

## ***Gymnocarpium robertianum* (Hoffm.) Newman     Limestone Fern**

Native

GB & England: Least Concern

GB Scarce

VC5 Rare; VC6 Scarce

A deciduous fern forming patches on open scree, rocks and stonework. Unknown in VC5 until 1981 when it was discovered by Caroline Giddens on a spoil heap in a disused slate quarry at Treborough, where it is increasing. In VC6 the distribution has contracted. Murray (1896) listed nineteenth century records for this species at Leigh Woods, Brockley, Burrington, Friary Wood, Frome, Tor Hole near Chewton Mendip and Ebbor (where it was believed planted); however, there have been no subsequent records at any of these sites. He also included a record at Mells by G. Horner: in 2019 Helena Crouch found three plants on the stonework of a bridge over the disused railway near Mells. In 1894, *G. robertianum* was found on lias ledges in the railway cutting near Saltford, where White (1912) believed it had been “brought along the railway by traffic from some limestone locality”. As a colonist of stonework, it was also recorded by S.T. Dunn on walls below the canal between Bath and Batheaston; found by Miss Roper at Congresbury station, established on the supporting wall of a platform (White, 1912), and seen in 1917 by B.W. Tucker on stonework at Litton Reservoir. There are no later records for these sites, but in the last century this fern has been found at two other post-industrial sites: on walls of an old buddle house (formerly used for storing lead ore) in Biddlecombe, West Horrington, found by Joan Appleyard in 1970 (Willis, 1971), and on the inside walls of a disused lead flue at Priddy Mineries, found by John Boyd in 1987. The stronghold for *Gymnocarpium robertianum* in Somerset, however, remains the upper part of Cheddar Gorge, where it was known to Murray (1896) and White (1912). It is no longer “plentiful” but is locally abundant in several locations on loose scree on both sides of the gorge and also on a wall at Black Rock reserve. Murray and White also listed Cleeve as a location: a small patch is still present in Goblin Combe on lightly shaded scree. In Somerset this species is at the southwest limit of its British distribution.



