

# BRITAIN'S LOST ANCIENT YEWS - Tim Hills 2024

These pages bring into a single document information about lost yews gathered over many years and from many sources.

It seeks to correct the often quoted 'Over 500 ancient Yew trees have been destroyed since the Second World War'. This information first appeared in 1994 in *The Sacred Yew* by Chetan and Brueton and was used most recently in a 2019 online campaign run by Janis Fry and Allen Meredith to **save our ancient yews**. Their campaign material succeeded in its aim of collecting sufficient signatures to trigger a meeting in Parliament, and a Yew Trees Petition meeting was held in the House of Lords on Wednesday, July 10<sup>th</sup> 2019, attended by Jenny Jones of Moulsecoombe (Green Party) and interested cross party MPs.

Shortly after this meeting took place I was asked to supply all of the lost yew information available to the Ancient Yew Group.

The locations highlighted in [blue](#) are those where there is sufficient evidence that a lost yew or yews might have had an age exceeding 500 years. There are only about 120 such sites.

The reasons for the losses are many. Wind is the main culprit (62) followed by burning (10) and deliberate acts of vandalism (7). One tree was unnecessarily felled simply because it was hollow, a few were lopped so severely the trees could not recover, three were brought down by the weight of snow, two because they blocked a view, while one was felled to make the owner's coffin!

There will undoubtedly be more locations that have lost old and even ancient yews, but historical accounts are often difficult to access. It is thought that information might be contained in *Churchwardens' Accounts*. These documents used to be held at every parish church, but realisation of their historical value means that most are now held in Local Authority archives, waiting to be processed into an accessible format.



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# LOST YEW SITES

**OLDLAND** Bristol

blown down 2020: 5m + girth

The tree, with a girth above 5m, had been gradually leaning for a long time. Its position, so close to a high retaining wall, prevented propping.



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**PECKFORTON** Cheshire

burnt down before 2020

An aged trimmed yew once grew in the village of Peckforton. It is seen in this old photo which can apparently be purchased from the National Trust.

Its location was described as 'next to a half-timbered, thatch roofed, building. The tree towers over the building and is so wide that it is almost half the width of the building.'

I was informed that this tree burnt down 'some time in the past'.



## BRIDGE SOLLERS Herefordshire

blown down c 2020: 12' girth

Four young yews, with girths of up to 7', had been reduced to stumps by 2007. The larger yew, girthing about 12', was blown down c2020. A section was cut for age analysis.



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## PENEGOES Powys

lost after 2016: 29' girth

In 2005 the tree consisted of 3 large fragments, each of great complexity, a combination of old material and plentiful new growth, seen both in the branches and as epicormic growth on the trunk.



The photo below taken in 2016 by Paolo Bavaresco shows that one of the 3 fragments had split and part of this lay on the ground. It is not known why it was thought necessary to remove the remaining fragments of one of Wales's oldest trees.



## HOPTON CANGEFORD Shropshire

lost before 2016: 7m girth

The remains of the old yew is found on the north side of the church, on the boundary with an adjacent farm. Girth at the ground was considered to have once been at least 7 metres. It is thought to have been alive in recent years and it is not known why it was removed.

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## CROSSWAY-BRILLEY Herefordshire

lost before 2016: no size information

A field entrance once filled with an enormous old yew. It was removed, according to our source, as part of hedge relaying.

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## TALGARTH Powys

blown down in 2014: 24' girth

This was the most significant of several yews in the churchyard. It had split and become 2 fragment trees, each hollow and leaning. Girth of its individual trunks was 14' 5" and 16' 1" - around both trunks approximately 24'.



On February 14<sup>th</sup> 2014 a rare east wind blew with exceptional force and felled both fragments of this ancient tree.





Information was provided for Vaughan Cornish's 1946 *The Churchyard yew and immortality* by Canon RE Ford. He described 'six fine yews'. In 2021 one of the yews succumbed to gale force winds. It was widely reported to be a pre-conquest yew, but was a much younger tree, probably only a few hundred years old.

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LLANFOIST Monmouthshire

blown down in 2012: 27' girth



The tree was probably weakened as a result of fires being lit in the hollows. It blew down in 2012. It was hoped there might be regrowth from the stump.



ALLOSTOCK - The Three Greyhounds Cheshire

felled c 2012

In 2012 it was announced that 'the old Yew Tree at the front of the pub has had to be taken down.' The roots of the tree were considered to be 'upsetting the foundations of the pub' and the major restoration work required to rescue the building left no alternative but to remove the tree. It was originally planned to create a green in front of the pub with the yew as a centre piece but this was not thought feasible. It was also considered that the yew, much of which had been replaced with cement, was becoming an eyesore.



## CULLOMPTON Devon

felled between 1775 and 2011

In 1775 yews were planted against the south boundary wall and also the north boundary wall adjacent to vicarage lands. In 2011 only one yew remained, its girth 8' 10". It is not known when or why the others needed to be felled.

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## ASHFORD CARBONELL Shropshire

felled in 2011: 23' girth

This ancient yew was not only felled, but attempts were made to destroy all traces of the tree. The Ancient Yew Group holds a full account of the unusual circumstances surrounding this loss of this tree.



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## HERMITAGE Dorset

felled c 2010: 10' girth

A recently felled yew (c2010) was discovered at this site, its girth about 10ft. The Wriggle Valley Benifice office was contacted for an explanation and they replied that the tree was dead and therefore permission was given for it to be felled. A second yew in the churchyard (right) also looks unhealthy and will probably suffer the same fate.



## WESTON BAMPFYLDE Somerset

felled c 2010: multi stemmed of no great age

Images available online show the yew in situ. It appears to have fallen, with its roots pulled out of the ground. Three major stems, each girthing about 5' can be seen.



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## CILMERY-LLANGANTEN Powys

felled by 2010: girth 460cm

An entry in *The Celtic Christian Sites of the central and southern Marches* (2006) by Sarah and John Zaluckyj described a yew as follows: 'In the south-west of the churchyard there is an old gnarled yew with a hollow trunk on top of a low mound. It has a wide spread and, although the existing girth is not huge, the tree has a look of some age.' It has been reported that the yew was felled in 2009.



A pair of yews once grew either side of the path. One is now a stump, its surviving partner had a girth of 12' 3" in 2010.

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**NANTMAWR** - Jones's Rough Shropshire

felled in 2009 : young trees

Jones's Rough is a 3.3 hectare reserve with a scree slope which runs up a southwest facing hill. In 1999 the following entry appeared in the Shropshire Botanical Society spring newsletter: 'The first impression upon entering the wood is one of gloom and darkness due to the unusually high number of Yew trees, mixed with Wild Cherry and Hazel. The Yew are probably native here on this steep slope where the underlying Carboniferous Limestone outcrops. Perhaps the Yew survived the woodman's axe due to superstition or the difficulty in cutting its very hard wood.'

In 2009 the Shropshire Wildlife Trust announced that 'a lot of work has been done by the Trust's conservation volunteers in the wood lately, cutting down yews to let in the light.'

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**SWINDON** - Richard Jefferies garden

felled in 2008: age 200/250

The yew was controversially felled by Swindon Council, who took the decision 'with huge reluctance, but the unavoidable fact is that its roots were damaging a listed, historic building and there was no other option.' The yew was referred to in the press as aged between 800 and 1000 years, however the size of the stump indicated that it was more likely to be in the range 200/250 years.

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**KINNERTON** Powys

stump by 2007; girth 262cm

A decaying stump was all that remained in 2007. The yew might have died up to 100 years before this. This is a private site and the yew once grew close to buildings known as Old Badland.



**LLANGATHEN** Carmarthenshire

felled in 2006: a young yew

Nine yews grew in this Conservation Area churchyard until 2006, when this one was felled without the required permission being obtained. Its girth was only a few feet.



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**ABERGWILI** Carmarthenshire

lost well before 2006: no girth record

There were once 3 old yews in this churchyard. The two surviving trees have girths of about 18' and 20', while this unmeasured stump is all that remains of the 3<sup>rd</sup>.



## SHELDON MANOR Wiltshire

lost before 2005: girth about 11ft

A private garden sometimes open to the public. Originally a trio of tall yews (girthing about 11ft) grew close to the Manor's 13th century porch. The third is now a stump, broken off at 5'/8'.

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## BEXLEY Greater London

last heard of in 2005: girth not known

In the 1930's Arthur Mee wrote in *The King's England* : 'Bexley's old yews (there are seven growing in the churchyard) have been growing up while London has been creeping round about, coming almost within sound of her. One of them is believed to be about as old as the Conqueror.....it is one of the oldest yew trees growing so near to London.'

The remaining yews are modest in size, the largest with a girth of about 11'. There is no evidence of the size of the lost yew.

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## CEFNLAYS Powys

burnt down c2005: 5.57m (18' 3") at 1.1m

From a local news report: "It seems that late last summer this ancient tree was set on fire by persons unknown. The dead stumps perhaps would have made ample flammable material. Well before anyone realised anything was amiss the whole tree was alight. The fire brigade was called but all too late, since this is an exceptionally remote site. The yew burned and then toppled over towards the church. The fire brigade eventually attended but could do little more than let the tree burn itself out. Nothing living survives above ground."



2001: A thickened hollow shell with many pieces of the original tree in evidence. It grew SSW of the church. In an act of vandalism the tree was set alight in 2005 and destroyed. Following advice about its safety, it was cut at about 2 metres from the ground. In 2007 I was informed that there was some regeneration to be seen, though in 2014 there was no longer evidence of this. A replacement yew has been planted alongside.



CAWTHORNE Barnsley

felled c 2005: young yews

A Conservation Area churchyard at which one yew has been felled and several others 'topped and lopped' to reduce their height to between 2.5m and 3.5m. The Church Council submitted proposals for the tree works, a site meeting was held at which the local authority Tree Officer was represented by a Temporary Forestry Officer. Reasons for this drastic action are given as (1) structural damage to buildings or boundary walls (2) the overshadowing of the gardens of neighbouring properties (3) the blocking of light to a church window.



## LLANDEFAELOG-TRE'R-GRAIG Powys

lost before 2004: young yews

The church has been deconsecrated and is now a family home. Close to the churchyard gate on the west side of the church were the remains of two younger yews which I was told had fallen and been removed.

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## SANDERSTEAD Surrey

severely lopped in 2004: 15' girth

1880 - Straker: East of the church, with a girth of 12' 3" at 5'.

2001 - Healthy foliage. Ivy covered the lower part of the tree and there was some filling of hollow spaces with concrete. Girths of 13' 11" at 1' and 14' 11" at 3'.

2009 - In a report prepared for the Ancient Tree Inventory, it states that the tree was severely lopped about 5 years ago earlier (2004) and that there were no signs of regrowth. It is almost certain that this drastic action killed the last of Sanderstead's trio of old yews. In 2009, all that remained was the stump, recorded with a girth of 14' 11" at 3'.



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## STOKE PRIOR Worcestershire

felled in 2003: girth 8' 10"

A yew was 'planted in Stoke Prior churchyard about 400 years ago, and has witnessed many generations of families attending St Michael's church. Sadly the tree died, and was cut down in 2003' (John Lakeman).

This was almost certainly not a 400 year old tree. Two living yews, with girths between 4m and 5m are likely to be the yews planted 400 years ago.



'Just a few days ago, the two yew trees, in the churchyard of St John's Church, were felled, on the orders of the parochial church council, because they had died. The trees' death goes back to the spring of 2002, when a mystery attacker drilled a series of holes round the lower sections of their trunks and poured some sort of chemical into the holes.'

While it was never established who was responsible, it is an illustration of how easy it is for a tree that might affect the profitability of a building project to be irreparably damaged.

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LLANLLEONFEL Powys

felled by 2002: 16' girth

In August 1999 I found the tree reduced to a height of about 20ft with all of its branches removed. This was clearly unsupervised work that was carried out, I was told, 'to allow more light into the church'. Since the tree was already sprouting new growth I sought assurance that it would be allowed to recover. I was given this assurance in writing by the vicar. However, when I revisited in 2002 to record progress, all trace of the tree had been removed. I received no explanation.



CORSLEY Wiltshire

lost before 2001: up to 20' girth

I was shown the stumpy remains of a yew which could have been between 16' and 20' in girth. I was told that the yew had been felled in controversial circumstances, but nobody I met was willing to provide further information.

Here are many yews on and around a hill fort. The area has been a gathering place for local pagans at Samhain and for 'socialising and informal ritual all year round'. The number of fires lit has unfortunately led to the destruction of one of the oldest trees.



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**CHURCH HANBOROUGH** Oxfordshire

felled c 2000: girth appears to be 16'/18'

This photo, reproduced by permission of Oxfordshire County Council (Reference Number: HT08861) has the caption 'Looking towards the church from the west with a large yew tree in the foreground.' Photographer: Henry Taunt Date Taken: 1902 Collection: Henry W Taunt. Archive Holder: Centre for Oxfordshire Studies.

By 2009 the yew was gone, a car park obviously considered more important than retaining the old yew seen in the photograph. I have also been informed that the line of young yews in the churchyard was planted to replace more mature yews that had been inadvertently felled some years earlier.



## BIGNOR HILL Surrey

removed early 2000s: no great age

Bignor Hill was once part of a substantial area of common land stretching from Whiteways Lodge on the A29 to the A285 at Dunton Hill. It forms part of the National Trust's Slindon Estate in the heart of the South Downs National Park

42 yews had been recently felled on National Trust land in order to facilitate grazing, first by cattle and later by sheep. This will reduce the scrub and allow for the common to revert back to chalk downland with its associated flora and fauna. Yews were also growing along and close to an important Roman road (Stane Street) and were damaging the archaeology. Girths of the yews felled are indicative of the period when extensive sheep farming on the South Downs declined from around 1880 and yews then colonised the area.

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## BUCKLAND ABBEY Devon

felled c2000

A line of 16 yew trees, considered to be between 300 and 400 years old, succumbed to gales and root disease. The source of this age information is not known

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## SALISBURY Arts Centre

felled c2000 for building extension

The building extension involved the felling of a 200 year old yew. This was 'a difficult and emotional decision'. The Art Centre's director, Jill Low, 'could see the potential in reclaiming and safeguarding the spirit of the yew tree' and this led to an exhibition of the work of 40 local artists, each given a piece of wood reclaimed from the felled tree. It was an impressive exhibition.

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## KINGSDOWN St Catherine Kent

lost c 2000: 10' girth

St Catherine's church is now redundant and in the care of the Churches Conservation Trust. A large yew trunk with a girth of 10' lies on the ground.



## BADLESMERE Kent

blown down c2000: 17' girth

A yew (girth about 17') blown down around 2000.

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## WEST HORSLEY Surrey

felled c2000: age 313 years

The yew was planted in the late 17th century, some distance from the church. However when the north aisle was doubled in width in 1850, the NW buttress was built right up against the yew. Around the year 2000 the tree was considered to be causing damage to the church's foundations. It was felled and found to be 313 years old.

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## CHIGWELL Essex

removed early 2000s: young trees

Many yews have been lost from this site.

September 2007 Dave Martin: In 1876 two avenues of yew were recorded, the first of clipped yews leading 'to the principal entrance, and farther east is a second avenue'. In 1956 a 'double row of ancient yew trees' was described, growing between the road and the south porch. It seems that the yews by the main entrance were removed early this century; two remaining stumps do not suggest they were of great age. Today there are only 4 young yews with average girths of 1.52cm.

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## PRIVETT Hampshire

lost before 1999: 24' stump

The yew, with a girth of 887cm, was apparently destroyed by branch removal (Toby Hindson). Russell Cleaver in 1999 reported a 7' high dead stump, half covered in brambles. Girth of stump about 24'.





A 6' high dead stump recorded by Lin Carter in 1999. There is no indication of when the tree died.

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**MYNYDDISLWYN** Gwent (Caerphilly)

lost long before 1998: part of stump remains

The churchyard, probably circular, is adjacent to a tumulus at about 1,000 ft above sea level. Five ancient yews remain. This was a sixth, presumably once of similar size to the remaining five, which have girths between 4.5 and 7m. A new yew has been planted next to the last remains of the dead tree.



## KNOWLTON Dorset

lost before 1999: no size information

There have been at least 8 large yews in this line which leads away from the henge. These are found in three enclosures on farmed land, with fencing erected for their protection. Two are dead and of the remaining six, the largest has a girth above 26'. No date has been reported for losses or the size of the lost trees.

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## ALDERSHOT Hampshire

felled c1998: age 270-300 years

In 2013 Peter Norton reported that the yew, felled about 15 years earlier, was thought to have been damaged by storms. In spite of a small girth of 8' 6" at 1' its age was considered to be between 270 and 300 years.

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## LLANSANTFFRAED-IN-ELWEL Powys

dying in 1998: girth about 15'

Lewis's *Topographical Dictionary of Wales* 1834 described 'some fine old yew trees'. A 1998 visit found one of these was almost dead, with a single tuft of growth. By 2007 all signs of life were gone.



## LLANFAIR KILGEDDIN Monmouthshire

felled in 1997: girth 13'

When J.Daryll Evans was collecting information for his book *The churchyard yews of Gwent* (1988) he described 3 impressive yews at this site.

The 2 that still grow here have girths above 8m. The felled yew, whose trunk lay in the nearby lane when we visited in 1997, had a girth of 13' at 3', recorded by Shirley Mills in 1988.



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## LLANLLUGAN Powys

felled before 1996: girth 12'

The Clwyd/Powys Archaeological Trust in 1996 recorded that 'an older yew tree near the south-west corner has been cut down and a yew in the south-east corner is no longer growing.'

In 2005 I found a young yew growing in the centre of a 12' girthed stump SW of the church. Its appearance suggests it was planted there to replace the lost tree.

There was no sign of the yew which grew SE of the church, though a patch of raised ground suggests where it once might have grown.

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## TRELYSTAN Powys

felled before 1996: no indication of size

The yews here were first recorded by the Clwyd/Powys Archaeological Trust, who in 1996 noted that 'six yews of considerable age encircle the west side of the church; the largest being by the south porch. Two yews located along with a holly tree near the south-east gate and a third yew felled.'

Reason for the felling is not reported, nor the size of the felled yew.

## REDLYNCH Wiltshire

struck by lightning 1996: small girthed

The yew was struck by lightning in about 1996 and has not recovered. Ivy was removed to aid its recovery, but to no avail. It was decided to fell the 45' tree before it collapsed and caused damage in the churchyard. A curved memorial bench will be made from some of the wood and sited as near as possible to the stump.



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## EAST STRATTON Hampshire

clear felled c 1996: largest stump 15' 2"

9/86: *Hampshire Treasures Vol 6* describes 'an old church in a grove of yew trees'. A cross marks the site of the original All Saints Church in Stratton Park, north of the village. All that remains of the yew grove are 5 stumps, set in a horse shoe shape around the cross.

In 2006 it was thought that the yews had been clear felled about a decade earlier. Of the 5 stumps, two are double stemmed, the largest with a girth of 21' (5.62m). The largest single stemmed stump measured 15' 2".





## CHOLDERTON Wiltshire

last reported in 1995: age about 300 years

*A History of the County of Wiltshire: Volume 15*, 1995 states that 'north of the house, and perhaps of c.1690, a grove of yew trees'.

When part of the Cholderton Estate was sold to pay death duties, the new owners destroyed many yew trees to make a pony paddock. We do not know the stature of these trees, but the fact that they are marked on some Ordnance Survey maps suggests they were once a prominent feature.

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## SANDFORD ORCAS Dorset

1994: 17' girth

Meredith's gazetteer in *The Sacred Yew* records a female yew with a girth of 17'. We found two large stumps, but were unable to ascertain whether both were of yew. One grew to the east, its girth 17' 6"; another to the west, covered in honeysuckle, appeared to be of similar girth.



## LYDNEY Gloucestershire

last recorded in 1994: 20' girth

The 1875 Penny Post contained the following description of two yews: 'One is situated close to the south porch, which it completely overshadows; the other stands in the centre of the churchyard, and also on the south side. This latter tree is of an immense size, and supposed to be from 500-700 years old. It is still in an excellent state of preservation, and the admiration of all who visit the churchyard. I once measured its girth, which amounted to nearly ten yards. The one standing by the south porch is evidently of much younger growth.'

This is the last known mention of yews on the south side. Interestingly, the article makes no mention of a yew on the north side. But in 1998 this is where we found a large stump, NE of the church. The pieces that remained confirmed Meredith's 1994 record in *The Sacred Yew* of a 20' girthed tree. In 2005 we were told that this tree's decline was gradual, its height being reduced in stages. The clearly visible stump reveals it was a tree of two sections. A complete stump remains of one of the parts but there are only hints of the other. Two gentlemen who grew up in the village vouched for its great size, and that it had been decaying for a long time before being declared to be dead. They had no recollection of yews growing on the south side of the church.



## WYMERING Hampshire

last recorded in 1994: 27' girth

Hampshire's 1994 Tree Survey recorded a yew with a girth of 27'. In 2001 I located a mound that might mark the site of the lost yew. The reason for its demise is not known.

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## HAMPTON COURT London

felled in 1993: 300 years

In July 1993 fourteen yews were felled. Dendrochronological analysis found them to be about 300 years old (*The Ancient Yew* - 2002 Robert Bevan-Jones).

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## LITTLE COWARNE Herefordshire

lost before 1992: 18' girth

Percival Morgan reported this to the Tree Register as a dead yew in 1992, with a diameter of 155cm at 0.9m. In 2005 we recorded a girth just above 18' at 3'.

