

Recent excavation in the new burial ground north of the church unearthed an urn dated around 1 A.D. The church (built of Kentish ragstone) was established between 1213 and 1215 by the Archbishop of Canterbury, though legend has it that William the Conqueror himself stood on the site and gave orders for its erection.

Petrie's watercolour of 1807 shows two of the four yews for which this churchyard is widely famed. The largest girthed is seen close to the tower, the smaller girthed on the right.



An article by George William Johnson called *Remarkable Yew Trees* appears in *The Cottage Gardener and Country Gentleman's Companion* - Jan 26th 1854 p327/ 8

In another churchyard, some six miles or more from the last (Loose) there is another tree of the same kind, which, I was informed, was as large as the last, and perfectly sound. This latter qualification seemed so extraordinary, that I determined on paying this famed tree a visit ; and though it fell short of what was reported of it, yet I was not disappointed, for I hardly expected to find a tree, 10 feet in diameter perfectly sound ; this one however, differed much from the last ; with a less expanded top, it presented equal tokens of good health, and its bole, which was not very short, was gnarly and covered with those short spray twigs, or branches, which in a great measure hid it from view ; however, a string run round underneath them, and at a distance of four feet from the ground, presented a circumference of upwards of twenty-seven feet ; and though I could not pronounce it as sound timber, I am satisfied there were no hollow spaces of any extent. This description will probably make it appear as a more extraordinary tree than the first named, but then it is to be considered, that at the place where the circumference was taken the girth was more than at one foot from the ground ; in fact, the tree presented a sort of barrel-like swell at that height, both above and below being smaller ; nevertheless, its size, general health, and comparative soundness, was such as to command respect. I may also add, that it, too, seems to luxuriate on the Limestone range, although its site was more elevated and exposed, being, in fact, on one of those eminences which command a view of eastern parts of the "Weald of Kent :" and our young friends will find its hill on the county map under the name Ulcomb.

In 1936 *The King's England* described these two as 'The Sentinels of Time stand guarding its church, Old Yew and Young Yew. They are at least as old as the conquest. Old Yew, 35' round his trunk, may well have seen his 1,000 years: he is the finest specimen we have seen in Kent, a solid English gentleman. Young Yew, with a trunk over 26' round, has not counted quite so many centuries, but their equal is not to be found side by side in any place we know'.

'Old Yew' is male and grows very close to the church. Removal of low twiggy growth has been necessary to maintain access to the building. In 1889, Lowe recorded that 'the central stem, which is much gnarled and covered with short dead branches, measured, at 17ft., 10ft. 3ins'.

Girth: 1892: 35' 2" at 3' ; 1955: 37' 8" at 3'

1999: 32' 8" close to ground

2013: 32' 11" close to ground



1999

The colour photos are from 2013. The b&w photo is from *The Churchyard Yew and Immortality* by Cornish 1946. The sepia drawing by Saunders is from 1865.



Young yew is female. It boasts an unusually large number of thick branches growing from a strikingly red bole, 90% of which is of living material. It is seen here in 2013.



Girth	ground	3' excluding limb	3' including limb	5'
1892		26' 3"		
1999	31' 2"	28'	29' 9"	28' 4"
2013	31' 7½"	28' 5"	30' 2"	

Another male and female pair grows NW of the church. Although they cannot compete with 'old yew and young yew' in terms of girth, these are exceptional specimens which illustrate many of the features associated with old yews, including internal stems and new wood snaking along the old sapwood shells. The photo from 1999 (left) shows them at risk from the piles of tinder dry wood being stored beneath their branches. This was no longer the case in 2013, when the other photos were taken.



Tree 3, male, girthed 20' 4" at 5' in 1999. Twiggy growth prevented remeasuring in 2013.



Tree 4 is female, with new growth both around and inside the original trunk. Girth was just over 18' at 2' in 1999 and 19' 8" at 5' in 2013.