

St Mary's church has Saxon origins but the oldest items contained within are 13th century. It is known that there was a church on this site at the time of the Domesday survey.

In the past:

1904: Cox's *Little Guide* tells of Colonel Phayre. 'Under the tree a demarcation in the ground is all that remains to show the spot where once stood a tombstone to Colonel Phayre, one of Charles I's regicides. He is said to have lived at Cobden's farm-house at Empshott, but to have been buried at Newton Valence. Although many people remember the tombstone with the name clearly inscribed upon it, it has now curiously enough disappeared. Either it was accidentally removed during the restoration of the church in 1872, or a snowstorm caused it to fall and then it was carried away, but no one knows where or how'.

1908: *A History of the County of Hampshire* noted the 'large yew tree on the left side of the path inside the churchyard'.

1928: 'A booklet was published about the history of Newton Valence. This quoted the yew as over 1,000 years old'. Tim Denehy, church warden

1939: 'A great yew about 7 yards round rivals the tower in height'. *The King's England*

1995: Local children and adults surveyed the tree in detail as part of the Hampshire Survey. Their findings were reported in a local news item entitled *Youngsters get to grips with the age of the yew*. 'Standing at 42 feet high, the Newton Valence yew has a girth of 18 feet at ground level, and a particularly impressive canopy. The twisted trunk is sound, although it has 6 hollow stumps, filled with cement in 1927, and several arched branches growing to the ground and up again, some of which are supported'.

1998: I recorded a female yew, its arched and propped branches leaving little head room. In spite of this they have not been removed but allowed to develop normally. This is a rare occurrence in churchyards, but in this instance has enabled some branches to become embedded in the soil, providing anchorage and possible regeneration.



2002: 18' 10" (5.74 at 1.1m) in girth. Large crown, branches arc over path, good condition, small cavity with concrete infill. Russell Cleaver

2011: Several branches have been removed which has allowed rot to start. One smaller branch is propped. Around the trunk were four embedded nails about 9" from the ground (measured from the east side and closest to the path). Girth using these was 18' 7". The photos below were taken at the time of Peter Norton's visit.



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