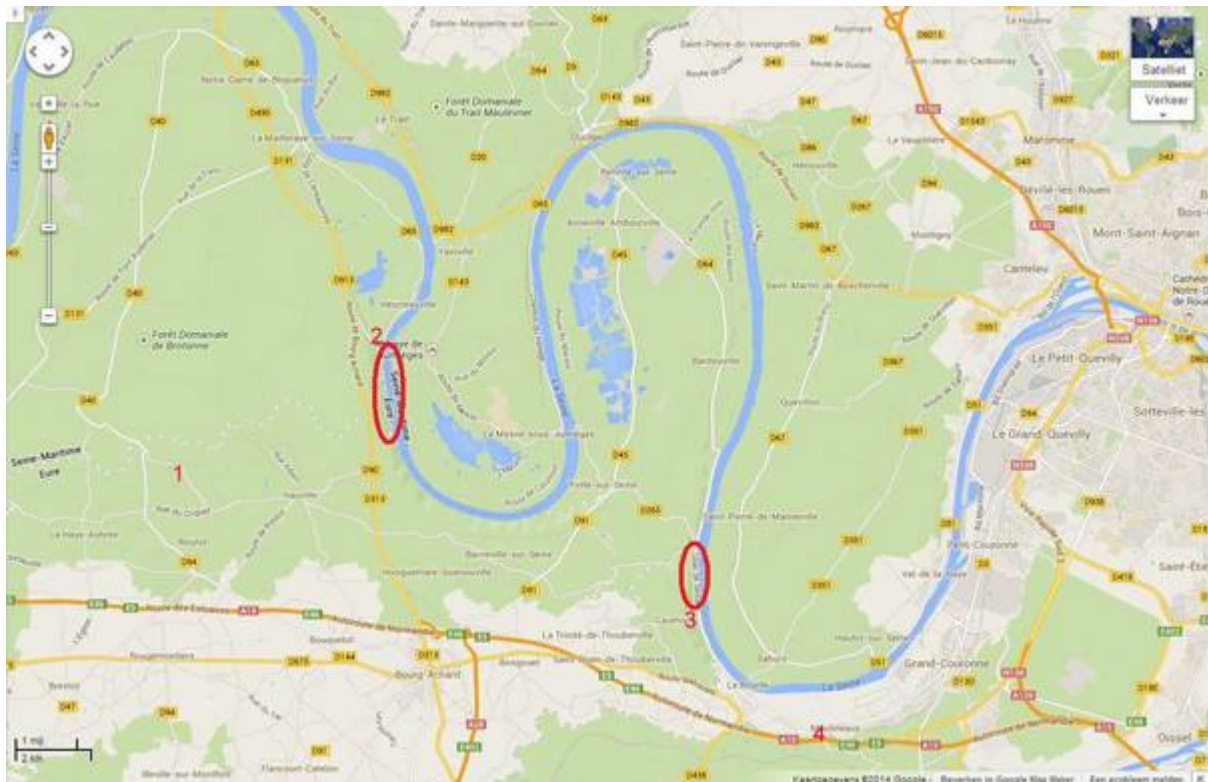


Yew stands on the cliffs of the Seine river, France.

Wim Peeters

The Seine is more or less the northern border for the occurrence of churchyard yews in Normandy. Fewer than 10 trees are found north of the Seine, from an estimated number of about 600 locations in Normandy and Brittany. The banks of the Seine, however, contains locations where natural yew stands can be found.

Bordered in the east by Rouen and in the west by Le Havre, the curling river is protected in the 'Parc Regional Natural de Boucles de Seine Normande', the regional nature park of the bends of the Normandic Seine. In this area large forests can be found, such as the Forêt domaniale de Brotonne, Le Forêt domaniale du Trait-Maulévrier or the Bois de Mauray.



Google Earth map of the location

At the edges of the forêt domaniale du Brotonne, at the village of La Haye-du-Routot (1) two very famous yew trees can be found, one containing the chapel of St Anne, the other with a small Lourdes grotto. However in spite of the presence of these two ancient yew trees, hardly any yew seedlings can be found in the forest. At the eastern part of the forest masses of holly form an understory under the beech and oak trees, but there are no yews. It is only in the vicinity of La Haye du Routot that we could find a few yew saplings.

When descending to the Seine river to the ferry to Jumièges, at the chalk cliffs facing the river in Hurteville (2), a large amount of yew trees can be found. These trees grow on the steep slopes, almost on bare limestone.

Unfortunately I did not have the opportunity to climb on the cliffs and make a more detailed survey. The images can give a good impression of the location and the trees.





A little more to the east, where the Seine is running in nearly the same direction, another yew stand can be found. This location is part of the Bois de Mauray. When driving from Caumont to Bas-Caumont (Lower Caumont) some yew trees can be seen by the side of the road just before arriving at

the banks of the seine. But the majority of the trees grow, just like in Heurteauville, on the chalk cliffs(3).



The oldest trees at this location are estimated to have an age of 400 to 500 years old. Yews on chalk cliffs can be much older than they appear to be. At this location is found the Chapelle de la Ronce, famous for the oak tree built in the masonry at the foot of the chapel. This tree also appears on the cover of the book 'Arbres Remarquables du Haute-Normandie' (Remarkable Trees of Upper Normandy) by Annick Vallée. When climbing the hill to the chapel, some fine yew trees can be seen. One has fallen and died, the others stand firm on the rock.







The above sequence of five photographs are courtesy of Bart Backaert.

When driving to the south in the direction of Elbeuf, the Castel of Robert le Diable (Robert the Devil) can be found in Moulineaux (4) where the road crosses the highway. This fortification is built on top of a hill overlooking the Seine Valley. The chalk cliffs of Bas-Caumont are visible in the distance. On the ruins of this castle, a few yew trees can be found close to the entrance of the fortification. It is very unlikely that these trees are more as 100 years old. One bigger tree grows on the slope just outside the fence.





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