



## The most significant YEWs in the DIOCESE of SOUTHWARK

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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 Southwark 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	County	Age of yew
Addington	Greater London	1 veteran
Charlwood	Surrey	1 ancient
Crowhurst, Surrey	Surrey	1 ancient
Farleigh	Surrey	1 veteran
Horley	Surrey	1 ancient
Tandridge	Surrey	1 ancient
Warlingham	Surrey	2 veteran
Woldingham	Surrey	1 veteran

Notable yews are recorded at Barnes, Burstow and Limpsfield.

Lost yews: Caterham - St Lawrence: Chipstead - St Margaret : Horley - St Bartholemew : Sanderstead - All Saints: Tatsfield - St Mary

**ADDINGTON** St Mary the Blessed Virgin TQ37106398

Girth of the old yew seen here was recorded in 1880, 1895 and 1913.

1999: The healthy female tree, to the left as you enter the churchyard, is split into two. There was evidence of fire damage to parts of the tree. Considerable low growth covered the bole. Girth: 16' 10" at the ground.

To the right of the churchyard entrance grows a second yew. Ivy and elder both in and around the tree made it impossible to examine. The untidy area around the tree had become a rubbish dump.



**CHARLWOOD** St Nicholas TQ24054110



1850: A 'decayed yew tree growing on the south side'. *Topographical history of Surrey Vol 4* ::Brayley

1936: '....a hollow yew, 28' round'. *King's England Mee*

1999: The tree is a hollow shell, with many slithers of new wood on the inner surface of the tree. Wire netting has been used in the past to block the 4' wide entrance. The remaining 19' of its 23' 8" circumference is a thin shell. In spite of this the tree supports many thick branches and vigorous growth.

Gary Shield—2010

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# CROWHURST

St George

TQ39074752

One of England's best documented yews, with records and stories from as early as 1625.



1999: There are only two gaps in this vast bole, one containing the 4' high door. There is much dead wood, and if this decays before new wood envelops it the tree's appearance will be much altered. The structure leans slightly towards the church and supporting wires and chains have been in place for some time. One branch, still attached to the tree, has splintered and rests on the ground.



The tree has been measured on many occasions, below are some of these taken from Lowe, Cornish, Meredith, Swanton and other sources.

Dates visited	Girth measurements	By
1630	30'	Old parish record
1650	30' at 5'	John Aubrey
1664	30'	John Evelyn
1833-45	30' at 5'	Samuel Lewis
1850	30' 9" at 5'	Brayley's <i>History of Surrey</i>
1874	30' 9" at 5'	<i>Gardner's Chronicle</i>
1877	31' at 5'	Mr Jennings
1880	30' 6" at 5'	E.Straker
1890	31' 8" at 4'	Rev Curteis
	32' 6" at 5'	.. ..
1955	30' 3"	Allen Mitchell (Bean)
1955	33' 9" at ground	Swanton
	33' 2" at 3'	Swanton
1984	31' 6" at approx 5'	Allen Meredith
1994	31' 6" at 5'	Gwyneth Fookes

## FARLEIGH

St Mary

TQ37246008

1850 : 'In the church-yard are two yew trees; one of which is very large'. *Topographical hist. of Surrey*- Brayley

1865: 'Observe the grand old yew W. of the church'. *Handbook for Travellers* - King

1880: Two yews were noted by Straker, this one WSW of the church with a girth of 19' 6" at 5' and a smaller yew NNW with a girth of 8' 6" at 5' . He estimated the ages of these trees to be about 850 and 290 years.

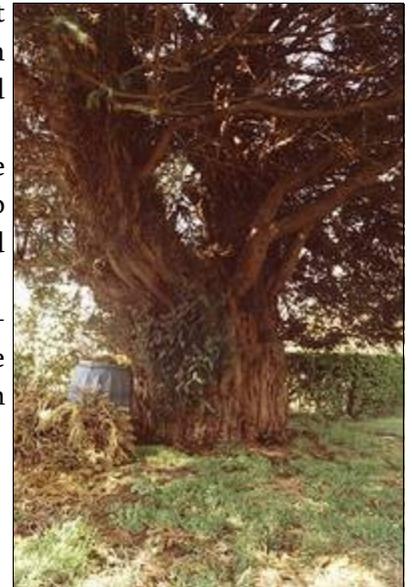
2000: The female yew presents two faces. The one shown here is open and visible, with a knobbly appearance. This occurs as the yew recovers from the removal of small branches. Its other face is obscured by twiggy growth



(A) which is seen on major branches throughout the tree. From its bole of about 6' are three main areas of growth. Girth was 17' 4" at the ground and 19' at 4'.

