

The church guide acknowledges those who chose the site, unknown people who are admired 'for their choice, warm and sheltered, yet with magnificent views and visible from so much of the surrounding countryside'. A pub opposite the church - The Ley Arms - boasts its origins in AD1298, while the parish church has a history reaching back to the 12th century. Whether this was a site of worship prior to the raising of the Norman church is not known, though this substantial ancient yew would seem to predate the present building.

1789-1800: 'A barn, a shed, the highway, ashes and a Yew Tree of prodigious size, enter well into the scene.....In the churchyard are the Remains of a Cross which in other days must have had an appearance of some note, and contiguous to it stands the Yew tree, which branching itself from its vast stock at about the height of [blank] feet, diverges as it were from a center, and as so many radii, its huge limbs spread themselves off, and in regular order, so surround the part from whence they sprung, as to form an inclosed area, impervious to the sun; Here, during the Summer Months from the year [shrapnel damage] to 1782 whilst Curate of the Parish, have I whiled away many an hour; and (in attendance on some Duty) within its friendly shade, meditated on a Gray or a Thompson, or refresh'd myself after a two-mile walk by availing myself of its "opacum frigus"-the arbour formed on the trunk a few feet from the ground, by the huge limbs was of space enough to hold at least half a dozen Persons, and a single one, (especially if the local circumstances were taken in) would find, as I have done, "fit room for Meditation".' *Travels in Georgian Devon Vol III* - The illustrated journals of the Rev John Swete - Editor Todd Gray Journal II

1857: 'At Kerne churchyard, Devon, there is a yew tree measuring twenty-seven feet in girth'. *Chronicles of the Tombs* by Thomas Joseph Pettigrew p265

1929: 'In the yard is a yew tree said to be 800 years old'. Bell's *Devon*

1999: This tall healthy male yew, seen here also in William Spreat's 1842 sketch, is a massive and imposing presence with its 8 substantial branches. Girth close to the ground was above 34ft, though this figure is exaggerated by the tree's two fragments slowly leaning away from each other. The visit was made in February and the whole tree seemed to sag under the weight of copious pollen sacs, bulging and ready to produce their annual 'pollen storm'.



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