

THE RINGMORE YEW



Picture by Mike Wynne-Powell

Passers-by on their way to the beach at Challaborough were justifiably mystified by what appeared to be Pagan activity in the churchyard of All Hallows on Wednesday 10 August.

Over forty villagers and visitors had gathered for the ritual measuring of the ancient yew which, in the words of Alfred, Lord Tennyson, 'graspest at the stones that name the under-lying dead'. How long has this tree been grasping our gravestones?

That's what members of the Ringmore Historical Society were trying to discover by measuring its girth in accordance with guide lines set by the Ancient Yew Group.

Is it still growing? Not half! The girth of its massive trunk has increased by seven centimetres since last measured five years ago to the day. Dare I say that some of those who attended appeared to have put on a similar increase?

Wine, nibbles and a view to the distant Eddystone lighthouse were enjoyed by all on a blustery but sunny afternoon.

In 2006, after the first measuring of the yew, the Historical Society came up with an age of 'at least 520 years', so let's assume that in 1490 John Welywrought, Rector of Ringmore at the time, planted the tree during the reign of Henry VII.

This year, Lily-Rose of Windwood Farm and three young lads from Germany were among those encouraged to apply nourishing compost to the area surrounding the tree. So who knows what the measurement will be in 2016 after another five years expansion of its girth?

James Stevenson

The article for the Sept. 2011 Newsletter

THE ALL HALLOWS YEW

The first measuring of the splendid English Yew in the All Hallows churchyard took place in 2006. It was a glorious summer day, and ninety-eight people came to the event. The measurements were sent to the Tree Register and our handsome tree was recognized as being over five hundred years old and was accorded the rank of an Ancient Yew. Since 2006 the categories assigned to very old trees have been refined and there are now three sections: Ancient, Veteran, and Notable, and our tree is now listed on the Ancient Yew Group website as 'Notable'. If you would like to see three pictures of it, taken in 2006, go to www.ancient-yew.org and click on the Gazetteer tab. Then proceed to p.145.

Old Yews are not easy to measure accurately. They grow very slowly and many of the very ancient trees - those over a thousand years and more - have had long periods of non-growth and then started to grow again. A difficulty in measuring the All Hallows specimen is that it grows from a steeply sloping bank (possibly the boundary bank of the early churchyard) and forks into separate limbs only a short distance from the ground. We follow the measuring instructions very carefully and our estimates of age are cautious. We then send them to the AYG for vetting and confirmation.

We will announce an estimated age for the Yew as soon as we have calculated it after measuring. When the results have been seen by the AYG the official result will be published in the Newsletter.

The All Hallows Yew is a female tree. We know this because of the lovely red arils, or flower seeds, that cover it in the autumn. Do take the opportunity to look at the flourishing yew cutting taken after the 2006 Measuring celebration. It is on display at the refreshments table.