Action had been taken to remove ivy, but the tree was disappointingly being used as the place to store a dustbin, a pile of dried grass and assorted churchyard rubbish.

The smaller yew, growing NNW, has not survived, but a millennium yew planted in the same position (a cutting from the Newington Yew in Kent) was perhaps planted to replace it.



## HORLEY

St Bartholemew

TQ27634275

1880 Straker recorded 2 yews.

1936 '.....two grand yews.....keeping watch for hundreds of years'. *The King's England* - Mee

Some time between 1936 and 2001 it lost one of these. All that remains is this stump, with a girth of 21' 7" at 2'. It grew approximately 10 metres from the surviving tree.

2001: The living yew is now in two pieces, fragments of an ancient split tree. The fragment on the north side (A) is a solid looking trunk almost hidden behind ivy, leaning before straightening. Fragment (B) is more convoluted, consisting of a section of hollowed out shell, with internal stems joined to the trunk. Girth around both fragments at the ground was 24' 5" while (B), complete with internal stems, had a girth of about 17'.



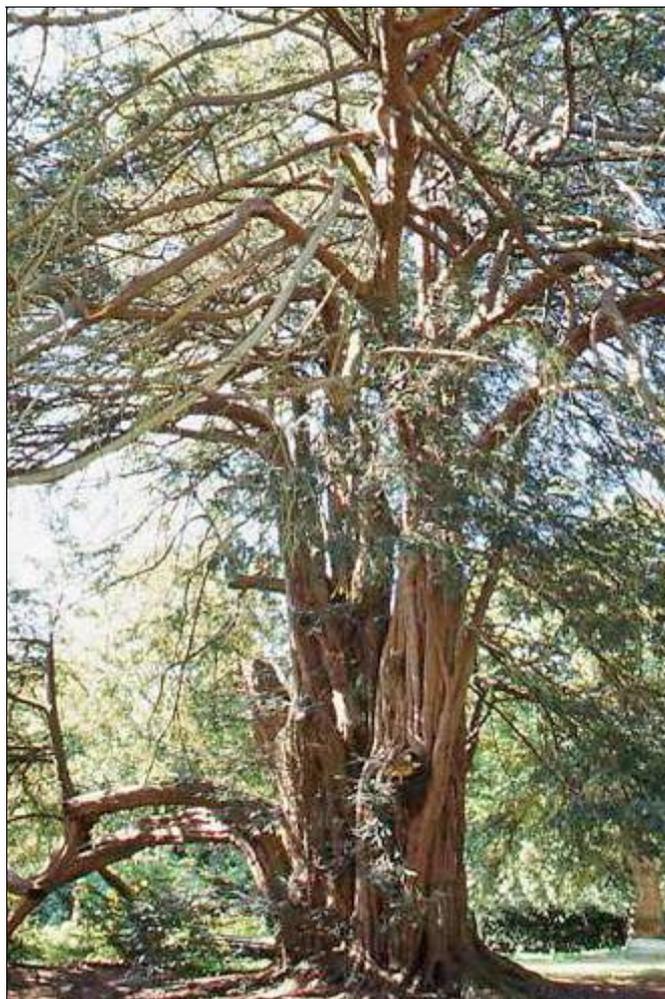
# TANDRIDGE

St Peter

TQ37445115

Described in 1850 as a 'large decayed yew-tree, split into four or five parts, and in a state of rapid decay'. By 1854 its decay was considered to be 'advanced', but 100 years later in 1958 it was - and still is 'a magnificent tree in very vigorous growth'.

If ever evidence was needed of a yew's power of recovery, this surely is it. The tree is now regarded as one of England's finest, boasting not only great girth but also considerable height carried on many straight fluted branches. In addition to its vast spreading canopy, younger yews growing nearby appear to have layered from the parent tree. Its cavernous hollow is unfortunately darkened by fire or smoke.

