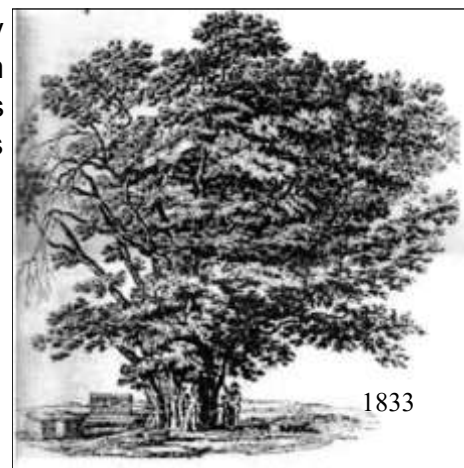


1813: William Barker Daniel wrote: 'In the churchyard at Gresford in this County are growing nineteen Yew Trees. The dimensions of one of them was taken in May 1808, and it is mentioned as a most singular Vegetable Production—The circumference of the Body (or bole) of this said Yew Tree, one foot from the ground, is the enormous size of seven yards eighteen inches; at five feet from the ground, is nine yards nine inches; two of the great arms are dead, and two more are following rapidly, yet there still remains a sound Body, and seven large Arms that are still in a thriving state; and probably will survive another Hundred Years, before it will drop amongst the Graves of the Dead, which it has so many Centuries shaded'. *Rural Sports*

1836: J.E.B. Bowman, writer and Fellow of the Linnean Society described the yew as having 'seven main branches, most of them being divided in their upper reaches into several smaller ones..... It is a male tree, in good condition, and is reputed to be the finest of its species in Wales'.



His measurements of 1836 can be compared with those made in 1878 by Sir Robert Christison

	<u>1836</u>	<u>1878</u>
Ground	264" (22')	268.25" (22' 4¼")
At 2'	276" (23')	297" (24' 9")
At 4'	318" (26' 6")	338.25" (28' 2¼")
At 5'4"	348" (29")	365" (30' 5")

1873: The Gresford Yew produced this **extraordinary** response to an article by Mr Lee in the 'May 1873 number of SCIENCE-GOSSIP'. "I cannot submit to his, or to any other man's theory, that the Gresford Yew, about which we have heard so much from time to time, is a single tree. I had examined this tree, perfectly unprejudiced, before I had read anything about its supposed age, and antiquity, and I then came to the conclusion, which I have not yet seen cause to alter, that this tree is in reality three trees; i.e., three young shrubs have many years since been planted, or sprang from seeds, in close proximity; these afterwards joined in the (bole) stem. And now form what appears at first sight to be one stem; but if it is carefully examined, it will be seen, where the joinings take place, this union can be traced from the base upwards into the branches. Again, there can be but little doubt that all the trees, of which there are many in Gresford churchyard (now very old), were all planted at one and the same time: the reason why the others have but small stems, in comparison to the "old one," so called, is, that they are single trees; in this only consists the difference. If the Gresford yew is ever unfortunately cut down, so as to divide the stem horizontally, it will then be discovered, beyond the slightest doubt, that there are three perfect trees, instead of one, as now is supposed."

Baxter, in *The Eternal Yew* (1992) described it as 'one of the best known trees in Britain, with much speculation about its age'. He noted estimates ranging from 850 to 1,734 years based on 'girth, ring counts from bore holes or decayed wood and imaginative perception'.

1999: Little seems to have changed in 170 years, except for the construction of a high, circular fence around the tree. In addition wire netting had been stretched across some of the holes. The centre of the yew appeared to consist of old and decaying material mixed with brick and concrete slabs. From the bole, which is remarkably free of twiggy growth, I counted at least 8 substantial branches leaning slightly outwards all around the tree, two almost at right angles. One hundred and sixty six years on from Bowman's description, the tree appears to be gaining rather than losing. Here is a classic example of the slow pace of change in an old yew tree.

