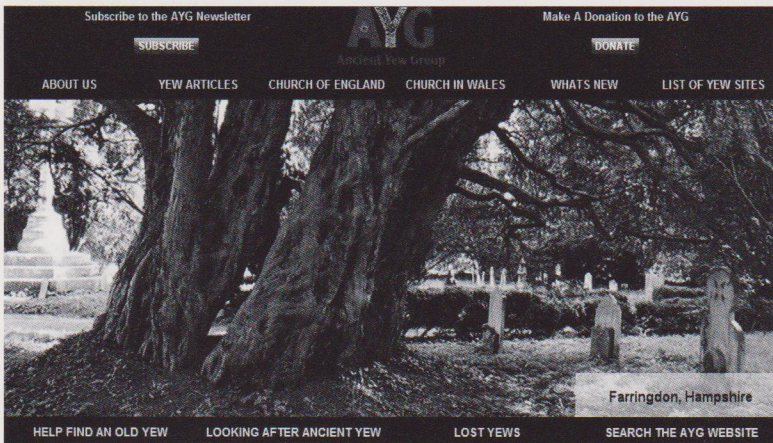


ANCIENT YEW GROUP WEBSITE Tim Hills

Regular visitors to our website (www.ancient-yew.org) will have noticed the addition of two new headings: **Church of England** and **Church in Wales**. This is an acknowledgement that the majority of Britain's oldest yews grow in their churchyards. The combination of an ancient building alongside an ancient tree at a sacred site exists in very few countries of the world, with Shinto shrines in Japan perhaps providing the closest parallel.



Many British churchyard sites are linked with 6th and 7th century Saints, with yew trees planted and becoming established alongside their newly founded churches. Good examples are at Llanerfyl and Llansilin in Powys. When, in the 11th century, the Normans began constructing their churches, some were at long established sites of worship, with yews that would already have been centuries old. Examples are Peterchurch in Herefordshire and Ulcombe in Kent. But they also built churches at sites where no previous church existed. At these places the yew and church have shared the same sacred space for a mere 800 years!

It is evident that the yew has been recognised as intrinsic to sacred sites in many cultures across the world and across time, right up to the present day as yews continue to be planted in our churchyards. It is a happy circumstance that many of the earliest plantings in consecrated ground have thrived and stand witness to millennia of Christian endeavour and worship.

www.ancient-yew.org
is hosted and supported
by the Tree Register and
its members

Our two new web pages mark the next step in bringing together all of the available information about our oldest churchyard yews. It is in a durable format, and gives each Diocesan Advisory Committee access to a list of the most important trees in their care. During the coming months it is hoped to publish on these web pages all available information of every known English and Welsh churchyard yew with a likely age of 500 years and above. At the moment this stands at 831 trees in 625 churchyards.

It is hoped that the recognition we have given to the **Church of England** and the **Church in Wales** as custodians of these ancient and veteran yews will enable appropriate measures to be taken to ensure the survival of trees whose 'remarkable powers of regeneration give them the stamp of immortality'. (Bellamy – 2007 from Hageneder's *Yew: A History*).