

1625/1649: Parish Church records show that the yew was 10 yards in girth at the time of Charles 1st.

1805: from *A compendium of Modern Husbandry* by James Malcolm

Hail ! venerable tree ! whose ample head
Five hundred summers o'er this turf has spread ;
This sacred turf! where turn'd to parent clay,
"The rude forefathers of the hamlet" lay ;
Thrice hail ! for to thy gen'rous trunk, we owe
The hero's lance, and the elastic bow.
Oft when Bellona blew her trump to arm,
And discord drew the peasant from his farm,
To thee tall tree! the village youths would fly,
And from thy sturdy arms the war supply ;
Trim thy tough bows they knew so well to use,
To deal high deeds for the historic muse.
If for the Barons bold, thy bows were bent,
Ere stubborn John had wisdom to relent ;
Thrice blest be thou, for we are bound to thee,
For Albion's greatest boast, her liberty !
If for the haughty peers thy arms were spread,
When civil fury dy'd the white rose red,
T' oblivion shall thy bard the tale consign,
The fault was theirs, altho' the deed was thine.
What tho' no more we ask thy pow'rful aid,
Since dreadful sulphur fits the warrior's trade ;
Still may'st thou hallow'd be, and flourish still
The pride, the glory of this peaceful hill ;
And may the clown that wounds thy boughs or bark.
Ne'er court thy shade, to hear the soaring lark ;
May dryads haunt him in the woodland way,
When sinks the moon before the break of day ;
And wond'rous tree ! that has ten ages stood,
May light'ning never blast thy hallowed wood ;
May those who guard thee without pain decay,
And thou, in turn, shed yew-tears on their clay.
Be't thine, O Walker !* to preserve this tree,
And he shall praise, who yields this verse - thee.

T. N. * Walker was the vicar of Crowhurst

1820s: Mrs Pamela Cook (1990) writes 'The tree was hollowed out in the 1820s when a door was put into the side of the trunk. A wooden bench seat was put inside the tree (believed to seat 12 persons) also a small wooden table. It is understood that this was done to provide shelter for those attending the annual Palm Sunday Fayre in the Churchyard. When the tree was hollowed out, a cannon ball was found embedded in the side of it, which was assumed to date from the time of the Civil War (about 1652). Mansion House, opposite the road from the church, is believed to have been a Royalist stronghold'.

JH Wilks in *Trees of the British Isles in History and Legend* tells it slightly differently, 'In 1820 some villagers apparently found a cannon ball in the earth around the base of the trunk.' According to Swanton (1958) 'the cannon ball subsequently became enclosed'.

1825: Stamford Mercury - Saturday 2nd April: 'The Lingfield and Crowhurst choir sung several select pieces from Handel in the cavity of a Yew tree in the churchyard of the latter place. The tree is 36 feet in circumference and is now in a growing state. The hollow was fitted up like a room and sufficiently large to contain the performers. On clearing out the interior of the tree some years since a 7lb cannon ball was discovered which no doubt had been fired into it; it was cut out from the solid part of the tree.

1838: A yew was mentioned by Evelyn as growing in the churchyard of Crowhurst, in Surrey, with a trunk 10 ft. in diameter. *Arboretum and Fruticetum Part 111*

1845: Samuel Lewis's *Topographical Dictionary of England*: 'In the churchyard is a yew tree 30 feet 9 inches in circumference at 5 feet from the ground. It is hollow, with seats and a table, and ten persons can sit within it.'

1850: Brayley's *History of Surrey* noted that 'the roof, as it may be termed, has fallen in'.



1897: John Lowe's *The Yew-Trees of Great Britain and Ireland* : It is not a little remarkable that there should exist in places of the same name two such noble trees as are found in the churchyard of the Crowhursts, the one in Surrey, the other in Sussex. This identity in name has, on several occasions, led to confusion. Of the two, the Surrey tree is the larger. In Brailey's *History of Surrey*, written so lately as 1850, it is stated that the yew-tree near the east end of the church 'measures 10 yards 9 inches in girth at the height of 5 feet from the ground. The interior is hollow, and has been fitted up with a table on the centre, and benches around. The roof however, as it may be termed, has fallen in.' Jennings, in 1877, gives it a girth of 31 feet. In April 1890, the Rev. Mr Curteis and I found that it measured at 4 feet from the ground, 31 feet 8 inches, and at 5 feet from the ground, 32 feet 6 inches, so that it has grown 8 inches in girth in 40 years. The trunk is hollow, the space in the interior measures 6 feet across, and there are seats all around. The shell is thin, but there is a considerable amount of living wood, and evidence of extensive cicatrization of large branches, which have been cut away, close to the trunk, probably after a large destruction of the top which took place in 1845. The rector, Mr. Curteis, informs me that an old parish record in the church states that its girth, in the time of Charles the First, was 10 yards, and this has been copied by Evelyn in his *Sylva*, 1664 ; Humboldt (*Aspects of Nature*), Aubrey, De Candolle (*Nat.Hist and Antiq. Of Surrey*), Manning (*Field Paths and Green Lanes p38*) and others.

Mr. Gill in a letter to the *Times* gives an account of this tree, and mentions that a cannon ball was found in its interior in 1820, and is supposed to have been there since the Civil War, and to have been gradually exposed by the growth of the tree. This may well have been, when it is seen how the new tissues have spread over the cut ends of the dead branches.

1910 Cox - *Rambles in Surrey*

'In the churchyard stands the remains of a veteran great yew of no small fame. The hollow of the trunk was materially increased in 1820 when the interior was filled with a round table and circular bench, capable of seating from twelve to fourteen persons; at the same time a door was constructed and hung to fit the opening.'

1955: In *The Yew Trees of England* Swanton describes seeing the yew and noting that the door was padlocked. Mr Giltrow got in 'through an opening 2' from the ground on the right side of the door and found all the furniture had been removed'. He noted 'no laying down of new wood in the hollow, but the edges of openings are being sealed over with living wood'. Swanton considered the tree looked 'unhealthy', Mr Giltrow used the word 'unhappy', though 'with much life in its branches and a good amount of spray'.

3 years later in 1958 Swanton wrote of it as 'an unhappy yew with early 19th century gravestones within 10' of the trunk'. It is one of 3 Surrey trees he considered to have suffered from excessive root pruning. He goes on to say that the burials, and perhaps cutting away of living wood when the hollow trunk was drastically scooped out about 1820, may also have checked its growth.

July 1999: Two gaps break the bole's continuity, one containing the door, which is in fact only 4' high. There is much dead wood, if this decays before new wood envelops it the tree's appearance will be much altered. The structure leans slightly towards the church and wires and chains must have been in place for some time, since one piece of chain has been almost 'swallowed' by new layers of wood. 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
1988	30' 7 ³ / ₄ " at 3' 6"	Peta Orr (for Country Living)
1994	31' 6" at 5'	Gwyneth Fookes
2008	10.06 (33') at 1.45	Richard Cooper
2008	10.37 (34') at 30cm	Richard Cooper
2013	32' 11" (1003cm) at 4'	Peter Norton