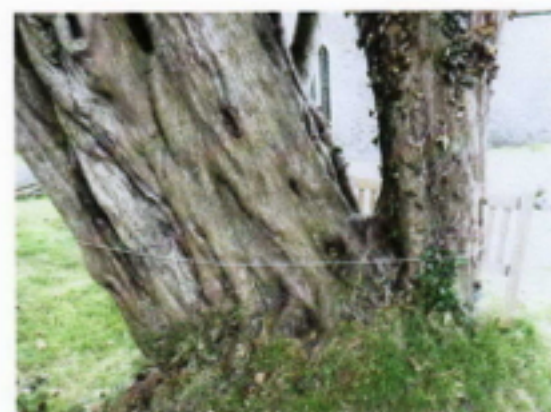
10 AUGUST 2011



THE SOUTHERLY ASPECT OF THE YEW



LOOKING UPWARDS TO A COMPLICATED
STRUCTURE OF MASSIVE LIMBS



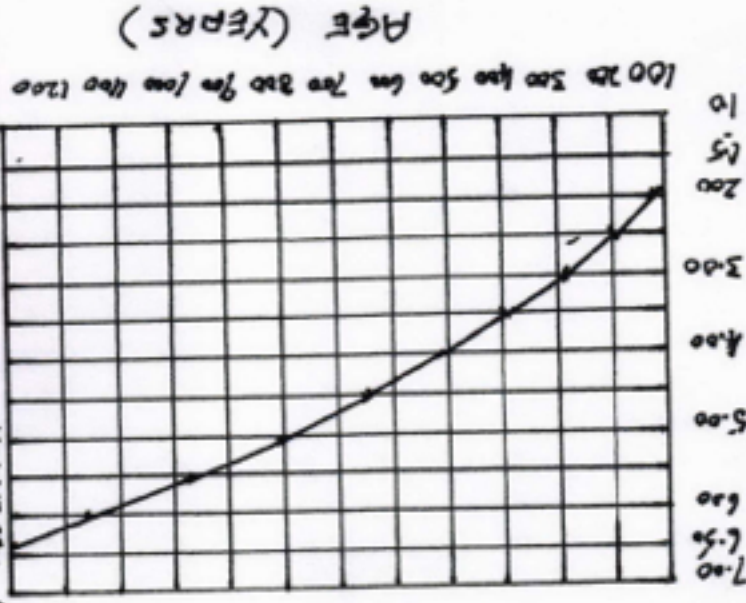
NOTE THE MEASURING CORD ROUND THE
UNFORKED PART OF THE TRUNK

RINGMORE HISTORICAL SOCIETY

AUGUST 2006

ESTIMATED AGE OF YEW

BASED ON FORMULA PUBLISHED BY TABORSKY & WHITE
(1996) RESEARCH ON CHURCHYARD YEW.



GIRTH (METRES)

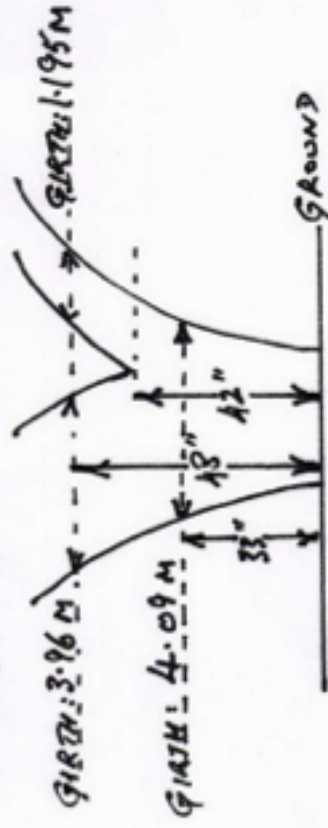
From the girth of the whole trunk
The age of the Jew is shown to be:
520 yrs.

Measuring the English Yew in Auld Hallowe Churchyard

Wednesday 9th August 2006

The tree was measured in two ways:

1. The girth of the whole trunk at a height of 33 inches above ground
2. The girth of the two forks at a height of 43 inches above ground.



The girth of the whole trunk = 4.09 metres.

Wendy Hilland
August 2006

2011
AugustTree Measuring Online Information Form
from
The Tree Register

General Information

Type of Tree: ENGLISH YEW Location: BURIAL GROUND, ALL HALLOWS
 Ownership: ALL HALLOWS Full Address: RINGMORE
 County/State: DEVON Country: UK
 Post Code/Zip Code: TQ7 4HJ Grid Reference:

Other information if known

Planting Date: Planted By:
 Seed Collection No.: Seed Collector:

MEASUREMENTS

Please select all appropriate boxes

Height measurement

Metres Feet

Was the height estimated?

No ☒

Circumference/Girth measurement of trunk at 1.5m (5ft) above ground level on the highest side of any slope*

Metres Feet & Inches

4.16

Height the girth was recorded above ground level if less than 1.5m due to burrs, swellings, branches or low fork*

Metres Feet & Inches

24cm north side
90cm south side

Is the girth measurement exaggerated by burrs/swellings/butresses etc?

No ☒

not significantly.

Tree Growth Category*

* Please see advisory notes on the Measuring Tree page

A ☒ C With some features of diagrams 2 and 3 in category B

CONDITION

Please select all appropriate boxes

General appearance

Excellent ☒

Is the trunk up to 1.5m(5ft)?

Good Single Stem ☐

Healthy, but fork at 24cm on North side and 90cm on South side. Tricky.

Is the tree growing on ground which is?

Level ☒

Does the tree lean?

No ☒

YES!

Can you see dead branches?

None or Very Little ☒

VERY FEW

Has it suffered from storm damage?

No Obvious Damage ☒

Has it had any past management?

Nothing Obvious ☐

Removal of extremities of a few dead limbs.

