Hornungia petraea (L.) Rchb.

Native
GB & England: Least Concern
GB Scarce
VC5 Lost; VC6 Rare

A winter annual, found on very thin soil over carboniferous limestone rocky outcrops and walls. Only ever recorded as an introduction in VC5, where it was planted in about 1940 on top of a field wall in Wembdon, last seen there by H.W. Boon in 1955. In VC6, first recorded by Hudson (1778) at Uphill, where it was also noted by Sole (Collinson, 1791). Although not seen again at Uphill for 200 years, *Hornungia petraea* was recorded there in 1993 by P. Rooney; however subsequent thorough searches by members of Somerset Rare Plants Group and others have been unsuccessful. Recorded by Sole at Worle (Collinson, 1791), a record which Marshall (1914) considered not at all impossible, yet there have been no subsequent records for that site. Watson (1837) listed a record by Collins at Cheddar. White (1912) reported that he had searched the most likely spots in vain. In 1935, however, this species was found by W.S. Parry near Charterhouse, which could be the earlier Cheddar site. It persists in two places at Ubley Warren Nature Reserve. Sole also knew this species “In the woods on the rocks facing the Hotwells” (Collinson, 1791), where it was also recorded by H.S. Thompson “On limestone under Leigh Woods” (Murray, 1896). In recent years it has been known from four discreet sites near the suspension bridge, however it is feared lost from three of these due to scrub encroachment. *Hornungia petraea* was unintentionally introduced onto a garden wall at Millards Hill House, Trudoxhill, where it was first observed by G.B. Milne-Redhead in 1910. It persists luxuriantly at this site. In Somerset, this species is at the southern edge of its British range.

*Hornungia petraea* at Ubley Warren (2007). Photo: FJR
Distribution of *Hornungia petraea* in North Somerset (VC6), mapped using MapMate. Black dots are post-2000 records; red squares are 1987-1999