

1998: Gwytherin village is in a remote location, in an area steeped in history and conjecture, with some believing St Winifred to be buried here. The possibility of an ancient nunnery on a site adjoining the church has been researched, and further along the road is the known site of an ancient monastery. The present church, largely rebuilt in the 19th century, is in an oval churchyard, along with three old yews and a line of standing stones thought to be from the Bronze Age or earlier. A 4th younger yew also grows here



All the yews are female. Pre-Christian stones lead directly towards this tree which grows on a mound west of the church. It is tall and healthy looking with many substantial branches.

In 1984 Reg Wheeler, Allen Meredith and Andrew Moreton visited. Wheeler recorded a girth of 769cm (25' 3") at 40cm. Meredith recorded 28' 7" (871cm) at 4'.

In 1998 I recorded approximately 29'.

The tree is seen here in 1885 and in 1998.



The youngest of the 3 ancients grows SW of the church. Reg Wheeler recorded a girth of 535cm (17' 7") at the ground in 1984, and noted 'Polyporus Sulphureus fungi fruit bracket inside hollow trunk'. At the same visit Meredith recorded 16' 11" (516cm) at 4'.

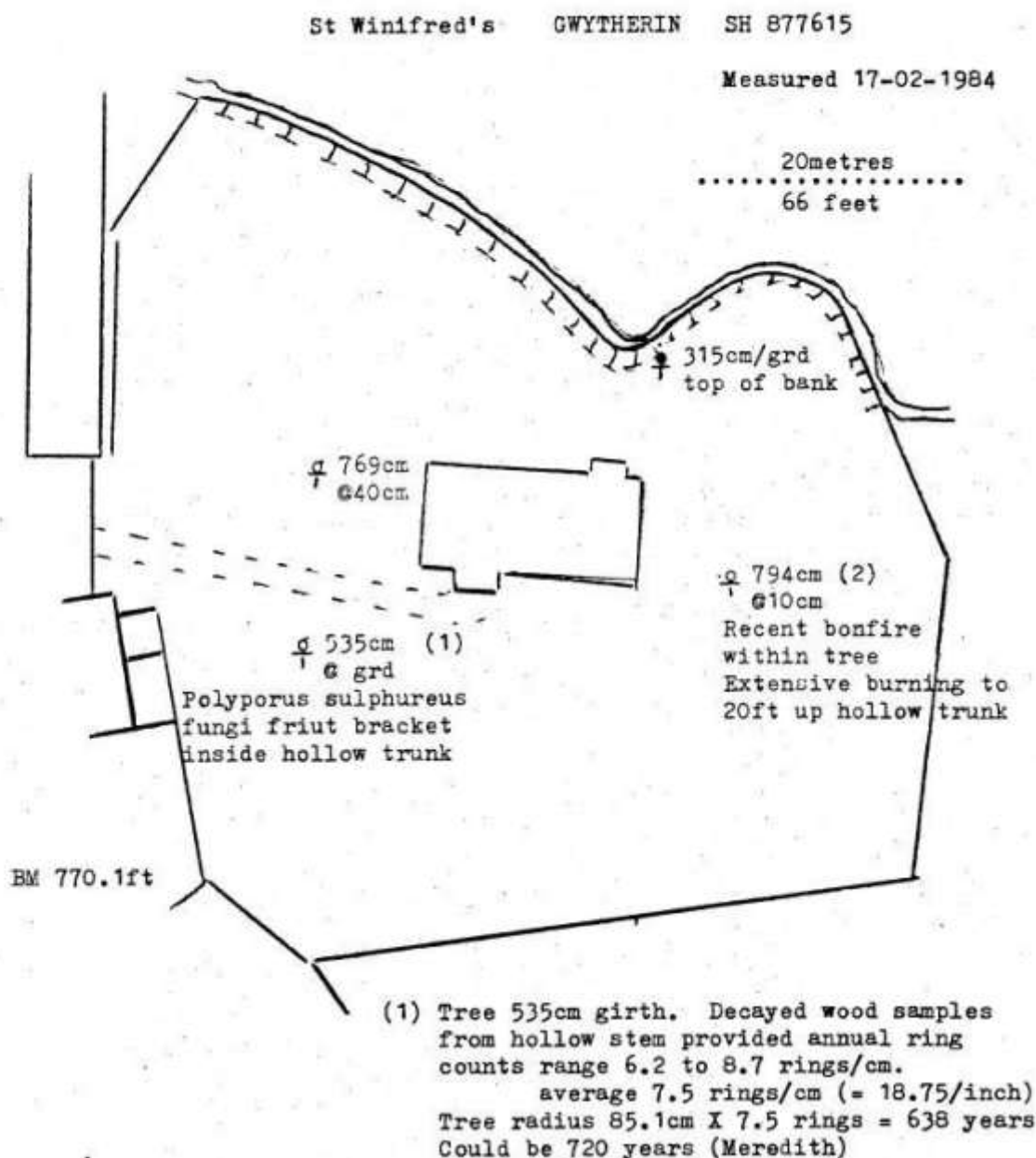


'At about 5 o'clock on the 3rd December 1983 one of the largest yews at the east end caught fire, this was fortunately spotted by Mr Williams who lives close by, both Mr and Mrs Williams could not put out the fire and the fire brigade was called. The tree burned fiercely for 1 and a half hours, its hollow trunk acting as a chimney. Everyone was dismayed, thinking that it would be destroyed. But next morning, looking from our front door, the tree looked the same as ever. However when I went to see it the inside of the trunk was black. The fire was thought to have started by children playing in the churchyard.'

This tree, seen here in 1998, consists of two hollowed out fragments. A girth of 794cm (26' 1") at 10cm was recorded by Reg Wheeler in 1984. At the same visit Meredith recorded a girth of 28' 8" (874cm) at the base. In 1998 the tree was unmeasurable.



Gwytherin



- (2) 'Green' wood samples from inside burnt pieces provided ring counts range 4.7 to 9.4 rings/cm
average 6/cm = 15/inch
Estimated age 715 years.
It will be interesting to see if burning will eliminate fungi from this tree or whether health will improve. It is 'sound' already though hollow - burning may damage healthy tissue to provide easier reestablishment of fungi in due course.

(1) and (2) Together these trees provide a good opportunity to study the effect of burning or non-treatment of fungi attack. The latter is sometimes more effective. Leave (1) 'untreated' to compare with (2) annually for (say) 5 years when health assessment may determine effectiveness of either course.

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