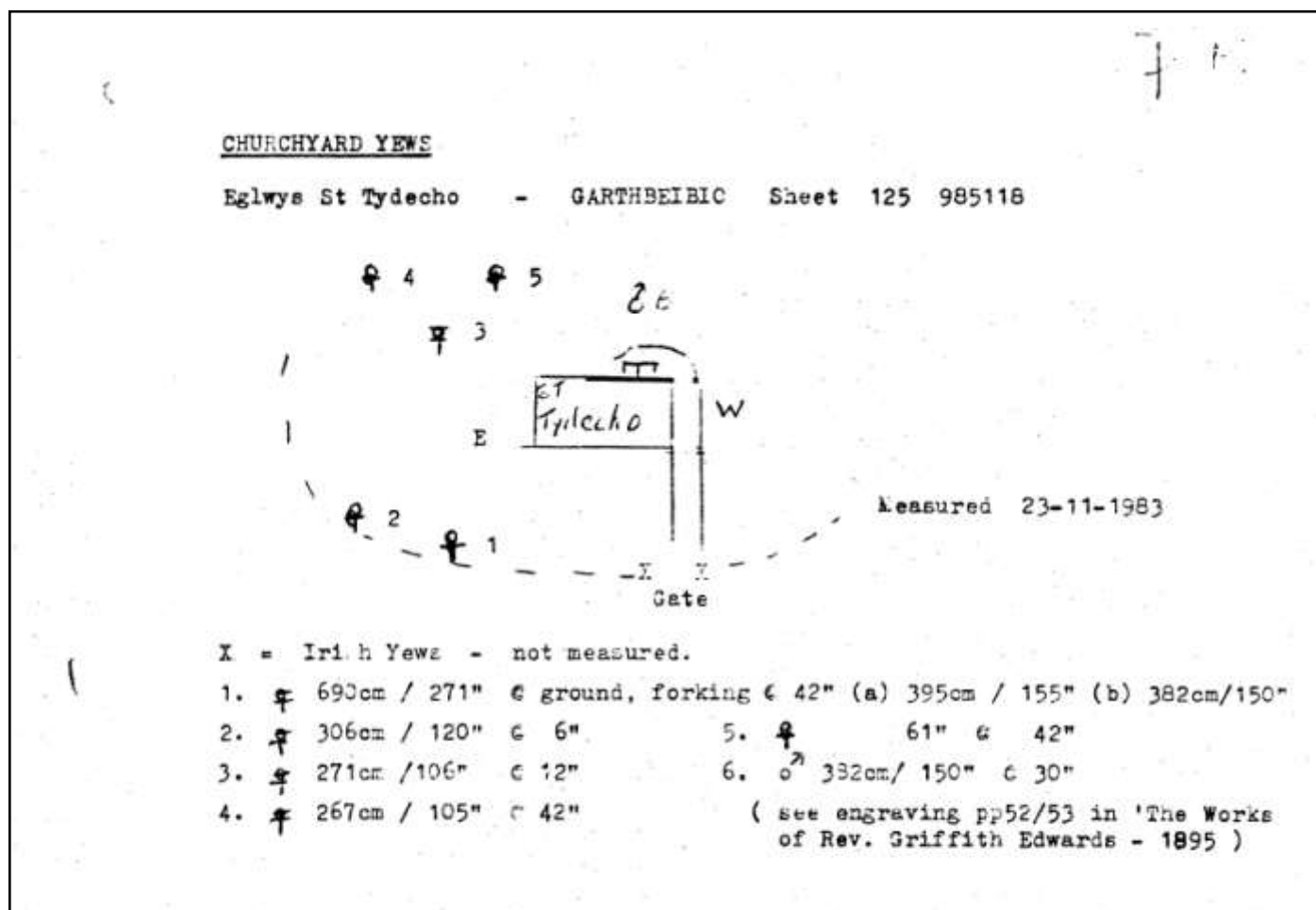


In the 1881 *Collections Historical & Archaeological Relating to Montgomeryshire, Volume 4* is found the following account: 'The church stands on a piece of ground above the village, from which a fine view may be had of the vale below. Our ancestors delighted in building their temples on slightly elevated ground, that they might worship their God according to the fashion of their forefathers, the Druids, "in the face of the sun and the eye of light," and this feeling was so strong in them that they had determined, (so tradition relates), to build their temple on the Foel, on the opposite side of the hill next facing the village; but neither peace nor prosperity attended the work, for all done during the day was removed in the night to the spot where the church now stands; therefore the church was built on its present site, because it was believed to be the spot where God desired to be worshipped. Formerly the rejected site on the Foel was distinguished by a yew tree which grew there. This yew tree was accidentally burnt at the roasting of a kid on celebrating the jubilee of George the Third's accession, and it is worth mentioning that the kid was taken out of a herd of goats that were depasturing on the side of the Ffridd'.