In the 2020s are reports that the tree is showing signs of life.



## LLANDDERFEL Gwynedd

cut down in 1991: 17' girth



In 1833 Lewis's *Topographical Dictionary of Wales* described two yew trees of remarkably fine growth. Reg Wheeler's plan of 1984 shows two yews, including this 17' girthed yew to the west. It was cut down in 1991, according to Fry and Meredith.

## LLANBEDROG Gwynedd

fell in early 1990s: girth 12' 5"

A yew was noted at this site in *The Churchyard Yew and Immortality* - Cornish (1946). A stump is all that remains - its girth 12' 5".

In 2009 Tony Vowell reported that the yew blew down in the early 1990s.



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## SHEPHERDSWELL Kent

died in mid 1990s: age c350 years

Venerable Yews were described at this site in *Saunters through Kent* (1927).

The lost yew was cut down in the mid 1990s.

In 1999 Owen Johnson recorded its girth as about 440cm (14' 5"). It apparently died after an infection of *Phytopthera*, due to damp ground and composted rubbish at its base. A ring count revealed about 350 + years.

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## EGLINGHAM Northumberland

felled between 1990 and 2000: young yews

Two yews were reportedly felled at this site between 1990 and 2000. It has been reported that they blocked the view of the church clock. The stumps are still in situ.

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## STEEP Hampshire

blown down in gale 1990: girth c 12'

A church of Norman origin. In 1895 two yews were recorded. In 1990 the yew growing NW of the church (diameter 125cm) was blown down in a gale. The other survives, growing on the south side of the church, two metres from the building .

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## BARLOW Derbyshire

blown down in 1990: 19' girth

The owner of Yew Tree Farm wrote: 'We also had another very old male tree which stood 40 yards to the north of the female. It was hollow and was unfortunately blown down in a snow blizzard on the 8th December 1990. It was as large as the surviving female tree (19').

## SELBORNE Hampshire

fell in hurricane 1990: 23' girth

Gilbert White said of this yew: 'In 1789 was apparently of great age. The body was short, squat and thick, and girthed 23ft, supporting a large head. It was a male.' When it was blown over in the hurricane of 1990, an attempt was made to re-erect and revive it. It was returned to its original position but failed to start growing again. Its stump has been left and its decay will take centuries.



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## KERSAL CELL Lancashire

no record before 1990: no size information

In *The Ancient Yew* (2002) Robert Bevan-Jones described that 'a dead yew, under-propped, and chained together so as to preserve the upright position, stands in the grounds of Kersal Cell, Lancashire.'

There are some paintings that show what appears to be a large girthed yew. If the tree in the paintings is the yew, and it was painted with accuracy, it would appear to be 6 or 7 metres in girth.



## LITTLE SODBURY MANOR Gloucestershire

fell c1990: 16' girth

In 2003 the fallen yew still had pieces of decaying heartwood inside its trunk. Its girth appeared similar to the living tree (16'), suggesting they would have been planted at the same time.



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## LLANGWM ST JEROMES Monmouthshire

burnt down c1990: 23' 8" girth

The yew grew on the north side of the church. It had a girth of 23' 8" with 'a secondary trunk growing inside the hollow original' (Evans 1986). It was destroyed in the early 1990s when a bonfire to reduce the pile of churchyard waste became out of control and set fire to the tree.



## NEWCHURCH Powys

fell in 1990: 7.7m girth

A letter to the Conservation Foundation in 1988 described a 'Yew at west end of church by the churchyard gate - at 3ft. 7.7m girth and at 4ft. 7.4m girth.' It is reported to have fallen in 1990.

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## LOWER GRAVENHURST Bedfordshire

fell in storm in 1990: no size information

The following description was submitted: 'During a storm in January 1990 we lost one of the biggest churchyard yews in Bedfordshire at St Mary's church, Lower Gravenhurst. It may appear in some old photographs taken c.1900 but as far as we know was never recorded. I suspect it wasn't more than 500 years old but even so it shows how a tree could be lost without any record at all.'

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## CHOLSEY Oxfordshire

fell in storm 1990: 17' 8" girth

A 'yew-tree said to be 900 years old' was recorded in the 19th century. In 1981 its girth was recorded as 17' 8". The first picture shows the yew in 1806.



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## WILCRICK Gwent

lost before 1988: girth of stump 560 cm

In J. Daryll Evans 1986 *The Churchyard Yews of Gwent* he recorded that 'outside the churchyard to the north is a yew stump, 560cm in circumference.' We visited in 2000 and learned that during a gale c1988 the stump, which was 8' high, had blown down and a logging firm had sawn it into pieces and burnt the remains.'

## LLANFIHANGEL TOR-Y-MYNYDD Monmouthshire

no record after 1988: girth 339cm

22/11/1988 - J. Daryll Evans in *The Churchyard Yews of Gwent* recorded 'one yew with a girth of 339cm at 1m'. Evans noted that 'the single yew is probably a remnant of those which once marked the churchyard boundary.' All that remained in 2021 was this piece of stump.



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## ALDINGBOURNE West Sussex

lost between 1988 and 1999: 26' girth

We have a photo showing the yew in 1975. In 1988 a letter to David Bellamy at the Conservation Foundation contained the following description: 'An unusual yew tree with four trunks growing from a central rotten trunk. The bole measures 26' at 3' high and 27' at 4' high.'

I visited in 1999 (left) and found the yew inundated with ivy and showing no sign of life. Much of this had been removed when Peter Norton photographed the tree in 2011 (right).



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## SHALFORD Surrey

fell in storm 1987: no size information

In 1990 Muriel Hawtin wrote that 'there was until recently, a fine old yew tree here in Shalford just outside the churchyard, and beside the old stocks, which are still there. It was blown down in a storm a few years ago.'

## ASHDOWN FOREST - Duddleswell crossroads

blown down in storm 1987: young tree

In *Flora Britannica* is a description of 3 yews at Duddleswell Crossroads. One of these was uprooted during the 1987 gale but it seems that before the Forest Rangers had an opportunity to right it, most of the wood was cut up and it disappeared.

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## BETTESHANGER Kent

fell in 1987 storm: age c 350 years

Kent Resources reported that 'in 1987 a 350 year old yew fell across the Church' and that 'this was probably the yew planted by Sir John Boys' in 1650.

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## CATHERINGTON Hampshire

blown down in storms of 1987 and 1990: c 250 years old

Two yews were planted to the east of the church in 1729. They were described in the 1908 *History of Hampshire* as 'two fine yew trees' but they succumbed to the storms of 1987 and 1990 and had to be felled. Their stumps remain, each about 1m in diameter.



## BELVOIR CASTLE Leicestershire

fell in storm 1987: no size information

A large yew fell, along with many other mature trees on the estate, in the 1987 hurricane.





At the church of St Cross, according to the Rev Hugh Pruen (p124 Hal Hartzell Jnr. *The Yew Tree*) it is reported that a yew 'stood in our churchyard until October 1987. Then in the great gale of that month, the most severe in England for almost 3 centuries, it was blown down. Part has been used in the church for the display of flowers.'

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**WADHURST** East Sussex

fell in 1987 storm: girth about 10'

An article at [www.wadhurst.org.uk](http://www.wadhurst.org.uk) reported that 'The people of Wadhurst woke up on the morning of 16th October 1987 to much devastation. Hurricane force winds had blown through the area causing trees to be uprooted. One of the two ancient yews in the churchyard was blown down.'

The yew still standing girths about 10' so the 'lost yew' was presumably the same age.

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**WORMSHILL** - Norwood Farm, Kent

fell in storm 1987: no size information

Wikipedia records that in the hurricane of 1987 'an ancient yew tree which had stood for several hundred years in the grounds of the house at Norwood Farm was destroyed along with a number of long-standing trees in the area.'

The site was visited by Cliff Hansford in 2007 to check the Wikipedia information. He learned from the owners that there was indeed a very large yew that stood in what is now the front garden. On the night of the storm they were awakened by the sound of the yew hitting the ground. There is nothing remaining to confirm its existence and no old photographs have been discovered.

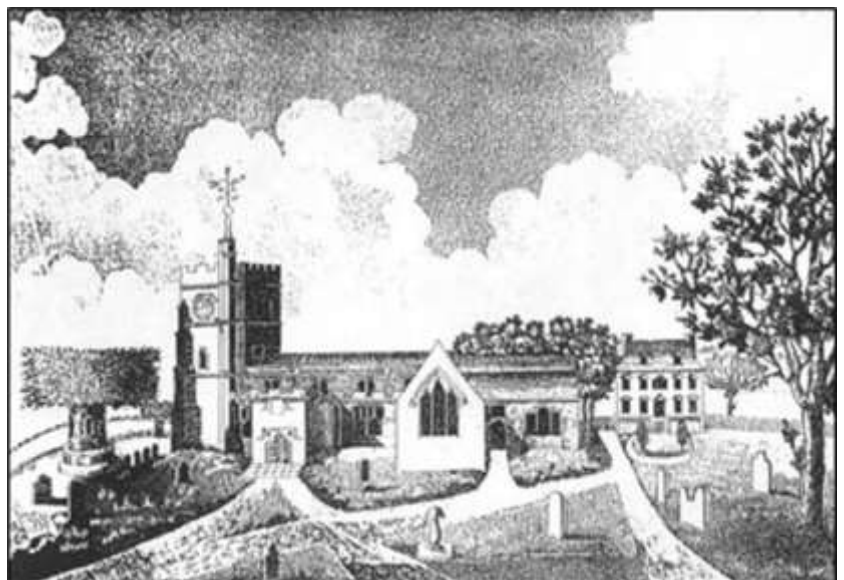
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**CHILHAM** Kent

destroyed by storm 1987: no size information



The tree lost all of its branches in 1987 when the churchyard lost half of its mature trees. This protected stump will be a feature in the churchyard for decades. Fry and Meredith also list a 30' yew in this churchyard that was 'cut down pre 1790'.



J.Daryll Evans (*Churchyard Yews of Gwent 1987*) recorded that 'At Llangua, there are eight stumps of common yew that have been felled, the largest to the left of the entrance gate.' These were small girthed trees and in 2002 we located one stump of a yew that once grew out of the wall close to the church gate.

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## YSTRADGYNLAIS Powys

blown down in storm 1987: no size information

In *Churchyard Trees in the Archdeaconry of Gower* (1992) John Andrew notes that of a 5th yew 'only part remains, measuring approximately 2m around the trunk, but it is impossible to be sure how much of the base of the tree has been removed so it cannot be compared' with the measurements of the other trees. The yew was blown down in the storm of 1987.

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## TOURNER BURY HILL FORT Hampshire

blown down in storm 1987: no size information

The hill fort site, which overlooks Chichester Harbour, is covered in woodland with no recognised public access. I was told about this site by Dave Shotton, who knew the Hill Fort as a child and had a recollection of there being old yews on the ramparts. In 1913 'some large yews on its banks' had been recorded, unfortunately these were all apparently destroyed in the hurricane of 1987.

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## CASCOB Powys

blown down in 1987: 25' girth

In 1970 the Brecon Yew Survey recorded a hollow yew 25ft in girth NW of the church. In 2011 a local farmer told me that the old yew tree blew down in gales over twenty years earlier (presumably the 1987 storm). A second yew, also measuring above 25ft, still grows at this remote churchyard.

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## NURSTEAD Kent

fell in snowstorm 1987: 270cm diameter

A diameter of 270cm is recorded in the Tree Register's data base (1997), where it is also noted that it 'fell in snowstorm 10 years ago'.

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## SULLINGTON West Sussex

fell in storm 1987: 15' 6" and 21'

There were once 6 significant yews in this churchyard. In the 1815 *Western Division of Sussex* -James Dallaway recorded that 'three yew trees, of great apparent antiquity, remain in the church-yard; about 20 years ago three others of equal size were cut down. When they were all standing, the appearance of the church, almost buried in a grove of yew trees, was remarkably picturesque.'

In 1987 two of the remaining three were blown down in the hurricane. Their girths in 1975 were given as 15' 6" and 21'.

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## HASTINGLEIGH Kent

fell in storm 1987: 24' 11" girth

The church guide records that a 'yew replaces the ancient tree which fell in (the great storm of) 1987'. Its diameter was recorded as 242cm in the Tree Register's data base - equivalent to a girth of about 7m 60cm.

## CHIPSTEAD Surrey

fell in storm 1987: girth between 17' and 22'

Lewis's 1811 *Topographical dictionary of England* : 'In the churchyard is an old yew tree, measuring 20 feet in circumference 3 feet from the ground.'  
In 1880 Straker recorded that the male yew growing to the NE had a girth of 22' 9".

Swanton saw it in 1955 and measured 17' at the base and 22' at 3'. He described a male tree with the 'interstices in the trunk .....filled with cement'. He went on to describe that 'it is on the north side of the church, an unusual position, but it overshadows a blocked up doorway of Transitional Norman date, so that formerly the villagers passed this tree as they entered the edifice.'

The tree fell in the storm of 1987. It is seen here on p379 of *Byways in British Archaeology*.



## HENDEN MANOR ESTATE Ide Hill Kent

blown down in storm 1987: no size information

There were originally three trees here. The two that have survived grow by the moat at Henden Manor, a Tudor manor house probably built between 1470 and 1490 and at one time owned by Henry VIII.

It is possible that all three could have been planted when the house was built. There is no public access to this site though the surviving trees can be seen from an adjacent footpath.

## COBHAM Surrey

blew down in 1987: 21' girth

The 'grand yew' was recorded by Swanton in *The Yew Trees of England* (1955) as follows:

"21' in girth at 3'; hollow. There is no sign of filling up. There is an aperture 6' high at 3', the width is 2', and new wood is being laid down at the edges. Large branches have been cut away to the disfigurement of the tree. The largest, sawn off at 10', just above its junction with the trunk at 5', is 7' 6" in girth. A few branches reach the ground on one side. The umbrage is 45' in diameter. Ivy is creeping up the trunk."

It blew down in the storm of 1987.



## BISHOPSTON Glamorgan

fell in storm 1987:609 cm girth

John Andrew (*Churchyard Yew Trees in the Archdeaconry of Gower*) reported that the yew 'blew down in the 1987 storm'. Mrs Alison R. Thomas gave him measurement details which translate to a circumference of 609cm (20').

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## STELLING Kent

fell in 1987: no size information



M.Chatfield's *Churches the Victorians Forgot* of 1979 described 'two yews with trunks of immense girth'. One of these fell in 1987 (personal correspondence David Grove). While the surviving tree has a girth above 24', the remains of the fallen yew show that it was smaller girthed.

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## RHULEN Powys

fell in storm 1987: no size information

A stump is all that remains of a yew that fell in a mid-1980s storm - presumably 1987. The tree is reputed to have prevented any extension to the chancel in the 14<sup>th</sup> century. The source of that information is not known and the size of the stump does not suggest a yew of that sort of age.



## KENNEL COPSE North Stoneham, Hampshire

fell in storm of 1987

A private woodland site next to the golf course at the M3/M27 interchange. Many yews in the adjacent Hut Wood were ring barked by the Forestry Commission 40 years earlier. Several yews remain, with girths between 10' and 14'. The tree lying on its side was blown down in the gale of 1987.

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## TREVETHIN Monmouthshire

taken down c1986: 20' 8" girth

1880: In a paper presented to Cardiff Nat.Soc. by T.H. Thomas is the following: 'Other fine trees, five in number, ornament the churchyard at Trevethin.....the largest of these, a female tree in full maturity, stands at the porch, and girths 20'. It enlarges slightly above, and divides into five limbs, which bear a splendid mass of foliage. Another female tree at the east end of the church forms a grand pyramid, and measures 19' in circumference.

1930: H.H.Hyde listed a single yew with a girth of 20' 8".

1986: J. Daryll Evans in *The Churchyard Yews of Gwent* wrote that the tree was 'recently taken down'.

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## RUCKINGE Kent

no record after 1986: no size information

A tree is seen close to the north porch in the photo of an 1807 watercolour.

In Saunders' 1872 drawing the trunk appears to be hollow.

There is also a record in the *Journal of the Church Monuments Society, Volume 1, Part 2* (1986) which describes 'one stone discovered pushed into the base of a hollow tree at Ruckinge, Kent'.

All traces of the hollow tree are now gone.

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## OLD COLWYN Conwy

cut down in 1986: no size information

Described as 'a magnificent 500 year old tree', adding that 'some even put it at 700'. In spite of a Tree Preservation Order the tree was cut down by Clwyd County Council. This was reported in the Western Mail on Monday 28th July 1986.

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## LLANRHIDIAN Glamorgan

burnt down in 1986: 17' girth

John Andrew's 1988 *Churchyard Yew Trees in the Archdeaconry of Gower* records a yew being 'deliberately burnt down around 1986, the burnt hollow stump found only a few metres to the NW' of a living tree. He recorded a circumference of 5.17m (17') at the ground.

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## FAIRFORD Gloucestershire

blown down 1986: less than 300 years old

A yew tree planted here in 1718 has not survived. From the Parish News May 1986: Churchyard Yew Tree: This magnificent tree was blown down in a storm on March 16th 1986.



This remote church can only be approached on foot across fields from a farm at the end of a steep lane.

On 24th December 1986 Revd J.Daryll Evans (*The Churchyard Yews of Gwent*) visited this churchyard. He recorded a yew with a girth of 355cm (11' 8") at 1m and described that the trunk was 'open on the west side and encloses a secondary stem'.

By 2021 the tree had been cut down, leaving only a stump between 2' and 3' high. Inside it could be seen that the secondary stem was a series of smaller internal stems. Many growth rings were still visible. There was also charred wood, suggesting that either the tree was set on fire and this led to its demise, or that there was an attempt after felling to destroy the rest of the stump.

## HOPE BAGOT LANE Shropshire

lost before 1986: no size information

In *The Trees of Shropshire* Andrew Morton wrote that 'Many of the ancient hedgerow yews which once marked the route to this exceptional site (the Hope Bagot churchyard yew) have been removed.'

## MATHERN Monmouthshire

a stump in 1986: 22' girth

A photograph of the 'massive yew stump to the north' appears on p59 of *The Churchyard Yews of Gwent*. Revd J.Daryll Evans added that 'the surrounding soil had been dug away, presumably to facilitate removal of the stump itself. Nearby was a large crater, showing where a second stump had been taken out. Though nothing remained of it, the size of the hole implied a tree of the same order of size as its immediate neighbour. In a year or so there will be little to show that such fine trees once grew here.'

## LLANHAMLACH Powys

lost in 1985

The trees lost since 1970 had girths of 20', 14', 13', 12'. Meredith's gazetteer in *The Sacred Yew* records that many were cut down in 1985.

## ASTHALL LEIGH Oxfordshire

cut down by 1985:19' girth

The yew was recorded in 1944 by H.Gardner - with a girth of 17' and a height of 30'. It was cut down in or by 1985 (Tree Register data base) when its girth was 19'.



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## GARTHELI Ceredigion

cut down in 1985: 333cm girth

Evans (1903) wrote of this church that 'At the end of the eighteenth century the building was in ruins, so much as to be unsuitable for marriages to be solemnized in it, and accordingly they took place in the graveyard under the wide branches of the old yew which still flourishes, and is as full of life as ever.'

Information provided by Arthur O. Chater: The yew grew on a walled mound SE of the chancel and when recorded in 1980 its girth was 333cm. Its health was regarded as poor and in 1985 it was cut down. A piece of its hollow trunk 6cm thick and 5cm from the outside of the tree had 136 annual rings. A replacement was planted SSW of the church porch.

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## BROUGHTON - YEW TREE HOUSE Hampshire

felled in 1984: young yew

Yew Tree House is at the junction of Queenwood Rd and High St and situated within an area known as The Square. *Hampshire Treasures* have a record of 'two yew trees known as Jacob and Esau, now only Esau remains, Jacob recently felled'.

An article in THE ANDOVER ADVERTISER on 13th January 1984 anticipated the felling of Jacob on 7th Feb. of that year. This was necessary because the tree described as 'rotten' could no longer be insured, and the owner understandably did not wish to risk paying a claim for damages. We now know that almost all yews of great age have areas of decay that lead to hollowing, and that this should present no danger. Unfortunately the knowledge comes too late to save Jacob. Described as 'the smooth one' it grew by the side of its survivor Esau 'the hairy one'. At that time this pair of yews had for some people an almost mythical status and it was reckoned that if anything happened to them disaster would befall the village. They were said to represent the heart of the village, providing protection. Some even put their age as high as 900 years, though less than a third of that would seem more likely.

## LLANRHYCHWYN Conwy

lost since 1984: 458cm girth

A 1984 plan drawn by Reg Wheeler shows 5 yews with girths above 12'. The yew he recorded with a girth of 458cm at the ground no longer exists.

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## LLANSILIN Powys

lost after 1983: 16' 11" girth

A male yew included on Reg Wheeler's plan of Llansilin churchyard, following his visit on 2nd December 1983. It grew east of the church and had a girth of 516cm (16' 11") at 75cm. The tree no longer exists.

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## LLANFACHRETH Gwynedd

3 yews lost before 1983: largest 14ft girth

Reg Wheeler's plan of 1983 shows the position and girth of five trees in a line NE of the church, as well as the position of three yew stumps. The largest of these had a girth of about 14'. There is no record of why these were felled.

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## ABER Gwynedd

2 younger yews lost between 1983 and 2000

Fry and Meredith's notes say 'originally a circle of 10 old yews recorded in 1983, now just one left'. Reg Wheeler's 1983 plan of the churchyard shows 14 yews and in 2000 I recorded 12.