Is the tree of local or national historical interest?

Not Sure ☐ - Local interest

Is the tree a local landmark?

Not Sure ☒Is the tree, in your opinion, "remarkable" or unusual in anyway, shape or form?
(If Yes please describe in comments below)No ☐ Its position in a bank makes it difficult to measure. Its total appearance is handsome.

Do you consider the tree to be a "veteran" as defined by English Nature?

Not Sure ☐

* Please see definitions below

Additional Information

Comments

Some of our 2006 measuring marks disappeared. Using photographs we have been able to make new ones with very small wooden pegs which are wholly benign and - we hope - indestructible.

Diane' Collinson

Any other information, either historical or interesting about the specimen.

A small cutting (c. 2 1/2") taken in 2006 is growing extremely well in a pot.

Diane' Collinson

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Please keep you graphic files small using .jpg format

File sizes should be no more than 20-30 Kilobytes.

(approx. 7cm growth in 5 years)

COMMENTS

My measuring marks from 2006 did not survive at all well. Accordingly, before our Yew Day on 10 August we stripped some newly-grown ivy from the trunk and I made five consecutive girth measurements using some temporary marks made afresh by reference to photographs taken in 2006. None of the results of these five measurements proved to be smaller than the 2006 result of a 4.9m girth, so I then derived a medial measurement from them: 4.16m. This means we have an approximate girth increase of 7cm over the last five years. I believe this is a reasonable and credible result. I am confident that we were pretty close to the original marks.

We have now installed four indestructible benign markers (tiny wooden pegs) for future measurements. Of course, these are not in exactly the same places as the original 2006 marks, but we will take a new measurement soon and record the heights of marks and the girth size, and these results will then be the basis for comparison with a measuring in 2016, and any subsequent measurements.

The All Hallows yew appears to be strong and healthy, produces arils in abundance, and shows no signs of decay or decline, but it is truly tricky to measure because it grows from a steepish sloping bank and this means that the height of single trunk before forking is about 24cm on the tree's north-facing side and about 82-90cm on its south-facing side. I think the enclosed photographs will demonstrate the difficulties. It should be noted also that the graveyard is at the head of a cove that slopes down to the English Channel and which receives the steady onslaught of the SW gales. This has caused an eastward lean in the tree.

OTHER REMARKS

The grassy bank on which the tree grows is vestigial. I believe it once marked the boundary of the original graveyard and that it was partly smoothed out when the graveyard was extended (at an unknown date) leaving the area of bank where the tree grows more or less intact.

If the yew was planted in the bank of the original graveyard when the present church was built it would probably date from the 14th century. That would make it somewhat older than our measurements suggest, but if we also take into account the growth-inhibiting effects of the prevailing winds, then that older age would be quite likely. But I have no substantial evidence for this line of thought, beyond a small knowledge of churchyard traditions and the harsh weather and environment of our particular yew.

Di Collinson (djc.bellevue@virgin.net)
djc.bellevue@btinternet.com

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RINGMORE HISTORICAL SOCIETY

10 AUGUST 2011

SARAH HITCHPOUGH	Natalie Hilton
ANDREW HITCHMOUGH	Ardene Bennett
PAUL ARCHER	Auson Wynne-Powell
Fiona STUART-WILSON	Jane Stenson
JULIET RIVA	Gill Tomlin
JOHN-PAUL RIVA	Jamy Stevenson
Sam Riva	Bony Old.
Evan Haines	Diane Collier
Tim Hines	Kathleen Nelson-Smith
Judy Spence	Rebecca "
Michael Haines	Jessica "
Billy RIVA	Frank Dunn Williams
JOHN BRUNEL CONEL	MERIBAH STARK
CHRISTINE " "	SUE FARRINGTON
Jane Baker	BRIAN STARK
RICHARD BAKER.	MIKE WYNNE-POWELL
KETHY STONE (ROMBEI)	HANTI
GEORGE DYKES	Nigel Stone
MARTIN BOOTMAN	James & Gillian Parker
Holly Bootman	LIBBY FROST
POPPY Bootman	Jessica Frost
Catherine Bootman (Wynne-Powells)	SARANTHA FROST
Chris Roberts	Debbie Chicken
Madeline capps	



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1 2 3 > >>>

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Notes: The largest of the three yews in this churchyard is considered to be several hundred years old. An event organised by Ringmore Historical Society was held on 8th August 2006 'to celebrate the presence of this noble and interesting tree'. Girth of the whole trunk was recorded as well as girth of the branches above the fork. The tree will be remeasured every 5 years and provide useful information on the growth rate of a tree in an exposed situation.

