

*Shropshire* by AJC Hare (1898) describes 'a good churchyard cross and an old yew-tree'.

*The King's England* (1939) gives the tree the recognition it deserves, describing 'a magnificent yew with a hollow trunk 30 feet round, in which 4 men could sit round a table'.

In the 1980s the Conservation Foundation sought information about Britain's oldest yews and received a letter from Claverley giving measurements of 30' 6" at 3' and 31' at 4'. Such measurements have perhaps influenced some of the estimates of age given to this tree, which reach 2500 years in *The Sacred Yew* (1994). Morton is more circumspect in *Trees of Shropshire* (1986) stating that 'the now popular estimate for the age of this tree is about 1500 years old'. We know this to be a very old site and archaeological discoveries are well documented in WH Dawkes *History of Claverley*.

1999: The yew, for which I recorded a girth of 24' 3" at the ground, grows at the NE corner of the church, with part of its trunk only about 8' from the building. I noted that the floor level inside this hollow tree was 2' above the ground level outside. Its outer shell is made up almost entirely of dead sapwood (middle photo), with life confined to a single youthful trunk supporting 2 growth areas, with many branches and healthy foliage. Around the tree, sections of dead wood rose to a height of up to 20'. Decay of this sapwood may take hundreds of years, and will eventually leave a small girthed tree. In 2009 it was reported that vandals had set fire to the inside of the tree.