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## BIGNOR West Sussex

cut down in 1982: 15' 6" girth

The girth of this yew was 15' 6" when it was 'drastically pruned to prevent accidents' (Swanton 1958). It is likely that this action led to the tree being felled in 1982. Traces of its trunk could still be seen in 2004.

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## EAST LAVANT West Sussex

felled in 1982: 28' girth

According to Mee's *The King's England* (1937) 'those who knew East Lavant's old church when it was new may have known its old yew when it was very young; it throws out its branches to make a ring about 200 ft round. Its hollowness was considered to be dangerous and it was felled in the early 1980s (Owen Johnson). Girth has been recorded as 28'.

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## WARNHAM West Sussex

cut down in 1981: 19' girth

The large yew used to grow in the walled garden. It was cut down in about 1981 by the owners. The stump, recorded as 6' in diameter (about 19' in circumference) was left by the new owners in the hope that it might regenerate. In 1992 this too was removed.

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## GORT NA MONA Co Galway

fell in the 1980s: 22' 3" c1897

This location, called Gartnamara in Lowe's 1896 book *The Yew Trees of Great Britain and Ireland*, is at Ballinasloe in County Galway. EW Lynham informed Lowe of a yew with a girth of 12' 5" at the ground and 22' 6" at 3'. He described it as spreading into 20 great branches at a height of 5'. The yew fell in the 1980's and all that remains is a 2 metre stump.



Two significant yews have been lost at this site. In 1986 Rev J.Daryll Evans recorded 'a massive ivy-crowned yew stump near the gate in the west wall of the churchyard'. He recorded no measurement for this tree and no trace of it remained in 1998.

Evans also noted the yew growing east of the church as follows: 'Much of the trunk .....is dead, but a part still grows. Girth 682cm (22' 4").' In 1998 there was no longer any sign of life and I measured the stump as 671cm (22' 0").




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**WOODFORD** NE London

destroyed in the 1980s: 17'

The yew, documented as early as 1796, finally succumbed to fire and storms in the 1980s. In Meredith/Fry's 2023 article *Britain's Lost Yews* a 17ft yew is noted in 1987 as 'damaged by building works and gales and also set fire'.

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**STONE** Kent

felled after 1980: 435cm girth

Meredith's gazetteer in *The Sacred Yew* recorded a 28' yew removed in 1980. A letter from the Rector at Stone sent in October 1980 invited Meredith to see the yew whose girth he had estimated at 30ft or so. Its girth had been exaggerated and when the stump was measured in 2005 girth was only 4.35m at the ground and 3.22m at the cut off point at a height of 50cm.

## CHERKLEY COURT Surrey

lost in storms in the 1980s

According to the estate manager up to two thirds of the yews were lost in the storms of the 1980s.

## LLANSPYDDID Powys

felled c1980: no size information

Several yews have been lost from this site. In 2006 I was told that two of the yews here was felled 25 years earlier. I was able to locate the remains of 3 yews, two of which had girths of 19' and 15'.



## BRIDEKIRK Cumbria

felled in 1978: girth 11ft

The reason for felling is not known, but the middle was described as rotted and hollowed out.

## MYNDTOWN Pilgrim's Route Shropshire

removed c 1977: no size information

From south of the Myndtown buildings a wide track leads to the Plowden / Asterton road. We were told in 2007 that there were once a larger number of old yews in this locality, particularly at the site of the orchard, but that these were removed about 30 years earlier.

## SOUTH BERSTED West Sussex

no record after 1975: 8' diameter

Owen Johnson (*Sussex Tree Book* - 1998) recorded South Bersted as a site where a 'notable tree' has been lost. In 1870 it was recorded as a 'hollow yew, more than eight feet in diameter'. By 1975 the tree had been reduced to a single fragment with a girth of 13' 4".

Photo - Rose Hanbury



The yew was reported by Hyde and Harrison in *Welsh Timber Trees* (1977) as 'felled in 1973'.



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**RUFFORTH** Yorkshire

Several removed between 1972 and 2012: possible age 350+

In *Trees of the British Isles in history & legend* by JH Wilks (1972): 'In the village of Rufforth, near York, yews were planted in a field adjoining the churchyard in 1644 to commemorate the local men who died at the Battle of Marston Moor. Thirteen yews still remain.'

This number has been reduced to six as several were presumably felled to make space for building the Primary School, Community Centre and houses in Yew Tree Close. I was informed that an archaeological survey was carried out prior to building, but it failed to uncover evidence of burials. While girth of these trees might not suggest an age of over 360 years, the story is well known and the information features in the Village Development Plan. If they were planted in 1644 they have been very slow growing trees.

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**HAGLEY** Worcestershire

cut down in 1971: no size information

Edwin Lees (1882) recorded 'a massive yew' with 'internal roots and the size of the tree suggest it was at least seven centuries old'. J.Pritchard, a local historian, in personal correspondence with Robert Bevan-Jones reported it 'cut down and burnt' in 1971. This was apparently part of a churchyard levelling exercise.

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**WHITTON** Powys

lost between 1970 and 1998: 18' girth

The 1970 Breconshire yew survey recorded four in this churchyard, with girths of 26', 18', 13' and 10' 3". The 18' yew and one of the smaller trees have been lost since the survey.

## PATRICIO / PATRISHOW Powys

lost between 1970 and 2000: 21' girth

The 21' tree recorded in the Brecon yew survey was lost after 1970. A Naturalist Club meeting of 1912 observed: 'By the church porch is a yew, holly and ash tree all in one, and this came in for much attention.' In 2000 all that remained of this botanical curiosity was a piece of yew stump.



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## BROCKLEY HALL Somerset

felled in 1970s - 18' and 17' in 1838

The yews were first recorded by Loudon in 1838, with girths of 18' and 17'. Frances Smith in *The Story of Brockley Hall* reported 'the ancient yews, unfortunately decimated by logging in the 1970s'.

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## BLARNEY CASTLE Cork

cut down c1970: 3' 6" diameter

The landscaped Rock Close, found in the castle grounds, is thought to have been built around an ancient druidic settlement. Some of the living yews here have been recorded with girths of above 4m. John McCarthy, a woodturner, was given a section of trunk from a yew cut down in the grounds c1970. The tree was over 3½ feet in diameter at the base.

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## CHILLENDEEN Kent

re-

moved before 1970: no size information

A drawing by Petrie (1807) shows a large yew growing close to the south porch.

A 1970 record from the Canterbury archive notes the 'removal of the four largest yew trees'.



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## LLANFIHANGEL TAL-Y-LLYN Powys

no record after 1970: 28' girth

The 1970 Brecon Yew Survey recorded trees as follows: 28', 17', 16' 6" and 10' 6". Two of these, including the 28' yew, have been lost since 1970.

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## CWM-DU Powys

no record after 1970: 17' 6" girth

In the Brecon Tree Survey of 1970 a girth of 17' 6" was recorded for a yew at this location. In 2000 we counted 28 yews in the churchyard, but found nothing of this size.

## PENPONT Powys

cut down in 1970: 230cm diameter (722cm girth)

According to Allen Meredith one of the large yews here (230cm diameter in the Tree Register's data base) was 'cut down in 1970'. The original source of his information is not known.

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## LLANDEGLEY Powys

no record after 1970: 17' and 12' girth

The Brecon Yew Survey of 1970 recorded yews of 18', 17' and 12', noting two of them to be hollow. By 2001 only one, with a girth of 19', was still alive. Stumps remained of the two lost yews



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## BETTWS GWERFIL GOCH Denbighshire

felled in 1970s: no size information

Clwyd / Powys Archaeological Trust recorded 'the last yews felled in the 1970s'.

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## LLANAFAN Ceredigion

felled in 1970 : 440cm girth

Arthur O Chater, in his *Flora of Cardiganshire* wrote that of the two larger yews described by Evans in 1903, one is now only a 'hollow partly burned stump E of the church, with a girth recorded in 1978 of 440cm'. It was apparently felled in 1970.

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## FORDEN Powys

blew down in 1970s: no size information

1995 Clwyd / Powys Archaeological Trust: An old yew on the west side of the south path blew down in the 1970s and several Irish yews were planted to take its place.

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## LLANELLAN Glamorgan

burnt down in or after 1969: 4.65m girth

In *Churchyard Yew Trees in the Archdeaconry of Gower*, John Andrew wrote that the yew, noted by R.E.Kay in 1969, was later 'killed by burning'. Its size is disputed, Kay recorded 7.616m, John Andrew recorded 4.65m.

## BOBBINGTON Staffordshire

felled in 1968: no size information

A yew by the footpath was felled in 1968. Another, thought to be older, blew down during a gale in 1992. This is all on local websites and there is no verification as to whether the trees were significantly old.

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## CLEARWELL Gloucestershire

felled since 1966: no size information

Mee, in *The King's England* 1966, wrote of the castle gateway 'shaded by two old yews'. We found no yews.

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## SHEPTON MONTAGUE Somerset

destroyed by fire in 1964: no size information

Arthur Mee's description in *The King's England* was of a giant yew higher than the roof. The church was rebuilt in 1964, following a fire which presumably also destroyed the yew.

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## FITZHEAD Somerset

felled in 1963: 16' in 1791

1791: Collinson/Rack - *The history and antiquities of the county of Somerset* recorded 'a very fine yew tree 16' round, with a very large spread'. According to the Tree Register's records, it was felled in 1963.



## SANDERSTEAD Surrey

felled in 1962: 16' in 1880

1880 - Straker: A yew growing SSW of the church, with a girth of 16' 3" at 5'.

1895 - Lowe: The larger yew, which was hollow, girthed 15' 4" at the ground, 12' 8" at 3' and 16' 4" at 4'.

2001 - Tim Hills: To replace this tree was a young yew with a plaque, stating that 'This English Yew was presented by the Sanderstead Preservation Society to replace one felled in 1962. It was planted on 27th April by Rev V.L. Tucker Harvey MA, rector of this parish.'

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## LLYSHENDY Carmarthenshire

felled in 1960s: no size information

Newspaper article - 2011: 'The oldest yew I ever encountered was at Llyshendy on the Ffairfach to Bethlehem road, once a medieval almshouse. As a boy I spent many hours visiting Mr Gunston who tutored me as a field naturalist. He showed me where owl pellets over hundreds of generations had accumulated in its vast hollow trunk. I'd guess two thousand years old. In the 1960s, a subsequent owner felled it as it obscured his view of the entrance gate.'

## MALLENY GARDENS Balerno

felled in 1961: no size information

These '4 disciples' are thought to be nearly 400 years old. There were once twelve, but the eight similar trees were allowed to be felled in 1961. See [www.treefestscotland.org.uk](http://www.treefestscotland.org.uk)

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## OLD RADNOR Powys

removed since 1960s: no size information

Paul Wood 2018: I was told that an old rotting yew was removed from in front of the porch in the 1960's. An old black and white photo confirms the yew's existence.



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## CILWERN Carmarthenshire

felled in 1960s: no size information

A photo c1920 shows the yew growing close to a farm building. The photo was supplied by Janet Shelly, whose grandparents appear in the picture. In the 1960s the house was subject to compulsory purchase so that open cast mining could take place. House and tree were demolished.



## LLANDDEWI YSTRADENNI Powys

destroyed in the 60s or 70s:no size information

The *Radnorshire Society Transactions* Vol XV of 1945 has an article by Rev D.Stedman Davies with this description: 'Radnorshire has one other hollow tree which was used for years as a church coal-house until a new one was built. It is in the Llandewy-Ystrad Enni, with the cavity extending twelve feet up the trunk, which is really a shell.' The source of the information about its destruction in the 1960s or 1970s is not known.

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## WHITTINGTON RECTORY Shropshire

felled in 1960s: 19' girth in 1849

1849: In *The Railway Companion from Chester to Shrewsbury* by Edward Parry, 'a magnificent yew-tree' was described, 'it is above 45 feet high, and 19 feet in circumference at 3ft 6ins from the ground; the land under its branches is 153 feet in circumference.'

David North, Rector of Whittington has provided the following information: Part of the extensive rectory grounds, including the old Rectory, were purchased by Shropshire County Council in the early 1960s. In clearing the site to improve the A5 the yew was destroyed along with many other trees.

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## STOKE POGES Oxfordshire

no record after 1954: no girth details

A yew, described in 1954 as 'very decrepit' is now gone.

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## BUCKLEBURY Berkshire

removed around 1954: 9 yards girth

In *Views of Reading abbey* with those of the churches originally connected with it, by Charles Tomkins 1805, is the following entry: BUCKLEBURY In the church yard is a remarkable fine yew trees said to measure nine yards in girth when measured in the widest part near the reparation of the branches from the trunk. This venerable tree is undoubtedly of a very great age. Having stood the blasts of many a winter, it was stripped in the last of much of its beauty, owing to its too luxuriant growth, for the branches, on the side next the church, which extended as far as the porch, a distance of not less than twenty yards, became so loaded with snow, as with its weight to break them all off near the trunk, from whence they were obliged to be severed, to the great regret of the parishioners and every one who had seen and admired the tree in its former luxuriancy. The present incumbent is the Rev. Richard Cox.

The yew remained in situ for a further 150 years, eventually being removed, we are told, around 1954





## CAE FFYNNON Conwy

no record after 1954: no size information

A well site thought to date back to the 6th century. It was recorded by F.Jones in *The Holy Wells of Wales* 1954 as follows: 'In a Field called Cae Ffynnon in Llanfairfechain: once a potent well, it has been filled up since around 1874; the site is in a plantation by the remains of some Yews.'

Although there is no longer evidence of the old yews that once grew in the vicinity of the well, the area around the site abounds in yew, with the avenue in Llanfairfechan's churchyard as well as many more at the local burial ground situated just up the hill from Cae Ffynnon.

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## BIRDHAM West Sussex

no record after 1953: 23' girth

A 23' stump. *British History online* described a remarkable twisted yew south of the church. The twisted tree is in fact a macrocarpa, but a formidable ancient yew once grew close to it. It had been lopped at about 8/10ft and was hollow, with evidence of much burnt wood within the hollow.



## BARNACLE Warwickshire

last noted in 195

Park Farm is a 17th century farmhouse built of brick and tile. It is on a site that is older still and the buildings are partly surrounded by a deep ditch, with other clues that this was originally a moat. British History on-line (1951) described 'ancient yew-trees at back and front'.

In 2009 I saw ten yews, predominantly female and appearing to be in the age range 250-350 years. Several of the trees were showing signs of rotting in the centre, similar to that seen in the clipped yews at Painswick, suggesting that attempts might have been made to topiarise these yews in their early stages. Three trees form a line leading towards one corner of the house. I was told that there were once considerably more than the ten yews counted today and that there used to be a line of yews across an adjacent field where an ancient right of way used to run.

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## SHUTE Devon

felled in early 1950s: 10' 6" girth

The yew was removed some years before 1954. When it lost a branch during a gale, concern was expressed that if the topmost branch also fell it might endanger life. The Church Council decided to 'have the tree cut off at its base, to avoid damage and possible loss of life'. The ivy covered base of its stump was measured as 10ft 6ins. (Swanton)

I was informed that two yews were taken down in the 1950s after branches fell from them and they were regarded as a potential hazard.




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**ROUNDWAY DOWN** Devizes Wiltshire

woodland clear felled in 1949: no size information

In Donald Grose's *Flora of Wiltshire* (1957) it is recorded that 'a large yew wood on Roundway Down was clear felled in 1949 and much of the debris burned on the site.'

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**LLANELLY** Monmouthshire

lost in storm of 1947: no size information

16 yews form a rough circle around the church in this circular churchyard. It is considered that the original circle contained 18 trees, and that two were lost in the storm of 1947.

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**LITTLE NESS** Shropshire

cut down in 1947: no size information

The Rev'd Parrott, who was vicar of Little Ness in 1947, reported damage caused to the nearby tumulus when a local farmer cut down a yew tree. There is no record of size.

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**TATSFIELD** Surrey

no record after 1946: 16' 3" girth

In 1865 *A handbook for travellers in Suurey, Hampshire and the Isle of Wight* by King and Murray recorded that 'The Little church of Tatsfield, on the edge of the chalk hill, 1m.N.E., is ancient, and worth a visit, though but a plain and humble village church. East of the church is a yew of great size, but of several stems.' In 1880 Straker recorded that the yew grew ENE of the church and had a girth of 16' 3".

The 1912 *History of the county of Surrey: volume 4* contains the following description: 'The churchyard..... contains in its eastern part a yew tree of great age and size subdivided into several stems.'

Cornish's 1946 *The Churchyard Yew and Immortality* recorded it as 'a yew of great age'. It was lost by the time of Fookes visit in 1994.

## YATESBURY Wiltshire

no record after 1946: 20' girth

In *Notes and Queries* Sept 19<sup>th</sup> 1931, Wm. Jaggard wrote: 'Yatesbury Churchyard, between Calne and Marlborough, owned some gigantic yews, centuries old. One was over 20ft in girth.'

Cornish (*The Churchyard Yew and Immortality* 1946) was told of a yew of 'aldermanic proportions'. There was no trace in 1999.

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## SOMERSAL HERBERT Derbyshire

no record after 1946: no size information

The Reverend Rex Jenkins described the following for Cornish's *The Churchyard Yew and Immortality* (1946): 'Ancient Yews with iron girdles and wooden supports.' There is nothing now to match that description.

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## MARTLEY Worcestershire

no record after 1946 : 12 yards girth in 1823

This was a substantial tree, recorded with a girth of about twelve yards in 1823. In 1946 it was reported that the 'old yew flanking the main entrance to the churchyard' was still growing. There is no trace of the yew today.

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## UPWEY Dorset

lost between 1946 and 1950 : no size information

Before 1946 Cornish (*The churchyard Yew and Immortality*) was informed by Rev AS Bryant that 'by the west tower was one of the finest yews in the county'. In 1950 there was reported an ivy covered 6ft high stump. This is now gone.

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## LLANDEFALOG FACH Powys

1 young yew lost between 1946 and 2001

In 1833 Lewis's *Topographical Dictionary* described the tower of the church as 'seen just rising above the dark foliage of the venerable yew-trees by which it is surrounded'.

In 1946 Cornish recorded that there were '15 trees, four of them between 16' and 20' 6".'

In 2013 there were 14 living yews and a stump of one of the smaller girthed trees. To lose one small girthed tree out of 15 is success indeed.

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## LLANGADFAN Powys

no record after 1946: no size information

According to Cornish's 1946 *The Churchyard Yew and Immortality* there 'used to be a big yew on the south side of the church'. This no longer exists

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## LIGHTHORNE Warwickshire

no record after 1946: no size information

According to Cornish there were 2 large yews on south side of the church. The two found SE in 2005 are only 7' in girth, probably nearer to 5' at the time Cornish was writing (1946). I was informed in 2005 that the 6 Irish Yews replaced *Taxus Baccata* which were destroyed 'some time ago'.

## LLANELIAN-YN-RHOS Conwy

no record after 1946: no size information

Cornish's 1946 *The Churchyard Yew and Immortality* recorded a 'very old yew'. We found no old yew at this site in 2000.

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## WRINGTON Somerset

no record after 1946: no size information

In 1946 Cornish (*The Churchyard Yew and Immortality*) was told about 'an old yew with trunk split'. It no longer exists.

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## BARWELL Leicestershire

no record after 1946: no size information

Mee's *The King's England* c1946 described 'venerable yews'. It is possible that these were Irish Yews.

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## WHATLINGTON East Sussex

no record after 1945: no size information

Owen Johnson in *The Sussex Tree Book* recorded Whatlington as a site where a 'notable tree' was lost after 1945.

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## GARTHBEIBIO Powys

no record after 1944: no size information

In 1946 Cornish's *The Churchyard Yew and Immortality* reported 'Two big yews, one in front of S. porch, the other on N. side of church.' The yew by the south porch no longer exists.

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## EURIDGE Wiltshire

no record after 1941: no size information

*The Project Gutenberg, EBook of the Natural History of Wiltshire* by John Aubrey and produced by Mickle Coher states that 'At Ewridge, in the parish of Colern, in North Wilts they (yews) also grow indifferently plentiful.' The yews were recorded in 1941 as 'still there on the hill' by Miss D.M.Frowde of Colerne, for inclusion in Donald Grose's 1957 *Flora of Wiltshire*.

In 2005 we searched most of the wooded areas around Euridge Manor. None had any sign of yew. Even the most likely area, a steep slope above a river, had at some time been cleared and was now filled with coppiced hazel.

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## CHESTERBLADE Somerset

no record after 1941: girth 13'

Mee's *The King's England* 1941 described 'an ancient yew 13' round the trunk'. This was gone before 2003.

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## KILVE Somerset

no record after 1941: 20' girth

Recorded in 1791 by Collinson in *The history and antiquities of the county of Somerset* as 'a very old yew tree with a large spreading head, the trunk 19' in circumference'.

In Mee's *The King's England* of 1941 it was 'an old yew tree, with a trunk over 20' round'.

## WHITELACKINGTON Somerset

no record after 1941: no size information

Mee's *King's England* (1941) recorded 'two ancient yews standing before the church'.

Only one was alive in 1999.



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## ENMORE Somerset

no record after 1941: 19' girth

Mee's *King's England* (1941) described a 19' round and hollow tree. It was lost between 1941 and 1997.

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## BOYNTON East Yorkshire

lost since 1940: girth assumed to be about 11'

Arthur Mee's *King's England* c 1940 described 'the church almost hidden by 2 fine yews'. In 2010 there was only one tree fitting this description, with a girth of about 11'. We can assume the lost tree was of similar size.

