

In the past:

The picture of Dunsfold church by T.Allen, was engraved by M.J.Starling for Brayley's *History of Surrey*. This was first published in 1842.

Its 'very large yew-tree' was first noted in King and Murray's 1865 *Handbook for travellers in Surrey, Hampshire, and the Isle of Wight*.

Cox's 1903 *Little Guides* described 'a fine old yew'.

The 1911 *Victorian History of the County of Surrey* vol III reported 'two yews, one of which, with a hollow trunk, close by the south porch, is probably one of the most ancient trees in the county'.



More detailed notes were sent by Allen and Jewell to Swanton, who was gathering information for his book *The Yew Trees of England* in 1955: 'Trunk completely hollow, and split into 2 or very nearly 3 parts, very irregular in shape..... All the main branches are horizontal, some 10 or 12 props being used to keep them up, otherwise they would be all over the gravestones. One branch stretches right up to and partly over the old church porch. Limbs have been cut off and sealed with bitumen. The bole is clear of spray up to 4', where the big branches begin'. Swanton concluded from this that the tree was 'in rather poor condition'. He considered it to be 'one of 3 possible Surrey yews that have suffered from excessive root pruning'. He noted the memorial slabs about 3' from the bole, and headstones from the period 1750 to 1910 about 5' to 7' away.

I visited in 1998, entering the large and spacious churchyard through the impressive yew tunnel. My first impression of the hollow male tree was that it was in very poor condition. My notes have the words 'clinging to life'. I did however observe thick green foliage growing from 6 places suggesting it had every chance of renewal.



There was evidence of infilling with concrete and I wondered whether the weight of this was contributing to the current state of the tree.



Girth records:

1903: 23' Cox

1955: 24' 6" at 3' G.O. Allen and A. Jewell (*Swanton*)

1998: 24' 9" at the base and 25' 3" at 3', just beneath the right angled branch - Tim Hills

2013: 24' 8" close to the ground; 24' 6" at 6"; 25' at 2' - all height measurements taken from the north side of the tree - Peter Norton

The Dunsfold Yew in 2013 - Peter Norton



The most recently planted yew in Dunsfold churchyard bears has a plaque bearing the following inscription: "A yew tree has stood near the door of Dunsfold church for 700 years. This tablet marks a yew planted to commemorate the silver jubilee of the accession of Queen Elizabeth 2nd."



