

The overlap of ages in the groups Ancient, Veteran and Notable

300-400
400-500
500-600
600-700
700-800
800-900
900-1000
1000-1100
1100-1200
1200-1300
1300-1400
1400-1500
1500-1600
1600-1700
1700-1800
1800-1900
1900-2000
2000 +



Notable yews: 300 to 700 years old



Veteran yews: 500 to 1200 years old



Ancient yews - at least 800 years old
no upper limit

Why the overlap?

- 1 It would have been convenient to make Notable yews 300 – 500, Veteran 500 – 800, and ancient 800+. We recognise however that a large number of Notable yews may well be over 500 years old, and similarly that a large number of Veterans will be over 800 years. Since we are not yet in a position to decide with certainty which they are, the overlap allows the possibility of notable yews to be up to 700 years and veterans to be up to 1200 years.
- 2 As further research clarifies the likely age of an individual yew we anticipate revising upwards the category of many trees - from Notable to Veteran or from Veteran to Ancient. Our cautious initial approach means that we should not need to revise any trees downwards.
- 3 We recognise that many churches proudly display certificates of age for their yew. Without the age overlap large numbers of these certificates would be seen to give ages that do not conform with our classification. The certificates were given out by the Conservation Foundation in the 1980s at a time when our oldest churchyard yews were under great threat. The ages given were estimates only, based on the work of Allen Meredith, whose Gazetteer of Ancient Yews appears in *The Sacred Yew*. At the time the certificates were given out in good faith. It does however need to be accepted that yew research has moved forward since that time and some trees are likely to be younger, and older, than the age given on their certificate.
- 4 The debate about yew ages began centuries ago, and continues to the present day, with some arguing for vast ages of 3000 years and more for our oldest yews. It has been suggested that a 4th category should have been included for those trees over 2000 years. Deciding which trees might be placed in such a category would prove highly contentious. The older a tree becomes, the harder it is to estimate its age, but we feel that by giving no ceiling to the category Ancient, we at least leave open the possibility that some of our oldest yews might have been growing in the Bronze Age.