*Gymnocarpium robertianum* at Treborough Wood (2011). Photo: HJC

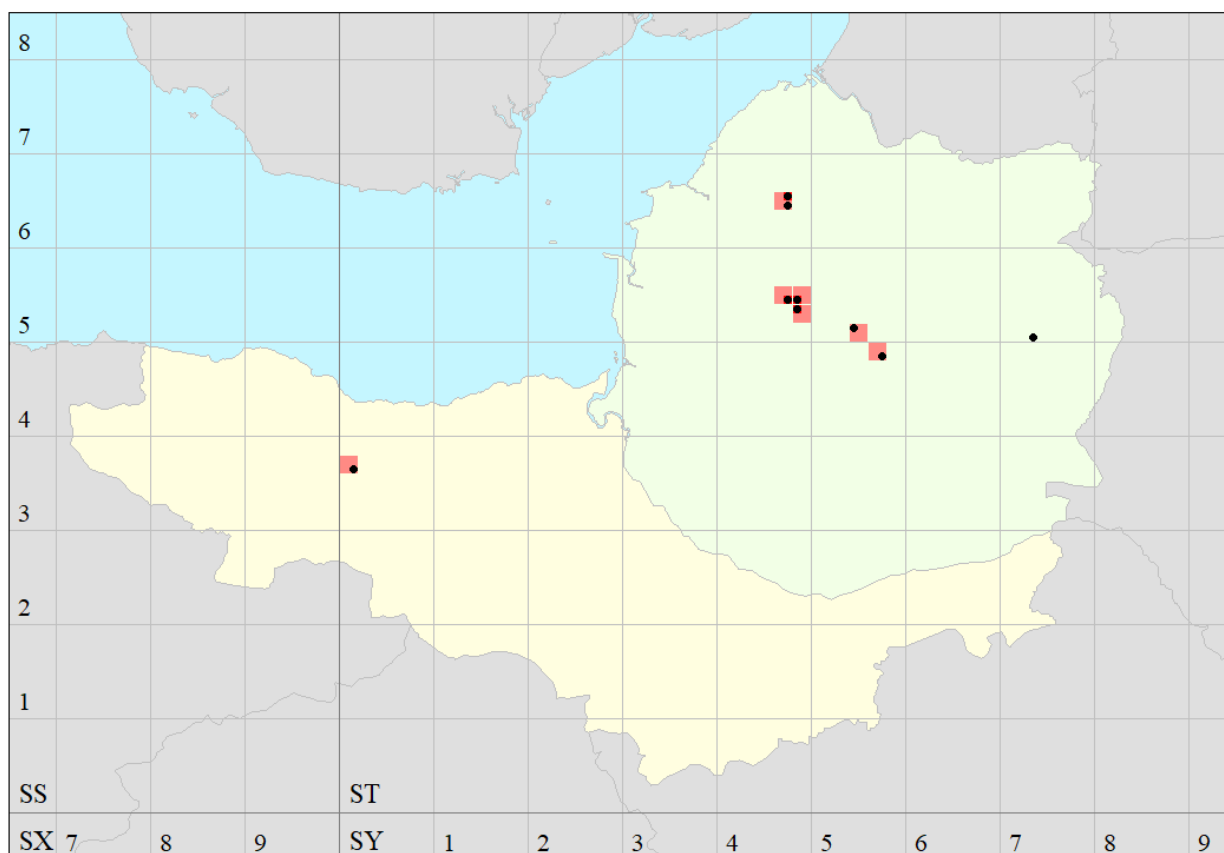
**VC5**

Treborough ST013369 2017 GEL Very healthy population in quarry

**VC6**

Cheddar Gorge	SSSI	ST470541	1997	RFG, EJMcd	30-40 fronds in shade on steep mossy scree
Cheddar Gorge	SSSI	ST47475435	2013	HJC, DEG	Hundreds on stabilised scree below cliff edge
Cheddar Gorge	SSSI	ST47485435	2013	HJC, DEG	Hundreds on stabilised scree below cliff edge
Cheddar Gorge	SSSI	ST47485436	2016	HJC, DEG	Hundreds on stabilised scree below cliff edge
Cheddar Gorge	SSSI	ST47505435	2016	HJC, FJR	2 fronds on ledge at base of cliffs, above scree
Cheddar Gorge	SSSI	ST47515457	2016	HJC	Large patch, open scree above bend in road
Cheddar Gorge	SSSI	ST47525457	2016	HJC	2 small patches, edge of scree E of reservoir
Cheddar Gorge	SSSI	ST47545458	2016	HJC	Hundreds in open scree at top of scree shute
Cheddar Gorge	SSSI	ST47545459	2016	HJC	Hundreds in open scree to W of yews
Cheddar Gorge	SSSI	ST47555459	2016	HJC	Small patch, edge of scree, W of yews
Cheddar Gorge	SSSI	ST47555460	2016	HJC	Scattered patches, edge of scree in open area
Cheddar Gorge	SSSI	ST47565460	2016	HJC	Hundreds in open scree near W edge of yews
Cheddar Gorge	SSSI	ST47565461	2016	HJC	Hundreds of fronds in open scree
Cheddar Gorge	SSSI	ST47565462	2016	HJC	Hundreds in large boulder scree
Cheddar Gorge	SSSI	ST47575460	2016	HJC	A few fronds in scree near W edge of yews
Cheddar Gorge	SSSI	ST47575461	2016	HJC	Lovely patch, open scree nr W edge of yews
Cheddar Gorge	SSSI	ST47575462	2016	HJC	Lovely patch in open scree nr W edge of yews
Cheddar Gorge	SSSI	ST47585460	2016	HJC	Hundreds of fronds on partially shaded scree
Cheddar Gorge	SSSI	ST47585462	2016	HJC	Small patch in open scree between yews
Cheddar Gorge	SSSI	ST47595460	2016	HJC	Hundreds of fronds, shaded scree under yews
Cheddar Gorge	SSSI	ST47595461	2016	HJC	c.100 fronds on open scree between yews
Cheddar Gorge	SSSI	ST47605460	2016	HJC	Hundreds of fronds, shaded scree under yews
Cheddar Gorge	SSSI	ST47605461	2016	HJC	Hundreds in open and partially shaded scree
Cheddar Gorge	SSSI	ST47605462	2016	HJC	Hundreds in open and partially shaded scree
Cheddar Gorge	SSSI	ST47615461	2016	HJC	Hundreds in open scree between yews
Cheddar Gorge	SSSI	ST47615462	2016	HJC	Hundreds in open scree between yews
Cheddar Gorge	SSSI	ST47625462	2016	HJC	Hundreds, partially shaded scree under yews
Cheddar Gorge	SSSI	ST47625463	2016	HJC	Hundreds in shaded scree amongst yews
Cheddar Gorge	SSSI	ST47625464	2016	HJC	Hundreds, scree above large spreading yews
Cheddar Gorge	SSSI	ST47635464	2016	HJC	Large patches on open scree above yews
Cheddar Gorge	SSSI	ST47735461	2016	HJC	100 fronds on E edge of scree shute
Cheddar Gorge	SSSI	ST47925446	2013	HJC, IPG	Only a couple of fronds
Cheddar Gorge	SSSI	ST47945448	2016	HJC	Hundreds on mossy scree above small layby
Cheddar Gorge	SSSI	ST47955449	2016	HJC	Hundreds on mossy scree above small layby
Cheddar Gorge	SSSI	ST47965449	2016	HJC	Hundreds on mossy scree above small layby
Cheddar Gorge	SSSI	ST47975449	2016	HJC	Hundreds on open scree above small layby
Cheddar Gorge	SSSI	ST47985449	2016	HJC	Hundreds on mossy scree above small layby
Cheddar Gorge	SSSI	ST47985450	2016	HJC	Hundreds on mossy scree above small layby
Cheddar Gorge	SSSI	ST48045389	2016	HJC	16 fronds, mossy scree under yews below cliff
Cheddar Gorge	SSSI	ST48055389	2016	HJC	12 fronds. mossy scree under yews below cliff
Cheddar Gorge	SSSI	ST48185384	2007	EJMcd	On mossy scree
Cheddar Gorge	SSSI	ST48265374	2016	HJC	24 fronds on mossy scree below cliff
Cheddar Gorge	SSSI	ST48265373	2016	HJC	17 fronds on mossy scree below cliff
Cheddar Gorge	SSSI	ST48215383	2016	HJC	24 fronds on mossy scree, at edge of yews
Cheddar Gorge	SSSI	ST48215382	2016	HJC	2 fronds under N edge of patch of yews
Cheddar Gorge	SSSI	ST48225381	2016	HJC	Hundreds on mossy scree below lower cliff
Cheddar Gorge	SSSI	ST48235381	2016	HJC	Hundreds on mossy scree below lower cliff
Cheddar Gorge	SSSI	ST48245381	2016	HJC	Several fronds, mossy scree below lower cliff
Cheddar Gorge	SSSI	ST48195383	2016	HJC	Hundreds of fronds, open scree at top of slope
Cheddar Gorge	SSSI	ST48195384	2016	HJC	Many fronds under scrub on scree
Cheddar Gorge	SSSI	ST48295382	2016	HJC	Hundreds, recently cleared scree above road
Cheddar Gorge	SSSI	ST48305378	2016	HJC	c. 100 fronds, scree at edge of yews on slope
Cheddar Gorge	SSSI	ST48305379	2016	HJC	c. 100 fronds on recently cleared scree
Cheddar Gorge	SSSI	ST48285379	2016	HJC	Many fronds above recently cleared scree

