

West Sussex Yews - Fairmile Bottom Local Nature Reserve

Parking in the large layby at Google map 50.873023,-0.604398 NGR SU982090

“The presence of yew has always been problematic to the grazing of the chalk grassland area of Fairmile Bottom Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI), due to its toxicity to livestock. Consequently, as part of the Western Area’s Environmental Stewardship Higher Level Scheme (HLS), clearance of some of the yew trees has been carried out. It is intended that this work, in combination with proposed new fencing to ensure that the remaining yews are outside the grazing area, will lead to a long-term grazing regime.”

Taken from the South Downs Focus dated July-September 2009. Access, Enjoyment and Understanding (Management Plan Ambitions 8 & 10) Chalk grassland

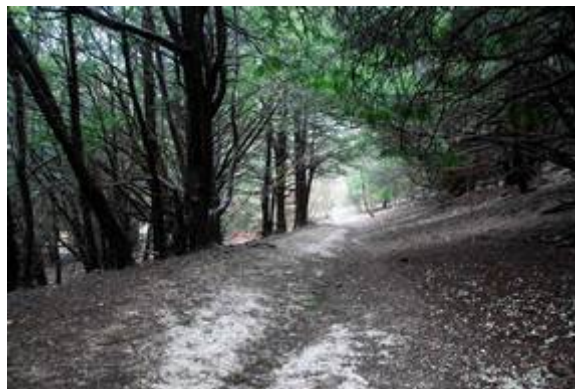
Fairmile Bottom (SSSI) lies on a north-west facing scarp slope of the South Downs where the Upper Chalk is covered by a thin layer of clay-with-flints.

Follow the bridleway sign up the slope until you approach the gate, noting the yews still growing within the grazing area, outside of the fencing.

This yew with so many removed branches is found at SU983089. It was measured at 2’ to exclude the exaggerations of branch development and a girth of exactly 11’ was recorded.



Go through the gate and on up a steep incline with young yew growing either side. The path starts to level out.



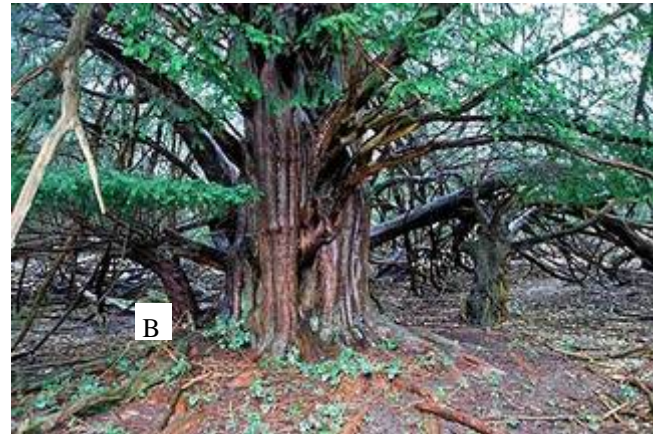
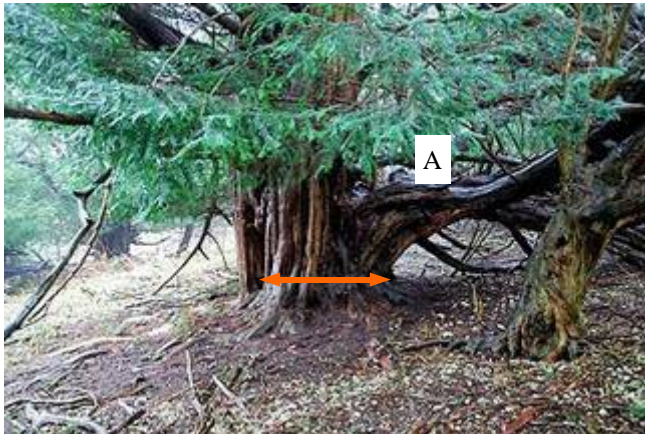
There is a faint track on the left which heads in a north east direction close to a waymark arrow. Here two yews that appear to have coalesced can be observed.

(Approx. Google location 50.87091,-0.602317 or NGR SU984088)



Continue NE towards 'Yewtree Gate', as it is described on the OS map. Yews are seen here growing along the top of the scarp. None are of great girth except for a male close to the path, obscured by dense yew foliage. A large limb pulling away from this tree (A) is included in the girth of 16' 10", but a root layered stem springing from the ground only inches away from the main bulk of the tree (B) is not included.

(Approx. Google location 50.87347,-0.596867 or NGR SU988091)



At Yewtree Gate NGR SU992094 is a cutting through a boundary bank. This bank stretches away to the north east and south west. Yews appear to have been planted along its entire length. Near to the 'gate' and heading south west are two yews growing on the raised bank. The fine male yew (below left) is followed by a slightly larger male a few paces further on (below right). Girth of this tree, measured at 2' from the top of the bank, was 11' 10".

(Approx. Google loc 50.874106,-0.593154 or NGR SU990092)



From here can be seen another faint track a few paces to the west. Continuing to head south west brings you to another pair of male yews. The tree below left measured 12' 3" at the root crown, that on the right had a girth of 12' 10" at 2' - above its spreading roots.

(Approx..Google loc 50.873145,-0.595665 or NGR SU989091)

(Approx. Google loc 50.872468,-0.59691 or NGR SU988090)



Continuing south west this tree is reached, a multi-stemmed male measuring 22' 5" close to the ground at the root crown. The growth history, and therefore the age and status of such trees, is difficult to determine

(approx NGR SU985088 Google map 50.870673,-0.601147)



Close by is this pair of coalescing male trees.

(Google map 50.87066,-0.60177)



Also nearby is this large female, measured at 2' to exclude all the side limbs. Exactly 19' was recorded.

(Google map 50.870518,-0.602006)



You then approach the main footpath that you originally walked along from the car park. This male tree was recorded as 14' 6" at the root crown and 13' 1" at 3', which excluded the side limb (A).

(Google map 50.870315,-0.602478)



At the cross roads, head straight across, south west . Here is another male, recorded as 16' 10" at the root crown or 1'. Note the small patch of spray on the west side of the tree which was difficult to get the tape through.

(Google maps 50.869935,-0.604151, or NGR SU983087)



Continuing south west and away from the track this male yew is found close to the start of scarp slope. I recorded 13' 11" at the root crown.

(Approx. Google map loc 50.869834,-0.606855 or NGR SU981087)



Close by grow many younger yews, the photos below showing a few of these.



The strikingly red male yew with a girth of 14' at the root crown is found at Google map 50.869536,-0.60781 or NGR SU980087



The final yew recorded during this initial visit grows on top of the earthwork bank. It is male, with a girth of 13' 9" at the root crown.

(Google map 50.869428,-0.609248 or NGR SU979086)



Many yews are evident all around this area so it is possible there are others of large girth still to be found.