

Two ancient yews grow here. They were first noted as follows in *The Gentleman's* magazine of 1804: 'On the south side are two very large old yew trees of about 30 feet in circumference; one of them with a door that would form a good cabin.'

1936 - The following description appeared in Mee's *King's England*: 'From the hill on which its spire looks out for miles two yews have looked down on Kent for centuries; one is 27' round and the other 26'. They are a marvellous pair, older than the tower of Canterbury cathedral; they may have seen the life of this secluded hilltop come and go for about 1,000 years. These Darby and Joan of trees are all that Cudham has save its old church, which has kept them company since they were young.'

1980 and 1984 Allen Meredith: The largest yew cannot have changed much since 1804, then having a door. This was obviously on the north side, where there is a gap of several feet, a metal cage and several metal rails fill up part of the gap. I climbed inside and examined the hollow shell, there is no obvious inner growth, and any growth at all would have been on the outer shell. The cavity inside the tree extends to 6 feet across in places, it is easy to see why it was mentioned as a good cabin in 1804.

Cudham's female yew

1999 - Hills: The female yew is hollow with a gap of 1' 6" in its shell that has in the past been blocked by a metal barrier. This is now incorporated into the tree as new wood grows over the metal. There are substantial areas of growth springing from all around this shell, replacing large limbs that have been removed. Between 1890 and the present day girth has not altered dramatically and I recorded 29' 9" at 1'.

The photos below were taken by Peter Norton in 2013. He noted that two of the larger branches were banded together by a wire hawser. Girths of 30' 5" at the root crown, 29' 7" at 2' and 29' at 3' were recorded. Nails had been hammered into the trunk at both 2' and 3'.





Female yew	1890 Rev. Freer	1980 Meredith	1984 Meredith	1999 Hills	2013 Norton
At the ground					30' 5" root crown
At 1'			30' 0"	29' 9"	
At 2'					29' 7" - nails
At 3'	28' 4"		29' 4"		29' 0" - nails
At 4'			28' 8"		
At 5'		28' approx			

Cudham's male yew

Revd. Nigel Freer gave the male yew a girth of 28' at 3' in 1890. In 1999 I recorded 22' 11" at the ground and 25' 7" at 3'. In 2013, when Peter Norton took the remaining photos, he recorded a girth of 23' 4" close to the ground, where nails had been hammered into the tree.





Male yew	1890 Rev Freer	1980 Meredith	1984 Meredith	1999 Hills	2013 Norton
At the ground				22' 11"	23' 4" close to gnd - nails
At 1'			24' 7"		
At 2'					
At 3'	28' 0"		26' 10"	25' 7"	
At 4'			27' 10"		
At 5'		27' 6" approx.			

In 1984 proposals to build additional rooms for Sunday school teaching and toilet facilities were thought to threaten one of the yews. An article *Yews are safe pledges vicar* appeared in the Kentish Times on the 25th April 1984. It read as follows:

Plans for Sunday school rooms and a much needed toilet for Cudham Church will not affect two ancient yew trees in the churchyard, the Rev. Ian Leahey assured worried villagers this week.

Bromley council is to investigate an application to rebuild a disused shed only yards from the church entrance and within a few feet of the trees - each though to be aged more than 1500.

Mr Leahey, Vicar of Cudham and Downe, said the church wanted to build separate rooms for Sunday school teaching which the children could use during the main service. And he pointed out that Cudham Church had never had running water.

"Some of the older people find the fact that we don't have a toilet a problem, and we are continually getting visitors asking for one," he said.

But he insisted the proposed building work would not harm the yew trees. The church was seeking expert advice.

"They are a feature of the village" he said. "Nothing would be contemplated that would in any way cause damage to them."