

An early medieval origin is thought likely for this church. In 1862, Query 113 to the the Cambrian Archaeological Association asked: 'What is the greatest number of old yew trees now standing in any churchyard in Wales?' The answer given was: 'In the churchyard of Garth Brengy, near Brecon, there are now standing thirty-three old yew trees forming portions of a double line which once surrounded the church; and they seem from two hundred to three hundred years old'.

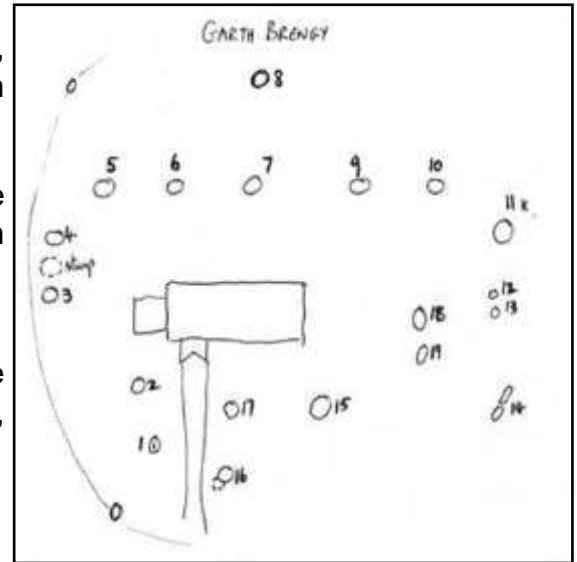
About a third of that number has since been lost. A recent development is the deconsecration of the grade 2 listed church, with planning permission for the new owners to convert it to a detached house with an acre of outside space. It is understood that at the moment (2016) the churchyard at the front will continue to be maintained by the diocese with the boundary being a line drawn along the wall on the north side of the church and on to the churchyard boundary at the east and west side.



This means that trees 1, 2, 3, 12, 13, 14, 15, 16, 17, 18 and 19 fall within the diocese area.

Trees 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, 10 and 11 will be within the living area of the church owners.

Fourteen of the nineteen yews are classified as veteran. They are 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 9, 13, 15, 16, 17, 18, 19.



This is another instance where a building receives the legal protection of listed status, while the yews at this significant Welsh churchyard site will have to rely on the goodwill of the owner.

My notes are from 2011, Paul Wood's from 2016.

Tree 1: The original trunk has been shattered and new growth is all on one side of this hollow tree. Girth was about 15' at 1' and 13' 6" at 3'. It has been larger, but probably not by a great amount. In 2016 Paul Wood observed that three quarters of what remains is dead and dying and the living west side of the tree was top heavy with a large branch supported on two small legs of living wood. The tree was in need of stabilization.





Tree 2: A hollow shell with much of its trunk missing. Rotting wood at the ground shows this has been larger girthed.

In 2016 ivy was beginning to envelop the whole tree with three sides well covered to a height of about 10'. Paul Wood considers that the mound the tree sits on might be a long barrow and wonders why this does not appear in any records or correspondence.

2011



2016



2016



2016



2016

Tree 3 (below left) is short and stocky with low growth preventing measurement. Inner heartwood was exposed and the tree will become hollow. Girth estimated as 12'/13'. By 2016 it was totally hidden and inaccessible with thick low growth.

Tree 4 (below right) is columnar with hollowing and internal growth. Girth was about 15' 6" at 1'.



2011



2011

Tree 5: A large portion of this tree has gone. Present girth is about 16' at the ground, but (A) is an exposed internal stem. If it was centrally positioned inside the original tree, girth would have been considerably larger.



Tree 6 - Twiggy growth on the south side, trunk visible on the north side, girth 18' 4" at the ground.



Tree 7 - Horse shoe hollow of a once larger tree.



Tree 8 (left) - it was not possible to get close to the tree.

Tree 9 (right) - columnar with tall upward reaching branches, 16' plus at the ground.

Tree 10 - 10' 8' at 2' (no photo)

Tree 11 - 12' 7' at 3' (no photo)



Tree 12 (left) a small girthed fragment.

Tree 13 (right) hollow shell 11' 3' at 3'.

