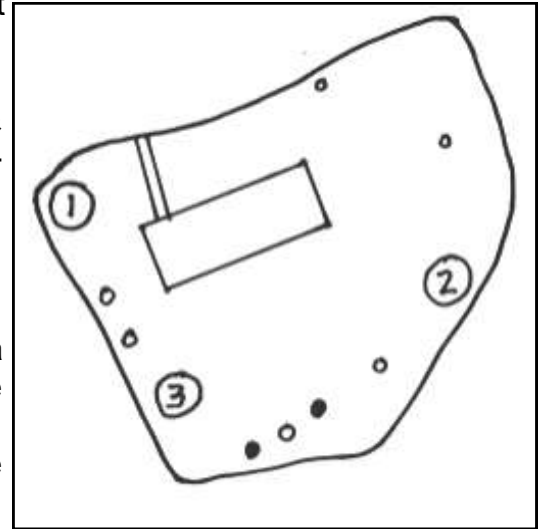


Llanspyddid's oldest yew grows within touching distance of an old trunk road, now the A40, at a site that would have been well known to travellers hundreds of years ago. In 1775 Rev Sir John Cullum travelled from nearby Penpont chapel and recorded his journey with these words: 'A little further, by the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



Cambrian Archaeological Association p334 (1853): "and they would then proceed to Llanspyddid..... the principal interest of the place arose from its very splendid yew trees, of great age and quite unrivalled in this county."

Archaeological Cambrensis of 1861: "The churchyard at Llanspyddid, two miles south-west from Brecon, is well known, not only for its beautiful situation on the banks of the Usk, but also for its encircling corona of immense yew-trees, thirteen in number, some of the finest in Wales. The solemn and yet soothing effect of this perpetual verdure and shade is indescribably attractive. Whoever has seen it will not forget this lovely spot."

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'.