Classification: notable**Classification Codes:** N**Girth cm:** 409**Height measured:** at 84cm**Girth ft ins:** 13' 5" at 3' 6"**Sex:** female**Earliest mention:** 2006**Source of earliest mention:** Pers. Corres. Di Collinson**Date of visit:** 09/08/2006**Latest information:**

Height of
trunk on
South side:



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1 2 3 > >>>

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Yew Views at Ringmore England



Copyright © Di Collinson - 2006

1 2 3 > >>>

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4.09



RINGMORE HISTORICAL SOCIETY

A FEW THINGS ABOUT YEW TREES.

- **The fine old yew tree** in the All Hallows' graveyard is an English yew, *taxus baccata*, a species renowned for its longevity and its connexion with pagan and religious rites. It is native to Ireland but appears all over Europe, often in association with Druid practices
- **The wood of yew** reputedly outlives iron. A 250,000-year-old yew spear found at Clacton in Essex is the world's oldest known wooden artefact.
- **The Fortingall Yew** in Perthshire is said to be 9,000 years old, has a girth of 52 feet and stands close to a Bronze Age tumulus.
- Yew trees are **dioecious**, that is, they may be either male or female. The seeds are called *arils*. They are poisonous if chewed, though the pulp of the fruit is not poisonous.
- **At least 500 churchyards** in England and Wales contain yews that are as old as or older than their churchyards. At least 130 of these trees are estimated to pre-date Christianity.
- **Many ancient yews** are hollow, although still alive. Some have seats placed inside them. A few have hollows large enough for a coach and horses to be driven through them. Hollow yews frequently resume growth after many years of dormancy.
- **The Irish yew**, which also grows in All Hallows' churchyard, has branches that sweep evenly upwards to form a tidy bundle. Irish yews are often clipped and planted to form avenues.
- **The clippings of yews**, although poisonous to animals, are medicinally and commercially valuable because they yield **taxol**, an alkaloid that is effective in the treatment of ovarian cancer.
- Yews were often planted in **boundary hedges**. It is possible that the All Hallows' yew marks an earlier boundary of the churchyard. If we had evidence of an earlier boundary it would be helpful in dating our tree.
- **A yew tree grows very slowly**. The rate of increase in girth is approximately 1 foot in 30 years, but growth may be much slower in yews that are subject to continuous winds from the sea.
- In Shining Cliff Wood, Derbyshire, a hollow yew known as the Betty Kenny Tree was once home to a family. A bough was hewn out to form a child's cradle and this is said to have inspired the nursery rhyme 'Rock-a-bye-baby'.
- **Yew branches** often bend down as they grow and root themselves to form new trunks that then unite with the main trunk.
- Almost half the parish churches in England and Wales planted young yew trees **at the 2000 millennium**.
- **A yew tree** should be kept free from ivy. It benefits from a gently watered-in compost that includes ox-blood.
- After the famous yew in **Gilbert White's garden** at Selworthy was uprooted by a great gale in 1990, a beautiful lute was made, using the tree's dark and light woods in a striped pattern.
- **The age of a yew tree** may be calculated by measuring its girth just below the place where its trunk divides, or at about 4 feet above ground level. The girth measurement is then referred to a table that gives an approximate age for the tree. But it has to be remembered that this is not rocket science: climate and sea winds, the closeness of a particular yew's tree rings (they may vary from 10 to an inch in a young tree to 100 to an inch in a mature specimen) and the yew's habit of becoming dormant for years, are all factors that have to be considered in trying to estimate its age.
- **Ancient yew trees** should be measured every five years.



