

The earliest reference to Durley is in the year 901. Available evidence suggests the church was built between 1270 and 1284.

'A large yew' at this site was first reported in Cox's 1904 *Little Guides*. In the 1908 *History of the County of Hampshire* it was reported that 'in the churchyard on the south is a very large yew, evidently of great age, even if the conventional thousand years claimed for it be more than its due'. While a planting when the church was built would seem the most likely explanation for this great old tree, 1000 years cannot be discounted, though there is insufficient evidence to support the 1400 age estimated in Meredith's *Gazetteer* in *The Sacred Yew*.

In 1939 Mee's *King's England* added that 'what most of its people believe to be its oldest possession is still alive and flourishing in its churchyard - Old Yew, a giant said (but wrongly we believe) to be mentioned in Domesday Book, yet in any case a giant indeed'. Mee is correct, since no individual yew is mentioned in the Domesday Book.

According to local legend, Oliver Cromwell's sister Bridget lived in the village, and the yew was the tethering place for his horse when he paid her visits.

1998: An ancient churchyard yew standing alone with no other trees around it is a rare sight. The male yew grows above a precarious drop to the road below. It is of striking appearance, tall and with fluting that can be followed high into its large branches. A thick limb emerges at right angles at about 10'. Others were sawn off after damage caused by the hurricane in 1987, when the tree took a severe battering. Wire netting covered the holes left following the removal of branches. It was evident that fires have been lit in the tree's hollow, in which can be seen much internal growth.



Girth records:

1998: 23' 7" at 1'; 24' 9" at 5' (avoiding bulges) Tim Hills
 2002: 24' 9" (7.54m at 1.1m) Russell Cleaver
 2010: 24' 2" at 1' 6", just above a protrusion at the root crown. A nail has been hammered into the tree at this height. Peter Norton

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