

***Trichomanes speciosum* Willd.**

**Killarney Fern (gametophyte)**

Native

GB & England: Least Concern

Schedule 8

VC5 Scarce; VC6 Absent

Perennial felt-like mat of branching filaments, unique amongst European ferns in its ability to exist forever as a gametophyte. Restricted to dark, humid recesses, crevices and caves in a range of acidic to neutral rocks. The independent gametophytic generation of this species was only discovered in Britain in 1989, by Don Farrar, however by 1997 it had been recorded in 38 vice-counties (Rumsey *et al.*, 1998). Found in Somerset for the first time in 2008, by Matt Stribley, at two locations on Exmoor, both in dark, humid rock crevices beside the River Barle. In 2009, a third site was discovered by Fred Rumsey at Holford Glen, in Alfoxton Wood, in the Quantocks, where again the species grows in rock crevices above a stream. This is one of two sites for *Hymenophyllum tunbrigense* in Somerset. In 2011, Matt Stribley discovered gametophytes of *Trichomanes speciosum* in crevices on Colescombe Rocks at Hawkcombe, which is the other Somerset site for *H. tunbrigense*. It was re-found here in 2019 and 2020, in two different monads, by Graham Lavender, who also discovered it in rock crevices at new sites nearby in 2020, at Horner Water and Wilmersham Wood. It is likely to be found on other similar rock outcrops on Exmoor. Somerset sites are within the area of the British and Irish distribution of *T. speciosum*, which is mainly northern and western, with some sites in Sussex.

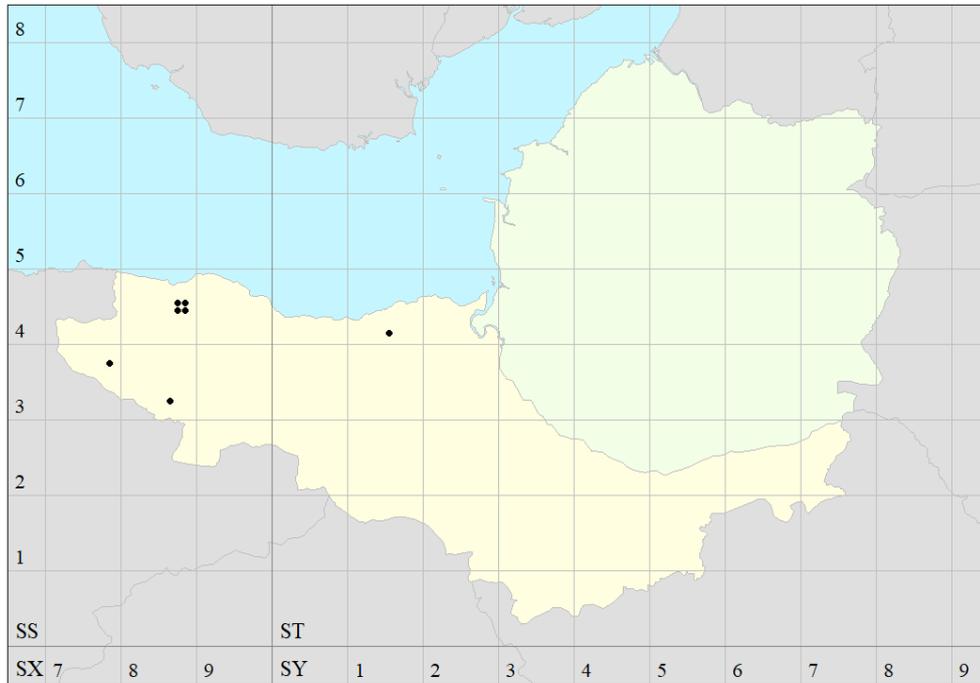
(Following molecular studies, some authors consider this species better placed in the genus *Vandenboschia*.)



*Trichomanes speciosum* gametophyte at Alfoxton Wood, Holford (2009). Photo: FJR

**VC5**

River Barle	SSSI	SS78833773	2008	MJS	Tiny amount in crevice in low cliff by River Barle
Tarr Steps	SSSI	SS86693221	2008	MJS	In rock crevice on W side of river, N of the steps
Horner Water	SSSI	SS87944442	2020	GEL	On S-facing rocks, N side of Horner water
Colescombe Rocks	SSSI	SS87934570	2020	GEL	In large crevice on vertical N-facing rock outcrop
Colescombe Rocks	SSSI	SS88034574	2019	GEL	Deep in crevices in N-facing rocks
Wilmersham Wood	SSSI	SS88134425	2020	GEL	5 patches in crevices in rocks, N bank of stream
Alfoxton Wood	SSSI	ST15504121	2009	HJC, FJR	In rock crevices above stream, below footbridge



Distribution of *Trichomanes speciosum* in South Somerset (VC5), mapped using MapMate. Black dots are post-2000 records



*Trichomanes speciosum* gametophyte at Hawkcombe (2020). Photo: GEL