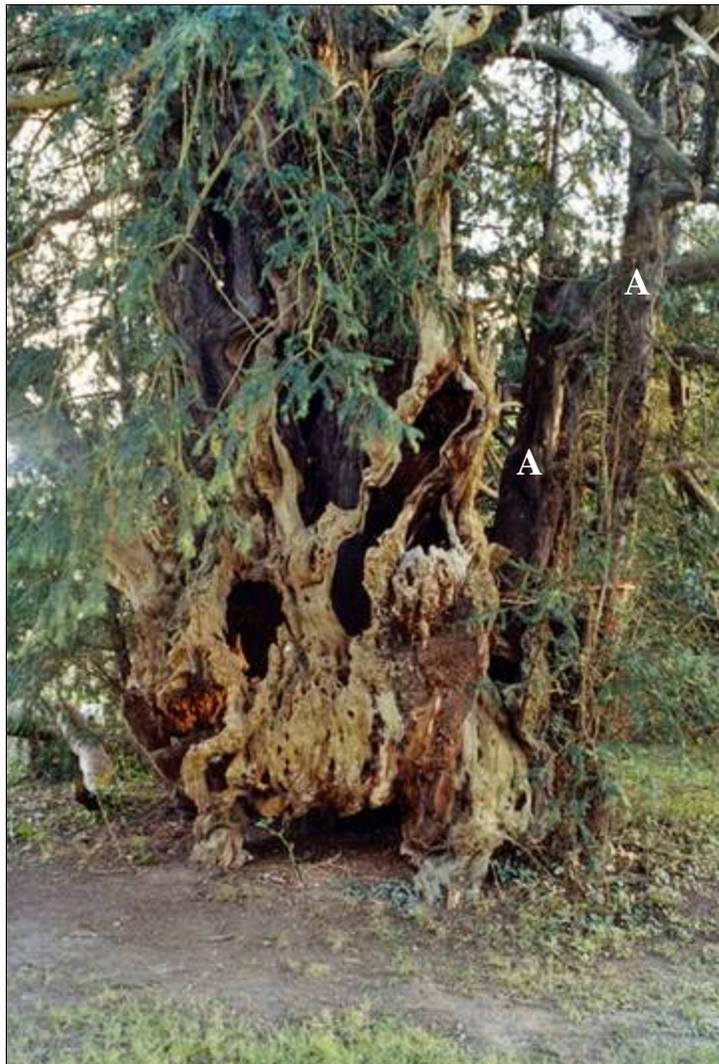


Bettws Newydd's 'fine yew-trees' were first noted in the *Topographical Dictionary of England* of 1848. There are three of them, though the account below, taken from the 1877 *Gardner's Chronicle*, noted only two. In spite of this error, the account is exceptional for its detailed sketch and description of Bettws Newydd's most famed yew.

‘Ancient Resuscitated Yew at Bettws Newydd - The gigantic old Yew, of which the base is here illustrated, is one of two now growing in the churchyard of Bettws Newydd, between Abergavenny and Usk

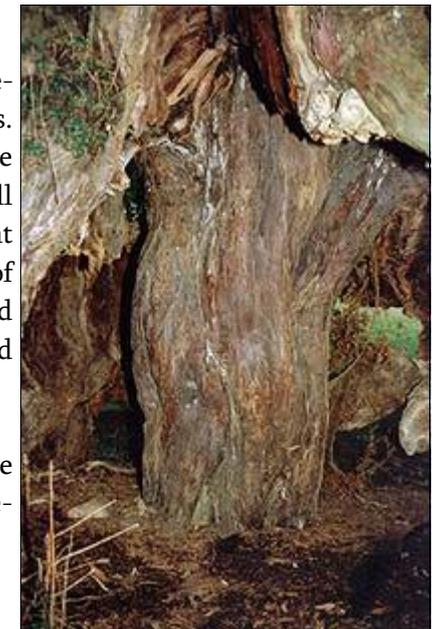


in Monmouthshire. The original sketch was made by the writer last autumn during the meeting of the Cambrian Association in Monmouthshire. The two great Yews at Bettws Newydd are considered remarkably large even in this district, where Yews of great size are common. The tree illustrated is 30 feet 6 inches in circumference at 5 feet from the ground, and is not only remarkable on account of its great size, but for its singular regrowth or resuscitation from within. The internal stem was probably at first an adventitious descending root, now it is a columnar stem of great size, which serves to support and feed the battered and time-riven old shell’.