The All Hallows Yew



Millennium postage stamp:
no 29

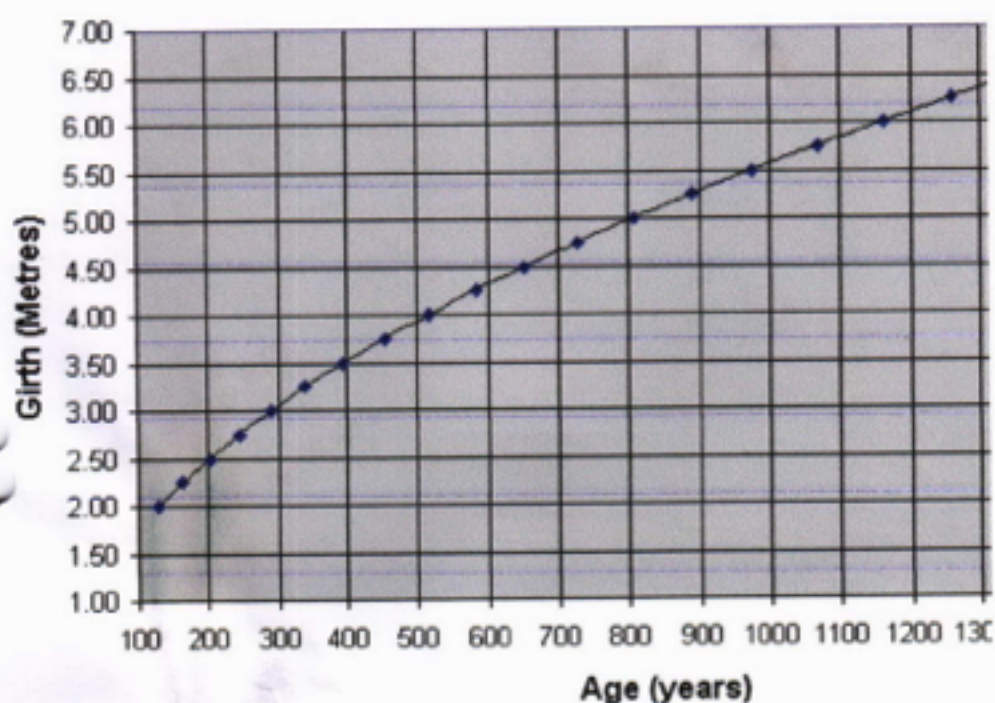


A place to sit . . .



Or to drive through . . .

Estimated age of yew*



* Age Estimate = based on formula published by Tabbush & White (1996)
research on churchyard yews

The objective is to record the smallest girth between ground and 1.5m if you are to compare with other trees and to assess better its age if a single bole. Inevitably many ancient yews are best measured between 0.5m-1m above ground level but this is what you must find out first.

If the tree has an obvious waist below 1.5m this will be the place to measure first and even if not obvious it is always worth trying lower than 1.5m to confirm. When you have found the smallest girth you must also record the height above ground you recorded it i.e. 13ft 4in at 2ft 4in above ground. If you wish to record again at this point in the future it would be useful to make a sketch of the tree in relation to the churchyard indicating at which point you measured from ground level. A photograph of the tape in position will also prove helpful.

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Chris Roberts	
Madeline Capps	

Judith Woodings

Peter Woodings

Anna Antebi

Carmen Henderson

Borlain McCabe

Pam Brunstall

DAVID L. BARNES.

Jean M. Barnes

Emily Bonnet

Debbie Pere Georgina & Bradley Macy

Lucie Balchin

Alex Skegg

Charlie King

Michael Neufeld

Oliver Woodings

Alan McCarthy

Robbie McCarthy

John Elliott

Pam Elliott

Michael Hammond

PHILL ERRETT

J.A. Patterson

P. Elliott

92+ on headcount

92 names on list

✓ Jacqueline Patterson

~~David Collins~~

✓ Dennis Collinson

✓ Mike Patterson

✓ Pat King

added by
D.J.C.

Audrea Young

David Young

Guy Eddy

Jim Daverson

Lily Rose Daverson

Hebe Daverson

Raymond Antebi

Anne Renzi

Donna-Marie Allen

Kirstin Bowden

Darren Bowden

Joanne Bowden

Daniel Bowden

Robert Bowden

9 Aug. 2006

P.T.O.

NEUFELD?

Measuring Form

2011
AugustTree Measuring Online Information Form
from
The Tree Register

General Information

Type of Tree:	ENGLISH YEW	Location	BURIAL GROUND, ALL HALLOWS
Ownership	ALL HALLOWS	Full Address	RINGMORE
County/State	DEVON	Country	UK
Post Code/Zip Code	TQ7 4HJ	Grid Reference	

Other information if known

Planting Date	Planted By
Seed Collection No.	Seed Collector

MEASUREMENTS

Please select all appropriate boxes

Height measurement - no means of calculating this.

