



The most significant YEWs in the DIOCESE of GUILDFORD

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This document provides some of the information gathered from many sources during the last 15 years and held on behalf of the Ancient Yew Group.

The yews featured here are the most significant to be found in churchyards in the Diocese of Guildford and each one should be fully protected.

Ancient yews are at least 800 years with no upper limit. The Yews for the Millennium project took cuttings from yews considered to be 2000 years old, and there is a growing acceptance that our oldest specimens have reached this age, with some thought to be older still.

Veteran yews are at least 500 and up to 1200 years old.

Notable yews are likely to be at least 300 and up to 700 years old, though this category may also include younger yews, for example those with a known planting date.

Site name	Church name	Tree Classification
Albury p2	St Peter and St Paul	1 veteran
Alfold p2	St Nicholas	1 veteran
Ashtead p3	St Giles and St George	1 veteran
Capel, Surrey p4	St John the Baptist	1 veteran
Dunsfold p4	St Mary and All Saints	1 ancient
Hambledon, Surrey p5	St Peter	1 ancient, 1 veteran
Little Bookham p5	All Saints	1 ancient
Peper Harow p6	St Nicholas	1 ancient
Walton-on-the-Hill p6	St Peter the Apostle	1 notable

ALBURY St Peter and St Paul TQ0633047852

1897: Lowe recorded this yew with a girth of 22' at 3'.¹

2001: The female yew grows SW of the present church. The bole has some thick fluting, much twiggy growth, and new wood flowing over the wounds of removed branches. A remnant of the old dead central stem is visible, and looking upwards into the tree new wood encircles many truncated branches. Girth: 16' 9" at about 1' and 21' 5" at 3'.

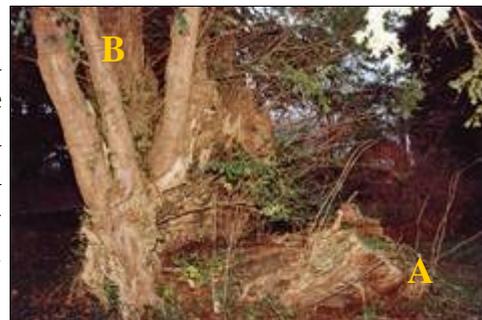


ALFOLD St Nicholas TQ0371033980

There are contradictory sources of information about yews at Alfold. In 1911 there were 'one or two yews of some antiquity.....the largest measures about 23' at 4' from the ground'.²

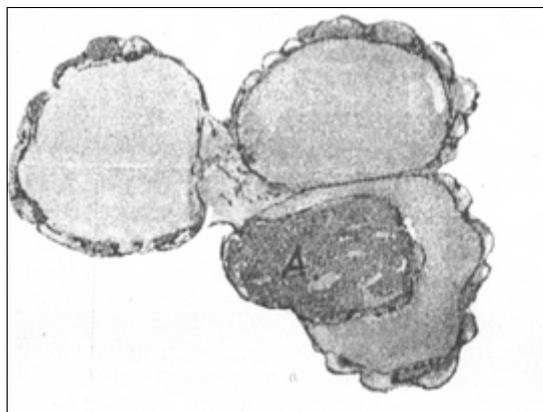
In 1936 Mee noted 'a great yew now breaking up with age. It is 25' round and has probably been growing for 600 years'.³ In 1992 Baxter⁴ recorded a yew 24' 8" x 33' high, while Meredith's *Gazetteer* of 1994 records a 22' male yew south of the church.⁵

1998: Only one significant yew was found here, growing at the northern extremity of the churchyard. It best fits Mee's description of a tree breaking up with age, having gone through the process of hollowing and later splitting into two fragments, one of which has leaned over and been cut off (A). The other section of the bole was similarly cut, but has survived and several new branches (B) grow from the top of the cut bole. Girth around both fragments was 19'6" at the ground.

