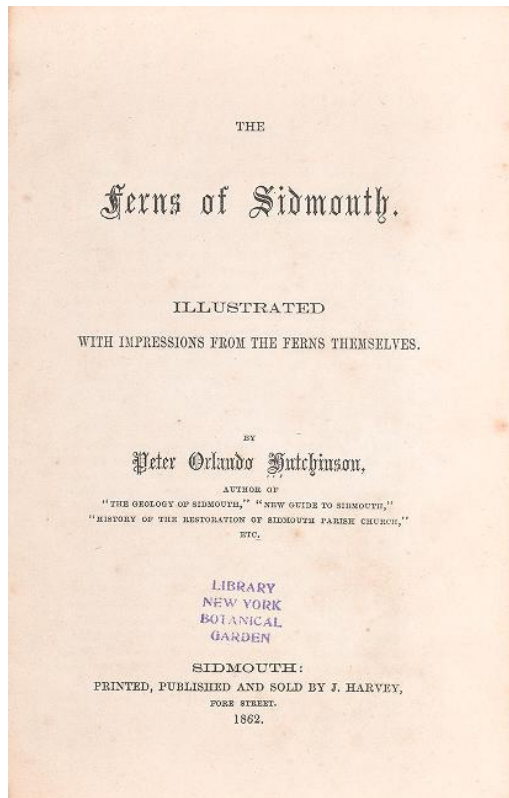


THE PETER ORLANDO HUTCHINSON FERN COLLECTION – GLEN GOYLE, SIDMOUTH

In 1862, local antiquarian and naturalist Peter Orlando Hutchinson published a book cataloguing the various ferns to be found in and around Sidmouth. The catalogue included 18 species plus 3 variants of one species, it also had descriptions of where the ferns could be found, medicinal and other uses, and prints taken from real fronds.



In Victorian times it was fashionable to have a fern collection in one's garden and this escalated to what has been called Pteridomania, a craze for ferns. Hutchinson certainly collected ferns but there is no access to the garden of Chancel House, his former home, to see if his collection survives.

As part of its survey of the local flora, the Sid Valley Biodiversity has located most of the species listed in Hutchinson's book still living in and around the valley.

Working with the Friends of Glen Goyle and EDDC, we hope to plant a new collection of Hutchinson's ferns on the bank at the top end of Glen Goyle. Unlike the Victorians who plundered sites to the detriment of some species, all the ferns in the collection will be cultivated specimens, some grown from collected spores but most from commercial nurseries.

Most of the ferns can join the Soft Shield Ferns that already grow on the bank behind the top bench near the large yew tree, see below.

Some of the species on the list are specialist cliff dwellers but they can be found on old walls around the town. There is a small area of old flint rubble wall on the bank by the yew which could be a suitable area for these species. This will need some work but nothing more than the addition of more flints packed with soil or a growing medium such as compost.

There are two species from Hutchinson's list, Moonwort and Adder's Tongue, that cannot be accommodated because they are only found in acidic wet grassland.



Soft Shield Ferns, *Polystichum setiferum*, on the bank



The 'cliff' is above the retaining wall

The collection will be labelled and pointed out during the tree and town Museum walks that pass through Glen Goyle, but it would be even better if there could be some form of interpretation board with information about Glen Goyle including the fern collection.

Ed Dolphin