisbury in Wiltshire and Iffley in Oxfordshire, we do not know how many have been killed by this practice.

The props appear to be a sensible precaution. While foliage was thin and the tree had many brown leaves in 1999, when I revisited one year later it appeared in much better health. Such fluctuations are normal.

Girth: 1894: 20' 4" at 3'. Height of 50'. Lowe

1999: 23' 6" at the base. 23' at 3'.



The male tree, growing south of the church, has a fluted trunk. It maintains its large girth for a greater height than is usual in yews. It too has had large cavities filled with bricks, and concrete poured into spaces left following the removal of hollow branches.

Girth: 1894: 20' at 3'. Height 50'. Lowe *Yew Trees of Great Britain and Ireland*

1999: 25' 6" at the ground.

2000: 24' 11" at the ground.

The difference in girth of the male yew between 1999 and 2000 is indicative of the difficulty of accurately measuring some yews. On trees of irregular shape, and those with what the Victorians liked to call 'knobs and excrescences' these figures can only be regarded as approximate.

Mark Wadey - 2012

female yew



male yew



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