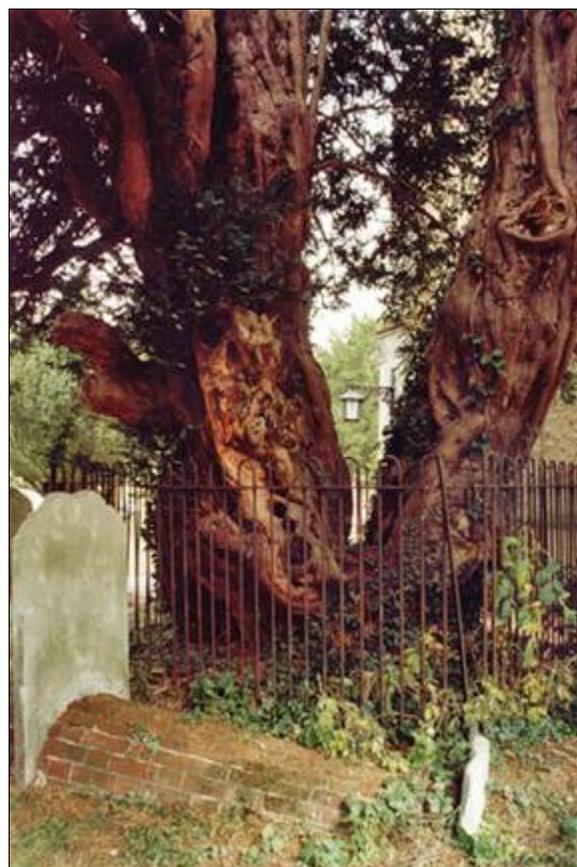


1880: Straker recorded a girth of 24' at 5'.⁶ While this was no doubt an accurate record, it did not mention the twin trunked nature of the tree.

1897: Lowe produced a more reasonable estimate of 18' for a yew 'enclosed by an iron fence'.¹ He considered this a good example of a mode of growth which can mislead us into thinking that there was once a central trunk which has disappeared. In this instance he noted that the original trunk is the dead one (A) partially enclosed by a new trunk and that the others have grown out from the base. Since there is no actual centre he regarded this as a compound tree



1999: What we see today is twin trunked, each one leaning and chained to prevent further pulling apart. One is tall and fluted, dividing at the height of the chains. The other is more complex, with much branching. Proximity to the church has necessitated extensive trimming, resulting in a tall, narrow tree probably in excess of 40'. While it appears green and vigorous, foliage was not dense and many of the smaller branches were visible.



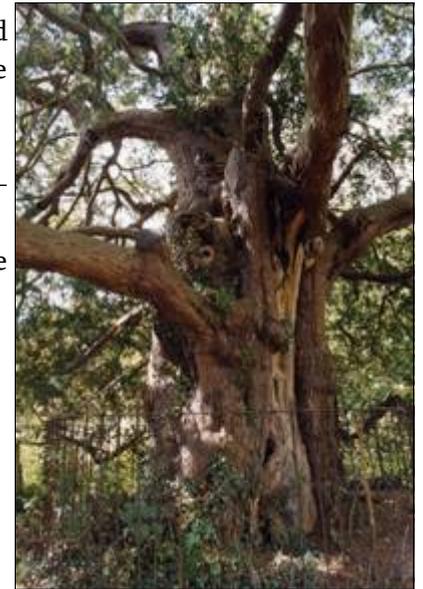
CAPEL St John the Baptist TQ1754640737

The yew was recorded by Straker⁶ in 1880 with a girth of 14' 6" at 5' and is noted in the Surrey Victorian History series of 1911 as a 'fine old yew'. It is not to be confused with Capel in Kent, also home to an exceptional old yew.

1999: The hollow female grows east of the church and close to the churchyard entrance. Metal railings around it are broken and no longer serve a useful purpose. Its bole supports many large branches, including two high in the tree which are extraordinarily curved. Foliage was green and plentiful.

Girth:

At the ground	19' 9"	Including root bulge
1'	18' 3"	
3'	16' 11"	
5'	17' 1"	Just beneath limb

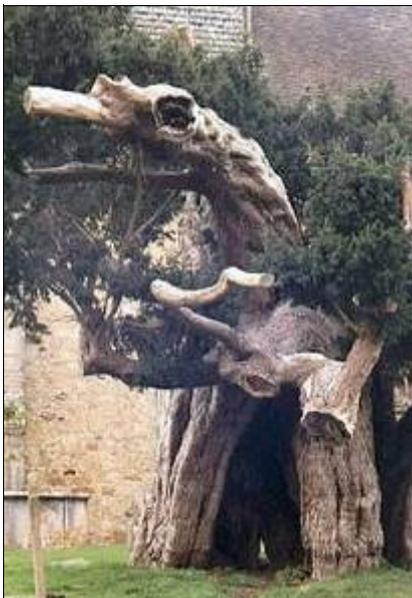


DUNSFOLD St Mary and All Saints SU9983536345

The large and spacious churchyard is entered through a yew tunnel.

