

A Devon and Somerset Bramble (Rosaceae: *Rubus* L. subgen. *Rubus*) revived

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ABSTRACT

The identity of a bramble frequent in parts of Devon and Somerset is discussed, its history reviewed and a new description provided as *Rubus avaloniensis* Newton & R. D. Randall **sp. nov.** (ser. *Anisacanthi* H. E. Weber).

KEYWORDS: Endemic, apomictic species, brambles, distribution, England.

The application of the name *Rubus drejeri* to British brambles has followed a most tortuous course, not least when used in connection with plants found in S.W. England.

R. P. Murray collected a plant at Dunster in 1893 which O. Gelert, the Danish batologist, named as *Rubus drejeri* (“no doubt correct”, comm. W. M. Rogers). It was abundant for 200 yards and occurred “locally over a large area in West Somerset exhibiting considerable variation”, though the Dunster plant (“an extreme form with strong armature” fide W. M. Rogers) was thought a good match for the plant issued by Friderichsen and Gelert as *Rubi exsiccati Daniae et Slesvigiae*, Fasc. 2: 43.

Murray (1896, p.111) describes *R. drejeri* as “very rare, growing at Dunster, Porlock & near Luxborough”; however in the Addenda (p.416), this name gives way to *R. leyanus* Rogers. This was published in 1894 when Rogers realised that gatherings of the Hereford and S.W. England plant differed significantly from the Schleswig-Holstein plant sent him by Friderichsen and Gelert. Murray rather surprisingly accepted this transition in the face of Gelert’s 1893 opinion.

Also present in the Flora of Somerset *Rubus* list (Murray 1896, p.112) is “*R. scaber* W. & N.”, stated to be rare & only known from the west of the county. Localities are given as Dunster to Wootton Courtenay (“remarkably distinct & handsome here”), hedges on Quantock & Peat moor near Shapwick (herb. Babington), the last noted as “not typical” by W.O. Focke, the German batologist.

In 1897 Messrs. Rogers, Murray & Gelert met briefly in Somerset. One result was the determination by Gelert of all the ‘*R. scaber*’ specimens except the peat moor plant (now named *R. ochrodermis* Ley) as “good *drejeri*”. Murray says that this was the first English record of *R. drejeri* *sensu stricto*, apparently again forgetful of the accepted view of Gelert on the Dunster plant four years previously. Earlier in 1897 *R. drejeri* *s.s.* had been reinstated for Scotland from the Stirling district (Rogers 1897).

Marshall (1914) lists “*R. drejeri*” from Brushford to E. Anstey, Dunster, Kingston, West Monkton & Bathealton, also on Burtle peat moor (H. S. Thompson).

The name *Rubus drejeri* is also listed by White (1912) but is here applied to a Durdham Down, Bristol (V.c.. 34) plant. Rogers says of the specimens he saw “good *R. drejeri*. I say good rather than typical because in so variable a species it is not easy to fix a type. These agree admirably with Scottish specimens as well as those of Friderichsen & Gelert from Slesvig”. This plant, widespread in the Archenfield region was found to be very distinct & was named *Rubus troiensis* (Series *Radulae*) by A. Newton (1974).

Evidently Rogers gradually expanded his concept of *R. drejeri* as more material was submitted to him. Occasionally new taxa were published: after *R. leyanus* (1894) came *R. hibernicus* (1897) and *R. dunensis* (1901) under pressure from Ulster enthusiasts. Rogers also gave the name to examples of taxa now recognised as *R. wirralensis* Newton and *R. anisacanthos* G. Braun. His vacillation over some determinations is a salutary example of the difficulty of operating a taxonomic system based on "Hauptformen" where described taxa are expanded to include plants which while similar in some respects are not identical. Eventually the names can cease to represent the intention of the original authors and become useless for the taxonomy of critical species. Today we have learned the need to adopt tighter criteria for the elucidation of Rubi.

In Flora of Devon (Martin & Fraser 1937, p.273) H. J. Riddelsdell refers to a "striking variety found by G. B. Savory in the Silverton area" which he cannot name. It had previously been put by Rogers to *Rubus ochrodermis*, with some doubt and then finally in 1910 to "*R. horridicaulis* off-type to *ochrodermis*" (MSS in BM). A Savory specimen (Barton & Riddelsdell herb. no. 10538, **BM**) was however earlier determined by Rogers in 1903 as '*R. drejeri*'. This plant grows in the same area today and clearly belongs with the Dunster and peat moor examples above.

One of us (AN) has been researching the application of the name *Rubus drejeri* to British plants for many years. First fruits confirmed the presence of the true plant in Scotland (Newton 1979) and unearthed the oscillating opinions of W. C. R. Watson at different times on the various candidates for the name. His last (1952) view referred a plant found at Tilburstow Hill Common (V.c. 17) to *R. drejeri* while equating another from the same locality with '*Somerset drejeri*' which he then stated was identical with *R. rotundifolius* (Bab.) Blox. (*R. rotundifolius* sensu Watson = *R. tamarensis* Newton).

