

In the past

1644: "In the churchyard is an immense yew tree, celebrated far and near for its gigantic dimensions and extreme old age. The trunk of this magnificent old yew, which is said in its prime to have shaded an acre of ground, measures at 4 feet from the turf, no less than 9 yards in circumference." *The Sacred Yew* (1994) attributes this to Captain Symons, the royal diarist.

In the *History of Compton*, published 100 years later it was described as "going fast to decay.....its dimensions and venerable decay fully corroborate the report that it is coeval with the sacred pile."

1803 or 05: "That at Aldworth in Berkshire, though its trunk is about nine yards in compass, is by no means comparable to this (Mallwyd), except that it may be superior in antiquity." *The British Tourists: Or, Traveller's Pocket Companion, Through England, Wales, Scotland and Ireland*. William [Fordyce] Mayor

1823: "In the church-yard of Aldworth, in Berkshire, is a yew-tree of prodigious bulk, the trunk measuring nine yards in circumference at upwards of four feet from the ground. The shape is very regular, of an urn-like form ; the branches spread to a considerable distance, and rise to a great height. All recollection of its age is entirely lost." *Sylva Florifera* Henry Phillips

1839: The first thing that struck our attention was the yew tree, it is just 27 feet in circumference at 3 feet from the ground, it is going fast to decay, and the branches are dying away at the top. It is supposed to be of the same age as the church, part of which is more than 700 years old . From *The History and Antiquities of Newbury and its environs*

1854: "In the churchyard is a very ancient yew tree, which measures nine and a half yards round the trunk, and is supposed to be older than the church." *Post Office Directory of Berkshire*



1897: Lowe was informed by Rev.W.L.Newham that the yew was "now a ruin." *The Yew Trees of Great Britain and Ireland*

1976: A storm is reported to have destroyed much of the trunk of this tree.



1997: All that is left is this single large fragment, supported on props, its girth reduced to a mere 13' and its foliage rather yellow. It will need a measure of good fortune to recover from its most recent battering in a storm of 1976 which is reported to have destroyed much of its trunk. In the photograph on the right a new yew can be seen growing from the root stock; this continued to grow vigorously when seen in 2005. By that time the old broken sign had been replaced with a new one. It seems that those in charge of this ancient fragment appreciate its significance and have not given up on it.

2008: Dave Kenny's photos show that the single live propped stem had considerable dieback though he also noted reasonably healthy growth from the side shoot. Girth round the remains of the old trunk was 3.53m at ground level.