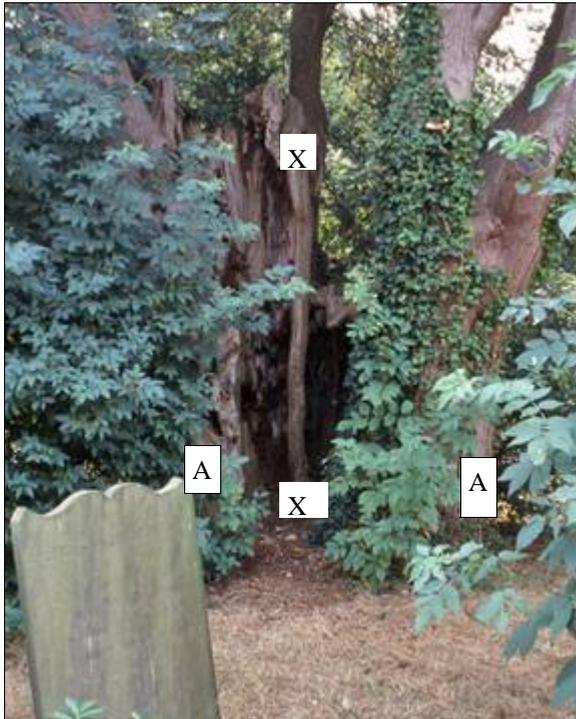


## WARLINGHAM

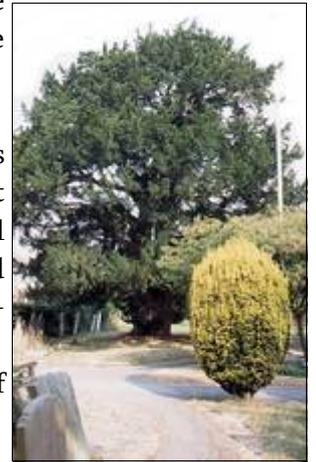
All Saints

TQ35595896

Two yews have been recorded here since 1850. The larger is a male yew growing SE of the church. It was described as 'decaying' in 1865, and a major portion of the tree has broken away, leaving a semi-circle of growth. However this thin shell has already thickened at the edges (A) and supports large branches. It is likely that the section between will eventually disappear, leaving two separated trees growing close to each other. At X is an internal stem that once grew downwards from a branch through the decaying centre of the tree until it reached the ground and became rooted.



A second yew, seen here on the right, is also male and grows close to the road west of the church. It has a solid bole and a tall straight main branch. Twiggy growth had been cut and larger low level branches removed. Girth of the larger tree is about 22' and of the smaller about 17'.



## WOLDINGHAM

St Agatha

TQ37145494

In 1850 the churchyard was described as 'distinguished, on its south side, by a large and beautiful old yew-tree'.



Between 1999 and 2008 one of the large dead stems at the entrance to the tree's hollow was removed. Each had been cut off at a height of about 9'/10'. There was much upright and lateral branching providing pleasant shade on a hot summer day. Girth was 16' 8" at the ground.



Some of Southwark's notable yews:

## BARNES

St Mary

2009

A well tended green oasis alongside a busy London street. The church is said to have been consecrated by Stephen Langton in the year of Magna Carta.

The yew grows on the south side. Though some consider it to have been planted at the time the church was consecrated (1215), its girth suggests that it is likely to be younger. At some time in the past the trunk was 'preserved with about 3 hundredweight of concrete'. This at least prevents fires being lit in its once hollow space, though the weight may be contributing to the tree's lean. This year the tree has produced vast quantities of pollen, and discarded pollen sacs covered the ground beneath the tree. Foliage was thin and there appeared to be little new leaf growth. Girth was 11' 2" at 3ft.



## BURSTOW

St. Bartholemew

TQ31234129

Two yews, both measured in 1880 by Straker.

Tree 1

SE of church.

1880: 13' 6" at 5'.

2001: 14' 10" at between the ground and 1' and 15' 11" at 3'. A comparative measurement at 5' would have been inappropriate since branches pull outwards and the tape would need to pass over the remnant of a former stem. The tree has 2 main growth areas, the base of one is hollow.

Tree 2

ESE of church

1880: 9' 9" at 5'

2001: 11' 11" at 5' over a small amount of adventitious bulging. This tree is in two separate pieces at the ground which join at about 6'. One section is hollowed out from the ground, the other begins to hollow at about 2'.

## CHELSHAM Surrey

St Leonard

Mee (*King's England*) wrote that the 3 fine yews in the churchyard were 'planted by the rector and the schoolmaster in 1746'.

## Some of Southwark's Lost Yews:

### **CATERHAM** St Lawrence

In 1850 an 'ancient yew-tree, much decayed, and overrun with ivy on the north side'.

In 1994 a 'stump with a girth of 10' 6" to the SSW'.

### **CHIPSTEAD** St Margaret

In 1811 'an old yew tree, measuring 20 feet in circumference 3 feet from the ground'.

When Fookes visited in 1994 the tree was no longer here. It apparently fell in the 1987 hurricane.

### **SANDERSTEAD** All Saints

Straker (1880) recorded 3 yews, of which two are gone. The largest, 16ft girth in 1880 was 'felled in 1962'.

### **TATSFIELD** St Mary

A yew of 'great size' recorded since 1865, but gone by 1994.

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