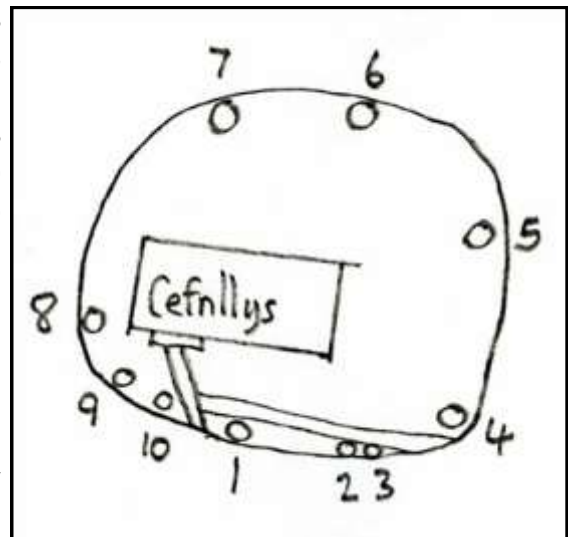


A signpost in the car park points towards Cefnlllys Castle. This is also the way to the church, a walk of several hundred yards across fields. The earliest documentary evidence of this church site dates from 1291, but there are indicators that its origins may be in the 10th or 11th century, for example its dedication to St Michael, the circular shape of the churchyard and its boundary marked by old yews.



I recorded tree 1 in 1998 as male, with a girth of 16' at 5'. It was photographed by Geoff Garlick in 2006 and a year later by David Alderman after it was burned down.



In 1998 I considered trees 2 and 3 to be younger trees and took no further detail. Paul Wood in 2017 makes a case for the two trees possibly having a common origin. Large amounts of dead and dying wood was in evidence, suggesting that here might have been a large tree that has regrown after losing most of its original material. Tree 2 has a thin shell of live wood with much old white sapwood visible all over the bole. This white wood was also sticking out of the bank between yews 2 and 3. Yew 3, again a mixture of living and dying wood, had two leading limbs from a short bole showing signs of stress, with one had broken off under the weight of the dead wood. This tree he thought will become vulnerable in bad weather to toppling over since the did not seem to be enough live wood to anchor it to the ground.



Tree 2

Tree 3



I photographed tree 4 in 2012. It is a distinctive twin trunked yew growing ESE of the church.



Its two stems were recorded as individual trees by the Tree Register in 2007 - with girths of 374 and 302cm at 1.5m. They observed that each trunk was of a similar girth to one of the smaller trees in the churchyard and suggested that they might have been planted originally as separate individual trees.

Experience of looking at hundreds of old yews suggests that this is one tree.

In 2017, when Paul Wood took these photos, the yew appeared in good health with deep green foliage that was plentiful but not thick. A lot of small dead branches had been cut back and protruded from the bole, which was very scaly with many small areas of fungus.





Tree 5 is male. I considered it to be of unhealthy appearance in 1998, but these 2012 photos show renewed vigour. There is a badger sett beneath the tree, and the space was also being used to store composting grasses. Girth in 1998 was approximately 22' at 5'. In September 2005 Russell Cleaver described it as the 'largest girthed yew at this site, multi-stemmed, measured 6.63m (21' 9") at 1.1m. Bushy re-growth, difficult to measure'.



In November 2017 Paul Wood noted that the badger sett was still there, as was the mound of composting grasses and much rubbish. Twiggy growth on low branches meant measurement was impossible. The yew had much healthy looking foliage, but this was not particularly thick. He was unable to get close to the centre of the tree, with only its south side relatively clear.





Tree 6 is female with a girth of 18' 4" at 5' in 1998. I photographed the tree in 2012. The photo (bottom right) from Paul wood in 2017 shows the encroachment of ivy.

In September 2005 Russell Cleaver described an 'open grown canopy, short, squat bole, branches feathered to the ground. Girth 5.29m (17' 4") at 0.65m.



November 2017: Paul Wood described the yew as difficult to approach with low branches resting on the ground. Of the three veterans in the churchyard, he considered this female to be the healthiest. The bole was reached through brambles and ivy, which surrounded this yew and was beginning to grow into the tree. Many established limbs at ground level were noted on its south side but none on the north side, where they have been removed, presumably to avoid them hanging over into the field where cattle were grazing. No hollowing was noted.



Tree 7 on the plan grows north of the church. It illustrates poor management in a churchyard where a veteran has already burned down. This churchyard seems to be much visited at night, with night lights placed in some of the branches. It seems only a matter of time before another tree is lost.

Though of relatively small girth, a large hollowed out branch rises from the centre, suggesting a hollow bole. In 2012 (left) the area was being used to store chairs and other wood. Since it was fire that destroyed a veteran here some years earlier the church warden was advised to remove this bonfire material. The other photos were taken by Paul Wood in 2017 who wrote the following description:



Old furniture and rubbish are still to be found on its eastern side. Its western side was inaccessible because of overgrown elder and brambles while the southern side was blocked by a mound of grass, rotten wood, brambles and general rubbish. BUT - we forced a path through and found a tree in surprisingly good condition. All the trees at Cefynllys have varying amounts of lichen but this one was plastered with it. The bole is well fluted and a gap has now opened on the south side at ground level and shows that it is beginning to hollow. Many small branches have been removed from various points on a bole which is quite scaly in appearance and was purplish/reddish at the time of the visit. The tree is quite squat and appeared to have suffered a little storm damage at about 12'/15' up on its south side. A small amount of ivy was beginning to climb into it.

Girth was recorded as 12' 0" (366cm) at 1' and 12' 8" (386cm) at 2'.