Paul Wood considers the possibility that 12 and 13, because of their unusual appearance, might be the fragmentary remains of a yew whose girth would have been about 35'. While a low mound was discernible, there were no pieces of rotting wood that would mark a former tree's location. This is perhaps one to consider in the future when technology is cheap enough for us to see what is happening below ground.



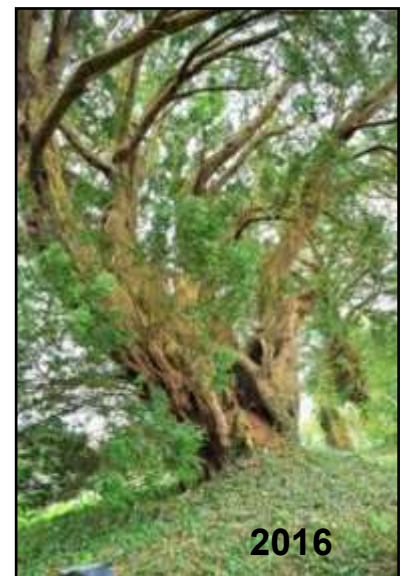
Tree 14 - Appears to be two separate trees, having none of the features to suggest they are the healing halves of an old split tree.



Tree 15 has four main branches above its hollow and a girth of 19' approximately at the ground.

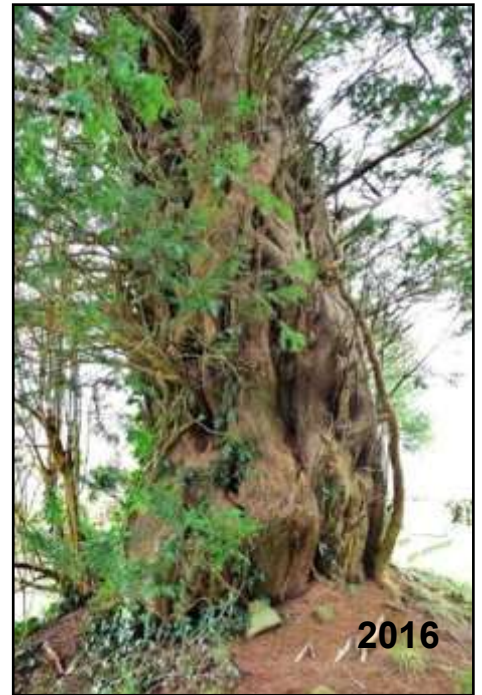


In 2016 Paul Wood noted that the large internal stem has virtually rotted away with many younger stems appearing. All four of the main leader branches appeared to be decaying in the centre and the bole has some twiggy growth establishing itself low down on the east and south sides.



Tree 16 has an internal stem in its hollow and a large stump suggesting these were once two fragments of a very large tree.

In 2016 Paul Wood observed an elongated mound suggesting there might be a long barrow beneath this tree. A small amount of twiggy growth has crept onto the bole and ivy encroaches from the dying stump on the southeast side. A number of young internal stems were visible and some of them are fusing. Internally there was also a lot of dark cubical rot.



Tree 17 (left) Girth close to 15' at the ground. Paul Wood 2016 noted the twiggy growth filling the bole around most of its girth. An opening at the bottom on the south side showed it to be quite hollow with two quite substantial and well rooted internal stems.

Tree 18 (right) Internal growth exposed, it has been larger, now 10' 3" at 3'. Paul Wood 2016 also considers that this is a fragment of a much bigger tree. A raised area on the west of it suggests that it might have been over 20' at some time past. Unfortunately there is no dead wood protruded from the ground.



Tree 19: Girth 15' 2" near the ground. In 2016 Paul Wood noted a large internal stem in a firmly anchored yew with its well developed internal stem fusing with the shell of the current tree. Some twiggy growth on the east of the tree low down and part of the internal stem exposed on the south of the tree appears to be rotting. Otherwise a tree in good health.



2016: A churchyard boundary Yew, not previously recorded, grows immediately to the left of the southern churchyard entrance. Though not of great size, probably no more than 9' in girth, this appears to be a hollow fragment of a once much larger tree.

