

This ancient church has been a place of worship for nearly 1200 years. The church guide considers there to be 'probably no parochial church throughout the country which can claim greater antiquity than St Andrew's'. It was consecrated in the year 802, and is generally accepted to stand on the site of an original Saxon building, of which no trace remains. *Hampshire Treasures Vol 2* considers that pottery and part of a tile found in the churchyard suggest an occupation site prior to this.



It is perhaps the site's long history that led to an estimated age of 1400 years for its yew tree in Meredith's *Gazetteer* found in *The Sacred Yew* (1994). There is however nothing in the yew's size or appearance to support such a claim. There have been other attempts in the past to estimate its age. *The Hampshire Antiquary and Naturalist* of 1891 said that: 'At Hurstbourne Priors...a fine yew tree stands in the churchyard on the south side. Its age from its stature can scarcely be less than seven of eight hundred years'. The church guide says: 'On the south side of the church stands an ancient yew tree which is reputed to be about 900 years old: it may possibly have been planted when the Normans built their church on the site of its Saxon predecessor'.

1998: This is a very fine and unusually shaped yew. It has many branches that dip to the ground and may one day become embedded. It is of sturdy appearance with a bole that splays out dramatically near to the ground, giving extra support for the weight it carries on its many large branches.



Girth:

1998: 24' at the ground; 16' 9" at 2'; 22' 5" at 5'

2006: 16' 9" at 2' - the narrowest part of the tree



The photos below were taken by Ian Robert Brown in 2007



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