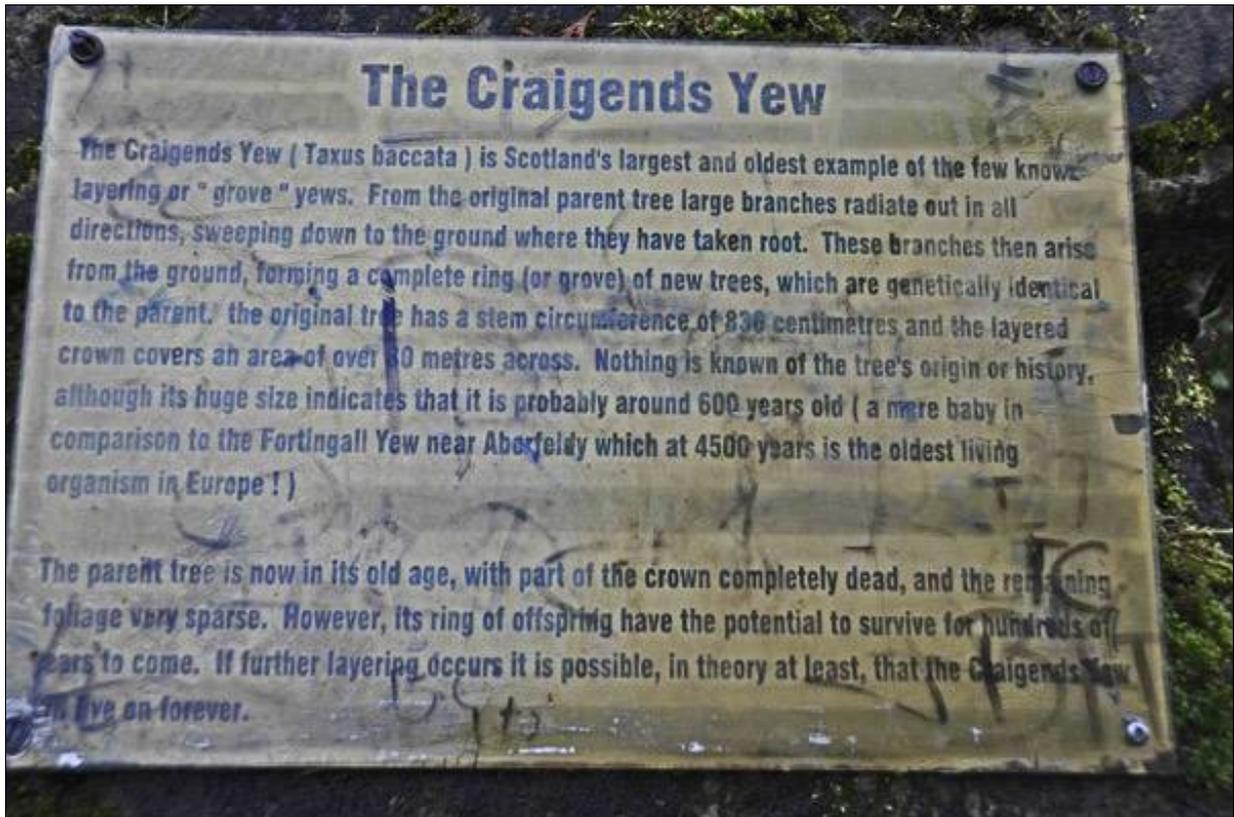
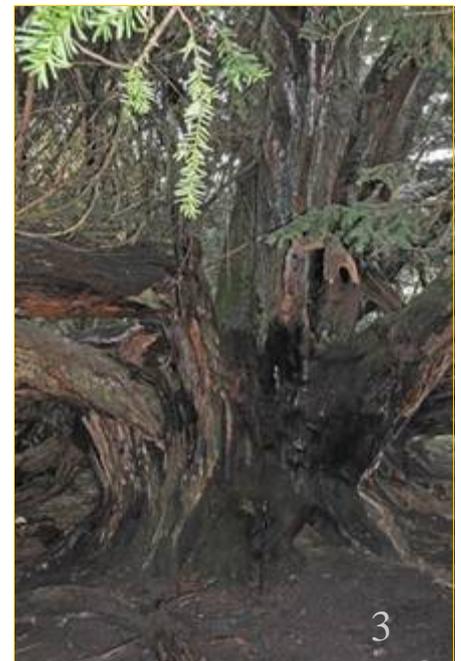