1865: The 'very large yew-tree' was first noted in a *Handbook for Travellers*.⁷

1955: More detailed notes were sent by G.O. Allen and A. Jewell to Swanton⁸: 'Trunk completely hollow, and split into 2 or very nearly 3 parts, very irregular in shape..... All the main branches are horizontal, some 10 or 12 props being used to keep them up, otherwise they would be all over the gravestones. One branch stretches right up to and partly over the old church porch. Limbs have been cut off and sealed with bitumen.'



sealed with bitumen.

The bole is clear of spray up to 4', where the big branches begin'.

1998: A hollow male tree, south of the church, in poor condition, though thick green foliage from 6 points suggested it had every chance of renewal.

There is evidence of infilling with concrete; perhaps the weight of this contributed to the current state of the tree. Wire had also been allowed to dig into the trunk.

The most recently planted yew in Dunsfold churchyard has a plaque bearing the following inscription: 'A yew tree has stood near the door of Dunsfold church for 700 years. This tablet marks a yew planted to commemorate the silver jubilee of the accession of Queen Elizabeth 2nd'.

Girth records:

1903	23' 9"	
1955	24' 6"	at 3' 8"
1998	24' 9"	at the base and 25' 3" at 3'.

HAMBLEDON St Peter SU9702838997

Two exceptional yews grow here. The larger tree was described in 1895 by Rev. R. Phillips: ‘There is a great cavity in the centre and an opening of irregular oval shape about 5' from the ground. The external shell is hard and shows vigorous growth.....A curious circumstance occurred in the winter of 1886 in connection with this remarkable tree. The weight of snow broke down several large boughs. One was 38' long and very heavy, and although the gravestones were packed very closely round, not a vestige of damage was done in the fall’.¹

1998: This tall, male tree contains a large hollow space filled with light from at least 11 holes. Branches have been allowed to dip to the ground and among the gravestones. One substantial limb (A) is pulling away from the tree and could mark a point for future separation. Some of the girths recorded for this tree are as follows:

- 1903: 30' 6" at 4' ⁹
- 1912: 29' at the base and 30' at 4' - Walter Johnson
- 1959: 31' - Alan Mitchell
- 1998: 31' 4" at the ground -Tim Hills



The smaller yew was described as ‘a perfect specimen of the columnar yew’ by Hal Hartzell Jnr.¹⁰

It is also the perfect example of a fluted stem– I was able to count more than 47 of these ‘flutings’.

- Girth has been recorded as follows:
- 1897: 18' ground 17' 9" at 3' ¹
 - 1911: History of Surrey 17' at 5' ²
 - 1998: 19' 10" ground: 20' 2" at 3': 21' 3" at 5' Tim Hills

LITTLE BOOKHAM All Saints TQ1228954015

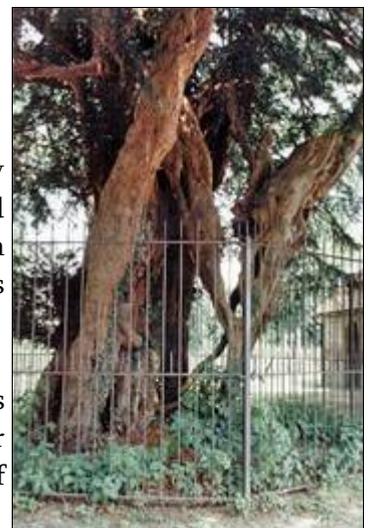
1865: A ‘very fine yew’ was noted in a *Handbook for Travellers*.⁷

1903: It is ‘one of the fine old yew trees for which Surrey is famous’.⁹

1936: Authorities at Kew said the yew was 900 years old.³

1958: As well as the iron fence around the tree there was also an iron seat. L. Giltrow crept through a break in the railings and measured the tree as 19' 6" at 3'. He added that ‘girth may have been nearer 23' or 24' at the base before a part of the trunk on the west side was broken away many years ago’. He added that it was not ‘in vigorous growth’.⁸

1998: The male yew appeared to be flourishing inside its high octagonal fence. It is very split yet supports considerable growth on its many branches. Outer and inner sections fuse to form its substantial main branch. High in the branches were signs of metal clamps.



