

Here is a classic example of an ancient yew's ability to recover from trauma. In the 1938 *King's England* it was described as 'a magnificent yew with a trunk 6 yards round, reaching the timber porch with its great arms'. But in 1969 disaster struck when the yew was 'split down the middle'. These newspaper extracts are taken from between Oct 1969 and Dec 1971.

'The famous 900 year old yew tree, which has stood in the secluded churchyard at Bulley, near Gloucester, since the church was built in Norman times, has finally succumbed to old age. For one evening last week there was a rending crack and the huge old tree suddenly split down the middle, shedding a number of its branches on to the paths and graves. Fortunately, the section which overhangs the main door and roof of St Michael's church remained upright'.

'Apparently, the falling branches did not even damage any of the headstones. It was a very famous tree in these parts. I am told by a local forester that it is probably 900 years old and I think it may have been planted outside the church door when the church was built'.

1998: Although it now appears lop-sided, this female tree, growing south east of the church, has recovered and is in fine health. From the trunk at a height of 8'9", four large branches stretch towards the porch for a distance of about 7/8 yards. Sudden exposure to the light of a large part of its trunk has resulted in attractive bark colouring.

Girth records:

1938: 18' round (Mee)

1986: 17' 6" at 3' (Meredith)

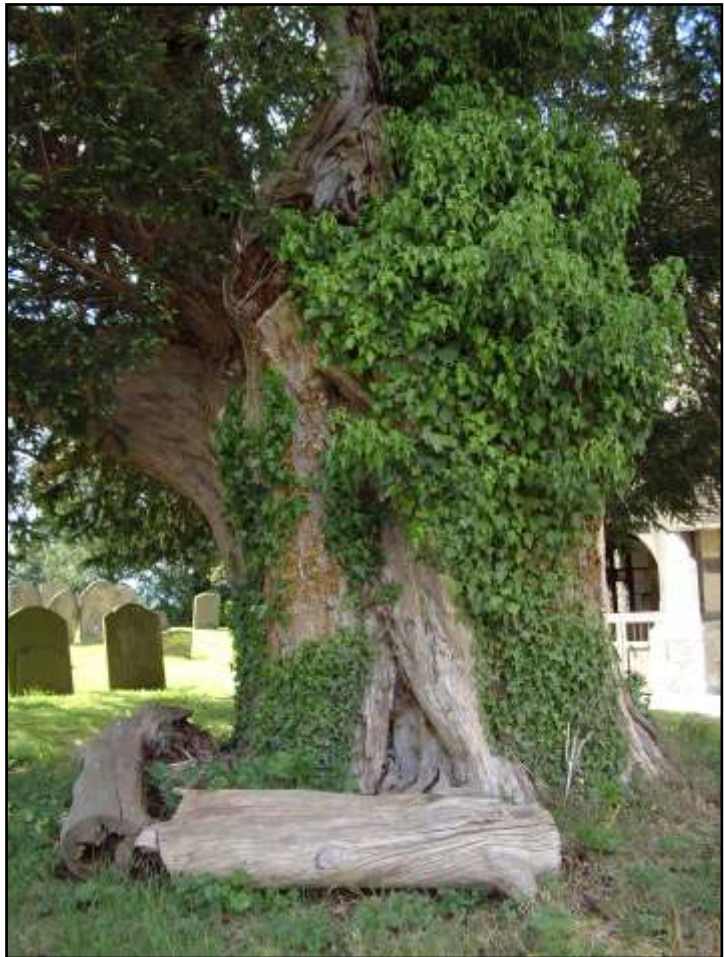
1998: 17' 3" at 1'; 17' 2" at 3'; 17' 11" at 4'
(just below limbs) Hills

2008: 17' 6" at 1'; 17' 6" at 3'; 18' 6" at 4' (Hills)

2013: 17' 3" at 1'; 17' 2" at 2' (Peter Norton)



Geoff Garlick's photos in 2005 show the relentless and unnecessary spread of ivy.



Eight years later in 2013 Peter Norton's photos show that ivy continues to swamp parts of the tree, particularly on the east side and high into its canopy. He described the yew as having an 8' break of crown with four massive branches. A section of dead wood, on the east side will eventually give way and the tree will then take on the classic horse shoe shape.



He also recorded younger yews as follows: To the west of the church a female comprising seven stems from a very low bole with a girth of around 12'. A further four young trees are at the northwest corner of the grounds. Opposite the northeast corner of the church a juvenile, probably from the silver jubilee, but no plaque to confirm this.