B. A. Miles visited Tilburstow Hill Common in 1962 and collected both forms (**CGE**). R. D. Randall searched the area in August 2001 and was unable to find specimens of either at Miles' locality, but did manage to locate a small colony of '*Somerset drejeri*' by a woodland path on Godstone Green adjacent to Tilburstow Hill Common. We would agree that this latter plant is identical with the Dunster plant. It does however differ from *R. rotundifolius* (inter alia) by the very short glandular development, terminal leaflet shape and panicle architecture, and from *R. drejeri* G. Jens. ex Lange by abundant short glands, short unequal prickles, also by relatively short filaments, glabrous anthers, and more or less patent sepals. *R. drejeri* sensu Watson (1952) from Tilburstow Hill, of which I have specimens named by Watson (coll. N. Y. Sandwith, 3/7/1932) can be separated from *R. drejeri* G. Jens. ex Lange by much larger flowers, very long filaments and densely pilose carpels. This plant appears to be undescribed but belongs to Series *Mucronati*.

Extensive examination of material cited by Murray and Rogers in **BM**, **BRIST**, and **CGE**, together with our own gatherings and field researches, reveals a plant adapted to a wide range of habitats from peat moor and woods to hedges and stony hillsides but none the less consistent in features, distinct from *R. drejeri* G. Jens. ex Lange, and therefore nameless. Following comprehensive field work separately and in tandem we have established a provisional range for the plant in v.c.s. 3–6 and 17 as shown by the map, and provide a description as *R. avaloniensis* (Series *Anisacanthi*).

DESCRIPTION

Rubus avaloniensis Newton & R. D. Randall, **sp. nov.** (Series *Anisacanthi*)

Rubo drejeri similis, sed foliolo terminali minus rotundato, glandulis stipitatis brevibus numerosis, aculeis brevibus inaequalibus, filamentis paulo brevioribus, sepalis ± patentibus, antheris glabris praecipue differt. Crescit in Britannia meridionali.

Similar to *Rubus drejeri*, but it differs chiefly in its less rounded terminal leaflet, numerous short stalked glands, unequal short prickles, slightly shorter filaments, more or less patent sepals, and glabrous anthers. It grows in southern Britain. Stems high-arching, suberect in the shade, bluntly angled, sometimes furrowed, green, turning brownish-purple, with frequent, sometimes dense, simple and tufted hairs, glabrescent. Prickles numerous, unequal, the longest on the angles, usually shorter than the stem diameter, declining, some slightly curved from a long base (1.5–5 mm), often

grading into the numerous pricklets, occasional acicles, and abundant unequal short-stalked glands (0.25–0.5 mm). Leaves mostly 3-nate, usually lobate, but often a few 4-nate or 5-nate and pedate; shallowly, finely and almost simply serrate, sparsely strigose above, greyish green and pubescent on the veins beneath. Terminal leaflet (4.5–)5–8(–9) × (3–)3.5–6.5(–8) cm, mostly obovate or subrotund, but sometimes elliptic or misshapen, cuspidate or acuminate at the apex, entire or subcordate at the base, c. 2.5–4.5 as long as its petiolule; petiole 3–5(–9) mm, shorter or longer than lateral leaflets, with numerous short stout falcate prickles to 2.5(–4) mm. Flowering branch with 3-nate leaves below and 3-nate to simple bracts above, not usually leafy to the apex; inflorescence cylindrical above, pyramidal and leafy below, lower peduncles ascending; rachis straight above, flexuose below, clothed like the stem, but prickles more uniform in length; peduncles and pedicels with numerous short, declining or slightly curved prickles, abundant short-stalked glands and a dense layer of short hair. Flowers c. 1.5 cm in diameter, cupped; sepals green or grey-green felted, not aculeate but with numerous short-stalked glands, patent, often with long or short tips ascending; petals 5–10 × 4–6(–8) mm, very pale pink, often appearing white on opening, obovate or oblong, entire or notched, anthers glabrous, filaments white, slightly longer than the greenish or yellowish styles; young carpels glabrous or very slightly hairy; ripe fruit subglobose to ovoid. Flowering in July and August.

HOLOTYPE: Dunster, Somerset, coll. R. P. Murray, July 1893 as *R. drejeri* G. Jens. det. O. Gelert (**BRIST**, herb. J. W. White) (Isotypi distributed through B.E.C., including **E**)

The name commemorates the Isle of Avalon, renowned in myth and legend and associated with Glastonbury, which lies in the centre of its known distribution.

