

There has been considerable confusion regarding yews at Broomfield. In his 1791 *History of Somerset*, Collinson described 'two fine old yew trees, and a stone cross, tolerably perfect'.

More than 100 years later (1890s) Rev. Percy G. Bulstrode was gathering information for Lowe's *The Yew-Trees of Great Britain and Ireland*. Since Lowe was only informed about one yew of note, which was described as 'hollow and surrounded by young growth', we can assume that the 2nd tree no longer existed. However by 1946 'two fine old yew trees' at Broomfield were once again being described - this time in *The Churchyard Yew and Immortality*. Vaughan Cornish, the author, had requested data from the Bath and Wells Diocesan office about their yew trees, and it would appear that he was sent Collinson's 1791 observations, which he then published as if it was up to date information.

In 1990 Hal Hartzell Jnr., in his book *The Yew Tree*, quoted from a letter dated April 6th 1990 from Rev. G.C.H. Watson. 'The Broomfield yew tree won a prize in a recent competition for the oldest churchyard yew tree in Somerset. It is certainly older than the 13th century church. Unfortunately the severe storm of 25 January badly damaged the tree, bringing down a large portion of the tree onto the church porch. We are advised that the remainder of the tree was in a dangerous condition and is therefore being severely lopped back in the hope that it will regenerate and a new crown form but inevitably the tree will never again be what it was'. It should be added that many of Somerset's yews are considerably older than the Broomfield Yew.



There have been attempts to measure this tree fragment as follows:

Rev. Percy G. Bulstrode around 1895: 24' 4" at the ground, 16' at 3' and a bole height of 4'.

Between 1895 and my visit in 2002 a large portion of the tree was lost, for girth was now 18' 10" at the ground (allowing the tape to ride above the spreading roots) and 19' at the tree's narrowest point just below 3'. The photo shows its elongated bole, which is a well developed fragment of a once larger tree, from which grow 3 new branches, two upright and a third leaning away from the tree. Each supported copious growth. The storm of 1990 must have altered its appearance considerably since Baxter's *Eternal Yew* (1992) recorded a height of 50' and it is now only about half that. Parts of the bole were covered in twiggly growth and during several visits in later years an increase in ivy was noted.

During the latest visit in 2016 a girth of 19' 2" was recorded at about 2' 6", the tree's narrowest point above the spreading roots.

In 2016 the smaller girthed yews were also recorded. A second yew (though this is not the 2nd tree noted in 1791, which would have been a 70 year old youngster at that time) is this notable specimen with a girth of 12' 1" at 1'. It grows on the perimeter, SW of the church. Measurement in future might be hampered by ground level changes from the storage of churchyard waste between the tree and the wall.



Still further west, making this a trio of male yews, is this young tree, possibly a millennium yew.



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