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## LITTON CHEYNEY Dorset

lost since 1940: girth about 9'

*The King's England - Arthur Mee* (1940s) described two yews here, of which only one remains, its girth about 9'.

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## MORETON Dorset

bomb damage c1940: no size information

A large yew tree 'up against the wall of the church' is reported to have been blown apart (along with much of the church) when a bomb was dropped on 8th October 1940.

## BARCOMBE East Sussex

blown down c1940: no size information

A *History of the County of Sussex: Vol 7 (1940)*: 'The site of a large yew, blown down recently, is now occupied by the War Memorial.'

A photograph/postcard of 1904 shows "The ancient yew tree, St Mary's churchyard". This is part of a collection of the East Sussex Federation of Women's Institutes and is held by the East Sussex Record Office.

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## HARVINGTON HALL Worcestershire

no record after 1940: no size information

The source is unknown, but there is a 1940 reference to 'a yew of considerable merit' growing here. The manager informed us that there is no yew in their garden/grounds, which are open to the public.

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## KENARDINGTON Kent

no record after 1940: no size information

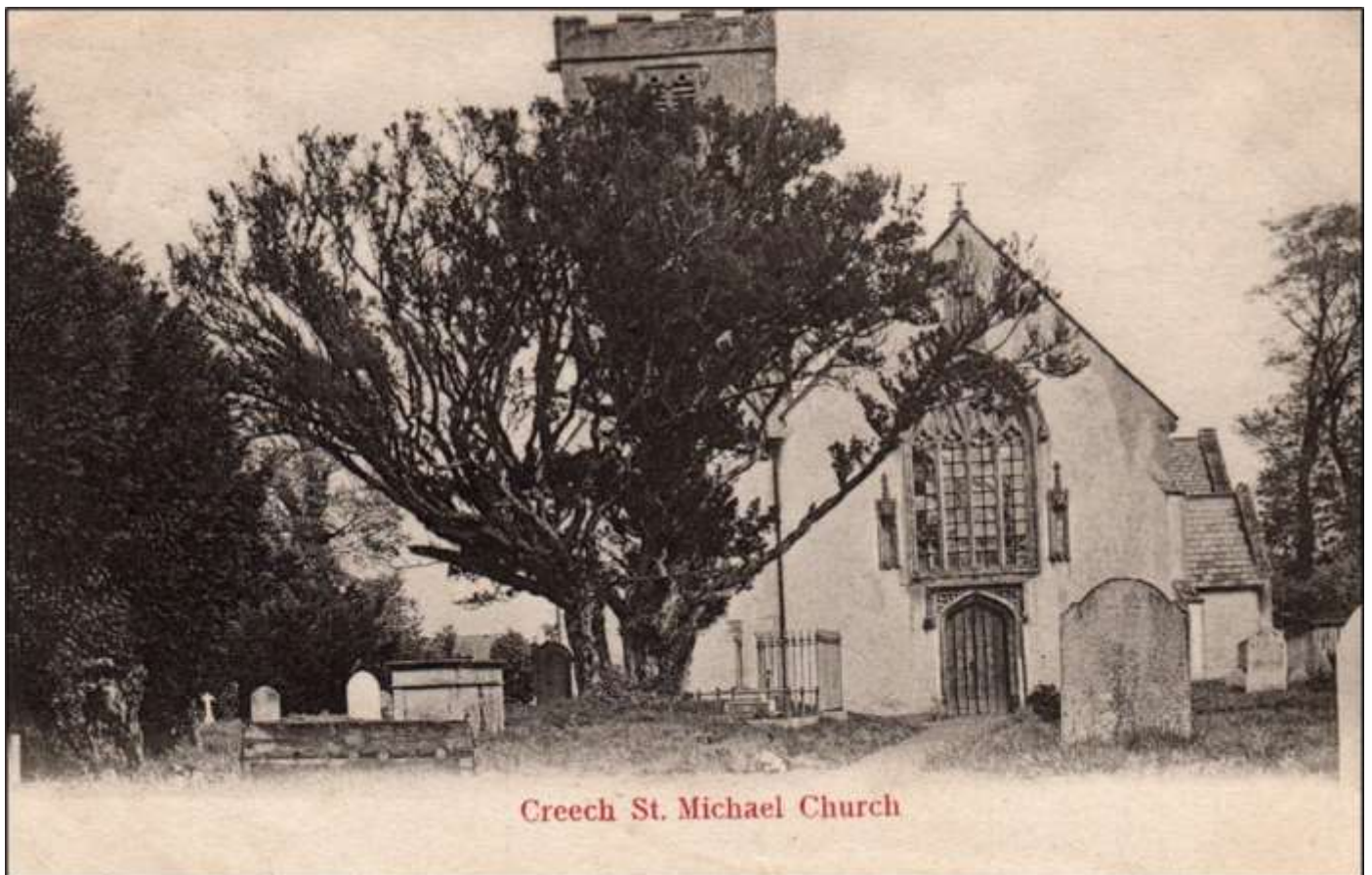
Mee's *King's England (1940)* recorded that 'the hollowed yew is flourishing'. I found no sign of this tree in 2002.

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## CREECH ST MICHAEL Somerset

tree dying in 1940: girth 15' +

In 1791 Collinson's *The history and antiquities of the county of Somerset* recorded 2 very large old yew trees, both hollow, and measuring 15' in circumference. By 1940 Mee described 'one of the yews dying after 700 years'. A postcard from c1905 shows the position of the lost yew and gives an idea of its poor condition. It grew close to the surviving yew, whose foliage is seen on the left.



## ST GILES PARK Wimborne Dorset

cleared for war effort c1940: no size information

In 1991 Mary Munslow Jones, editor of the Worcestershire Naturalists Club for many years, wrote to the Conservation Foundation. Part of her letter describes a childhood on the Shaftesbury Estate, where her father was the Clerk of Works. She was often taken to the oldest yew on the estate and described it as 'hollow, and I used to play house in it. My father said it was over 1000 years old. It was seldom visited, for it lay away from the drives which then led from the mansion to various lodges across the park.'

She enclosed a map showing the precise location of the tree. Twenty years after this letter Peter Andrews spoke to Mary Munslow Jones, now in her mid-90s but still with a clear recollection of the tree of her childhood. After visiting the site Peter had to report to her that the tree no longer stands. The land was apparently cleared during the 2nd World War for farming.

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## UPTON BISHOP Herefordshire

no record after 1940: no size information

In 1940 Mee's *King's England* noted that a 'great yew with a hollow split trunk shades the path to the church'. It was gone by 1990.

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## HOLWELL Dorset

no record after 1940: no size information

In 1940 Mee's *King's England* described 'a pair of old yews, of which only one now survives as a regenerating stump'.

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## STAPLE Kent

last recorded in 1940: girth 12' 9"

In 1836 'two large yew-trees' were described. One has survived to the present day, its girth 12' 11" in 2002. The lost yew was described by Mee (c1940) as 'a fine yew by the lychgate'. Its stump remains, with a girth of 12' 9".

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## ASTON BOTTERELL Shropshire

no record after 1939: no size information

The yew is seen in a painting of 1791.

It was described by Mee in the *King's England* 1939 as 'an ancient yew with two trunks'.

There is no information on its size, but fragments of stump do not indicate that this was a particularly large or significant yew.



In the garden of a house adjacent to church, Mee's *King's England* (1939) recorded '2 sentinels'.

Planted so close to the house it should have been obvious that one day they would block out most of the light.




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**SOBERTON** Hampshire

no record after 1939: 22' 2" girth

Mee's *King's England* 1939 described a 'hilltop church guarded by a noble yew'.

In 1999 I found an old stump, on the north side of the church and colonised by ivy, sycamore and elder. It was a hollow tree which had separated into two fragments. Girth was 22' 2".

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**EASTINGTON** Gloucestershire

no record after 1938: no size information

In 1938 '8 old yews' were noted in Mee's *King's England*. Only 5 of these remain today. One of the lost yews might have been the 'great yew-tree on the North side of Eastington church' beneath which William Pemble was buried in 1623.

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**ORCOP** Herefordshire

no record after 1938: up to 30'

Mee's *King's England* recorded 'a hollow yew' in 1938. It has been described as having had a girth of 30', but the source of this information is not known. In 1999 we found no trace of the tree, nor anybody who could remember it.

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**ABENHALL** Gloucestershire

no record after 1938: 15' girth

In 1938 Mee's *King's England* described that 'a lonely place is the 13th century church, with two magnificent old yews that have kept it company most of the time.' While one lives on, a 15' girthed stump is all that remains of the other.



The stone tablet at the base of the tree records that it 'lost some of its noblest branches' during the great gale of 24th January 1884. A visitor in 1938 noted that 'though much of it is dead and the gnarled and twisted trunk is hollow, one vigorous arm was holding out when we called.' The stump reveals a hollow tree with an internal stem and suggests that it was formerly of greater girth. In 2009 there were no signs of life.




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**IBBERTON** Dorset

no record after 1937: no size information

In *Companion into Dorset* by Dorothy Gardiner (1937), she describes a well on the hillside below Ibberton church, located 'under the roots of an aged yew'. The tree no longer exists.

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**COED-LADYR** Gwynedd

lost to weight of snow 1937: no size information

*Archaeologia Cambrensis* refers to 'yr hen Eglwys' or old church as the site of this yew. Its position was about a mile ESE of Coedladur, spelt Coed-ladyr on the present OS map. In maps of c1940 the location was marked as 'site of church', but the church no longer exists. The location is at a height of about 1300 feet and on an old Celtic- Roman road. The yew was lost to the weight of snow in 1937.

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**CERNE ABBEY** graveyard Dorset

no record after 1937: no size information

The Abbey House is now a private dwelling, but parts of the old Abbey grounds are accessible, including the graveyard. In *Companion into Dorset* by Dorothy Gardiner (1937), she records a many-stemmed yew on the site of St Augustines Well at Abbey House in Cerne Abbas. This yew no longer grows here.

1880: from a paper read by T.H.Thomas to the Cardiff Naturalists' Society:

'Another very good tree is the female yew at Caerau, near Cardiff. Its circumference at the ground is 18', and at 4' from the ground 18' 8". The greater part of the present tree seems a new growth upon a huge internal root, around which we put the tape, the girth being 9'. The whole of the body is an almost indescribable mass of growing, mingled with withering and decaying tissues. The foliage of this tree is remarkable for its density; the multitude of twigs grow close and crisp in their battles with mist from the mountains and winds from the sea, and have wholly lost that fall of the glossy braided tips which is such a grace to the yews which grow in sheltered situations.'

The Friends of St Mary's church web site has provided information that the yew was destroyed when vandals set fire to it on 6th July 1937. Its girth was 20' 2" just below the lowest branch, according to Hyde's *Welsh Timber Trees*.

## WALMER Kent

no record after 1936: no size information

In 1999 a stump was all that remained of a fine tree, illustrated in 1852 and still thriving in 1936. It is not known when it fell or was felled, but the signs of fire damage visible on the stump suggest that this is what caused the tree to fail.



## LITTLE CHART Kent

gone by 1936: no size information

It is known that there were 'two fine yews' in 1814 [*An Historical, Topographical and Descriptive Account of the Weald of Kent* by T.D.W.Dearn]. Only one has survived to the present day, its girth about 5m.

It is not known when the 2nd yew was destroyed, but by the time Mee wrote about the site in his 1936 *King's England* he reported only one yew.

## COLDRED Kent

no record after 1936: no size information

According to Mee's *King's England* (1936) there was a 'yew in the churchyard, ancient, hollow and dying'. It can be seen on the south side of the church in Petrie's 1807 drawing.



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## BETHERSDEN Kent

no record after 1936: no size information

Mee's *King's England* 1936 described 'a yew tree seen for miles'. We found nothing of that description in the churchyard.

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## KILMINGTON Devon

the old stump fell on the night of 3<sup>rd</sup>/4<sup>th</sup> March 1935

In *The Book of the Axe* c1875, Pulman wrote 'the yew tree is an arboreal curiosity and very old. Within its hollow trunk are twisted stems, thrown up from the roots, through which sap is conveyed to the branches - a curious effort of nature to supply the place of the decayed trunk. Tradition says the yew was planted long before the church was built.' The old stump fell in 1935.

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## GLYNCORRWG Glamorgan

no record after 1933: 10 yards 4"

Carlisle's 1811 *Topographical Dictionary* described 'five remarkable Yew Trees, the largest of which (in 1810) measures 10 yards 4 inches in circumference'.

This tree was 'still there' in 1933 but has since been lost, apparently cut down during church rebuilding. Of the five remarkable yew trees noted in 1811, three remained in 1998, suggesting the loss of 2 trees.

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## WEST HENDRED Berkshire

no record after 1931: girth 12' 8"

On 10th October 1931 the churchyard yew was measured as 12' 8" at 30" from the ground; umbrage 45 yards; height about 40'. This tree used to grow on the north side of the church. All that remains is a large portion of its decaying stump. A healthy and well established replacement yew grows nearby.

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## WEST FARLEIGH Kent

one of its younger yews lost since 1931

In *Notes and Queries* of 1931 it is reported that the Parish Register recorded five yew trees planted in 1721 and a further three between 1840 and 1843. At the time all were reported to be alive and healthy.

Two large yews have been lost from this site. We were told that the first, removed in the 1930s, was an immense tree. A little further to the south are the remains of what was possibly a twin trunked yew.



**BWLCH-LLAN** - formerly Nantcwnlle, Ceredigion

no record after 1930: no size information

*A Short History of the Parish of Nantcwnlle* by Rev. Evan Edwardes, 1930, describes the following: 'There in one yew in this graveyard which has possibly challenged the storms for years and another which is not so old. After the church was renovated (1887) about a dozen yew trees and other arbor vitae were planted on either side of the path which leads from the gateway to the Church door.' Old photos of the church suggest that some of the trees leading from the gateway to the church were Irish Yews, though there are still young yews at the southern and northern perimeters of the churchyard. There is no trace of the yew which had 'challenged the storms for years.'

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**LLAN** Powys

lost between 1930 and 1940: no size information

Reg Wheeler (March 1984) wrote that an 'elderly lady here remembers a magnificent old yew which was blown down many years ago - before 2nd world war - between 1930 and 1940'. This was undoubtedly one of the 'yew trees of fine growth and of great age' recorded in the 1833 *Topographical Dictionary*.

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**SELLING** Kent

no record after 1930: no size information

Two yews were recorded in the 1930 *Bell's Pocket Guide to Kent*. By 1983 one was an ivy covered stump.



**BOXWELL** Gloucestershire

no record after 1928: no size information

A visit was made to find St Mary's Well and locate the 'two large yew trees' reported in 1928 as marking the site of the spring. Sadly this is no longer the case and two willows now mark the spot. We were told that two stumps (not of great size) could still be located, but several feet of brambles covered the site at the time of the visit.

## YATTENDON Berkshire

damaged in 1925 gale: 9' in 1877

The yew was planted in 1666 by the rector, Mr Sayer. Its last recorded girth (1877) was 9' at 18" from the ground. After suffering major branch loss in 1849, 1886 and 1893 its bare trunk was finally removed in 1926 following a damaging gale in 1925. A four year old yew was planted in its place SW of the church in 1893.

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## LLANDDEWI FACH Monmouthshire

destroyed by fire c1925: 30' 4"

In 1882 the yew's circumference was reported to be 30ft 4ins. There are conflicting stories about its demise. This account is from E.W.Swanton, who wrote to Rev. Harold Richards asking for measurements. The reply he received in September 1955 said: 'It seems as though there used to be a great yew tree, but, from what I can glean from the old parishioners, it was destroyed by fire over 30 years ago - how and why remains a mystery.' In a 1977 account in *Welsh Timber Trees*, Hyde and Harrison reported that by 1930 only a few live branches remained and in 1975 it was 'just alive'.

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## HORTON Berkshire

no record after 1925: no size information

In *A History of the County of Buckingham: Volume 3* (1925) we are told of 'two very picturesque and antique yews, coevals, male and female, probably 600 or 700 years old'. The male has been lost since then.

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## FAWLEY Buckinghamshire

no record after 1925: a 'huge tree'

In *A History of the county of Buckinghamshire* (1925) a fine yew was described growing north-west of the church. It was so large that in the hollow trunk 'twelve persons can take shelter at the same time'. An elderly resident was able to identify a slight mound under the turf near the Freeman Mausoleum, the only remaining evidence of this once huge tree.



## STOCKTON-ON-TEME Worcestershire

last recorded as alive in 1924: 20' girth

*A History of the County of Worcester: Volume 4* (1924) described 'a fine yew tree in the churchyard to the south-west of the church'. A dead fragment, with an internal stem close to its edge was located in 2011, but it is now almost concealed by roses and other climbing plants. Girth of what remains was about 16', but this tree would have once been closer to 20'.



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## CASTLEMORTON Worcestershire

no record after 1924: no size information

The 1924 *History of the County of Worcester* contained the following description: 'In the churchyard are the remains of a cross and there is a yew tree to the south-east of the chancel.' An old postcard is the last record of the tree. There is no indication of likely age.



## GRAPPENHALL Cheshire

no record after 1923: no size information

In a 1923 lecture by Arthur Mounfield recorded in the *Warrington Examiner*, he described the antiquities to be found in the churchyard as 'mere striplings in comparison to the yew tree under whose shade they stand. There would be material for quite a small lecture on this rugged yet kindly giant were there but time to give it.'

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## KEMSING Kent

drought 1921: no size information

The yew died in the drought of 1921. This extract is from a letter to David Bellamy sent by V.E.Bowden in 1988: 'The yew is merely a fifteen foot stump, the tree having died in the drought of 1921. It is now covered in ivy and makes a feature in the churchyard.' Was 15ft the height or girth of the stump?

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## DUFFIELD Derbyshire

no record after 1921: 21' girth



## HINTON BLEWETT Somerset

fell in 1920s: no size information

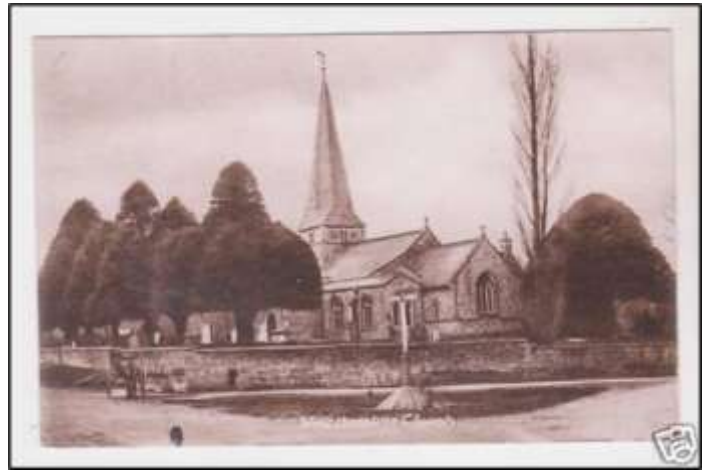
A 1916 publication *West Country Churches* recorded that 'in the SE corner of the churchyard is a fine old yew tree, said to date from the time of Henry VIII'. I was informed locally that it came down in the 1920s. A few pieces of yew wood could still be seen poking through the ground close to a vent in the pub wall.



## WEST HARPTREE Somerset

no record after 1920: 16' girth

The lost yew, which grew NE of the church, is seen on the right in the 1920s postcard. This is almost certainly the tree that Collinson's 1791 *History and antiquities of the county of Somerset* reported with a girth of '13 ft round'. The stump is all that remains. The pieces show that the tree's girth was above 16' when it was felled. The reason for its demise is not known.



## SHINING CLIFF WOOD Derbyshire

lost to vandalism since 1920: 26' girth

A famous tree, reputed to have provided the inspiration for the nursery rhyme 'Rock-a-bye-baby'. It would seem that this tree, still alive in 1920, has suffered extensive fire damage, other acts of vandalism and souvenir hunting. Girth estimated as 26'.



## MARDALE Cumbria

flooded in 1919: no size information

Mardale village, including the church, was flooded to create the Haweswater Reservoir. The land was compulsorily purchased by Act of Parliament in 1919. The yews were cut down and the church dismantled. The following was described in the 1932 *British-History on-line*: 'Six ancient yew trees that have grown up taller than the tower give the holy place an air of antiquity.'

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## STON EASTON Somerset

no record after 1916: no size information

Collinson (*The history and antiquities of the county of Somerset* 1791) recorded '2 remarkable old yew trees, of astonishing girth'. An overgrown decaying stump is all that remains of one of these.



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## TIRLEY Gloucestershire

no record after 1914: no size information

In 1825 Thomas Rickman wrote *An attempt to discriminate the styles of architecture in England*. While describing churches in Gloucestershire he noted that in the churchyard at Tirley were 'two very large and fine yew trees; that on the south side short and very thick, that on the north side very tall'.

JC Cox's '*Gloucestershire*' (1914) described them as 'two exceptionally fine yew trees'.

The survivor girthed about 450cm in 1999. There is no size record of the lost yew.

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## ULVERSTON Cumbria

no record after 1914: no size information

According to the 1914 *A history of the County of Lancaster: Volume 8a* there was a 'large yew tree near to the church on the south side'. There is no sign of this tree, only a recently planted Millennium Yew. It is inconclusive from old pictures whether this 'large yew' was anything other than a tall young tree.

