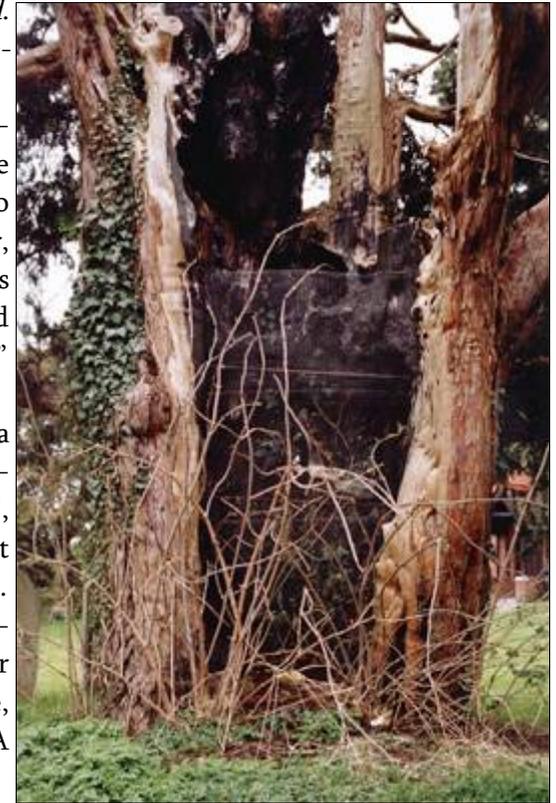




'Ancient Yews' were first noted at this site in the 1930s in *The King's England*. In 1991 the following description appeared in the Thorley Archives: *Our Ancient Yew Tree* [www.friends.stjames.btinternet.co.uk/Yew\\_Tree.htm](http://www.friends.stjames.btinternet.co.uk/Yew_Tree.htm) 1

"Ten years ago, in April 1991, the oldest feature of our church was nearly destroyed by fire. Prompt action by the fire brigade and sensitive pruning by the tree surgeon, saved our ancient yew tree. The cause of the fire was put down to inquisitive children igniting the dry tinder inside its hollow trunk. The Rector, Clive Slaughter, used his persuasive powers on the firemen to leave their hoses running to ensure that not only would the smouldering ashes be truly subdued but also make sure the roots had a good soaking to encourage prompt regrowth."

1999: The male yew grows SW of the church and is a hollowed out shell in a typical horse shoe shape. Though its interior had been badly burnt it did not appear to be affecting growth on the 5 main branches rising from its bole at 9/10', or of the many smaller lateral branches. Foliage was sparse but in sufficient quantity to aid the tree's successful recovery from damage. Girth was 20' 9" at 4'. When Ian Robert Brown visited in 2005 he observed 'a large opening to a hollow shell. Tree seems to be thriving with new sapwood evident on the outer trunk. New branches growing all about the tree. Despite being damaged by fire, from one side the tree appears unharmed with a very healthy appearance. A fence across the opening to the inner shell now protects the tree'.



Ian also noted that 'on the other side of the church yard there are new yew trees that look as if they may have grown from an old shell'. I had been aware of a clump of 5 younger yews but had not realised they were from a regenerating old stump. I found confirmation of this in *The Ancient Yew*, where Robert Bevan-Jones describes the following: 'Sometimes the entire original trunk is felled and the stump regenerates, and a circle of small yews can occur. Re-growth stumps, such as at Thorley in Herts...are deceptive and need an expert eye to determine the history of the tree'. A photo of these young trunk appears on p24 of *The Ancient Yew*.