Metres ☒ Feet ☒

Was the height estimated?

No ☒

Circumference/Girth measurement of trunk at 1.5m (5ft) above ground level on the highest side of any slope*

Metres 4.16 Feet & Inches

Height the girth was recorded above ground level if less than 1.5m due to burrs, swellings, branches or low fork*

Metres 24cm north side
90cm south side Feet & Inches

Is the girth measurement exaggerated by burrs/swellings/butresses etc?

No ☒ not significantly.

Tree Growth Category*

* Please see advisory notes on the Measuring Tree page

A ☐ B ☒ with some features of diagrams 2 and 3 in category B

CONDITION

Please select all appropriate boxes

General appearance

Excellent ☒

Is the trunk up to 1.5m(5ft)?

Good Single Stem ☐ Healthy, but forks at 24cm on North side and 90cm on South side. Tricky

Is the tree growing on ground which is?

Level ☐ NO

Does the tree lean?

No ☒ YES!

Can you see dead branches?

None or Very Little ☐ VERY FEW

Has it suffered from storm damage?

No Obvious Damage ☒

Has it had any past management?

Nothing Obvious ☐ Removal of extremities of a few dead limbs

Is the tree of local or national historical interest?

Not Sure ☐ - Local interest

Is the tree a local landmark?

Not Sure ☒Is the tree, in your opinion, "remarkable" or unusual in anyway, shape or form?
(If Yes please describe in comments below)No ☐ Its position in a bank makes it difficult to measure. Its total appearance is handsome,

Do you consider the tree to be a "veteran" as defined by English Nature?

Not Sure ☐

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Additional Information

Comments

Some of our 2006 measuring marks disappeared. Using photographs we have been able to make new ones with very small wooden pegs which are totally benign and - we hope - indestructible.

Diane Collinson

Any other information, either historical or interesting about the specimen.

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Please keep you graphic files small using .jpg format
File sizes should be no more than 20-30 Kilobytes.

(August 2006 girth: 4.09 metres)

Diane Colinson
Matt Hunt
Jennifer Hunt
John Bracey
Phil Errett
Meriel Hunt
Jan Deverson
Lily-Rose "
David Bolender

Natalie Hilton
David Waring

Grady Burr
Mike Warr - Bull
Mike Hammond
Ally Warr

Robbie McCarty

Alan McCarty

John McCarty

James Stevenson
Ted Bull Warr

Nail B. W.

John Stevenson

Pat Waring

Wyatt Stephens

Sheldon

David

Joshua

Jackie Taggart

Ann Bracey

Adam Bull
Myndah Beach
Richard Adams

B. N. Cld.

Paul Taggart

Sam Baker

Cliff

Aggie + Martin Hudson

Sandy Hammond



Crowds gathered for the tree-measuring ceremony, which mystified many a passer-by

Mike Wynne-Potter

'Pagan ceremony' creates much confusion

TRAVELLERS through Ringmore, on their way to the beach on Wednesday, August 10, were mystified by what appeared to be Pagan activity taking place in All Hallows churchyard.

Over forty villagers and visitors had gathered for the ritual measuring of the massive English Yew tree which, in the words of Alfred, Lord Tennyson, 'graspest at the stones that name the underlying dead'.

But for how long has

this tree been grasping at the All Hallows gravestones?

That's what members of the Ringmore Historical Society were trying to discover by measuring the tree's girth in accordance with guide lines set by the Ancient Yew Group.

James Stevenson from the society said: 'Is it still growing? Not half!'

The girth of its massive trunk, already known to be between four and five metres, has increased by seven

centimetres since last measured, five years ago to the day.

'Dare I say that some of those who attended appeared to have put on a similar increase?'

In 2006, after the first measuring of this venerable giant, the historical society came up with an age of 'at least 520 years'.

So let's assume that around 1490 John Welywrought, rector of Ringmore at the time, planted the tree during the reign of Henry VII.

This year, Lily-Rose

of Windwood Farm, Ringmore, and three young men from Germany, were among those encouraged to apply nourishing compost to the area surrounding the tree.

The society are now looking forward to measuring the tree in 2016 to see how another five years will affect its growth.



