

**The Service-Yew; on Merrow Downs**  
**From LYRICS of the Heart and Mind**  
**by Martin F. Tupper 1855**

I.

WHEN the Druid, long of old,  
Solemn stalk'd in white and gold  
Down among those ancient yews  
Ranged in serpent avenues,  
Then wert thou a sapling tree,  
Then that Druid planted thee,  
Thousand-winter'd son of earth  
Thirty feet around in girth!

II.

Thence, amid thine old compeers  
Thou hast stood these thousand years  
Changeless, save for sturdier growth,  
Strong in adamantine sloth,  
Watching in the lapse of time  
Many an outlaw's course of crime,  
Gipsy's theft, and poacher's snare,  
The felon's haunt, the brigand's lair,  
With thicket-hidden deeds of strife,  
The mangled throat, the bloody knife;  
Or where underneath thy shade  
Gay cavaliers their bivouac made;  
Or the pilgrims rested well  
Trudging to St. Catherine's cell;  
Or the trampers to some fair  
Joked and swore and haggled there;  
Or beneath thy sheltering form  
Travellers crouch'd to fence the storm.

III.

So, in vegetable strength  
Down to modern days at length  
Hast thou stood in sluggish power,  
Ancient yew-tree, to this hour;  
But how comes it that green sheaves,  
A mighty stack of brilliant leaves,  
High over all thy branches crown  
Their gloomier mass of olive-brown?  
How is it that, outspreading them,  
A service-tree of sturdy stem  
Born of thy solid trunk, on high  
Flings forth its trophy to the sky?

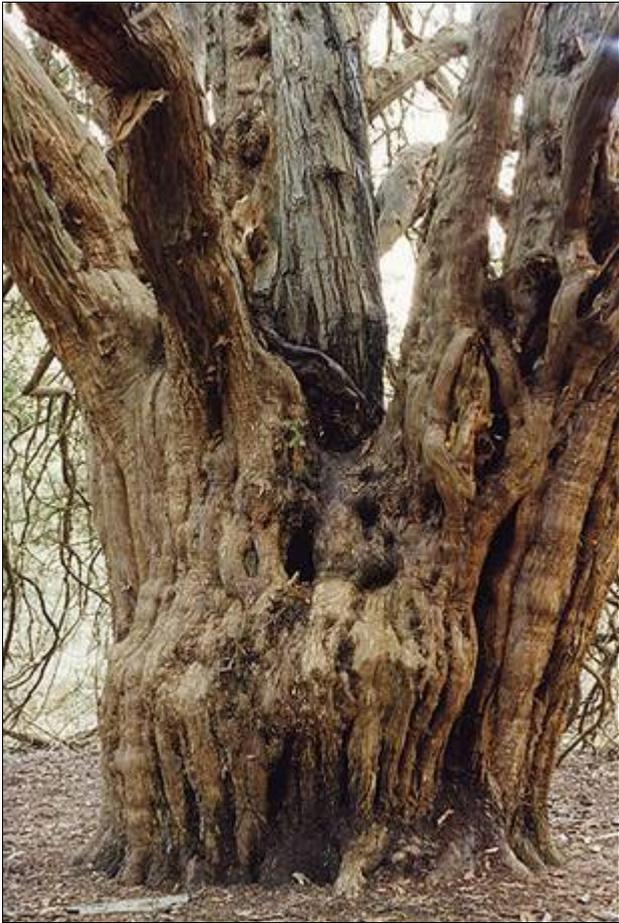
IV.

O marvel!—Poet, come once more  
And muse our other mystery o'er:  
Is this a heathen type, forsooth,  
As overgrown by gospel truth,—  
The healthy service, springing new  
Ungrafted, from the deadly yew?  
Is it a sign of happier years  
O'ertopping oldtime wrongs and fears,—  
Of liberty, and light, and love,  
All antique thraldoms throned above?  
Is it a proof that Mercy's might  
Shall whelm the reign of sin and night,  
And out of darkness, death, and woe,  
Breed happiness to all below?

V.

Ah, Poet!—well it is to view  
Such lessons in this service-yew;  
Yet, art thou stopt on fancy's wing  
By any peasant's questioning,—  
"As how this yew could breed and rear  
" A greenleaf'd service like this here?  
Come then again, botanic friend,  
And bring the matter to an end:  
For never human grafting did  
What only happ'd as Nature bid;  
Some fieldfare, thirty years ago  
Or thereabouts—it must be so—  
Feeding on sorbus-berries nigh,  
And perch'd upon this yew hard by,  
Into some crack a berry dropt,  
And, snugly posted, there it stopt;

Until the seed by some good hap  
Struck rootlets to its mother's lap,  
And drank her sap, and upward grew  
A foster nursling of the yew;  
And so, it overtops the rest,  
Till, like a cuckoo in the nest,  
This parasite, ungrateful wight,  
Its patron soon will kill outright.



A 'Service-Yew' on Merrow Downs in 2001  
Tim Hills



An 'Ilex-Yew' on Merrow Downs in 2006  
Christian Wolf

This Yew woodland has now become known as Newlands Corner