Cheddar Gorge	SSSI	ST48285380	2016	HJC	Few hundred fronds on recently cleared scree
Cheddar Gorge	SSSI	ST48295380	2016	HJC	Few hundred fronds on recently cleared scree
Cheddar Gorge	SSSI	ST48195382	2016	HJC	Many fronds at E edge of scree at top of slope
Cheddar Gorge	SSSI	ST48295381	2016	HJC	Several hundred, recently cleared scree
Cheddar Gorge	SSSI	ST48135385	2016	HJC	7 fronds, mossy scree under yews below cliff
Cheddar Gorge	SSSI	ST48285384	2016	HJC	100+ fronds on small scree patch above road
Cheddar Gorge	SSSI	ST48275383	2016	HJC	100+ fronds on small scree patch above road
Cheddar Gorge	SSSI	ST48285383	2016	HJC	200+ fronds on small scree patch above road
Cheddar Gorge	SSSI	ST48255384	2016	HJC	c. 200 fronds on scree on steep open slope
Cheddar Gorge	SSSI	ST48055389	2016	HJC	12 fronds, mossy scree under yews below cliff
Cheddar Gorge	SSSI	ST48315378	2016	HJC	c. 50 fronds on scree at edge of yews on slope
Cheddar Gorge	SSSI	ST48305380	2016	HJC	Hundreds, recently cleared scree above road
Cheddar Gorge	SSSI	ST480546	2012	MW	
Black Rock	SSSI	ST484545	1997	RFG, EJMCD	Small population on shaded mossy wall
Black Rock	SSSI	ST485546	1997	RFG, EJMCD	Few fronds inside lime kiln flue
Black Rock	SSSI	ST486548	1997	RFG, EJMCD	On shaded wall
Black Rock	SSSI	ST48705487	2016	HJC, VG	On side and base of wall, W of gate
Black Rock	SSSI	ST48725487	2016	HJC, VG	On side and base of wall, W of gate
Black Rock	SSSI	ST48735488	2016	HJC, VG	Many patches along wall, W of gate
Black Rock	SSSI	ST48745488	2016	HJC, VG	1 clump on wall, W of gate
Black Rock	SSSI	ST48755489	2016	HJC, VG	5 clumps on wall, W of gate
Black Rock	SSSI	ST487549	1997	RFG, EJMCD	In woodland below steep NE-facing cliffs
Goblin Combe	SSSI	ST47726492	2015	HJC, FJR	On lightly shaded moss-covered scree
Goblin Combe	SSSI	ST47736492	2015	HJC, FJR	On lightly shaded moss-covered scree
Goblin Combe	SSSI	ST4765	2005	SJP	About 10 plants, seems to have decreased
Priddy Mineries	SSSI	ST54565113	2016	HJC	47 fronds, N-facing stonework of linear flue
Biddle Combe		ST57074808	2011	HJC, JPC	26 fronds on walls of ruined Buddle House
Mells, Colliers Way		ST73505034	2019	HJC, CVWG	3 pl on N-facing buttress of railway bridge



Distribution of *Gymnocarpium robertianum* in Somerset, mapped using MapMate  
Black dots are post-2000 records; pink squares are 1987-1999 tetrad records