VC5 Ferns and update autumn 2020.

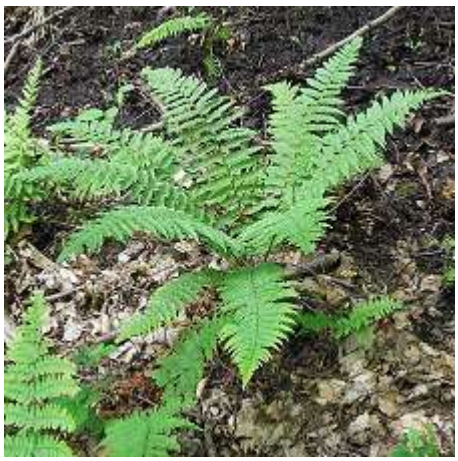
Although ferns can be recorded all year, the autumn does confer some advantages, as the bracken and brambles die back it can make recording easier. So what's new? The first discovery is from Hawkcombe Woods on Exmoor, I put together the following pictures comparing one of the specimens from the Hawkcombe to pictures from Heidelberg. My German is limited so bear with me but I think Heidelberg is the site of 2011 description of holotype but I may be wildly out on that. (yes I was see addendum)

Anyway, it was fairly clear that the Hawkcombe specimen had the essential features of *Dryopteris lacunosa* including; distinctive double teeth on many pinnules and some long incurved teeth that form islands (lacunae). Not my words but those of Roger Golding who kindly accepted a voucher and made the determination.

Addendum; now found the Holotype of *Dryopteris lacunosa* its collector is indeed S Jess but it was collected 1998 in the Berner Oberland of Switzerland and is in the Frierich-Schiller-Universitat Jenna Herbarium (JE)

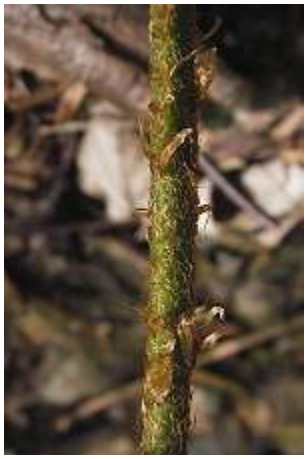
Dryopteris lacunosa.

Comparison of pictures from Heidelberg by S Jess, G Zenner, C Stark and W Bujnoch.



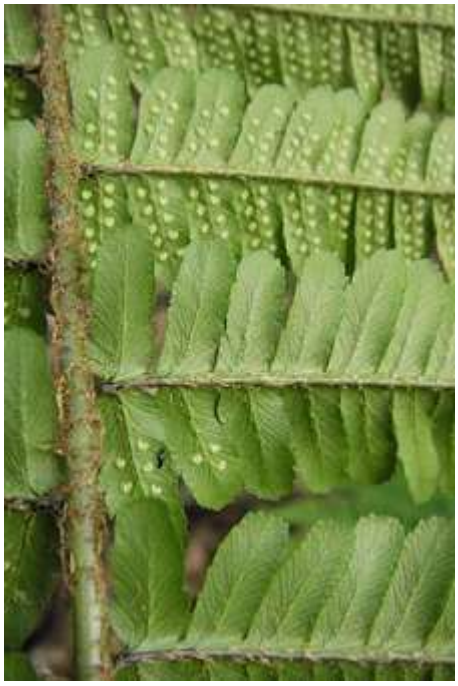
Heidelberg

Hawkcombe



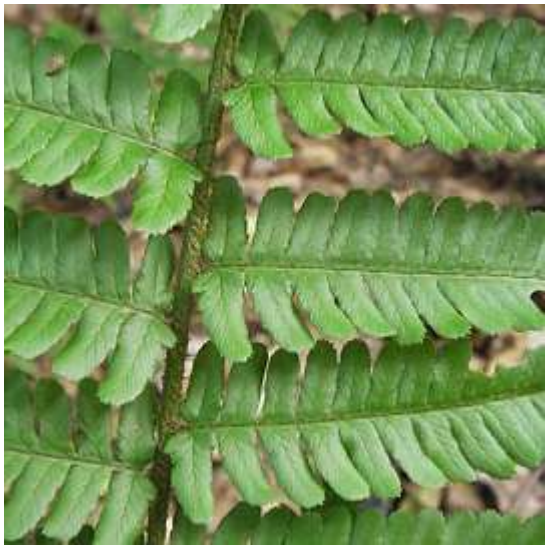
Heidleberg

Hawkcombe



Heidleberg

Hawkcombe (the double teeth are visible if you look carefully)

