

## EASTLING

St Mary

Diocese of Canterbury

TQ96525654

This 1807 b/w photograph of a water colour by Petrie shows the tree more than 200 years ago. In 1838 *The Farmers Magazine, volume 8* recorded that it measured '9 yards in circuit, at the height of four feet from the base'.

In 1936 Mee's *King's England* noted that 'all round the church is a ring of yews. If Eastling had nothing else to see we should come to look at the kingly yew near the porch, which must have been a veteran when Chaucer rode to Canterbury. It is said to be as old as the throne of England, and it looks as flourishing'. Even Pevsner, who rarely allowed himself to stray from the subject of church architecture, recognised this 'colossally aged yew tree by the W porch'.

In 1982 Meredith recorded a girth of 30' 4" at 4'.

Mee's 'kingly yew' grows only metres from the church porch. Inside this male tree's hollow are seen large internal stems fusing with the fluted main branch. Its bole of about 8'9" in height bulges outwards from the base. In 1999 I recorded a girth of 28' 6" at its narrowest point close to the ground, 30' 9" at 3' and 31' 6" at 5'. The yew's dimensions have altered little in 200 years.

A dozen younger yews around the perimeter should ensure that this churchyard will one day be able to boast more than one ancient yew.

