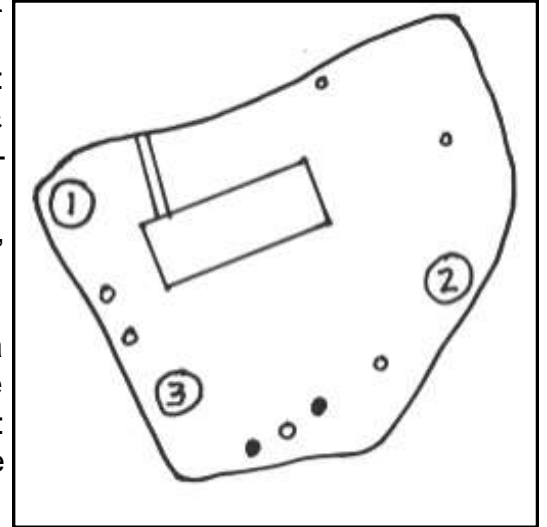


Llanspyddid's oldest yew grows within touching distance of an old trunk road, now the A40, at a site that would have been well known to travellers hundreds of years ago. In 1775 Rev Sir John Cullum travelled from nearby Penpont chapel and recorded his journey with these words: 'A little further, by the Road-side is a Church embosomed in a Grove of the noblest Yews I ever saw'.

Travelling the same route in 1811 Thomas Gery Cullum wrote: '...at Llanspyddid, the Yew Trees are of uncommon magnitude & completely surround the Church Yard, producing a more venerable and solemn Gloom than I ever remember to have seen'.

The above accounts are taken from the Cullum family papers, found in the Suffolk Record Office E2/44/2.2 and E/2/44/50-51.

Lewis's *Topographical Dictionary of Wales* of 1834 described a 'churchyard planted with yew trees, several of which have attained a prodigious growth, but are now beginning to decay: one of these, which are considered to be some of the finest in the county, is 27' in girth'.



In 1998 and 2000 the churchyard was so overgrown that this (tree 1) was the only yew that that could be approached. It has three main areas of growth from a low bole, with many smaller upright branches. Girth was about 27' 6". The photos were taken in 2006.





Paul Wood photographed the tree in 2017





By the time of my 2006 visit, the churchyard had been cleared, revealing these two yew stumps with girths of 19' and 15'. I was informed that they had been felled about 25 years earlier, with the young tree planted as their replacement.



At the same time an unsuccessful attempt was made to fell tree 3 (right). This has now sprouted new growth from one side of the 14' girthed stump and was therefore alive when felled. It raises the question of whether the other two were also alive and why it was considered necessary to fell them.



Tree 2 (left) had a girth of about 19', while two of the remaining yews had girths of about 14'.