

**“The deliberate felling of any of these ancient monuments ...is an inexcusable piece of arrogance.”** Owen Johnson, author of *The Sussex Tree Book* and editor of *Champion Trees of Britain and Ireland*.

It is important that we document and analyse the loss of our oldest yew trees so that:

- 1 We are aware of the rate of their decline.
- 2 We know the reasons why so many are being lost.
- 3 We can take measures to prevent further unnecessary losses.
- 4 Sites - including stumps - can be preserved for future archaeological and botanical exploration.

200 lost yew sites currently feature in the data base, and this number will continue to rise as new information becomes available.

We would be pleased to hear from visitors to this web site who could provide further information about lost yews, whether at sites already named or at locations not yet documented.

**The following list contains excuses given following the destruction of ancient yews in the past. They are not acceptable.**

- **We were concerned about meeting Health and Safety regulations.**
- **Limbs might fall.**
- **The topmost branch might fall off.**
- **Drastic pruning prevents accidents.**
- **It was hollow therefore it might have been dangerous.**
- **People might trip over its roots.**
- **Children might climb it and be injured.**
- **We always store drying grass clippings beneath the yew.**
- **The bonfire beneath its branches got out of control.**
- **It had become very overgrown.**
- **Not enough light was getting into the church.**
- **Gravestones were obscured.**
- **It was past its prime.**
- **It was very old. We planted a young tree in its place.**
- **We needed to extend the church.**
- **Its berries are poisonous.**
- **Animals might eat the foliage.**

**A few sites in England and Wales have incurred losses on a large scale.**

At Sullington (Sussex) there were once ‘half a dozen yews’ of which only one remains. **R.L.Hayward** *Yesterday in Sullington*

At Strata Florida there remain only two of the “ thirty-nine vast Ewgh trees in the churchyard belonging to Strathfleur Abbey” reported in the reign of Henry VIII.

**Robert Bevan-Jones** *The Ancient Yew*

At Blaina (which used to be known as Aberstruth, in Monmouthshire) Archdeacon William Coxe in 1799 noted no fewer than 11, all apparently old, the largest 24' in girth. All have been removed.

**J.Daryll Evans** *The Yew Trees of Gwent*

Of 12 substantial yews recorded at Llanhilleth, Monmouthshire in 1802, a single fragment of one tree is all that remains along with several large stumps.

At Fountains Abbey (Yorks) there were in 1758 “seven yew trees, growing on the declivity of the hill on the south side of the Abbey..... They are of incredible size.....”

**John Lowe** *The Yew-Trees of Britain and Ireland* (1897). Of the two which remain today, one has fallen and lies close to a farm building. Both are in excellent health.

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