## LULLINGSTONE Kent

no record after 1912: no size information

In his 1912 *Byways in British Archaeology*, Walter Johnson states that 'Cedars occasionally replace the yew, for example in the churchyard of Lullingstone, Kent.' This is confirmed by Robert Bevan-Jones in *The Ancient Yew* (2002) reporting that 'The ancient yew at Lullingstone in Kent has been replaced by a cedar.'

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## LLANDILO ABERCOWIN Carmarthenshire

no record after 1912

Allen Meredith visited this site in the 1980s with photos from a 1912 publication. One clearly showed the old yew SE of the building. He reported finding the dead stump hidden beneath nettles and brambles and considered it of similar girth (5.5m) to the yew which survives next to the church ruins at Trefenty, 800 yards away, but separated by a stretch of water.

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## DEANE Greater Manchester

lost between 1895 and 1911: no size information

In 1848 a 'very large yew-tree' was described; a similar description appearing in 1895.

By 1911 'the ancient yew tree on the south side is now dead, but the trunk and branches remain with a picturesque covering of ivy.'

This painting by James Howe Carse, dated 1860, almost certainly shows a representation of the old yew.



## BROCKENHURST Hampshire

lost before 1911: no size information

*A History of the County of Hampshire: Volume 4* (1911) says that 'in the churchyard is a remarkably fine yew tree, and to the south-west near the church is the hollow stump of a still older yew.' The surviving yew had a girth of about 22' in 1998.

## EDNOL Powys

no record after 1910: no size information

The ruins of Ednol church can still be seen. The chapel was formally abandoned around 1830 and parts were still standing in 1910, along with its old yew tree. It is still possible to trace the outline of the tiny chapel but there is no sign of the old yew or its stump.

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## LLANFIHANGEL ROGIET Gwent

lost before 1909: no size information

In *Monmouthshire Little Guides* (1909) GW and JH Wade recorded that 'In the churchyard is the stump of a tree of remarkable girth.'

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## PENRHOS Monmouthshire

no record after 1909: no size information

In the 1909 *Little Guides* 'two fine old yews' were recorded. The survivor girthed 574cm in 1999. The other no longer exists.

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## LLANDDEWI RHYDDERCH Monmouthshire

no record after 1909: no size information

In 1909 'some fine old yew trees much decayed' were recorded. In 1986 Evans noted '4 large stumps of yew to the north of the church'. I found two stumps, but neither appeared to be yew.

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## HITTESLEIGH BARTON Devon

no record after 1906: 12ft girth in 2014

A 'fine yew' was recorded here in 1906. In 2014 the stump, on the south side of the church, reveals that it was hollow with internal growth and a girth of about 12 feet.



## COMPTON ABBAS Dorset

no record after 1906: no size information

Sir Frederick Treves (1853-1923), writing in *Highways and Byeways of Dorset* (1906), recorded a yew at this abandoned church. There was no sign of it in 2008.

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## BLANDFORD Dorset

lost since 1906: no size information

Sir Frederick Treves (1853-1923) *Highways and Byeways of Dorset* (1906) shows an illustration of a yew in the SW corner of the churchyard. It no longer exists.

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## LLANLLECHID Gwynydd

no record after 1906: no size information

In *The Old Churches of Arllechwedd* by Herbert L North (1906) is the following: 'There is an old yew tree once much larger that stood at the south side of the West end of the old church; there used to be another on the North side and they met over the West end of the building. Young boys could climb up the one, cross over the branches and descend by the other.' Without knowing the position of the old removed church it is not possible to tell whether the largest yew in the churchyard is one of these trees. The other has long gone.

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## STURMINSTER MARSHALL Dorset

lost before 1906: 28'

*The Old Stone Crosses of Dorset* (1906) by Alfred Pope tells us that 'In the churchyard; to the west of the tower and near the spot where once stood a venerable yew tree twenty-eight feet in circumference.....'

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## LETTON Herefordshire

tree dead before 1905: no size information

An article by Robert Clarke in the *Woolhope Papers* (1905) recorded 'the remains of a very fine yew tree'.

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## CRASWALL PRIORY Herefordshire

no record after 1904: 21'

A 21' decaying stump, its roots cut through as part of an excavation. There is a photo of this work being carried out, dated 1904.



## CLOSE WALKS Midhurst Sussex

losses from 1905 to the present day

In 1905 Elwes and Henry in *Trees of Great Britain and Ireland* found it strange that earlier writers had not noted these yews, of such extraordinary height that they were believed to be 'the most remarkable yew grove in Britain or elsewhere. The close walks are situated close to the town on the other side of the river, and consist of four avenues of yew trees forming a square of about 150 yards, together with a grove of yews at the upper end which average, as nearly as I could measure them, about 75 feet in height, but some probably exceed 80. These trees are for the most part sound and healthy, though little care has been taken of them, and some have fallen. They are remarkable not only for their great height, which exceeds that of any other yews on record in Europe, but on account of their freedom from large branches, many having clean boles of 20 - 30 feet with a girth of 8-9 feet. They stand so thick together that on an area of about half an acre or less (I made 213 paces in going round it). I counted about 100 trees and saw the stumps of 10 or 12 more, which would probably average over 30 cubic feet to each tree without reckoning the branches.'

In *The Eternal Yew* (1992) Trevor Baxter wrote 'The Yews in the avenue in Close Walk Woods are remarkable for their height; the tallest are around 80 feet. Recent storms have caused some damage, but they remain the tallest avenue in Europe. The yews at Close Walks have clean trunks up to 24 feet with no large branches. Mr

Maurice Smith of Close Walk outlined the history of the woods and their link with Cowdray. Their longevity and importance is reflected in past events which include the visit of Queen Elizabeth to the Yew avenues in 1591 whilst attending a banquet given by Viscount Montague. Unfortunately there is no doubt that the maintenance and care of the wood during the 20th century is noticeably less than in the 16th century.'



In 2014 local resident Alan Smith, speaking to a project entitled Midhurst in Living Memory, is 'Just sitting here looking at some photographs of old Midhurst. One I'm looking at the moment is The Close Walks. The old avenue down through the Close Walks from Selham Road down to the Gas Works basically - before it was turned into a building site. Shows a beautiful selection of tall yew trees, one of which I believe is the tallest yew tree in the country which is noted in the Guinness Book of Records. Another shows the yew avenue as recently as 1988, while the next shows what might be all that is left of this yew feature, a couple of yews at the entrance to a new housing estate at Closewalks.'

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## HASTINGS East Sussex

lost c 1904: no size information

We have no idea of the stature of this tree, which grew in the garden of Rev Webster Whistler, who was buried in his yew coffin in Hatton, St Clements in Hastings. An extract from *Highways and Byways in Sussex* by E.V.Lucas 1904 says: 'Mr Whistler had a Chinese indifference to the necessary end of all things, which prompted him to use an aged yew tree in his garden, that had long given him shade but must now be felled, as material for his coffin. This coffin he placed at the foot of his bed as a chest for clothes until its proper purpose was fulfilled.'

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## SWLCH TUMP Powys

no record after 1903: 18'

This was the site of St.Elyned's Chapel. In 1903 nothing remained of the chapel and the site could only be identified by the 'fine old yew tree, about 6 ft. in diameter, spreading its branches over a well now almost choked by mud and weeds'. The yew's diameter of 6' is equivalent to a girth of about 18'. We do not know why such a 'fine old tree' should have been reduced to 'no more than a withered stump' by 1999.

## OTHAM Kent

no record after 1901: no size information

'Some very fine yew-trees' were described in the 1835 *Mirror of Literature*. A later record states that 'the ancient yew tree in Otham churchyard was almost destroyed by fire 14 February 1901. It was then discovered that the hollow.....' The information came from *Archaeologia Cantiana* by the Kent Archaeological Society. Unfortunately restricted access prevented me reading more. There no longer appears to be a significant yew here, but it has not been verified.

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## KEMEYS COMMANDER Monmouthshire

lost c1900: 15'

Correspondence between Roy D. Goodridge and Allen Meredith in 1983 states that: 'The very oldest inhabitants can recall a great yew' and 'whatever the structure was, it has long since disappeared, apparently having collapsed in a storm at the beginning of the century'.

Another source states that Archdeacon Coxe (1802) described an unusual yew tree on his visit in 1799. 'In the churchyard is a singular phenomenon, within a hollow yew tree fifteen feet in girth, is inclosed an oak, not less than seven feet in circumference; its branches rise to a considerable height, and overshadow the parent trunk, forming a singular combination of foliage.'

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## HEATH CHAPEL Shropshire

no record after 1900: no size information

I am reliably informed that a drawing c1900 can be seen in *British History on-line*, and that this clearly shows an ancient yew.

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## CHURCH KNOWLE Dorset

lost since 1900: no size information

An old photograph (?c1900) held in the church shows a large yew that once grew here.

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## LLANDEILO TALYBONT Glamorgan

burnt down before 1899: no size information

In 1899 'Col. W.E.Llewellyn Morgan mentioned that on the south side of the church are the remains of a very old yew tree which was burnt down a few years ago.'

In his *Churchyard Yew Trees in the Archdeaconry of Gower* (1992) John Andrew noted that all that remained was a 'small part of the stump situated on a large mound'.

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## KINGS SOMBORNE PALACE Hampshire

no record after 1897: no size information

According to *Black's guide book* of 1897 'there are the ruins of a palace, said to have belonged to John of Gaunt, with time-honoured yews flourishing about them.' The area around the ruins had been tidied and there was no sign of old yews.

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## GYFFIN Bangor

lost during 19<sup>th</sup> century : no size information

The site of yews felled in the 19th century, the result being that lacking the protection of the yew's foliage, the 'roof of the Church hath suffered excessively'.

## MARBURY Cheshire



It is not known when this yew died and it is placed here as it has similarities with the stump at Hartshead.

August 1999 - Tim Hills: A hollow, 10' tall stump with a chain around the top to prevent it from splitting. Its fine white wood sculptural features have all but lost their silky lustre as water penetrates and it begins to rot.

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## HAMSTEAD MARSHALL Berkshire

no record after 1897: 37'

This was one of England's largest yews. Loudon recorded 37' girth in 1836 and Lowe 47' in 1897. Prebendary J. Sweetman informed Swanton in October 1954, that 'there is no yew tree in Hampstead Marshall Churchyard or its vicinity, and I can neither see signs of stumps or learn from old residents that there ever was any.'

Fry in an online article writes '1 yew lost from the woodland, reported to have been 59ft in 1830s'.

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## KINLET Shropshire

no record after 1897: 15'

A yew was recorded by JC Loudon (1836) with a girth of 484cm. It is not known whether this was a churchyard tree.

According to Lowe (*The Yew Trees of Great Britain and Ireland* - 1897) a yew at Kinlet had a girth of 15ft at 4ft and a height of 40ft.

In 2017 we were unable to locate this yew either in the churchyard or in woodland that now belongs to Moffats School, adjacent to the churchyard.

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## CLEVEDON Somerset

lost before 1897: no size information

Extract from Lowe (1897) 'There is now no trace remaining of the tree mentioned in Tennyson's *'In Memoriam'*, as existing in Clevedon Churchyard' and 'in reply to a letter of enquiry (1896) the present sexton informs him that there was a very old yew-tree in the churchyard when his father was appointed 70 years ago, but he did not give the date of its disappearance.'



## YEWDAL MONARCH Cumbria

no record after 1897: 26' 2"

In 2002 I found what I what I was told were the remains of the 'Yewdale Monarch' on a farm to the NE of Coniston. Details of the yew were recorded by Dr Christison (1897- John Lowe). A new yew had been planted nearby to replace the lost giant, whose girth was reported to have been 26' 2" at 2'.



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## KYRE PARK Worcestershire

no record after 1897: 30'

The yew presumed lost grew 'outside the wood-patch grove'. Girth of this tree prior to 1897 was 30' at the ground and 26' at 5'. Lowe was informed that 40 or 50 years earlier this tree was hollow, but was now filled. According to Mrs Baldwin-Childe 'The Court Leets were formerly held under its shade'. It is not known when the yew was lost.

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## STOGURSEY Somerset

dead by 1895: 15'

In 1791 Collinson's *The history and antiquities of the county of Somerset* recorded that there were '2 fine yew trees, one large with a fine spread of branches, and a raised seat round the roots'. The larger of the two was recorded by Rev. Meade in 1895 with a girth of 15', but by then was 'a dead shell only'. A smaller yew with a girth of about 11' still grows south of the church. While it is possible that this was the 2nd yew noted by Collinson in 1791, it would have been a very young tree at that time.

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## BROOMFIELD Somerset

lost between 1791 and 1895: no size information

In 1791 Collinson's *The history and antiquities of the county of Somerset* described 'two fine old yew trees, and a stone cross, tolerably perfect'.

In 1895 Rev. Percy G. Bulstrode informed Lowe that there was only 1 yew, 'hollow and surrounded by young growth'.

In Swanton's 1958 *The Yew Trees of England* the following is recorded: Hone, in his Year Book, 1829, gave an engraving of an ancient yew in Windlesham Churchyard, said to have been planted in the time of William the Conqueror, and described as being 12ft in girth and 21ft high. A locked case exhibited in the church today has the following note on a brass plate beneath it. 'This case, containing the Chain Apology of Jewel, published in the 16th century, is made from the yew mentioned in Hone's Year Book, as standing in Windlesham Churchyard in the 11th century and blown down in 1896; and from part of the old beam charred when the church was struck by lightning and burnt down in 1676. T.Dale, windlesham, fecit 1906.'

Lowe in *The Yew Trees of Britain and Ireland* wrote that the yew was blown down in December, 1894, and 'had been long dead'. He considered that its age had been greatly exaggerated and that it was probably less than 400 years old.

[www.southernlife.org.uk/Surrey/windlesham.htm](http://www.southernlife.org.uk/Surrey/windlesham.htm) reports that 'there was at one time a warning notice in Windlesham Church against mutilation of the churchyard yew. An offender would be liable to one of three punishments: whipping at the cart tail, standing at the pillory, or a fine. The tree was blown down in a storm!'

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**HARTSHEAD** West Yorkshire

dead by 1893: 10' 6"

*The Short History of Hartshead Church* by Mabel Ferrett (1993) records 'the ancient yew, dead now for over 100 years'. The stump's girth was 10ft 6in in 2002.



## LULSLEY Wiltshire

presumed lost in 1892: girth 18'

In *The British, Roman and Saxon Antiquities and Folklore of Worcester* (1852) several yews were noted by the writer: 'In the chapel-yard at Lulsley there is an ancient female tree, which is 6 yards round at about five feet, and five yards round at about three feet from the base. The head of it is partly dead, and several large limbs have broken off. The length, from the extremity of one bough to that of the opposite one, is twenty-two yards.' The assumption is that the tree was lost at the time the new church was built in 1892, replacing a medieval church on the same site. It was closed for worship in 1972 and is now a private house.

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## WINFRITH NEWBURGH Dorset

no record after 1892: no size information

The following description appears in *The Nation* 1892: 'A yew at Winfrith, of such extravagantly aged aspect that it must surely have profited in its youth by the rain that followed Hastings, as it might in its gnarled and twisted and contorted but sturdy old age by that which preceded Waterloo.' There is no sign of the old yew, only a young yew growing SE of the church.

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## LOWER HARDRES Kent

no record after 1891: 4m 52cm

The yew was mentioned by Leland L. Duncan in August 1891, who spoke of an altar tomb near the yew tree of Henry Wotton, who died in 1734. The stump was still in situ when it was recorded for the Ancient Tree Hunt in 2009/10 (tree 55833), with a girth of 4m 52cm. By 2013 the stump too had been removed.

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## BLACKWELL Derbyshire

no record after 1891: no size information

The 1848 *Topographical Dictionary of England* contained an article about old yews in Derbyshire churchyards. It described Blackwell as follows: 'One such a wreck we have shown in our cuts, it stands near the secluded church of Blackwell, in Derbyshire - an ancient foundation dedicated to St Werburgh. Many centuries have passed over its venerable top which is literally so thin, so starved, so shorn of its cedar like branches, that scarce two crows could lodge in the same tree. The stem is split asunder, and the base exhibits that ruddy bulbous surface that indicated approaching dissolution. It is regarded as one of the landmarks of the neighbourhood with much of paternal affection.'

*Kelly's Directory* of 1891 also mentions a remarkable yew in the churchyard.

When visited in 2009 there was no trace of the old yew.

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## OTTERSTON Fife

lost since 1890 : young yews

Hutchinson (c1890) described 'six fine yew trees standing in a row, with trunks measuring from 6' to 9' in girth. These have evidently at one time formed part of an old hedge, but are now fine specimen trees.'

The precise location of these yews had been a mystery for some time, but have now been discovered in a private garden at Otterston, near Aberdour. Three of them have survived.

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## TREGARON: ARGOED-FAWR

no record after 1890's: no size information

Site of an old Baptist chapel, apparently built in 1760. Several records note a yew at this site, one describing 'an ancient yew tree casting its shadow'. The tree is no longer found here.

Site of a ruined kirk near the mouth of the river Tay. The five trees recorded grew beside the ruins and two are seen in a postcard from 1907. According to Hutchison (c1890), popular tradition gave these trees an age of 600 years. The largest at that time (1890) girthed 12' 5" with a bole length of 18'. Two of the five are described as being of a different variety, having lighter foliage and a more upright appearance, while the others have branches dipping to the ground and in some places springing up from it again. In 2014 Judy Dowling wrote that 'Two of the yews are now on private land. One has a girth of 365cm at 130cm and the other a girth of 342cm at 70cm. Of the 5 trees Hutchison originally recorded, only 3 still live.'



## LLANWDDYN Powys

drowned in 1889: no size information

In the 1849 *Topographical Dictionary of Wales* 'some remarkably fine yew-trees' were described in the churchyard of an ancient church that belonged to the Knights Hospitallers. Church, trees and village were drowned in about 1889 to create Lake Vrynwy.

## CWM-YOY Powys

no record after 1884: no size information

1884: *Woolhope Naturalists' Field Club Transactions* reported: 'The very yew trees in the churchyard bore out the air of desolation that hangs on the place - two were dead and bare, and the others, ragged and worn, seemed scarcely able to sustain their existence.' In 2000 there was no sign of yew.

## MAYFIELD - Blacksmith's Forge, Sussex

no record after 1884: no size information

Old Place Farm is the site of the old blacksmith forge. *Field Paths and Green Lanes* (1884) contains the following description: 'An old yew-tree stands appropriately at the entrance to the village near the blacksmith's forge.' This no longer grows here.

The 'destruction of the yew in the churchyard' took place between 1864 and 1884. It is recorded in the East Sussex Record Office: Parish of Glynde, catalogue ref PAR 347/7.

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## LEDGEMORE BOTTOM Gloucestershire

no record after 1884: 23'

A site where several old yews are said to have once grown. The location is in what used to be known as *Churchyard Field* near Ledgemore Bottom. An extensive search of the wooded areas around Ledgemore and Longtree Bottom failed to find any yews or stumps.

The following information is taken from the 1884 *History of Horsley* by Rev. Messing Rudkin. 'There is a tradition that a church once stood there, but without any support from record or excavation. I apprehend certain yew trees adjacent furnished the denomination. This account by Dudley Fosbrook, who was Curate-in-charge of Horsley at the close of the last century bears witness at any rate to the great age of the yew trees which still exist, for they must have appeared even a century ago of very ancient date to have been considered the origin of a tradition that a church once stood there. A Clergyman who visited some ancient yew trees on an island in Loch Lomond this last summer, and which were being examined at the time by some learned society who declared many of the trees to be 1500 years old, gives it as his opinion that the yews in the Churchyard Field are of the same age. The largest of these yews at six feet from the base measures twenty-three feet. If a church or churchyard formerly existed there, it must have been in Saxon or British times.'

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## PATTERDALE Cumbria

blown down in 1883: no size information



In his 1894 book *Yew trees of Great Britain and Ireland*, Lowe presented 3 photos of the Patterdale yew, including the trunk lying on the ground. The tree was blown down in 1883.

## TAPLOW COURT Buckinghamshire

blown down before 1883: girth 21'

*The Sacred Yew* by Chetan and Brueton contains the following description: 'On top of the barrow was an ancient yew. The archaeological report (1883) records that it was not less than 21ft in circumference.' *A History of the County of Buckinghamshire* (1925) says that the 'fine old yew tree.....was blown down in a gale before the tumulus was excavated in 1883'.

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## WESTMESTON East Sussex

blown down in 1882: no size information

'A large yew-tree in the churchyard was blown down in 1882.' The tree was noted in an unpublished novel *After My Fashion* by Powys, who described 'brick steps up from the road and the remains of a vast yew-tree in the churchyard'.

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## WELLINGTON nr Moreton-on-Lugg Herefordshire

lost since 1882: girth 13' 6"

1882: A Woolhope field excursion visited the churchyard and reported that 'the yew on the eastern side measures 13ft 6 ins, but upon it were several specimens of the fungus *Polyporus Sulfureus*, very beautiful in themselves, though they were past their prime, but sadly indicative of tree decay.'

There is no trace of the yew.

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## WINKLEBURY Wiltshire

removed in 1881/2: no size information

General Pitt Rivers, regarded as the father of modern archaeology, started his pioneering first season's work in 1881-1882, close to his home at the promontory Iron Age hillfort of Winklebury. During the excavations the general opened a number of British barrows and removed an ancient yew tree.

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## BICTON near Clun Shropshire

no record after 1881: no size information

There were apparently 5 or 6 yews recorded on these earthworks in 1881. I am unable to trace the source of this information. Today there are no yews.