PEPER HAROW

St Nicholas

SU9346044060

The 'fine old yew tree' was first noted in 1903. ⁹

In 1936 Mee described an 'immense double yew perhaps 600 years old'.³

1958: Allen and Jewell gave a more detailed description: "The short squat trunk is split and hollow. There are 7 or 8 stout vertical limbs at about 8' to 10'; they appear to grow out of the rim of the original trunk. Several horizontal branches have been cut off, the branches are growing vertically from some of the cut surfaces, giving the tree a richly branched appearance".⁸



1998: The male yew is split into two distinct sections and it was possible to walk between them. The larger (A) is many branched, two rising vertically while others of lesser size spray out at all angles. The smaller section (B) contains much lateral growth. An overall impression was of a tree lacking in vigour; with many smaller branches containing no foliage. The most vibrant colour was on twiggy growth near the base of the tree. I was informed that the tree had suffered severe damage in the hurricane of 1987 and was still recovering.

Girth: 1958 26'6" at 2'6" Swanton⁸

1998 23' close to the ground

WALTON – on – the – HILL

St Peter the Apostle

TQ2238555085



Straker recorded the yew in 1880 with a girth of 7' at a height of 2" growing WSW of the church. ⁶

2004: In spite of its small girth of 11' 6" at 1', this has the appearance of a very old tree. From about 8' upwards it splits into 2 hollowed out branches. Rusty chains and metal wire were attempting to prevent further separation. The whole structure leaned away from the church and was propped up. It grows SW of the church.

Some Lost Yews

BANSTEAD All Saints

Straker (1880) recorded a yew with a girth of 15' 3" at 5' growing south of the church. This no longer grows here.

CHIDDINGFOLD St Mary

A fine looking healthy yew was threatened with felling to enable the church to be extended. It is not known whether this has happened.

COBHAM St Andrew

A 'grand yew' grew SW of the church. It was recorded by Swanton in 1955⁸ with a girth of 21' at 3' and was apparently blown down in the storm of 1987. There is a drawing of the tree c1900 in Walter Jerrold's Surrey, one of the *Dent's County Guides* series.

CRANLEIGH St Nicholas

In 1911⁹ two yews were noted, 'one near the chancel, of great antiquity'. The tree of great antiquity has not survived. The one that remains is recorded as number 6736 by the Ancient Tree Hunt, with a girth of 12' 1" at 3'.

SHALFORD St Mary

The History of the County of Surrey (1911) recorded the following: 'As a relic from the past, the stocks and whipping-post, shaded by the yew tree under the churchyard wall, are of interest'. In 1990 Muriel Hawtin wrote 'there was until recently, a fine old yew tree here in Shalford just outside the churchyard, and beside the old stocks, which are still there. It was blown down in a storm a few years ago.'

WEST HORSLEY St Mary

A yew was planted here in the late 17th century, some distance from the church. However when the north aisle was doubled in width in 1850, the NW buttress was built right up against the yew. Around the year 2000 the tree was considered to be causing damage to the church's foundations. It was felled and found to be 313 years old. For a full account see www.tree-ring.co.uk

WINDLESHAM St John

Hone's *Every Day Book* recorded a 12' yew blown down in December 1894. At that stage it had apparently been 'many years dead'. (Lowe)¹

REFERENCES:

- 1 *The Yew Trees of Great Britain and Ireland* John Lowe 1897
- 2 *Victorian History of Surrey* 1911
- 3 *The King's England* Arthur Mee
- 4 *The Eternal Yew* Trevor Baxter 1992
- 5 *The Sacred Yew* Chetan and Brueton 1994
- 6 Straker - 1880 survey of Surrey Yews from a paper read to the Croydon Society on 15/12/1880
- 7 *A handbook for travellers in Surrey, Hampshire, and the Isle of Wight* Richard John King, John Murray
- 8 *The Yew Trees of England* Swanton, E.W. 1958 Farnham
- 9 *Cox's Little Guides*
- 10 *The Yew Tree: A Thousand Whispers* Hal Hartzell Jnr 1991