In 1946 two big yews were described in Vaughan Cornish's *The Churchyard Yew and Immortality*, 'one in front of S. porch, the other on N. side of church'.

Reg Wheeler's 1983 plan only shows one yew of great size, tree 1 on the north side. There are several smaller girthed yews on the south side and it is possible that tree 6 was the one described to Cornish as a big yew 'in front of the south porch'.



## One tree or two?

When I visited in 1999, an entry in the Gazetteer in *The Sacred Yew* told me that I would find a very aged yew on the north side of the church. Without giving it any further thought I recorded this as a twin trunked female growing from a bole of about 3'. One trunk was very fluted with many angled branches, while the other subdivided at 10', adding a further substantial branch. An unusual feature is the twisting nature of part of the fluting. Wood also flowed over the memorial stones of Huw and Mary Dolyman, who died in 1790 and 1796, and whose stones have leaned against the yew for a very long time. They will eventually be completely swallowed up as new wood is laid down. Girth was in the region of 22'.



The photos below were taken by Paul Wood in 2016. He considers that these twin trunks might be two separate trees and worthy of further study. He recorded a girth of 23' 0" (7.01m) around both trunks at the ground. He reported that much twiggy growth covered the east side of the tree and that there were uneven leaders in the canopy, with the north side of the yew heavy with growth while the rest of the canopy had much open space, quite possibly caused by weather, since none of the exposed broken limbs looked sawn. The tree appeared to be thriving with no issues.





Paul Wood also recorded Garthbeibio's younger yews. Below, left to right, are trees 2, 3 and 4.



Tree 2 was recorded by Reg Wheeler in 1983 with a girth of 306cm - 10' 0" at 6". In 2016 it was not possible to measure, being virtually hidden by the gravestone leant against it and with dense twigggy growth on the east and south sides of the tree. There was a small amount of ivy on the north side. As with all the yews here, foliage was remarkably green and the tree appeared to be growing well.

Tree 3 was recorded by Reg Wheeler in 1983 with a girth of 271cm - 8' 10" at 1'. In 2016 there was thick twigggy growth on its east and south sides down to the ground making measurement impossible. Thin short twigggy growth covered the rest of the bole on its other sides The curving bank this yew sits on suggests that this might be on the original churchyard boundary before its current form.

Tree 4 was recorded by Reg Wheeler in 1983 with a girth of 267cm - 8' 9" at 3' 6". In 2016 the yew was covered in long thick twigggy growth on its east and south side with short stubby twigggy growth on the rest of the bole. He was a good example along with trees 2 and 3 of how the sun's warmth accelerates and stimulates the growth of the tree. It could not be measured because of twigggy growth.

Tree 5 was measured by Reg Wheeler in 1983 with a girth of 5' 1" at 3' 6". The tree is very upright and straight, almost as if trained to be this way. A girth of exactly 7' (2.13m) at the ground was recorded. This was perhaps exaggerated by a little twigggy growth, which is thick on the east side of the tree, its only side exposed to the sun.

Yew 5



Yew 6



Yew 6



Yew 6 is almost certainly the 2nd 'big yew' described in 1946. Measured by Reg Wheeler in 1983 it had a girth of 12' 6" (382cm) at 2' 6". In 2016 Paul Wood measured at the root crown to obtain its smallest girth and recorded 11' 10" (3.61m).

Close scrutiny of the living and dying parts of the tree suggest that this has been larger girthed, possibly as large as 15'/16'. The tree is growing well, with a full green canopy. This appears to be the only yew to be regularly cut back, perhaps to allow for easier access to the church entrance, which is only a few metres north of the tree.



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