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## CATERHAM Surrey

no record after 1880: girth 10ft

Straker recorded a yew of 10' girth at 4' in 1880. This was gone before 1994, when Fookes found a stump of 10' 6" to the SSW. It was described in the 1875 *Penny Post* as 'decaying'. The tree seen in a 1797 painting is probably the lost yew.



## LLANTARNAM Monmouthshire

no record after 1880: no size information

Some fine yew trees were noted here in an 1880 paper presented to the Cardiff Naturalists Society by T.H.Thomas.

Evans' 1986 *Churchyard Yews of Gwent* noted 'a big yew stump near entrance gate to the west'.

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## RUDRY Caerphilly

no record after 1880: 17' 6"

An 1880 paper presented to Cardiff Nat.Soc. by T.H. Thomas recorded a yew which 'girths 17' 6" at 2' from the ground, and in height surpasses any we have described'. Thomas Henry went on to give a full description of the 'mere shell, partially alive'.

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## COLEMORE Hampshire

no record after 1880: girth 17' 6"

Colemore was known as Colmer in 1880 when Thomas Hervey produced his *History of the United Parishes of Colmer and Prior's Dean*, in which he noted a significant yew. On page 273 Hervey noted an 'Incomplete shell 17' 6" in girth in 1880, both at 1' and 4' from ground. Nearly half of the outside shell on the western side has perished.' The yew, which grew SW of the church, no longer exists.

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## LLANISHEN Gwent

no record after 1880: 18' and 13' 7"

T.H.Thomas, in a paper read to the Cardiff Naturalists' Society (1880) was the first to note yews at this location. Girths were recorded as 18' and 13' 7". By the time Evans carried out his survey (1986) both trees had gone.

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## HORLEY Surrey

last recorded alive in 1880: 21' 7" girth

A *Paper presented to Croydon Nat. Hist. & Scientific Soc.* by E.Straker in 1880 recorded a girth of 19' 9" at 5'. In 2001 a 21' 7" girthed stump was all that remained of this yew.



1880: In a Paper presented to Croydon Nat. Hist. & Scientific Soc. by E. Straker, a yew with a girth of 15' 3" at 5' was recorded south of the church. This no longer grows here.

STANFORD BISHOP Herefordshire

lost in 1880: 27'

In 1856 Edwin Lees wrote in *Pictures of nature around the Malvern Hills*: 'Several very old and remarkable yew trees stand in the churchyard; one in particular, of surpassing magnitude, a female tree, measured 27ft in circumference at 4ft above its base, and higher up, where the trunk bulges out, 31ft.'

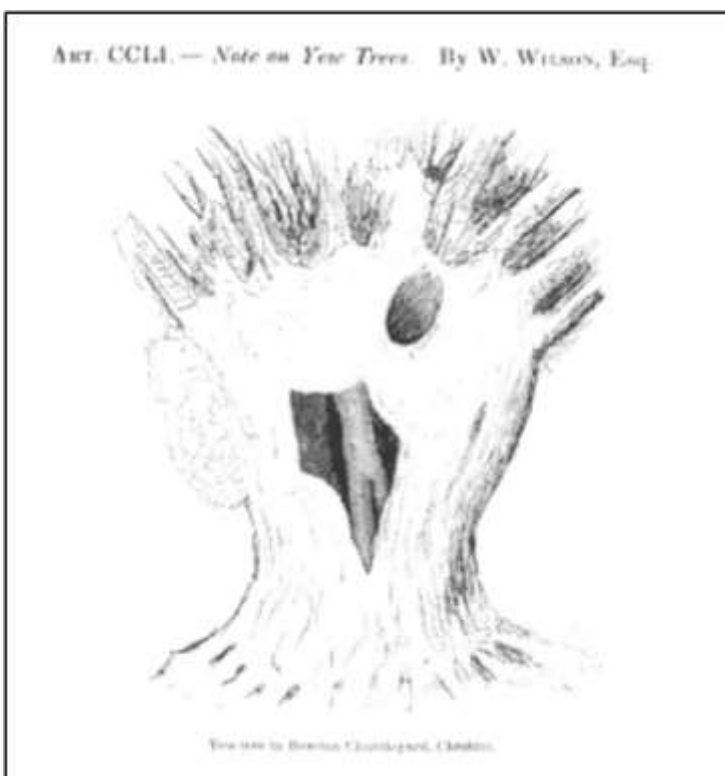
This is recorded in Chetan and Brueton's *The Sacred Yew* as lost in 1880.

BOWDON Cheshire

no record after 1879: c16' girth

In 1879 A. Ingham wrote in his *History of Altrincham and Bowden*: 'There are several growing now in the churchyard and one in particular is, judging from calculations made of the growth of such trees, upwards of 800 years old. According to one authority it is even said to be planted in the 7th century. It is a gnarled sturdy looking veteran but much the worse for its 1000 years exposure on the hill top.'

A drawing by W. Wilson, showing an internal stem, appeared in *The Phytologist*, alongside the following: 'An account of the tree has lately appeared in the newspapers; and it is worthy of remark that there is a curious old yew-tree in Bowden church-yard, Cheshire, which presents an analogous appearance. The rude sketch now sent was taken on the spot. The tree is about 5 feet in diameter in the thinnest part of the trunk, hollow and decayed on the east side. Within the hollow, about 6 feet from the ground, a thick, forked, root-like stem, apparently connected with one of the principal branches, has at some distant period, but subsequent to the decay of the trunk, commenced its downward growth, and is now of considerable thickness. It is covered with its own cortical layers. Behind this there is a smaller separate root, about an inch in diameter, proceeding in a slanting direction from the right to the left.'





## BELPER Derbyshire

removed in 1880 and 1911: no size information

In 1846 *The History, gazetteer and directory of Derbyshire* by Samuel Bagshaw noted 'some very old yew trees'. The 1886 *Notes and Queries* Feb 27<sup>th</sup> reported that 'the village stocks formerly stood beneath the shadow of some old yews.'

On 10th December 2012, Belper News reported that the 'two ancient yew trees which once stood in Belper's oldest chapel grounds have been replaced. The originals - probably as old or even older than the 750-year-old St John's Chapel - were removed in 1880 and 1911.'

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## SOUTH WINGFIELD Derbyshire

no record after 1879: 23' girth

Is it possible that the tree on the sign of The Old Yew Inn in South Wingfield is the same tree that was recorded in 1879 as growing in the NE corner of the burial ground? There is no sign of the tree in 2005 and people we spoke to had no recollection of an ancient yew. Its girth has been reported as 23'.

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## GLENDALOUGH Ireland

no record after c1878: no size information

A monastic site in the Wicklow mountains. In 1838 *Arboretum and Fruticetum (part III)* recorded that the Glendalough Yew was 'an immense tree, and shaded from the sun and the storm, not only the ruins of a small church under it, but the greater part of the churchyard. Hayes was informed, on undoubted authority, that on one hot summer's day, when the tree was in its full beauty, the agent for the Bishop to whom the church belonged, had all its principal limbs and branches cut off close by the trunk and sold. About 40 years afterwards, when Hayes saw it, the trunk was decaying at the heart, and a holly was growing up through one of the fissures.'

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## LLANYCHAEARN Ceredigion

no record after 1878: no size information

From *Bygones* 1878: 'The ancient parish church of Llanychaiarn with its dilapidated porch and stone steps, shaded by a yew tree of centuries growth.'

Another report states: 'Tree very old, at the west; the tree is propped up and held together by wires.'  
It no longer exists.

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## BROMSGROVE Worcestershire

no record after 1877: no size information

In 1877 the following information was reported by the *Worcestershire Naturalists Club*: 'A very old and shattered yew tree in the churchyard (St John) claimed attention, and it was said to be the oldest yew in Worcestershire. It is quite hollow, and may certainly claim to have existed a thousand years, and probably stood here when a Christian fabric was first reared on the hill.'

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## MADLEY Herefordshire

no record after 1876: no size information

In 1876 *Littlebury's Directory and Gazetteer of Herefordshire* (transcription by Rosemary Lockie) is a description of 'visible traces of a circular mound, supposed to be the remains of a tumulus, at which there is a very ancient yew.' I found no trace of yew at this site

## CHILSTONE Herefordshire

no record after 1876: no size information

The 1876 *Littlebury's Directory and Gazetteer of Herefordshire* described that 'the foundation of a Catholic chapel was removed a few years since at Chilstone, the residence of William B. Street, Esq. Near to here are visible traces of a circular mound, supposed to be the remains of a tumulus, at which there is a very ancient yew tree.'

No old yew tree was found either at the mound site or at nearby Yew Tree Farm.

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## NOTGROVE Gloucestershire

blown down in 1876: no size information

An archive held by the Gloucestershire Record Office, catalogue reference P.233, entitled Notgrove: Anglican Parish: An 'old yew in churchyard blown down in snowstorm 1876'.

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## WEST PARLEY Dorset

no record after c1875: no size information

The name West Parley is taken from the Saxon for Pear Tree Field and it is thought that a church existed on this site long before the present building. The oldest parts of this date from the 12th century.

A yew was recorded here in J.Hutchins *History of Dorset, 1st edition 1774* and updated on several occasions during the following hundred years. The tree no longer exists.

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## CASTLE ASHBY Northamptonshire

no record after 1875: no size information

In the 1875 *Gardeners' Chronicle* is the following description: 'In the small churchyard is a wonderful old Yew in vigorous growth, though of great age, having one main stem, with branches issuing from it all round, each of which has rooted into the soil and become a huge tree, with side branches spreading out below, feathering to the ground, and which covers a large space of the churchyard.'

This yew feature no longer exists.

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## MORLEY West Yorkshire

no record after 1874: no size information

*The History of Morley* of 1874 by Norrisson Scatcherd contains the following: 'There seems to be no doubt that the Christian Clergy preached at these Crosses before Churches were erected, and afterwards, upon the consecration of a Church, it seems to have been the custom to erect a Cross in the centre of the Church-yard, or to plant a Yew Tree, or, perhaps, to do both. Indeed, it was by seeing an ancient Yew Tree in the Burial-ground of Old White Chapel, that Archbishop Sharp knew it to be consecrated ground.'

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## HEDSOR Buckinghamshire

no record after 1874: 27' girth

An article in *The Gardener's Chronicle* of 30th May 1874 described this yew as 'the largest yew referred to by any English writer, said to have been 81 feet in girth'. This figure has been arrived at by misreading its girth of 27 feet as 27 yards (27 x 3 = 81). It was nevertheless a substantial tree. It is not known whether this was a churchyard yew or grew on the surrounding estate, where more large girthed yews are recorded.

## KINGTON Herefordshire

felled in 1871: no size information

A 'tree of considerable magnitude' growing northwest of the church was described in 1845.

In 1871 a 'slight extension on the north side' caused the removal of tombs and at the same time destroyed two yew trees. In *Memories of Kington* by W. Edwards we are told that the boles were cut up and divided among the masons.

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## LLANGADWALADR Powys

burnt down by 1871: no size information

In *Bye-gones* (1871) the writer was told that a still larger yew was destroyed a few years since by a foolish attempt to smoke out a swarm of bees that had made their nest in the hollow trunk

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## LLANYMYNECH Shropshire

no record after 1871: 16' and 12'

From *Bye-gones* 1871: 'There are two yew trees in Llanymynech Church Yard, which are hollow, but they exhibit a green old age, doubtless gaining nourishment from the earth up their shells. One is situate near the National School, and it measures round the butt, immediately springing from the earth, 12 feet. The soil I do not think is very favourable to the development of the tree, and a wall cramps it on the west side, and it is annually shorn of its boughs for Christmas decorations. The other tree faces south, and has suffered from the same treatment. This tree measures 16 feet around its base. The elders say that these trees have 'been neither smaller nor larger these forty years!'

While I found two yews in the churchyard in 2009, neither were in the right position or of the right size to be the trees described above.

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## HENDRE near Glewstone Herefordshire

no record after c1870: no size information

The first edition Ordnance Survey map shows three yews. They used to grow on the parish boundary between the Peterstow and Glewstone parishes in south Herefordshire. At many places where the word 'yew' appears on the map have been found yews of considerable size. Unfortunately there was no trace of these three trees.

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## TANKERSLEY PARK South Yorkshire

no record after 1870: no size information

Tankersley Park was 'once famous for its yew trees of enormous age and growth'. This description appears in *Yorkshire, Past and Present* by Thomas Baines, and deals with the period up to 1870. It would seem that they were destroyed as a result of industrialisation, since Baines goes on to say 'Tankersley Park has suffered more than other sylvan retreats in the transformation of the district; for beds of coal and ironstone, and the chimneys of furnaces, are its close neighbours.'

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## GORTON Greater Manchester

no record after 1870: no size information

*Notes and Queries* 1870, p156 has the following extract from John Higson's *Gorton Historical Recorder*. 'Well do I remember in childhood's days an isolated Gorton farmstead, with a yeoman's house dating back to the early part of the seventeenth century. Almost overshadowing it was a sombre old yew-tree, doubtless coeval, but then beginning to decay. This end was being hastened by the annual yuletide custom of lopping off the branches, in order to decorate the tiny leaden-casemented windows then existing in the house, and also in a chapel hard by the green in a neighbouring village. Lying at some depth beneath the grassy hillock, on which the fine old tree had long stood sentinel, was a deep dismal pool which had some time been excavated as a marl pit.'

## SEDBERGH Cumbria

blown down c 1870: no size information

An entry in the 1875 *Penny Post* described that 'there were, until lately, two very ancient yew-trees on the south side of the parish church, Sedbergh; one was blown down a few years ago, but the other is still living, supported by props.'

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## MANSTON Dorset

no record after 1870: no size information

A yew was recorded here in J.Hutchins *History of Dorset*, 1st edition 1774 and updated on several occasions during the following hundred years. No record of size, and tree not heard of after c1870.

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## KINGTON MAGNA Dorset

no record after 1870: stump 14' girth

The Ancient Tree Hunt (76156) has a record from 1870, that 'a noble and vigorous yew tree is growing in the churchyard'. The source is not known. All that remains is a 10ft high stump.



## MYLOR Cornwall

no record after 1870: no size information

In 1870 two remarkably fine yew trees were recorded growing near the east end of the church. One was described in the *Complete Parochial history of the County of Cornwall* ed J.Polsue as 'covering a considerable portion of the churchyard'. Only one remained in 2012.

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## GLASBURY Powys

no record after 1868: no size information

The 1840 *Cambrian traveller's guide, and pocket companion* by G.Nicholson: 'The site of the former parish church may still be seen near the fall of the Llyfni into the Wye, where a few yew trees remain.'

The 1868 *National Gazetteer* states that 'An old yew-tree tells where once a church stood, and persons lately living could recollect tombstones. The ground is now covered with fir-trees.'

Nothing remains of the old church site.

**PLEASLEY** Derbyshire

no record after 1868: no size information

Yew of great antiquity were last reported in the 1868 *National Gazetteer*.

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**CRADDOCK LAND** Herefordshire

no record after 1867: 18' 9"

The *Woolhope Papers* of 1867 reported that 'about 200 yards to the east of the church, in Craddock Land, is the shell of a yew of extreme age. It measured 18 feet 9 inches in circumference, and only a few branches show any vitality.' This yew no longer exists.

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**CLIFFORD** Herefordshire

no record after 1866: 18', 15' 9" and 15' 3"

In 1866 the *Woolhope Papers* recorded 3 yews in Clifford churchyard, with girths of 18', 15' 9" and 15' 3". Today there are no yews approaching this size. The yews that survive would have been too small in 1866 to have been noted by Woolhope.

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**BORROWDALE** Cumbria

lost in storm 1866: no size information

An article in *British Wildlife*, pp 178-182 by Maurice Pankhurst, Stuart A'Hara and Joan Cottrell tells us that one of the famous Borrowdale yews was uprooted in a storm of 1866.

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**CLAINES** Worcestershire

no record after 1863: no size information

In the 1846 *Mirror of Literature, Amusement and Instruction* is a description of Claines churchyard: 'It is presided over by a still greater piece of antiquity, namely, a very venerable but now decaying yew, apparently six or seven centuries old.'



Confirmation of this yew's existence was captured by the artist W.B. Leader in a painting dated 1863.

Today, growing in the same position as Leader's yew, there stands a golden yew - its age perhaps between 60 and 80 years. It was presumably planted when the ancient yew finally succumbed.

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**PENRHYN-COCH** Ceredigion

no record after 1866: no size information

In 1866 Williams wrote that in the nearby Nant Silo Valley there was a farm called Cwmbwa on which were to be found the remains of yew trees and noting that only one was then left. This too has gone.

Information provided by Arthur O.Chater.

## WHITNASH Warwickshire

no record after 1863: no size information

1863: From *A series of English Sketches* by Nathaniel Hawthorn: 'In front of the tower, on the village-green, is a yew of incalculable age, with a vast circumference of trunk, but a very scanty head of foliage; though its boughs still keep some of the vitality which, perhaps, was in its early prime when the Saxon invaders founded Whitnash. A thousand years is no extraordinary antiquity in the lifetime of a yew. We were pleasantly startled, however, by discovering an exuberance of more youthful life than we had thought possible in so old a tree; for the faces of two children laughed at us out of the opening in the trunk, which had become hollow with long decay.'

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## EDLESBOROUGH Buckinghamshire

no record after 1862: no size information

From *History and Topography of Buckinghamshire* : In 1862 the Edlesborough Manor House stood 'at the south-east corner of the green, and is a brick and timber structure, fast going to decay, being let in tenements. In front are some very old yew trees.' It has not been possible to locate this site.

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## LLANYBLODWEL Shropshire

no record after 1862 planting

In 1862 'the late Rev.J.Parker, with excellent taste and foresight, planted a thick grove of young yew trees which, it is to be hoped, will be suffered to grow to maturity.' I visited in 2007 and the three yews growing in a line to the west of the church were older than this. It would seem that the more recently planted grove was not 'suffered to grow to maturity'.

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## MEDMENHAM Buckinghamshire

no record after 1862: no size information

In the 1862 *History and Topography of Buckinghamshire* J.J.Sheahan described that in the churchyard: 'is a very fine ancient yew tree'. A visit in 2011 confirmed the loss of this yew.

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## GARTHBRENGY Powys

many yews lost since 1862: no size information

In the 1862 *Archaeologia Cambrensis* there were reported to be 33 yews here, forming a double line surrounding the church. We counted 23, so many have been lost since that time.

When we visited in 1998 the church was closed and the roof was already beginning to look the worse for wear. I feared that the site could soon become overgrown. The church has since been sold and converted to a home. It would appear that some trees on the north side of the building are now in the garden of the new owners. The remaining trees are in the old graveyard, which remains accessible to the public and is maintained by the Church in Wales.

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## SHALSTONE Buckinghamshire

no record after 1862: no size information

The 1862 *History and Topography of Buckinghamshire* described that 'On the north-east side of the church stands a very fine ancient yew tree.'

What appears to be a yew stump is seen in this position, half in the churchyard, half on land which the church presumably sold so that an adjacent garden could be enlarged. Was this the reason for the yew being cut down?

## BRITHDIR Caerphilly

no record after 1862: no size information

A remote, former religious site of archaeological significance. The O/S map of 2002 (50000) marks the 'Old Graveyard' to the NW of Brithdir, as well as 'house platforms', indicating the site of the village. A concrete pillar marks the spot where the Tegernacus stone once stood on the top of the ridge. It reads 'Tegernacus, son of Martius, lies here' and is thought to be early 7th century or older. It can now be seen in the National Museum of Wales.

An 1862 [www.ucl.ac.uk/archaeology/cisp/database/site/tirph.h](http://www.ucl.ac.uk/archaeology/cisp/database/site/tirph.h) account describes a small chapel, 'the sole evidence of vitality about the place were two venerable yew trees, quite decayed in the trunks, and with only a few green sprigs on the top.' Today there is no sign of the yews.

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## LLANWRDA Carmarthenshire

no record after 1862: no size information

George Borrow (1862 - *Wild Wales*) reported an 'enormous yew' by Llanwrda church. Today three yews are found in this churchyard. In 1998 the largest had a girth of about 17ft. Could a large stump by the churchyard entrance with a girth of about 20' be the remains of Borrow's tree? A second yew stump north of the church was reported by M.Rees-Hughes in 1993.



## PORTBURY Somerset

lost before 1861: no size information

Two yews, one lost before 1861, the second by 1955. The stump is of the tall yew on the right in the drawing. The yew on the left lives on.



## DUNMANWAY Co Cork

lost between 1815 and 1860: no size information

Recorded in 1750 as growing on the side of a rocky hill, a mile north of Dunmanway, where there is scarce any earth to support it. In 1815 the tree was still in existence, but in a very decayed state. By 1860 it was recorded that 'there was formerly an old yew tree of such great size near the town, that it gave its name to the rock on which it grew, and which is still marked on many maps as termed in common parlance - the Yew Tree Rock.'

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## WEST STOUR Dorset

tree removed by 1860 : 21' girth

In Oulton's guide is the following description: 'Opposite Eastour is Westour, where is another remarkably large yew-tree, whose body is 21 feet in circuit.' This no longer exists.

In a later edition of Hutchins *History of Dorset*, first published in 1774 is the following: '21ft girth yew removed by 1860'.

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## HATTON Warwickshire

3 yews lost before 1858: girths of 13'/14'

In his 1858 *Notices of the Churches in Warwickshire*, Matthew Bloxham wrote that 'Southward of the tower in the churchyard is a very large yew tree. This is the sole survivor of four trees of equal size which were formerly standing in this churchyard; one of them was wantonly destroyed by fire.'

