

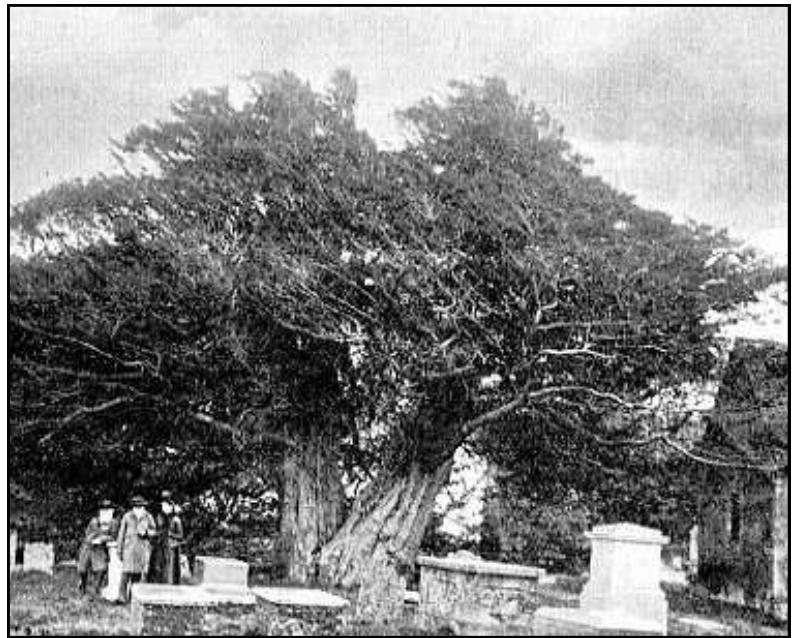
A 12th century downland church in an area with a rich history that includes the Wilmington Long Man. The tree has been noted since 1848, when *A Topographical Dictionary of England* recorded 'a fine yew tree, six yards in circumference at two feet from the ground'.

The 1850 *Sussex Archaeological Collections* pages 65/66 was more forthcoming: 'Here I would conclude, were it not that I must crave permission to add a brief notice one of the greatest antiquities of the place, -its noble Yew-tree, the ornament of this church and village. Its age can not be less than that of the ecclesiastical fabrics of which it is the appropriate companion. An old man of 85 once told me that he had known it for 75 years, and in his earliest recollection its appearance did not differ materially from that which it now presents. Here we have three-quarters of a century scarcely effecting a visible change, and a gauge wherewith to measure roughly its great age. Its gnarled and magnificent double stem is really a study for the painter. At 3ft. 3in. above the ground, where the stem divides, as is common with this kind of tree, its girth is 20 feet. One half of the trunk has become hollow. To the first large branch is 10½ feet, the length of the largest branch is 33 feet, and the ground which the tree covers—chiefly to the east side, for on the west it has been stunted and driven back by the violence of our prevailing winds—is about 250 square yards, or a circuit of 168 feet. In former ages it has been sadly and wantonly maimed. Whoever wanted a piece of yew wood, or wished to gratify a destructive caprice, seems to have applied the saw and the knife without mercy. It is now more carefully guarded; and I sincerely hope it may yet be spared to shelter from winter rains and summer suns many more generations of honest peasants, when assembled for attendance at our venerable house of prayer'.

In his 1897 *The Yew-Trees of Great Britain and Ireland*, John Lowe's list of yews contains the following observations: 22' girth at ground level. Length of bole 2'. Height 56' 9". Diameter of umbrage 69'. Remarks: At 2' divides into two limbs, S 13'10" in girth, N. 14' 9". The photo suggests that a height of 56' 9" should read 36' 9".



1850 *Sussex Archaeological Collections*



1897 Lowe—*Yew trees of Great Britain and Ireland*

1928 *Bell's pocket guide* described a 'magnificent old yew tree, split into gigantic leaning arms which are propped; either of them might vie in girth with many a boasted oak, being at their origin 15' round'.

1992 *The Eternal Yew* - Trevor Baxter described this as a 'striking example of a twin trunk Yew; the low angle of its massive trunks gives the appearance of each having drifted away from the other to make room for their own massive array of branches'.

1997 *The Sussex Tree Book* - Owen Johnson: 'two long clean hollow boles slant at opposite angles from a massive base; they are probably the healed halves of a single stem which split apart many centuries ago. The crown is very windswept but spreading'.

1999 I recorded each trunk of this exceptional tree having a girth of about 16'. Both are fluted and have hollow spaces. Props and chains have been introduced to prevent further pulling apart, though some of the chains have been in place long enough to become partially enclosed in new layers of wood. It still has a vast spreading canopy, and although branches dip towards the ground there was no sense of being in an enclosed space.



2015 Peter Norton's photographs of the yew are seen below and allow a remarkable yew to be seen from many angles.





© Tim Hills/Peter Norton - Ancient Yew Group - 2019