

# Would you believe! Currahchase yew tree up to 1,200 years old

## Poisonous to horses and cattle

AN ancient yew tree in Currahchase Forest Park in county Limerick, is believed to be 1,200 years old.

A scientific study carried out by University of Limerick undergraduates has concluded that there are about 100 Currahchase yew trees that are aged from 300 to 400 years old.

Yew woodland is rare and threatened in a European context and were thought to occupy 75 hectares in Ireland.

In 2006, Coillte took part in an EU project to conserve and enhance the area size of the yew tree.

Coillte's woodland restoration project has increased the extent of yew woodland by a further 46 hectares more than a 50% increase nationally.

In Currahchase, there are two to three acres of yew.

Brendan Lally, forest manager at Currahchase, told the Limerick Post that these trees would be considered among the oldest in Ireland and they have priority conservation status.

He declared: "They are an important part of our biodiversity and are part of the forest parks natural attractions".

After the discovery of the ages of the trees, non-Irish species were removed from the proximity of the yews to allow other yew to be planted and so far, some

4,000 have been put in place.

"We isolated an area of 12 acres to encourage natural regeneration of the yew trees," said Lally.

The Irish yew tree is an evergreen and is commonly planted in cemeteries, as graveyards and monastery grounds were the only enclosed places where

the yew, which is poisonous to horses and cattle, could be safely grown. The yew is a slow grower and grows to a height of over 30 feet.

The Currahchase yew trees are located at the entrance barrier on the left hand side entering the forest park and they will be fully signposted by

Christmas.

Currahchase House in the park was the birthplace of poet and author Aubrey de Vere. The house was burned down by an accidental fire in 1941 and the ruin remains to this day which is a curiosity to day-trippers and visitors to the park.



Brendan Lally, Forest Park manager, Currahchase, standing beside one of the ancient yew trees.