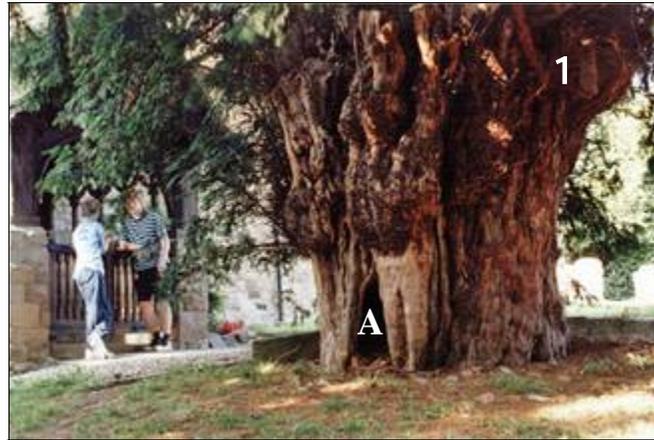
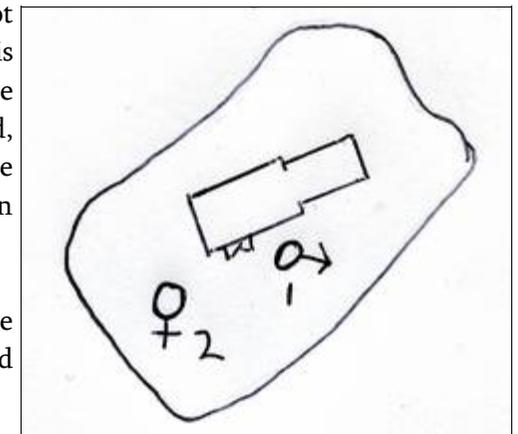


1901: *Transactions of the Shropshire Archaeological and Natural History Society* noted 'two magnificent yews in the churchyard'. *The King's England* (1939) was less flattering, describing 'two poor old yews, both of which have been growing by the porch for centuries'. One hundred and forty years earlier, in 1790, Revd Williams included the male yew in his watercolour of Billingsley church (number 1). This is held by Shropshire Archives and reproduced here with their kind permission.



When Morton wrote *The Trees of Shropshire* 1986 he noted 'debris in the hollow trunk' of tree 1, a situation which had not changed when I visited in 1998. Since a small internal stem grows in the hollow, its development could be hampered by this unnecessary debris. A large dead section at will eventually decay - a process that might take a century or more - leaving the classic shape of a horse shoe hollow tree. This decaying section (A) was probably once completely surrounded by living wood, which would have made the tree considerably larger in girth than it is today. About 11' of its present 16' 6" at 1' circumference is alive. At a height of 5' girth was closer to 22'. Ivy had been removed from the tree, but has left cuts up to a foot long and in places one and a half inches deep in its trunk.

The female tree (2) is smaller in stature, measuring 13' 9" at 1', swelling to about 20' at 3'. This is an excellent example of the 'vase' shape, an indicator of a tree that is probably older than its small girth at 1' suggests. This tree is beginning to hollow and bark had been stripped from the ground to waist height.



These yews had been recognised in the church guide: 'The two yews in the churchyard are several hundred years old and are amongst the oldest trees in the County'.

The Billingsley Yews in 2009