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## FLAX BOURTON Somerset

no record after 1857: no size information

A yew of considerable magnitude was last noted in the *Journal of British Archaeology* (1857). There was no sign of the yew when visited in 1998.

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## SAMPFORD ARUNDEL Somerset

no record after 1856: no size information

George Bellett wrote in his 1856 *The Antiquities of Bridgnorth* that 'there is a yew-tree known to the writer, at present growing in the church yard of Sampford Arundel, in the county of Somerset, but now hollowed by age, respecting which there is certain evidence, that more than a century has passed over it, without producing seemingly any change whatever in its state of decay; it is now, to all appearance, as it was more than a hundred years ago.'

A drawing by J.Buckley (1841) suggests that the yew probably grew on the south side of the church.

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## BRONSIL Herefordshire

no record after 1856: no size information

In 1856 *Pictures of nature around the Malvern Hills*, Edwin Lees described 'monstrous, spreading yew trees now springing from the side of and overhanging the moat, and which appear to be about 400 years old.'

The yews we saw in 2004 were much younger trees. Those close to the water were causing damage to the structure of the moat and were marked for removal. This was possibly the fate of the 'monstrous' yews which, had they survived, would be 500 years + today.



## GADBURY BANK Worcestershire

no record after 1856: no size information

'The fragment of an old battered and contorted yew tree' was described in 1856 by Lees in *Pictures of nature around the Malvern Hills*.

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## WORMELOW TUMP Herefordshire

not heard of since 1855: no size information

From *The Ancient Yew* - Robert Bevan-Jones (2002): 'A decayed yew stood on a mound at Wormelow Tump until 1855.' The place was 'an ancient meeting place for one of the Herefordshire hundreds.....certainly a Saxon moot site, believed to be on a prehistoric funerary mound.'

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## ST WEONARD'S TUMP Herefordshire

felled in 1855: no size information

According to *The Ancient Yew* - Robert Bevan-Jones (2002) the yew growing on St Weonards tump 'stood until 1855'.

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## USHAW Co Durham

no record after 1855: no size information

According to the *Topographical Dictionary of England* (1848) the name Ushaw is derived from the abundance of yew-trees that formerly grew in the district.

A correspondent in *Notes and Queries* of August 25th 1855 writes of 'one fine old yew tree, though now much injured, still stands upon the spot' and 'Two houses now remain of the former hamlet, so that the picturesque old yew-tree hard by, the last of his venerable race, is once more left in undisturbed possession of the soil, so far as the village is concerned; but the name is preserved in the fine Catholic collegiate institution of St.Cuthbert adjoining, and will probably receive from it an historic interest, which the hardy northern woodman to whom it was first known as the Ushe-shaw, little dreamed would ever attach to it.'

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## OXFORD BOTANIC GARDEN

no record after 1853: if alive would be 400 yrs old in 2045

The Oxford Botanic Garden was founded in 1621. A plan drawn in 1675 shows two yews. Also in the garden was 'a double yew hedge, which extended from the principal gateway to the opposite extremity, and of a similar one, which ran from east to west, intersecting the former at right angles. Between these hedges the public were allowed to walk, and there was at one time a thoroughfare into Christ Church meadow through the centre. But the square plots of ground enclosed within these hedges, which contained the plants, appear to have been less easy of access, and to have been kept under lock and key. Of these hedges, the one which extended across the garden from east to west was cut down in the time of the younger Dr. Sibthorp; whilst the other, which divided the garden longitudinally, remained standing till the year 1834; when, having lost much of its former beauty, and being in the way of the new arrangements, it shared the same fate. The two large yews, which in Bobart's time were clipped, according to the taste of the day, and the fashion of Dutch gardening, so as to represent two giants guarding the entrance to the garden on the side of the meadow, have been suffered to remain.'  
*Oxford Botanic Garden* - Daubeney 1853

Only one of the two yews remains. According to Bobart's handwritten notes it was planted in 1645, giving it an age of 369 years in 2014. Its small girth is indicative of a yew that has been extensively clipped for many of its early years. Height was a little above 45'.

## EGREMONT CASTLE Cumbria

no record after 1852: no size information

A description from the 1852 *Handbook of the Whitehaven and Furness Railway* stated: 'Some fine old yew trees, and a profusion of ivy, invest the ruins with the air of picturesque grandeur.'

In 2014 there were no old yews at the site.

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## LEYLAND Lancashire

blown down in 1852: no size information

*Transactions of the Historic Society of Lancashire and Cheshire* for the year 1855 reported that 'we had a venerable yew tree in our churchyard, but it was blown down in the storm of Christmas 1852.'

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## SNITTERFIELD Warwickshire

no record after 1851: no size information

The 1851 *Biography of Shakespeare* by Charles Knight contains the following description: 'The old village of Snitterfield, with its ancient church and its yew trees as ancient.' In 2009 there was no sign of yews that would have looked old in 1851.

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## MANEST COURT Powys

lost c1850: no size information

Meredith's Gazetteer in *The Sacred Yew* (1994) states that the yew was removed around 1830. However the following description in 1849 tells us that it was much later: 'On a farm called Mannest are the remains of a cist-vaen, under an aged yew-tree, and surrounded with stones apparently from a dispersed cairn, under which it had been concealed for many ages.' The relic at that time was thought to be either Druidical in origin, or the remains of St. Illtyd's hermitage. The O/S map calls the site Ty Elltud.

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## WALL HILLS - LEDBURY Herefordshire

no record after 1850: no size information

Edwin Lees in the 1850s considered a pair of yews growing on the western side of the ramparts to be ancient. We found no yews at this location, but did locate 3 field boundary yews, all close to the earthworks, but none 'on the line of the rampart' as reported by H.H.Lines in 1880.

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## BOLNEY West Sussex

lost by 1849: no size information

This is one of the oldest records of pollarding an old yew. The extract is taken from the 1700 *Diary of Richard Stapley* (1682-1724), recorded by Rev Edward Turner for the *Sussex Arch. collections relating to the History and Antiquities of the County*.

'On January 3rd [1700] ye great eugh tree on ye south wall of Bolney church was polled by order of John Gatwick, vicar of Bolney, and Henry Purvey, of Bolney, polled it.'

A footnote to this account by M.A.Lower (1849) reports that 'this yew tree no longer exists'.

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## TILSTOCK Shropshire

no record after 1848: no size information

The 1848 *Topographical Dictionary of England* recorded that a national school was built on the site of the former chapel, 'which was remarkable for its antiquity, and was surrounded by very fine old yew trees'.

The building still stands but the yews have gone. There is no record of them after this date.

## CHARTLEY CASTLE Staffordshire

no record after 1848: no size information

*A topographical history of Staffordshire* - 1817 noted 'nearly one hundred full-grown yew trees, of the age of many centuries'.

In an 1848 account the fragments of the two castle towers were described as 'rising amid the foliage of numerous full-grown yew trees that have weathered the storms of many centuries'.

These trees no longer exist.

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## GLOSSOP Derbyshire

no record after 1848: no size information

The *Topographical Dictionary of England* 1848 described that 'in the churchyard is a very ancient yew tree.' The tree no longer exists.

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## BLORE RAY Staffordshire

no record after 1848: no size information

The *Topographical Dictionary of England* 1848 described that 'in the churchyard is an ancient yew-tree.' When visited in 2013 there was no trace of the tree.

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## STADHAMPTON Oxfordshire

no record after 1848: no size information

The *Topographical Dictionary of England* (1848) described a 'remarkably fine yew-tree'. When visited in 2009 there was no trace of the tree.

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## ROXBURGH CASTLE Scottish Borders

no record after 1846: no size information

In the 1846 *Topographical Dictionary of Scotland* it is reported that 'the spot on which the king (James II) fell is marked out by a yew-tree planted by the Duke of Roxburghe.' No yew has been found in the area that might be 550 years old, but there are yews to be found on a narrow strip of woodland to the north of a large caravan park.

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## HARTBURN Northumberland

destroyed c1845: 16' 6" girth

JC Loudon recorded a yew in 1836 girthing 16ft 6ins. A letter from the Rev. J.Kershaw in 1895 informed Lowe (*The Yew Trees of Great Britain and Ireland*) that 'it was destroyed 50 years ago by another tree falling on it. The remains of the trunk show that it must have been about the size given.'

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## HEIGHTINGTON Worcestershire

blown down in 1845: no size information

At some time prior to 1867 this was recorded on the Ordnance Map as The Yew-in-the-oak. In Lees' account he described that 'a botanical curiosity existed near Heightington, being a fine young yew-tree, that having originally vegetated as a seedling on a pollard oak, had extended its roots to the ground, and so filled up the hollow cavity of its foster mother. Thus for many years the two trees grew in close proximity, the yew, however, gradually breaking away from, and disrupting the yielding bark of the oak, until a fierce hurricane of wind, in 1845, entirely prostrated the yew.'

Snave Parish Records ref p341/1/1 records that 'a yew tree was planted in the churchyard 3 April 1845'. This no longer exists.

## BLAINA, formerly Aberystruth Blaenau Gwent

burnt down in 1844: 24' girth

Archdeacon William Coxe - prior to his visit to Mamhilad in 1799 - recorded a yew at Aberstruth with a girth of 24' (*The Churchyard Yews of Gwent* - Revd J Daryll Evans). Coxe noted a further 11 yews, all apparently old, forming a square around the edge of the churchyard. Most of the trees were burnt down by the same fire that destroyed the church in 1844, though it is reported that the remains of one lasted into the 1930s. The drawing by Henry Gastineau is dated 1820.



## EAST ILSLEY Berkshire

destroyed before 1844: no size information

The 1844 *History and Antiquities of the Hundred of Compton, Berks* by William Hewitt: 'Between the church-porch and the gate, stood formerly two venerable yew-trees of considerable size, but they have long since been destroyed.'

## BRIDELL Pembrokeshire

no record after 1844: no size information

This site is best known for its Ogham Stone. Lewis's *Topographical Dictionary of Wales* described the church in 1844 as 'embosomed among trees, the luxuriant foliage of which almost conceals it from view'. The yew was presumably one of these trees and the position of the stump in 2006 suggests that its branches would have provided the stone with protection from the elements.



The village and church were built in 1843 and it is likely that the yews here would have been planted at that time. Mee's description in *The King's England* (c1940) was of a churchyard 'shaded by yews'.

The yews form an avenue leading to the church and are likely to be contemporary with the building. There are nine trees remaining (4 on one side of the path and 5 on the other) but there are visible signs that some trees have gone with depressions in the grass marking their former positions. The largest of the single stemmed trees measures 2.95m girth.

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## BROUGHTON Hampshire

lost since 1843: no size information

J.C.Loudon (1783/1843) described 'two yew-trees in the churchyard at Queenswood, near Tytherleigh, which are above five hundred years; the largest is 28 feet high; diameter of trunk 3 feet 6 inches, and of the head 50 feet.' Only one of the two remains.

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## DUNSCORE Dumfries and Galloway

blown down in 1841: no size information

In *Observations on popular antiquities* by J.Brand and H.Ellis, the minister of Dunscore described that 'The old burying-place is not tilled. Upon one corner of it grew a large yew-tree, which was consumed in the heart. Three men have stood in it at once ; but it was overturned by the wind this season.'

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## LLANSTEFFAN Carmarthenshire

blown down in 1841: 16' girth

The *Visitor's Guide* to the church contains the following description: The altar is made like a box and inside the lid are carved the words: 'Made of an old yew tree 16 feet round and blown down in this churchyard Feb 1841.'

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## LLANILLTYD Powys

no record after 1840: no size information

A description of the journey to this location is found in the *Cambrian Travellers Guide* of 1840. Once there it describes that 'at present a yew-tree grows on the spot; hence it may have been a Christian oratory.'

Paul Wood visited the site in 2017 and wrote: 'The route is difficult to follow, but eventually reaches Senny (Sennybridge), which is about 4 miles from this site. We can be sure that this is the right place because (1) it is described as 'the Hermitage of Illtyd' (2) it is within a few yards of 'a pile of stones, and the appearance of an entrenchment' (3) it describes 'a Roman Road only a few yards below'.

The Hermitage of Illtyd sits within a large oval earthwork which I have assumed to be the entrenchment mentioned in the text, since no other earthworks are visible in the area. The pile of stones I conclude to be the Kerb Cairn at SN97352634 called Bedd Gwyl Illtyd or 'Grave of St Illtyd's Eve'. These are 100m south of Sarn Helen, the Roman Road which is named on this capture of the 1885 - 1890 one inch outline map.

When I visited the site to photograph the church remains, I noted that there was no living yew nor the remains of an old yew.

*Horsfield's History* of 1835 recorded that 'in the churchyard stands a hollow and venerable yew, it measured 21' at the ground.'

Lowe (c1897) was informed that it was destroyed by a storm in about 1840. The following text accompanies the drawing, but the name of the source is not known: 'We are indebted to Taper, Audrey Ryder who sent in a copy of the illustration and comment reproduced below, from an 1838 publication entitled *The Mirror of Literature, Amusement and Instruction*. 'This beautiful specimen of an ancient English yew tree, stands in the church-yard of Hardham Church. Few trees of the kind have reached the gigantic dimensions this venerable relic has attained. Its trunk is capable of containing twenty-seven people - its girth is twenty-three feet, and supposing the trunk were yet solid, it would contain not less than five hundred cubic feet of wood. About eighteen years ago the top of this tree was unfortunately blown down, and it is to be feared that in a very few years scarcely anything of this wonder of the vegetable creation will remain, so old and worn is the wood. No doubt can exist as to its being more than two thousand years old.'

H.M. The editor responded with the following: 'I have been assured that this tree no longer stands in Hardham church-yard.'




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## PENSTROWED Powys

no record after 1840: no size information

Two stumps of very small yews could be seen, but no trace of the 'yew tree of most extravagant girth' recorded in 1840 in *The Cambrian traveller's guide, and pocket companion* by George Nicholson. The church was completely rebuilt in 1863, perhaps this was the time that the yew was felled.

## OLD WINDSOR Berkshire

no record after 1840: no size information

In the 1840 *Glimpses of the Old world .....* By John Alonzo Clark is the following: 'A yew-tree in the churchyard, which shaded several moss-covered monuments, is said to be a thousand years old.'

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## THE HIRSEL Scottish Borders

no record after 1838: no size information

Four yews are noted in the vicinity of the Dunglass monument, accessible through Scottish Outdoor Access. They are considered to be probably contemporaneous (1784). Two, with girths of 330cm and 310cm are dead. There is also a record of a yew described in the 1838 *Arboretum and Fruticetum* as '30 years planted, it is 17 ft. high, the diameter of the head 26 ft'. Several small terraces lead from the house to the River Leet; on one of these are the remains of a Victorian roserie near the Bower, under an enormous yew. There has been no recent report of this tree.

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## CRUXTON CASTLE Renfrewshire

no record after 1838: no size information

In Loudon's *Arboretum and Fruticetum* (1838) 'The Cruyton Yew stood close by Cruyton Castle; and under its shade tradition says that Queen Mary gave her consent to marry Darnley, to perpetuate the memory of which, she had the figure of a yew tree stamped on her coins. J.Maxwell,Esq., M.P., whose residence at Police commands a view of Cruyton Castle, informs us that this yew has been dead many years; but that he has preserved a portion of its trunk. He has also a young tree, raised from its layering, which he intends to plant on the site of the old one, as soon as it attains sufficient size.'

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## BERNERA ISLAND Argyll and Bute

felled before 1838: no size information

In Loudon's *Arboretum and Fruticetum* (1838) we read that 'the late Sir Duncan Campbell cut down a yew of vast size. Its precise dimensions were not preserved, but the timber of it deeply loaded a highland 6-oared boat, and was sufficient to form a large elegant staircase in the house of Lochnell, which was afterwards destroyed when the house was burned down.'

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## SPROTBOROUGH HALL South Yorkshire

no record after 1838: 15' 6" girth

A large yew growing in its parkland was recorded by Loudon in 1838 *Arboretum et fruticetum* as follows: 'Its girth measured at 3ft from the ground was a very respectable 15ft 6in, its canopy had a diameter of some 63ft and it was judged to have been 34ft in height.' This tree no longer exists.

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## DUKINFIELD Greater Manchester

no record after 1837: no size information

From the Tameside Local and Family History: In *Reminiscences of Dukinfield* (1837) the location of the yew is quite specific: 'In Yew-Tree-lane, very near to Cheetham Hill-road, stands what remains of that very old landmark, the old yew tree.' In [www.old-maps.co.uk](http://www.old-maps.co.uk) the name Yewtree clearly marks the position, which is now the site of the Moravian Church.

In the *Description of Dukinfield* circa 1830 it says that 'At Yew Tree there was an old farm named after the huge old yew that grew beside it.'

## WOODNESBOROUGH Kent

no record after 1836: no size information

*Mockett's Journal* of 1836 noted that 'Here are five large yew-trees.' The young yews seen today must be their replacements.

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## DIBDEN Hampshire

blown down in 1836: 30' girth

Lowe's 1897 *The Yew Trees of Great Britain and Ireland* contains the following: 'In 1833 Sir T. Dick Lauder says that there was a fine tree in the churchyard, which measured 30 feet in girth above the roots. Miss Carlyon informs me (Jan 1895) that when her father, the Rev. E. Carlyon, was appointed in 1866 it had been long dead; the trunk had been taken up and placed in the rectory garden. Miss Gray informs me that the tree was split down the centre and appeared almost as two trees. One half was blown down in 1836, and the other before her father relinquished the living.'



ANCIENT YEW-TREE, IN DIBDEN CHURCHYARD, HAMPSHIRE.

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## KIRKHEATON West Yorkshire

no record after 1834: girth 20' 9"

Pigot's 1834 directory described 'a large yew tree, measuring in girth twenty feet nine inches; and its antiquity is stated to be traced to the remote period of 800 years back.'

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## LLANYCIL Gwynedd

no record after 1834: no size information

In 1834 Lewis's *Topographical Dictionary of Wales* described '8 (yews) of venerable growth'. In 1998 only five of these remained.



## STRATA FLORIDA Ceredigion

yews lost between 1833 and 1999: no size information

In Lewis's 1833 *Topographical Dictionary of Wales* it is reported that there were 'according to Leland, thirty-nine yew-trees, though others say twenty-four'.

14 pages are devoted to the Strata Florida yews in *The Ancient Yew* (2002) by Robert Bevan-Jones. No fewer than 37 'vast Ewgh trees' have been lost from this site since the time of Henry VIII.

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## CANTREF Powys

no record after 1834: no size information

1834: Lewis's *Topographical Dictionary of Wales* reported that 'At a distance of 12' from the ground, a mountain ash has taken root and not deriving sufficient nourishment from the old tree on which it grows, has struck down its roots through the decayed trunk, which have long since penetrated into the earth.'

In 2000 the decayed trunk is still in situ and a mountain ash continues to grow inside the stump.



## GUILSFIELD Powys

no record after 1833: no size information

The 1833 *Topographical Dictionary of Wales* described the churchyard as 'ornamented with twelve exceedingly fine yew-trees, which, according to a document in the possession of John Jones, Esq., of Crosswood, were planted in the reign of William and Mary, and are all of the same age.'

The largest yew, with a girth of 18' 5", is now only a stump.

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## COLESHILL Warwickshire

no record after 1833: no size information

In the 1833 *Magazine of Natural History*, W.T.Bree wrote 'The tree consists of a mere thin hollow shell, not more than half of the whole circumference, and carries, perhaps, its due proportion of top and branches. More than forty years ago, a near relative of mine, as I have often heard him state, once stood for half an hour watching this tree during a tempestuous gale of wind, in order to witness its fall, expecting every moment that it must inevitably be blown down, it bent, and wreathed, and twisted so, under the influence of the boisterous elements. My friend has been dead some years; the yew remains to this day precisely in the same condition in which it existed when I first knew it in my childhood.' There is no record after this date.

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## LLANEDWEN Powys

no record after 1833: no size information

A church is thought to have been founded here in the 6<sup>th</sup> century. Thirteen 'fine yew trees of luxuriant growth' were reported in 1833. Today there are 9 common and three Irish Yews.

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## LLANFIHANGEL RHOS-Y-CORN Carmarthenshire

no record after 1833

In the parish is a spring termed Fynnon Capel, situated near an ancient yew-tree, from which circumstance, combined with the evidence afforded by the name, it is inferred that there was once a chapel at the place. Near the eminence on which the church stands is a turbarry of considerable extent. No size information.

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## LLANDRINIO Powys

no record after 1833: no size information

A church is thought to have been founded here in the 6<sup>th</sup> century. Thirteen 'fine yew trees of luxuriant growth' were reported in the 1833 *Topographical Dictionary*. In 2007 only 9 remained, and the 3 Irish Yews were presumably planted as replacements.

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## NORTHOP Flintshire

lost c1832: no size information

In the 1832 *History of Northop in the Cambrian quarterly magazine and Celtic repertory* is the following: 'In the north side stood a yew tree, which must have defied the storms for ages; but the steady course of time succeeded, a few years back, in its downfall. When it stood, the Rev John Owen, late curate of the parish, was buried under its shade.'

Formerly the site of a holy well. *'Stourbridge and its vicinity'* by William Scott (1832) describes that 'adjoining the precincts of the borough, on the road to Hagley and Kidderminster, is Hasbury, famous in ancient times for a well, dedicated to St. Margaret. Some curious stone-work adjoining its margin, was removed, A. D. 1747, its waters form a rill tributary to the Stour.'

