

1856 Edwin Lees: *Pictures of Nature around the Malvern Hills* wrote that 'several very old and remarkable yew trees stand in the churchyard; one in particular, of surpassing magnitude, a female tree, measured 27ft in circumference at 4ft above its base, and higher up, where the trunk bulges out, 31ft. It may be possibly 1,000 years old or more; and as it is only just beginning to get hollow, and bears its age well, if no hurricane assails its integrity it may last another 1,000, as a faithful watchman at the church doors, and in its perennial verdure a symbol of the life that shall never end'.

Some time between 1856 and 1880 this female yew 'of surpassing magnitude' was cut down. In *The Finding of St Augustine's Chair* by James Johnson, published in 1898, the writer 'missed one older and larger, but perfectly hollow' yew and asked if anybody knew what had become of it. The answer is possibly contained in the book, but the full text is not yet available on the internet.



In spite of this loss, Stanford Bishop is still able to boast this exceptional male yew - described in *The Finding of St Augustine's Chair* as 'sound to the core'. In 1913 *Kelly's Directory* recorded that 'on the N side of the church is a huge yew tree supposed to be over 1000 years

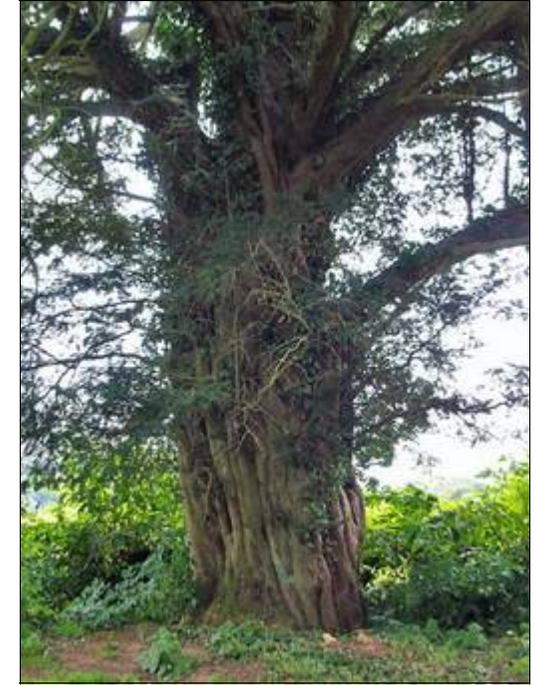
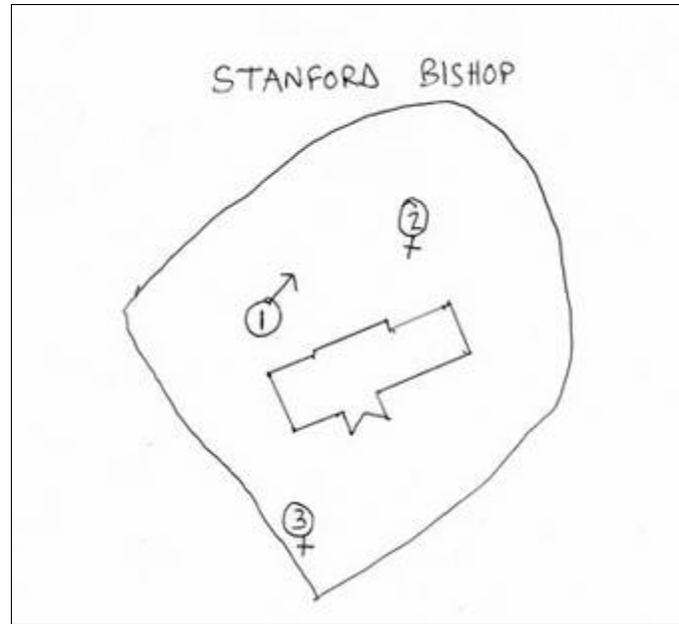


old, and which, at 6ft from the ground, is 24ft in circumference'. From its bole at a height of about 8' rises a large central hollowing branch and 3 further substantial branches. These form a regular canopy around the tree.

In 1938 Mee's *The King's England* described 'an ancient yew measuring 22ft round the trunk'.

In 1998 I recorded girths of 22' 8" at 1' and 28' 3" at 5' and in 2012 - 22' 9" at 1'.





Two notable yews and four young yews are also found in this churchyard. To the NE is a hollow female (tree 2, left) with a complete circle of growth around the space and an accumulation of 3' of humus in the hollow. A vigorous healthy tree with a girth of 13' 11" at 2'. Tree 3, right, grows SW and is of solid appearance with a girth of 13' 6" at 1'.

Correspondence in The Times - Friday August 13th 1943

The vicar of Stanford Bishop had apparently suggested that his yew is "reputed to be the oldest in England." This, according to the correspondent "is to arouse feelings of dissent bordering on indignation in the breasts of many who have been brought up to believe that their own particular yews can claim that honour. Clearly it is one of those arguments that can have no definite end, and this is a good thing. If it could conceivably be proved that St Augustine's Yew was the oldest, Stanford Bishop might enjoy a brief and scornful satisfaction in saying 'I told you so', but all the other claimants would be as angry as they were unconvinced. The sum of human happiness would be perceptibly diminished with no corresponding gain. Facts were once said by a distinguished and picturesque writer to be a sad hindrance, and the same is true of evidence, which is often valuable and sometimes essential, but nevertheless a miserable spoil-sport."