

St Michael's church, originally dedicated to All Saints, dates from about 1250.

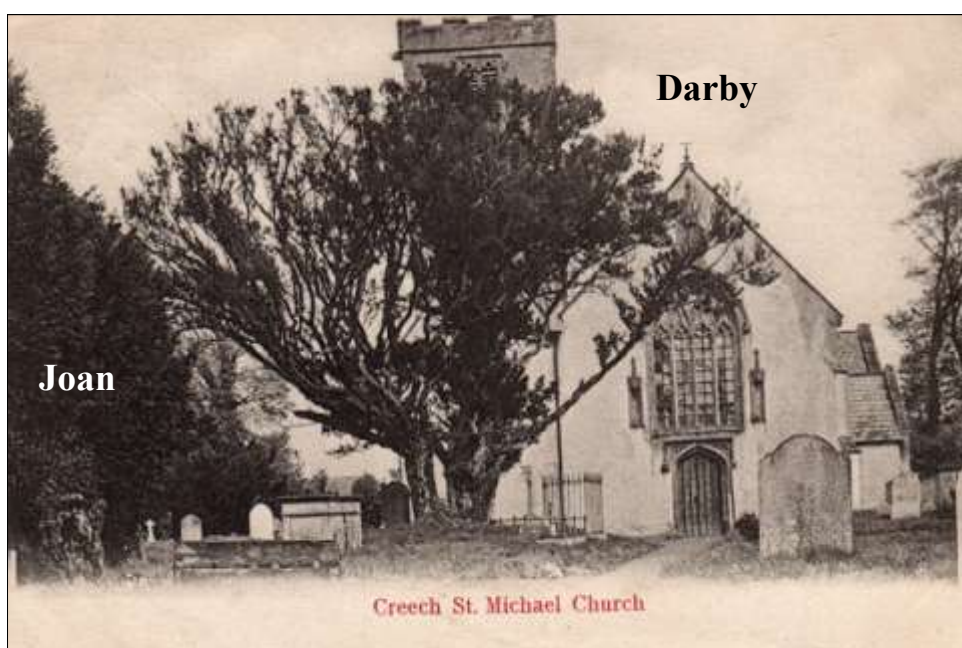
1791: In his *History and Antiquities of the County of Somerset* Collinson noted '2 very large old yew trees, both hollow, and measuring 15' in circumference.'

1811: Lewis's *Topographical Dictionary of England* provided the following description: 'In front of the western entrance are two venerable and remarkably flourishing yew trees.'

1857: The *Journal of the British Archaeological Association, Volume 13* noted only one yew here, but we know they were both still alive, since in 1897 Rev J Bownes recorded the following girths:
Tree A: 18' 3" at ground and 18' 10" at 3'
Tree B: 11' 11" at ground and 17' at 3'.

1940: Mee's *King's England* described how 'pathetic it was to find these oldest inhabitants apparently soon to be parted, for one of the yews was dying after 700 years'. He named them Darby and Joan, describing Darby as 'hollow and broken' while Joan 'carried her age like a great lady'.

The undated painting by Harry Frier (1849-1921) shows the yew before it became 'hollow and broken' while the later postcard shows a fragmented tree with thin foliage.



1999: The church guide tells us that the surviving tree - Joan - was 'much reduced in size in 1909', suggesting that most of the branches that rise from its hollow shell are less than 100 years old. It also considers the yew to be older than the church, denoting the likelihood of a pagan site preceding the building of a Christian church. Girth was 15' 5" at the ground.



2015: A pile of soil had been dumped close to the tree, and has been there long enough for elder to take root and grow. Ivy also covered most of the tree's trunk. It was nonetheless full of green healthy foliage and laden with ripe arils. It was not possible to remeasure through the ivy.



Closer to the church, on the same side of the path, was a young bushy male yew, which I presume is a millennium planting. It was the first time I had seen gall on a recently planted yew.