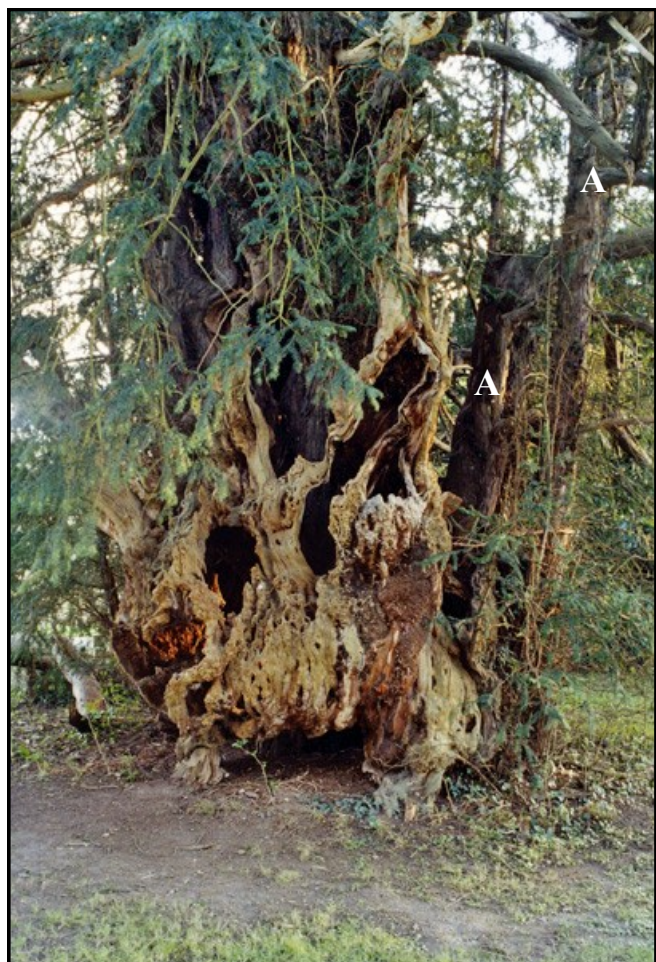


Bettws Newydd's 'fine yew-trees' were first noted in the *Topographical Dictionary of England* of 1848. There are three, though the account below, taken from the 1877 *Gardner's Chronicle*, noted only two. In spite of this omission, the account is exceptional for its detailed sketch and description of 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 sapwood has finally decayed, this great ancient yew will take on the entirely different appearance of several trunks growing close to each other, but all connected. The largest of these will be provided by its internal stem (below right), which will be surrounded for many more decades by the decaying sapwood shell.



In 1977 *Welsh Timber Trees* by Hyde and Harrison, a girth of 31' was recorded for the yew.

In 1983 Allen Meredith recorded a girth of 33' 0" at 3'.

Internal stem

1983: Girth of 6' 8" at 3' - Allen Meredith

1998: Girth of 7' 6" at 3' - Fergus Kinmonth

2014: Girth of 6' 5" at 1' and 6' 3" at 6" - Peter Norton

2025: Girth of 6' 6½" at 1' and 6' 5" at 6" - Tim Hills



Photos 1997

1997: This fine male specimen grows by the perimeter wall north of the church. On decaying branches and beneath the yew were large quantities of laetiporus sulphurous, commonly known as the chicken of the woods bracket fungus. Other branches dip to the ground and some have become embedded.



The following girths have been recorded:

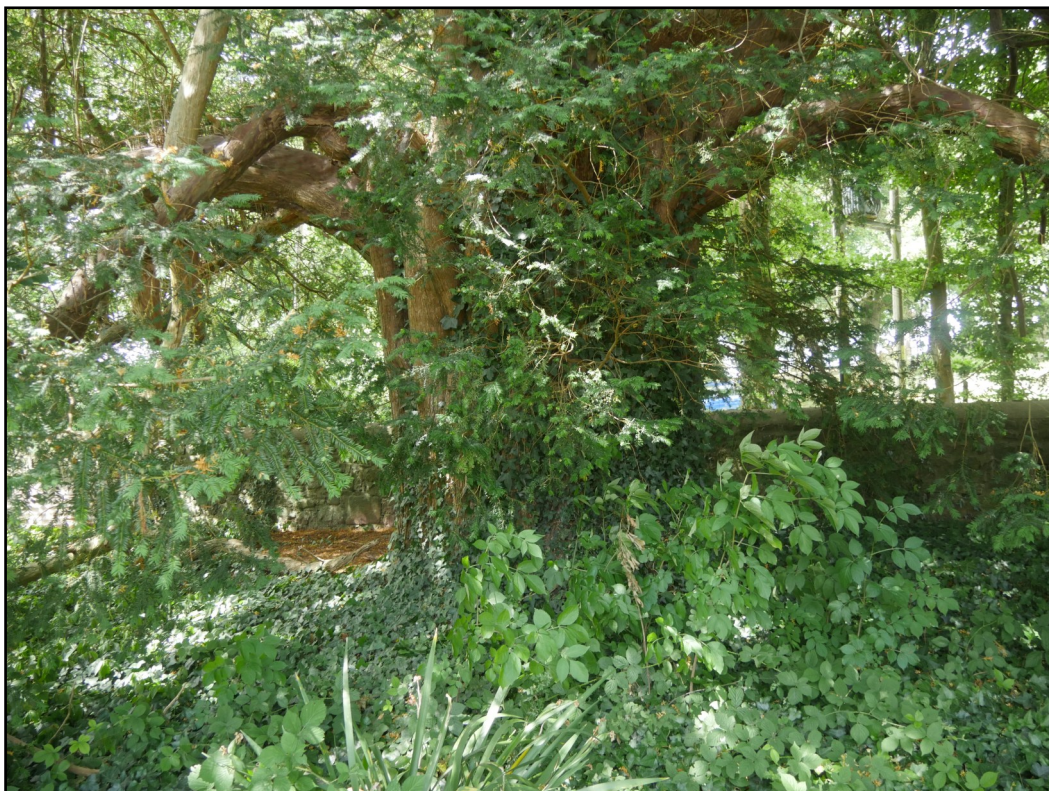
1983: 20' 0" at 4' - Meredith

2000: 19' 7" at 3' and 20' 0" at 5' - Hills

2014: 19' 11" at 3' and 20' 6" at 5' - Norton

2025: 20' 7" at 3' over some ivy - Hills

The 2025 visit was to a less approachable yew, almost hidden in undergrowth and with sections of its trunk covered in ivy. Foliage was thick and green throughout.



2000: The 3rd tree, 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. It was possible to measure the tree, with girths of 21' 1", keeping the tape a constant 1' above the ground and 22' 0" at 3' (through twiggy growth).

The yew was measured in 1983 by Allen Meredith, who recorded 22' 4" at about 4'.



2025: Low growth prevented further measurement of this complex tree. Foliage was thick and very green, though there was much leaf gall.

