

The Yew Tree

Words and Tune: Maria Cunningham

Five hundred years I've stood beside the old church wall
The Yew Tree painted bright upon the board
The creaking of my sign proclaims my name to all
And a welcome to all those who roam abroad
In winter storms and gales, I've a shelter for the night
Good company and songs around the fire
The jugs of foaming ale have often filled the tankards bright
I've seen the lives of farmer, sailor and of squire

*And the hands of the clock keep turning
With the passing of the years
What tales I could tell to you
If my voice could reach your ears*

High above my roof soars the church's noble tower
For eight hundred years she's watched the plight of man
And her bells ring out in glory and the tenor marks the hours
Of the life and death of every human span
Raised up to the heavens, stone on heavy stone
The masons skill in every leaf and face
I've heard the sinner humbled, his wrong ways to atone
The congregation sing of worship and of praise

In the churchyard stands the ancient twisted tree
The yew whose name the inn takes for its own
I watched the building of that inn, likewise the church beside of me
For I was here long years before, and so well grown
I saw the ancient priesthood, in their robes of white
With their knives and altars made of stone
And trysting lovers down the ages come in the dark at night
To hide within my arms, and be alone

Now you've heard our story, the inn, the church, the yew
In England's villages the tale is much the same
The kings and queens and statesmen, they were but few
History books record their glory and their gain
But we are living history, the lives of common folk
Have left their mark upon our wood and stone
We hold the love and laughter, the anguish and the hope
We are the life, the breath, the sinew, flesh and bone