**The Craigends Yew Grove sited on a Bank of the River Gryfe, Renfrewshire, Scotland – Bryan Bowes**

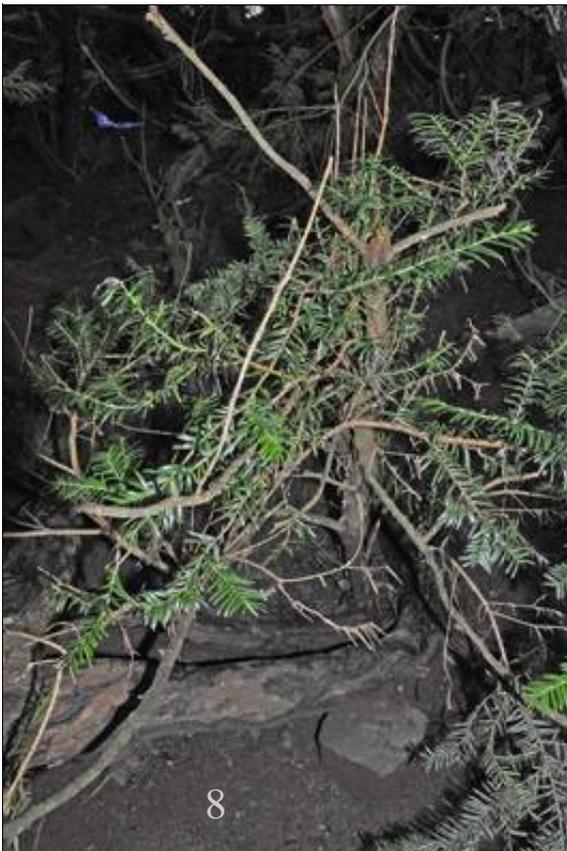
This Yew grove (presumably clonal) probably dates back to the 1400's when the Craigends Estate was originally granted to the Cuninghame family ([www.craigends.net/features](http://www.craigends.net/features); [www.craigends.org.uk](http://www.craigends.org.uk)). According to a plaque at the Yew site (Fig 1) the grove has a diameter of some 80m and a trunk girth of 8.3m.



Although today much of the grove – including the original "trunk" (Figs 2-3) – is rather moribund, there are remaining areas on its periphery where indications of its elegant past are still evident (Figs 4-5).



Access to the grove is difficult due to the numerous layered branches (Figs 6-7 ) some of which are sprouting new Yew saplings or small individual trees (Fig 8). However, the fencing of the new estate houses lies on the periphery of the grove and, according to one of the web sites given above, “---Yew --- has been cut back --- to make way for the houses & gardens of Carmelite Lane ---” [Fig 6 shows the fencing]. Even on a bright day the interior atmosphere is gloomy and there is only scattered ground flora (Figs 7 and 9); however, at least one tall sycamore has managed to establish itself (Fig 9).



I went the grove twice this year. On the first reconnaissance visit, a friend who knew the area guided me through the labyrinthine layout of the new housing which has taken over the former Cuninghame Estate. On my more detailed subsequent visit, I drove by a different route and became very lost – there is no signposting for this famous Yew, so any future visitors will do best to obtain a detailed map of the local area.



My photographs generally show their orientation (e.g. Fig 2 shows the trunk viewed towards the North whilst Fig 3 is at 180 degrees and points towards the South). It is very difficult to decipher the historical sequence of the Yew's growth: could the tree have started out some 600 years ago as a maiden or was it coppiced from an early stage? There are several more-or-less vertical trunks (Figs 3,10) but mostly they are horizontal or ground-hugging (Figs 2, 7, 11). The main trunk is badly split open (Fig 2) so that measuring its circumference is problematical; but, with the help of my friend, we obtained a figure of some 6.9m for its circumference at just above ground level (this is about a 1m greater girth than stated on the plaque). I measured the circumference of the left-hand larger front bough seen in Fig 11 at 1.5m above the ground; its girth was a very impressive 1.65m.

Altogether, I felt my visits to this tree were quite inspiring and for all tree lovers this is most definitely a "wow" tree.

Bryan Bowes, March 19th 2009

