

No early reference to this yew has been found. I first visited in 1993 after reading *The Yew Tree - a thousand whispers* by Hal Hartzell Jr., published in 1991. He misleadingly reported that there was a 'great yew in the Kingston St Mary vicarage in Broomfield, Somerset', badly damaged in a storm of 1990.

In 1993 Percy Morgan saw the ancient fragmented yew and described it as follows: 'An old tree, but growing well still. The centre has rotted away and the shell has split open into a number of parts so that only a reading at ground level could be taken. This was 36 feet'.

I first visited in January 2001, when the photo below was taken. The church guide of that year considered the yew to be as old as the building, which dates from the reign of Henry III - about 1225. For a yew to grow to this size and be so fragmented suggests that the tree might be even older.

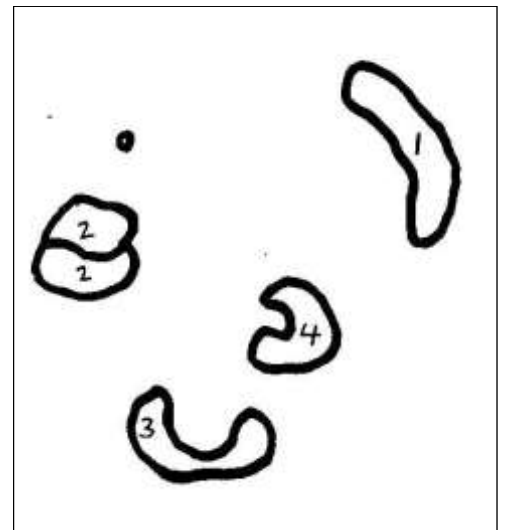
The fragments, all female, would have developed on the edges of the original trunk as it decayed.

Fragment 1 leans outwards towards the footpath at 45 degrees or more. One branch was dying, the discoloured leaves visible from the path. Lower down, a chain wraps around this branch and is possibly restricting its growth. It also wraps around fragment 4 and once supported this whole section of the tree.

Fragment 2 is a branch cut off at about 4/5', but with vigorous new growth emerging from it. Adjoining this another piece cut off at 1/2' showed no signs of life. A foot or so away is a new stem of yew about 2' high.

Fragment 3 leans at about 25 degrees and is propped up. It supports mainly vigorous growth but has some dead areas and discoloured leaves.

Fragment 4 has a prop which could be removed since it no longer serves any purpose. It is hollowed out and leans at about 15 degrees.



A reduction in girth from Percy Morgan's 36' in 1993 to my 32' 11" in 2001 probably indicates the loss of some pieces of stump. At almost 33', this is the second largest girthed yew in Somerset and puts it among the 30 largest girthed in the country.

The next photographs, taken in 2001 and 2016, show considerable change in the overall appearance of the tree. In 2001 large sections of the canopy consisted of discoloured leaves, and ivy dominated parts of the tree. The thick ivy stems had been recently cut through and the success of that action can be clearly seen in the 2016 photo. Excessive ivy can add considerable and unnecessary extra weight that might result in damage to the tree.



In February 2016 two younger yews were also recorded.

Number 2 on the plan is female and grows at the SW corner of the churchyard. It is many branched from the ground.

Number 3 on the plan grows at the NW corner of the churchyard, wedged in between a wall and a shed. It is male with an estimated girth of 6'8'.

