

Recent excavation in the new burial ground north of the church unearthed an urn dated around 1 A.D. The church (built of Kentish ragstone) was established between 1213 and 1215 by the Archbishop of Canterbury, though legend has it that William the Conqueror himself stood on the site and gave orders for its erection.

Petrie's watercolour of 1807 shows two of the four yews for which this churchyard is widely famed. The largest girthed is seen close to the tower, the smaller girthed on the right.



In 1936 *The King's England* described these two as 'The Sentinels of Time stand guarding its church, Old Yew and Young Yew. They are at least as old as the conquest. Old Yew, 35' round his trunk, may well have seen his 1,000 years: he is the finest specimen we have seen in Kent, a solid English gentleman. Young Yew, with a trunk over 26' round, has not counted quite so many centuries, but their equal is not to be found side by side in any place we know'.

'Old Yew' is male and grows very close to the church. Removal of low twiggy growth has been necessary to maintain access to the building. In 1889, Lowe recorded that 'the central stem, which is much gnarled and covered with short dead branches, measured, at 17ft., 10ft. 3ins'.

Girth: 1892: 35' 2" at 3' ; 1955: 37' 8" at 3'

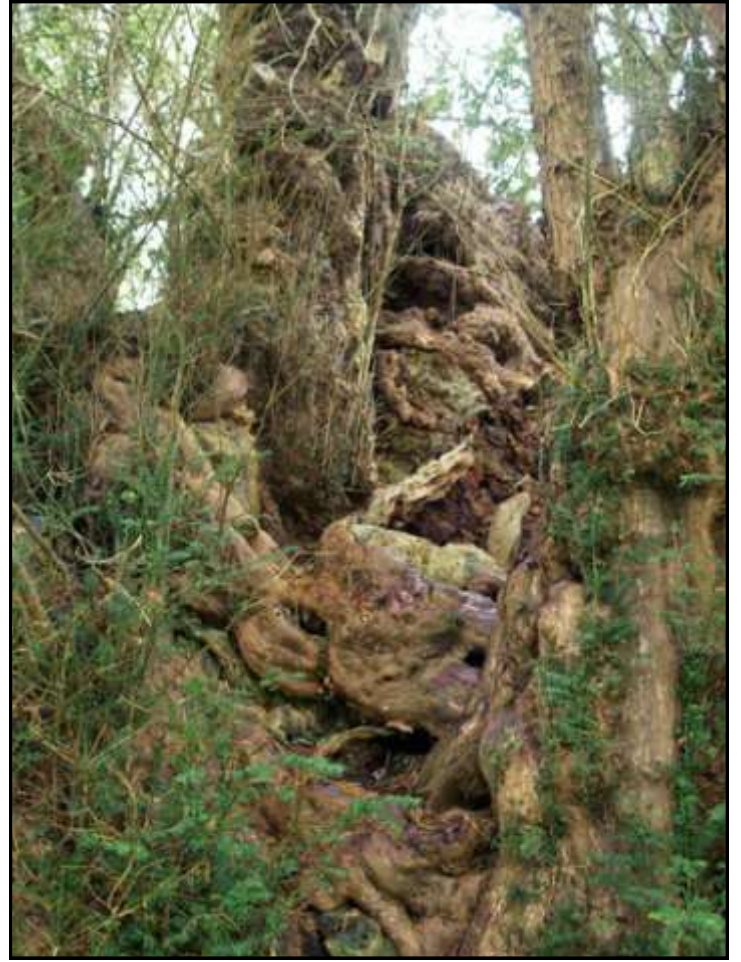
1999: 32' 8" close to ground

2013: 32' 11" close to ground



1999

The colour photos are from 2013. The b&w photo is from *The Churchyard Yew and Immortality* by Cornish 1946. The sepia drawing by Saunders is from 1865.



Young yew is female. It boasts an unusually large number of thick branches growing from a strikingly red bole, 90% of which is of living material. It is seen here in 2013.



<b>Girth</b>	<b>ground</b>	<b>3' excluding limb</b>	<b>3' including limb</b>	<b>5'</b>
1892		26' 3"		
1999	31' 2"	28'	29' 9"	28' 4"
2013	31' 7½"	28' 5"	30' 2"	

Another male and female pair grows NW of the church. Although they cannot compete with 'old yew and young yew' in terms of girth, these are exceptional specimens which illustrate many of the features associated with old yews, including internal stems and new wood snaking along the old sapwood shells. The photo from 1999 (left) shows them at risk from the piles of tinder dry wood being stored beneath their branches. This was no longer the case in 2013, when the other photos were taken.



Tree 3, male, girthed 20' 4" at 5' in 1999. Twiggy growth prevented remeasuring in 2013.

Tree 4 is female, with new growth both around and inside the original trunk. Girth was just over 18' at 2' in 1999 and 19' 8" at 5' in 2013.