The handwritten description of the tree and its demise is as follows: 'A yew tree more than 800 years cast its dark shadow over the old stone steps that led down to the ancient well. Centuries ago the lame and sick made pilgrimages to the holy well. The beautiful stonework around the well was shipped to Rome in 1844, by John Pitt. The water from the ancient spring still flows, not into the ancient well, but down the ever thirsty pipe that was placed by the developers to sap the energy of this forceful flow. The 800 year yew had stood guardian at Margaret's well, but it too had to fall to the might of the modern bulldozer.'

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## ECKFORD Scottish Borders

no record after 1830: no size information

1830: *New Statistical Account of Scotland* described 'three aged yews in the churchyard, but at what time they were larke it is difficult to say'. None survives today.

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## LLANEDWEN Anglesey

no record after 1829: no size information

In *The Topography of Great Britain* (1802-29) was the following description: 'The churchyard, with its ancient yew and graves overgrown with box, has a very picturesque if singular appearance.' A church was founded on this site in the 7<sup>th</sup> century, but the present building dates from 1856. The ancient yew no longer exists.

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## HILLINGDON Greater London

no record after 1829: no size information

1829: Felton wrote of 'noted yew-trees' in the churchyard. In September 2011 only one remained, growing in a large space SE of the church in the old part of the churchyard.

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## LLANBLETHIAN Glamorgan

no record after 1828: no size information

21<sup>st</sup> June 1828: 'The old tree on the hill has fallen, and scarcely a low stump remains of the tree which I delighted in childhood to think might have furnished bows for the Norman archers.' From *Literary Chronicle*, New Series; London, Saturday, 21 June, 1828, Art. II.

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## WESTBURY - BROOMHILL FARM Shropshire

no record of the tree after 1825: girth 24ft+

The location is described as 'The Farmhouse, called the Broomhill, in the Parish of Westbury, in the county of Salop.'

The yew was obviously impressive. In a comparison with the renowned Darley Dale Yew, it was described in the 1825 *Museum Europaeum* by Charles Hulbert as 'nearly equal in size and beauty'. Its girth at 1' was upwards of 8 yards.

Martyn Price, whose family have owned the farm since the 1930s, has no record of the tree and reports that there is no sign of remains.

## GUILDFORD Surrey

no record after 1825: no size information

Guildford Park was originally The King's Manor. Henry II inclosed a considerable tract of land on the north side of Guildford shortly after his coronation in 1154. The Manor and land were sold in 1709 and the area divided into 4 farms.

The following is taken from his *Rambles round Guildford* by WC Smith: 'In a field of one of these farms, near Henley Grove, an earthen pot was found in 1781, near the surface of the ground; it was almost filled with pieces of burnt bone: & at the foot of an ancient Yew-tree on the same farm, some years since, a heart preserved in spirits was dug up.'

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## CROSTHWAITE Cumbria

no record after 1824: no size information

Robert Southey, writing about *Sir Thomas More - on the Progress and Prospects of Society* (Colloquy X): 'Some of the oldest and finest yew trees in the country stood formerly in this churchyard. The vicar cut them down thinking the wood might serve to make a pew for the singers, for which purpose it was found unserviceable, when too late. One of them grew beside the school house, and was so large, that an old man saw boys, some forty in number, at one time perched upon its boughs.'

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## ST MARGARETS Herefordshire

lost c1823: no size information

In *The Gentlemans Magazine* of 1853 an article entitled *Ancient Cruciform Mound, And Excavations Or Cavities, Recently discovered in St Margarets Park, Herefordshire* - contains the following: 'I learn from a workman that about thirty years ago nine large yew trees were felled that grew around it, one of which was of gigantic size.'

From undated notes compiled by Hilary White, a cross headstone was to be found 'under an aged yew tree' in the fence of a field 500 yards west of the church. According to one tradition this is a burial site of plague victims, it is also the possible site of St Leonard's chapel. A search failed to find the headstone or the yew.

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## LLANBADARN FAWR (Aberystwyth)

no record of the tree after 1823: girth 24ft

This is thought to have been a site of worship as early as the 6<sup>th</sup> century. In 1823 there were recorded in *Sylva Florifera* by Henry Phillips 'eleven yew-trees, the largest of which is twenty-four feet in circumference'. This one no longer exists, though many new yews have been planted since this time.

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## CONGRESBURY Somerset

destroyed by lightning 1820: no size information

In 1791 Collinson's *History and antiquities of the county of Somerset* described 'a fine yew'. It was unusual in growing very close to a beech tree. We are told (Robinson) that in the 1820's 'the tree was struck by lightning, and now nothing but the ancient trunk remains. This is of immense size.....and probably dates from the Norman Conquest.'

By 1941 Mee's *The King's England* described that only 'a stump of ancient yew' remained.



An 1815 engraving shows two dead looking fragments of what must have one been a formidable tree. Today a yew grows in the same position, its girth of 9' 2" suggesting it was planted to replace the ancient tree.



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SWANSEA HIGH STREET West Glamorgan

no record after 1818: no size information

In *Churchyard Yew Trees in the Archdeaconry of Gower* (1992), John Andrew records that an 1818 drawing by Baxter shows a tree of large girth in the south of the churchyard, partly obscuring the building. Even at that time the tree appeared to be 'in the terminal stages of decay'.

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WESTON-ON-TRENT Staffordshire

no record after 1817: no size information

More than one old yew has been lost from this site. In *A topographical history of Staffordshire* - ed William Pitt 1817, there were two large yew trees, one of them with 'the high top dry with bald antiquity'. In 1904 it was still possible to see 'the remains of a picturesque yew tree' in the churchyard. The other was reported at that time to have 'disappeared within the last century'.

## PORTCHESTER Hampshire

thought to have been felled c 1816: no size information

The yew is reputed to have been bought and planted by the French prisoners held here during the Napoleonic Wars at the beginning of the 19<sup>th</sup> century. 1816 is given as a possible planting date and it is supposed to have cost the prisoners what was then the considerable sum of one shilling and three pence. There are reports that the yew replaced an older specimen that stood on the same spot. One suggestion is that the previous yew was 'felled for firewood', another that it was 'destroyed by the fumes of their kitchen fires'.

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## RICHMOND Greater London

no record after 1812: Girth 10' 3"

An article in [www.southernlife.org.uk/Surrey/richmond.htm](http://www.southernlife.org.uk/Surrey/richmond.htm) describes a sundial replacing 'a yew tree that was planted by Elizabeth'.

In the 1813 *Beauties of England and Wales* by John Britton and others, it states that: 'In Mr Fullerton's garden is still remaining an old yew tree, mentioned in the survey and there valued at £10. It is upwards of 10' in circumference.'

In *The Environs of London: Volume 1, County of Surrey* - originally published by T Cadell and W Davies, London in 1792, it notes other houses on the site of the palace and states that 'in Mr. Skinner's garden there still exists the old yew-tree which is mentioned in the Survey..... The circumference of its trunk is 10 feet 3 inches.'

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## WALTERSTONE IRON AGE CAMP Herefordshire

no record after 1812: no size information

Robert Bevan-Jones (*The Ancient Yew* 2002) was informed that a previous owner had removed all trees from the land and sold the wood. 'The venerable yew that yet remains' in 1812 was probably one of those trees.

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## MOLASH Kent

no record after 1807: no size information

The lost yew is seen in a watercolour sketch by H. Petrie.



## BOLTON ABBEY North Yorkshire

lost before 1805: no size information

An item in the 1805 *Gentleman's Magazine* states: 'Of Bolton Priory, the whole cloister quadrangle has been destroyed. In the centre of it is remembered the stump of a vast yew-tree, such as were originally planted in that situation; not merely for shade and ornament, but probably with a religious allusion.'

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## LLANHILLETH Blaenau Gwent

11 yews lost since 1801: no size information

Of the 12 old yews reported in Coxe's 1801 *Historical tour in Monmouthshire* only one remained in 2021. Coxe described the 'old upland church surrounded by 12 substantial yews'. In this bleak location it is not surprising that yews have not thrived.

We found 3 large stumps, but nothing of the size that J.Daryll Evans recorded for his *Churchyard Yews of Gwent* in 1986. He found a stump partly concealed by long grass with a girth of 26' 1".



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## GREAT NESS Shropshire

lost before 1800: no size information

An entry under PARRY, Thomas - vicar of Great Ness, Salop, 17 March 1800 reads: 'To be buried in the lower end of Gt.Ness ch.yd. near the place where the great Yew tree formerly stood.' [www.genuki.org.uk](http://www.genuki.org.uk)  
The tree no longer exists.

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## DENTON Greater Manchester

cut down in 1800: no size information

There was 'formerly a yew tree on the south side, but it was in a very decayed state in 1796, and was cut down four years later.'

When the 1911 *History of the County of Lancaster* was published it recorded that 'another tree now marks its position.'

## LYSS Flintshire

cut down in 1799: no size information

The 1832 *Cambrian quarterly magazine and Celtic repertory* reported that 'The last remains of anything like ecclesiastical antiquity here, were four fine yew trees on the verge of the ground on which the chapel stood; they were cut down in 1799, and converted, by the Crews of Celyn, into household furniture.'

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## POSTLING Kent

no record after 1799: no size information

From *The History and Topographical Survey of the County of Kent: Volume 8 (1799)*, 'Under the hills, above the church, rise those springs, which form the head of that branch of the river Stour, called, to distinguish it from the other which rises at Lenham, the Old Stour, the principal one of which rises close to the church here, under the foot of that hill which has a single yew-tree on it.' The yew no longer grows on the hill.

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## BRABOURNE Kent

lost before 1799: 58' girth

This is the site of the largest ever documented yew. Hasted's 1799 *History of Kent* states that 'Mr. Evelyn, in his *Discourse on Forest Trees*, mentions a superannuated yew-tree growing in this churchyard, which being 58 feet 11 inches in circumference, bore near 20 feet diameter; and besides which there were goodly planks, and other considerable pieces of square and clear timber, which he observed to lie about it, which had been hewed and sawn out of some of the arms only, torn from it by impetuous winds. This tree has been many years since gone, and a fine stately young one now flourishes in the room of it.' This might have been a new tree planted to replace the old, but we should be aware of the possibility that the present tree developed from a fragment of the old tree or as an internal root within the decaying shell.

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## MAMHILAD Monmouthshire

lost since 1799: no size information

Two of the 12 yews recorded by Coxe in 1799 are lost.

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## CHALLOCK Kent

three yews lost since 1798

Hasted's *History of Kent vol. VII (1798)* recorded that there were no fewer than 'six yew trees, of a remarkable large size'.

By 1936 Mee *The King's England* recorded 'four old yews round the church, one a wreck and one still healthy after about 600 years'.

When Meredith visited in 1982 he noted 3 old or ancient trees, as well as 'what appears to be a stump of a tree almost vanished' and 'decayed beyond recognition'.

In 1999 I recorded the 3 ancient yews that have survived.

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## MALLWYD Gwynedd

three 15' yews lost since 1798

During Warner's *Second walk through Wales (1798)* he was 'induced to stroll into the churchyard, remarkable for several enormous yew trees, of which 4 measure 15', and one 27' in circumference'.

Three of the 15' girthed yews were lost between 1798 and 1983.



## HADDON HALL Derbyshire

no record after 1798: no size information

The garden had become 'overgrown and uncared for' and at the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, a 'massive clearance took place and the once grand and then neglected gardens at Haddon Hall were returned to their former glory' ([www.haddonhall.co.uk](http://www.haddonhall.co.uk)). Little is known about the yews which were removed.

In *Picturesque England* they were described as 'very ancient yews' while an account from 1798 in *The Stately Homes of England* by Jewitt, Llewellynn and S. C. Hall, states that the gardens were 'planted with yew trees, many centuries old, whose gnarled and knotted roots may be seen curiously intertwining and displacing the stone edges of the parterres.'

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## GOUDHURST Kent

no record after 1798: 27' in circumference

The following is taken from the 1798 *History and Topographical Survey of the County of Kent. The hundred of West or Little Barnefield: The parish of Goudhurst*: 'There is a remarkable yew-tree in the churchyard, which measures twenty-seven feet in circumference.' It is not known when the tree was lost.

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## MILL HILL London

no record after 1797: girths 7/9ft

Ridgeway House is now part of Mill Hill School. In the 18<sup>th</sup> century it was home to the botanist Peter Collinson, who lived there until 1767.

*Sylva Florifera* by Henry Phillips (1823) contains the following information: 'At Mill Hill, Hendon, in Middlesex, are four beautiful yew-trees, which, in 1797, measured from seven to nine feet each in circumference.' Owen Johnson reports that a few trees have survived from this time, but sadly none of the yews.

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## CWM Denbighshire

no record after 1791: no size information

The Clwyd/Powys Archaeological Trust quotes a record of 1791 stating '6 ash, 1 sycamore, 2 firs and one old yew tree in churchyard'. There was no sign of the old yew in 2004 nor any record of when it was lost.

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## MARK Somerset

decaying in 1791: no size information

Described by Collinson in his 1791 *The history and antiquities of the county of Somerset* as 'already in a decaying state'. The tree no longer exists.

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## SOUTH STOKE Somerset

no record after 1791: no size information

Described in 1791 by Collinson in *The history and antiquities of the county of Somerset* as 'a fine yew tree'. There was no trace of the yew in 2003.

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## PULBOROUGH West Sussex

decaying in 1791: no size information

The 1791 *Topographer* (vol 4) describes the churchyard as follows: 'On the south side is a strong old building, which was the burial place for the Milles, now used as a school and now open and decaying. Near this is a large old yew tree, much in the same state.'

## BROADWAY Somerset

no record after 1791: 14' circumference

Described in 1791 by Collinson in *The history and antiquities of the county of Somerset* as 'an ancient yew tree, the body of which is 14' in circumference. The trunk is quite hollow, but it has a fine spreading head.'

In 2002 there was no trace of the tree.

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## SAMPFORD BRETT Somerset

no record after 1791: no size information

The 'very large spreading yew tree', recorded in 1791 by Collinson in *The history and antiquities of the county of Somerset*, no longer existed in 2002.

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## CHILLINGTON Somerset

no record after 1791: no size information

A 'large, ancient yew' was described in 1791 by Collinson in *The history and antiquities of the county of Somerset*. By 2002 only a few pieces of stump remained.



## CHURCH PULVERBATCH Shropshire

no record after 1790: no size information

A watercolour by Rev Williams is dated 20<sup>th</sup> May 1790. Tower, nave, chancel and north arch were rebuilt since then and perhaps the trees shown in the painting were damaged during the reconstruction and replaced at a later date. The tree on the left in the painting has been replaced with a young yew, while the yew tree on the right has been replaced with a cedar.

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## CHILHAM Kent

cut down before 1790: girth 30'

Meredith's gazetteer in *The Sacred Yew* records a 30' girthed yew cut down before 1790. The source of his information is not known.

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## OYSTERMOUTH Glamorgan

no record after 1790: no size information

A 1790 illustration shows what John Andrew describes as 'a very large, and presumably medieval, yew tree' south of the church porch. This information is from his *Churchyard Yew Trees in the Archdeaconry of Gower* 1992. No trace is now to be found and there is no record after 1790.

## UPPINGTON Shropshire

no record after 1790: no size information

A watercolour by the Rev. Williams dating from the 1790s shows clearly that there were once two great yews at this site. Andrew Morton, in his 1986 *Trees of Shropshire*, asserts that the yew to the west was probably removed during restoration work - the fate of many trees.



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## TREFRIW Conwy

blown down c1787: no size information

In *Wanderings and Excursions in North Wales* (1837) Thomas Roscoe recorded that 'ancient Yew trees are here to be found in their glory, which seem from their gnarled and venerable appearance to be co-existent with the old church. About fifty years ago, one of these patriarchs was blown down during a violent tempest.' He goes on to note that it 'had acquired from its size and antiquity the title of the 'Father of Yews.' More recently, in 1946, Cornish described a church 'overshadowed by two fine yews'. Only one of these remained at the time of our visit in 2000.

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## SHAREHILL - SARDON MAGNA Staffordshire

last seen in 1780: no size information

In *Arboretum and Fruticetum* of 1838 is the following description: 'A tree at Little Shardon, near Sharesill, in Staffordshire, had, in 1780, a singularly picturesque appearance, and formed one of a vast number of very old and large yew trees.' It has not been possible to locate where these trees once grew or discover when they were lost.

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## FONTMELL MAGNA Dorset

no record after 1774: no size information

A yew was recorded here in J.Hutchins *History of Dorset* 1<sup>st</sup> edition 1774 and updated on several occasions during the following hundred years. Hutchins called the village Great Fontmell. Today a small girthed yew (10') grows here. This tree would have been a recent planting in 1774 and it seems likely that it is a more substantial yew that has been lost.

## WIXFORD Warwickshire

felled in 1763: girth 18' 3"

In *A History of the County of Warwickshire* (vol 3, 1945) it is recorded that in 1660 six parishioners accused the rector of wishing to cut down a yew tree in the churchyard 'the like whereof is not to be found in all the diocese'. In 1730 Dr. Thomas, rector here, gave its height as 53ft and circumference as 18ft. 3 in. The tree was eventually felled in 1763.

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## EAST STOUR Dorset

felled in 1760: girth 24'

In Hutchins *History of Dorset*, first edition 1774, the following was noted: '24ft girth yew with 20 yrd crown spread felled in 1760 yielded 10 waggon loads of wood.'

The lost tree was described in the 1805 *Traveller's Guide* by Walley Oulton as a 'prodigious large yew-tree, under which 1500 men can stand: its circuit 24 feet.'

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## FOUNTAINS ABBEY North Yorkshire

no record after 1758: no size information

In 1758 there were 'seven yew trees, growing on the declivity of the hill on the south side of the Abbey - they are of incredible size' (Lowe: *The Yew Trees of Great Britain and Ireland* 1897). Two lived on in 2002 and there was no indication of when the other 5 were lost.

Fry and Meredith however claim '7 cut down in 1975'.



## LLANRHYSTUD Ceredigion

no record after 1744: no size informatio

A churchyard yew last heard of in the 1744 Parish Records - 'payment for providing a bench round tree'

## DODDINGTON Kent

no record after 1719: no size information

Described in the 1719 *History of Kent (vol 1 p100)* by Rev. John Harris as growing out of its body 'a dozen, or more, of the large arms of a poplar tree; whose spreading branches compose almost all the lower part of this oddly double tree; the yew appearing above in the upper part of it; so it hath a body and top of yew; but most of the lower and middle branches are of the white poplar.' An arboreal curiosity.

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## DERITEND West Midlands

no record after planting date of 1713

The chapel of St John the Baptist no longer exists. In 1713 there was a 'planting of yew trees in the chapel yard'. These were presumably felled when the building was demolished.

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## HALES HALL POOL Staffordshire

loss of yews from a 1712 planted avenue

Originally an avenue of 60 yews, planted either side of the artificial reservoir and stretching towards the site of the old hall. The hall dates from 1712, which would seem a likely time for planting the avenue.

We counted 37 surviving yews and 4 stumps. In torrential rain we may not have accessed the whole site. Several had girths of about 10' but the majority were closer to 6'.

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## ALBURY ESTATE Surrey

loss of yews planted c1700

Here is line of yews thought to have been planted by Evelyn in the late 17<sup>th</sup> century. It is a mixture of the original trees, stumps and some replacement trees. The site is part of the Duke of Northumberland Estate and not open to the public.

I recorded a total of 119 yews and 37 yew stumps, some with visible rings suggesting that the original planting might well have been more than 300 years ago. Girth of the majority of stumps were between 4' and 6'.

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## NORTH BRADLEY Wiltshire

no record after 1690: no size information

Recorded in the *Natural History of Wiltshire* by John Aubrey (1626-1697) as 'a great eugh-tree in North Bradley, planted, as the tradition goes, in the time of ye Conquest'. There is no record after this date.

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## EAST BUDLEIGH Devon

no record after 1686: no size information

The churchwardens accounts of 1686 has an entry for 'putting up ye seat about ye yew tree' (Cornish). In 2000 we found no trace of yew or seat.

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## BOURTON-ON-THE-HILL Gloucestershire

no record after planting in 1679

Gloucester Archives has a record with the heading 'yew planted in 1679'. It no longer existed in 2011. There was only one space where the yew might have grown, at the east end of the churchyard. That space was now occupied by a young Rowan.

## NORTHENDEN Greater Manchester

lost before 1635

In 1635 the rector Thomas Mallory wrote in his diary that the tree came down in a bad storm. There is no other mention of the yew since that date. The fact that some stump remains suggests that perhaps only the top section of the tree that came down in the storm and that the remainder of the tree lived on in its reduced form for centuries after that.

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## YATTON KEYNELL Wiltshire

felled c 1633: no size information

Last recorded in 1633 and apparently killed soon after that time. From the Project Gutenberg, Ebook of the *Natural History of Wiltshire* by John Aubrey and produced by Mikle Coher: 'When I learnt my accidents, 1633, at Yatton Keynel, there was a fair and spreading ewe-tree in the churchyard, as was common heretofore. The Clarke lop't it to make money of it to some bowyer or fletcher, and that lopping kill'd it: the dead trunk remains there still.'

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## MARDEN Herefordshire

historically reported: 33' girth

Rober Bevan-Jones wrote in *The Ancient Yew* (2002) that 'a 33ft girth yew was historically recorded at Marden churchyard, which also has a famous well.' There is no indication of when the yew was lost after this time.

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