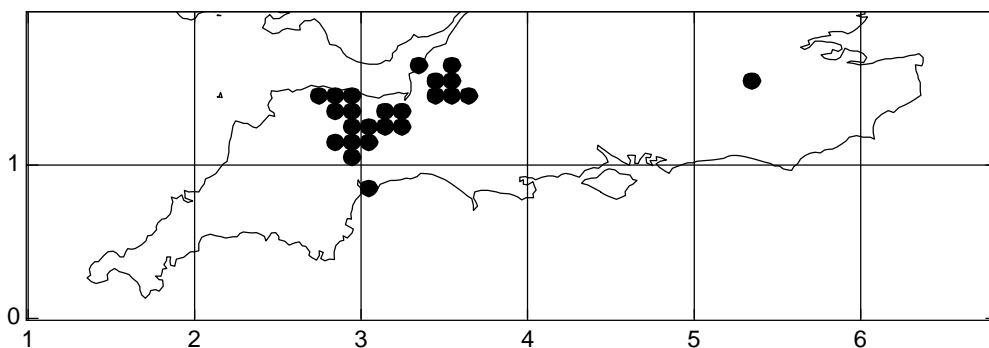


FIGURE 1. The distribution of *Rubus avaloniensis* in the British Isles.

REPRESENTATIVE EXSICCATAE

V.C. 3

Near Criss Cross, Silverton [SS90], on bank by roadside, 7/8/1903, G. B. Savery, *Rubus drejeri* G. Jensen det. W.M. Rogers, herb. Barton & Riddelsdell no. 10538 (**BM**).

Roadside hedge, No Man's Land, Leonard Moor, ST056130, 25/7/2001, A. Newton & R. D. Randall, **herb. R. D. Randall** no. 01.51.

Roadside, Lythecourt, near Tiverton, SS946160, 25/7/2001, A. Newton & R. D. Randall, **herb. R. D. Randall** no. 01.52.

V.C. 4

Wood border, Southern Wood, SS792474, 24/7/1989, A. Newton, **herb. A. Newton**.

V.C. 5

Quarry near Dunster [SS94], 8/9/1892, R. P. Murray as '*R. scaber* W. & N.', *R. drejeri* G. Jensen, teste O. Gelert, comm. W. M. Rogers, B. E. C. specimen no. 450, herb. Barton & Riddelsdell no. 10534 (**BM**).

Roadside near Wiveliscombe [ST02], 7/8/1891, R. P. Murray, det. *Rubus drejeri* G. Jensen (**BM**).

Brushford [SS92], 27/8/1907, leg. E. S. Marshall no. 3184, *R. drejeri* G. Jensen (teste Rogers), **(BM)**.

Quarries above West Monkton [ST22], 20/8/1907, leg. E. S. Marshall no. 3181, *R. drejeri* G. Jensen (teste Rogers), **(BM, E)**.

“Both specimens [no. 3181, 3184 on same sheet, **BM**] are *R. rotundifolius* Blox., not *Drejeri*”, W. C. R. Watson, 2/1951. “*Rubus* ‘*pseudodrejeri*’ Miles MS. det. B. A. Miles, 1963 – on duplicates in **CGE** of both gatherings, D. E. Allen, 10/1992. Not *R. rotundifolius* sensu Wats. (= *R. tamarensis* Newton)”, D. E. Allen.

Timberscombe [SS94], W. H. Mills, 9/1931. “I first saw it below Dowsborough camp and then in other places. Small leaf from Dowsborough Camp” W. H. Mills. “untypical *acutifrons*” det. H. J. Riddelsdell, herb. Barton & Riddelsdell no. 3957 **(BM)**. “*Rubus* ‘*pseudodrejeri*’ Miles MS. det. B. A. Miles, 1963 – on a dup. in **CGE**”, D. E. Allen.

Roadside by view-point, Haddon Hill, SS980286, 25/7/2001, A. Newton & R. D. Randall, **herb. R. D. Randall** no. 01.54.

Garden weed, Ranscombe Lodge, Wootton Courtenay, SS946433, 25/7/2001, A. Newton & R. D. Randall, **herb. R. D. Randall** no. 01.56.

v.c. 6

Near Shapwick [ST44], 21/8/1889, herb. D. Fry as ‘*R. scaber* W. & N.’, later redetermined *R. ochrodermis* Ley, ‘Somerset *drejeri*’ det. A. Newton, 1982 **(BRIST)**.

On the peat-moor, north-west of Ashcott Station [ST44], 3/8/1921, herb. C. Bucknall, as *R. foliosus* Weihe, ‘Somerset *drejeri*’ det. A. Newton **(BRIST)**.

Peat moors, Shapwick, 8/89, H. S. Thompson, as *R. drejeri* G. Jens. fide W. M. Rogers (1901) **(E)**. Limestone heath, Burrington Common, ST487585, 21/7/1990, coll. & det. R. D. Randall, **herb. R. D. Randall** no. 90.37. [forma aprica]

Edge of Worlebury Wood, Weston-super-mare, ST331631, 28/7/1990, R. D. Randall, **herb. R. D. Randall** no. 90.44. [forma umbrosa]

v.c. 17

Tilburstow Hill at 550 ft., TQ347501, 16/7/1962, B. A. Miles, as ‘*R. pseudodrejeri*’, **herb. A. Newton**.

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