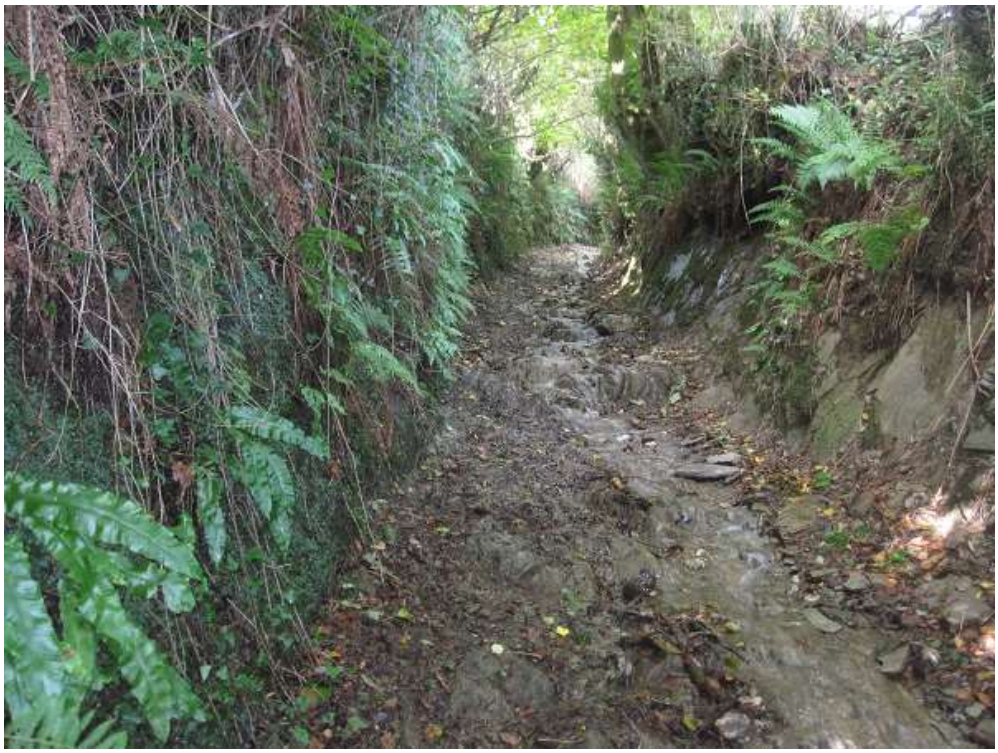


Heidleberg

Hawkcombe

A few weeks ago I mentioned *Asplenium trichomanes subsp. trichomanes* which had been confirmed by Fred. A second specimen has revealed itself in a new hectad but I thought it might be worth highlighting the similarities in habitat if anyone is inclined to search for more records. The first was just inside a tunnel under the road, very limited light and almost certainly perpetually damp from seepage through the walls and condensation from the stream through tunnel. The second one is from a sunken lane at Cutcombe. *Quadrivalens* was prolific until a section of vertical rocky substrate with seepage created a perpetually damp environment with limited light.

The eye is instantly drawn to the red stipes, very thin and wiry and still present even after loss of pinnules. Just one more picture to show the habitat; this specimen was on the darker, damper rocks on left

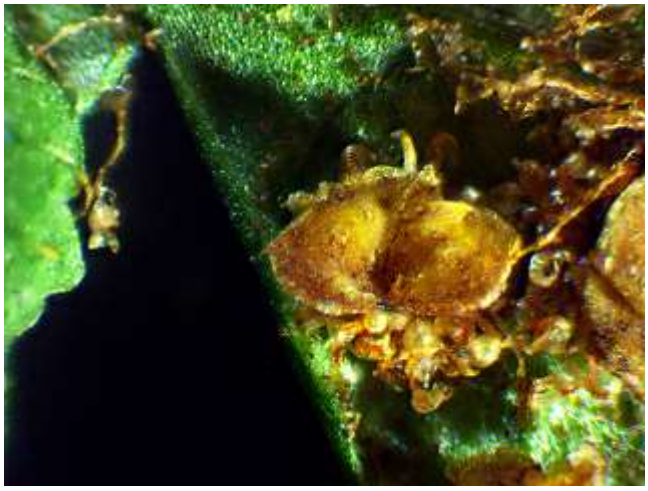


The next one of interest is *Dryopteris paleaceolobata* or *Dryopteris affinis subs. Paleaceolobata* depending on whether you follow Stace 4 or not.

The eye will probably be caught by the pinnules which are curved under at the side and up at the end and orientated away from the rachis.

I think the above is reasonable representation of pinnules from *paleaceolobata* from Hawkcombe woods.

Having had the eye caught its worth having a closer look.



The picture above shows the characteristic “butterfly” type indusia.

The scales are also a key character being very red/brown, narrow and long. Picture below probably does not do credit to the richness of the red colour.

Another feature that is important is the lowest basiscopic pinnules which clearly show them being longer than adjacent pinnules and not so easy to see on picture but they are stalked.

My pictures cannot do justice to the fern but the best description and pictures are in Ken Trewren's book, "Some Taxa within the Dryopteris Affinis Complex". *Dryopteris paleacelobata* is currently scarce in VC5 but locally in the west I suspect it is going to jump to not scarce. If anyone is interested in looking for and at some examples in field very happy to have small groups this winter?

Graham

Nov 2020.