

Dryopteris submontana (Fraser-Jenk. & Jermy) Fraser-Jenk.

Rigid Buckler-fern

Native

GB & England: Least Concern

GB Scarce

VC5 Absent; VC6 Lost

This deciduous fern of limestone rocks, walls and crevices, grows in sheltered locations where humus has collected, such as the grikes of limestone pavement. Largely restricted to northwest England, this species caused great excitement in the pteridological world when a single plant was discovered near Bath in 1853 by John E. Vize. Of the four fronds found, one was sent to E. Newman on 19th September, with a letter; both frond and letter are now in **BM**. A second frond was sent to Mr Harrison of Liverpool and John Vize retained the other two! In a short, published communication (Phytologist IV: 1101) the identity of the frond sent to E. Newman was confirmed as *Lastrea rigida*. Within weeks, G.B. Wollaston wrote to Mr Newman (President of The Phytologist Club) suggesting “the possibility, if not probability, that it had been planted there by Potter, a well-known fern-collector, now dead, en route to Cheddar” (Phytologist IV: 1134). White (1912) believed that this species was “doubtless planted” and Roe (1981) more cautiously wrote “probably planted”, however there is no evidence that this was the case. In a paper many years later, Vize (1890) revealed that he had found three plants of *Lastrea rigida*, and that their locality was Hampton Rocks, near Bath. There have been no later records of this species in Somerset, where it was growing far to the south of its current area of distribution: it is largely restricted to northwest England, with a few sites in Derbyshire and Wales.