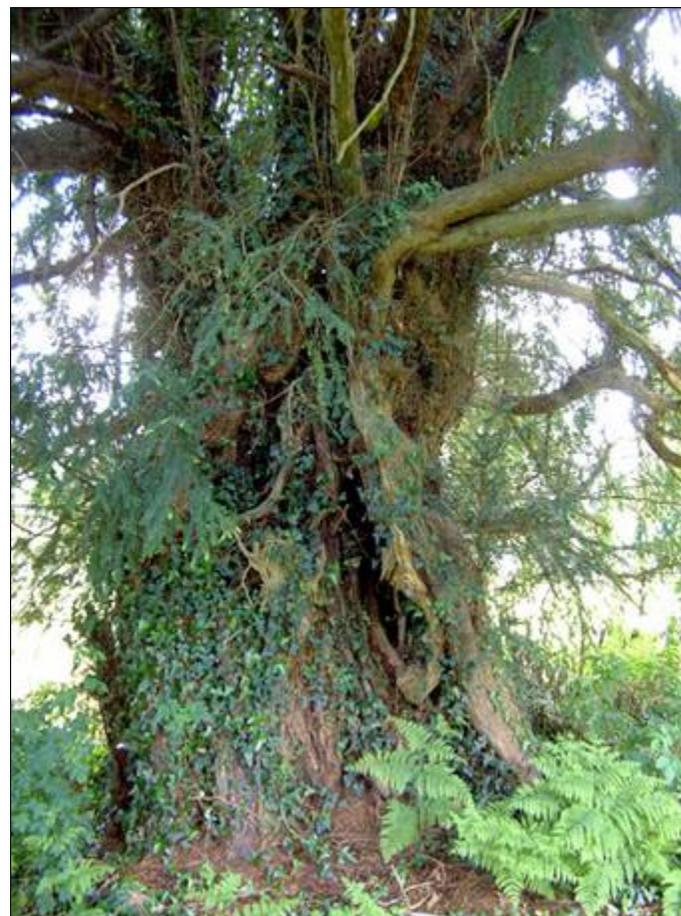


The value of this sketch is the evidence it provides of the extremely slow decomposition rate of dead sapwood, which appears little changed in 125 years. New branches, not seen in the 1877 sketch, have since begun to form at the outer margins of the shell (A). In a few hundred years time when the shell has finally decayed, this great ancient yew will take on the entirely different appearance of several trunks growing close to each other. The largest of these will be provided by its internal stem (right), which will be surrounded for many more decades, possibly even centuries, by the decaying sapwood shell.

Girth in 1877 was 30' 6" at the ground. In 1977 *Welsh Timber Trees* by Hyde and Harrison, a girth of 31' was recorded. Girth of the internal stem was recorded in the 1990s by Fergus Kinmonth as 7' 6" at 3'.



This fine male specimen grows by the perimeter wall N of the church. On decaying branches and beneath the yew were large quantities of the chicken of the woods bracket fungus - *laetiporus sulphureus*. Other branches dip to the ground and some have become embedded. In 1997 girth was 19' 7" at 3' and exactly 20' at 5'.



The 3rd tree (right), also male, grows on the east side. It leans slightly towards the church, with its ivy covered bole a confusion of growth and hollows to a height of about 10', where it divides into many branches. In 1997 the hollows were stuffed with churchyard waste and old newspapers, and the ground beneath was a store for dried grass. This had been removed by 2000, when a girth of 21' 1" at 1' and 22' at 3' (through twiggy growth), was recorded.