YEW-NIQUE MAP FOR TREE LOVERS

Thursday 17 March, 2016

With spring walks in mind, The Conservation Foundation has produced a *yew-nique online map* featuring almost 1,000 ancient, venerable and notable yews around the UK as part of its **We Love Yew** campaign supported by the Heritage Lottery Fund.

The UK has one of the greatest collections of yew trees in the world, which are widely dispersed around the country. You can discover your local yew heritage on the map at: www.weloveyew.org/map.html

No-one knows for sure just how old yew trees can be, even the experts disagree in the absence of age rings in the oldest yews which are hollow. Many have been measured and recorded over the years and experts are confident of classifying yews as being 'veteran' between 500 and 800 years old or 'ancient' - anything over 800 and possibly several thousand. They are often one of the oldest living things in the landscape, witnessing centuries of changes.

The map helps to highlight the distribution of Britain's yews. Churchyards for example are particularly important sites for Britain's yew tree heritage, holding almost 1,000 of our veteran and ancient yews, of which some 300 are ancient. There are no ancient yews in East Anglia.

The map has been produced with the help of the Ancient Yew Group which has records on veteran, ancient and notable yews across the UK. If you have a yew which should be recorded but isn't found on the map, you can contact the group at www.ancient-yew.org

The Conservation Foundation has been encouraging greater awareness of the long heritage of yew trees since 1987 and gave away almost 8000 cuttings taken from trees estimated to be at least 2000 years old to celebrate the year 2000. In 2015 the Foundation launched *We Love Yew* to help communities celebrate the 800th anniversary of Magna Carta by planting young yews propagated from trees growing at the time of King John. It is thought he brought together his Barons and Bishops to witness the sealing of the Magna Carta under an ancient yew still growing beside the Thames near Runnymead.

The Foundation is currently funding carbon dating of a piece of a yew growing by an ancient well in Wales which may help throw more light on the age of yews, and supporting churches and non-profit groups to care for and celebrate their yew trees.

A limited number of yews propagated from some of our ancient trees are available as part of the campaign to grow on the next generation of Britain's ancient yew heritage. For details contact info@conservationfoundation.co.uk

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