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### *Gymnocarpium robertianum*

[Synonyms : *Aspidium robertianum*, *Carpogymnia robertiana*, *Currania robertiana*, *Dryopteris robertiana*, *Gymnocarpium dryopteris* var. *pumilum*, *Lastrea robertiana*, *Nephrodium robertianum*, *Phegopteris calcarea*, *Phegopteris robertiana*, *Polypodium calcareum*, *Polypodium dryopteris* subsp. *robertianum*, *Polypodium robertianum*, *Thelypteris robertiana*]

**LIMESTONE FERN** is a deciduous fern. Native to Europe and northern North America it has narrowly triangular green fronds that are fragrant when bruised.

It is also known as *Bukovník vápencový* (Czech), *Kalkbräken* (Swedish), *Kalkki-imarre* (Finnish), Limestone oak fern, Limestone polypody, Northern oak fern, *Ruprechtsfarn* (German), and Scented oak fern.

It is a protected plant in the Irish Republic under the Flora Protection Order 1987.

*Robertianum* can commemorate one or more of several people, including St. Robert of Molesme, Robert (one of the Dukes of Normandy), St. Rupert, St. Robert de Turlande and the legendary Robin Hood of Sherwood Forest. The most likely candidate appears to be uncertain in this case.

Then a French Benedictine monk, St. Robert of Molesme (1027-1110), to whom in 1075 Pope Gregory VII (c.1020-1085) gave permission to found a monastery in Burgundy in the forest of Molesme. Its initial establishment was exacerbated by disruptive external influences and from 1098 he with several of his fellow monks (including one who would become St. Alberic (died 1108/9)) moved to a remote area in the Dijon region (Citeaux) owned by the then Viscount of Beaune. Here they founded a new Cistercian monastery which was destined to provide a guiding light for this new Order. But in 1100 St. Robert was urged to return to Molesme where the remaining monks had agreed to submit to his leadership based on the Rule of St. Benedict. He was canonized in 1222 by Pope Honorius III (1148-1227). Not only is he said to have used herb-robert (*Geranium robertianum*) to cure different diseases but the plant also flowers on his feast day celebrated by Roman Catholics on 29<sup>th</sup> April.

Then a Frenchman, Robert (1054-1135), one of the Dukes of Normandy for whom in 1490 Johann von Cube wrote a herbal known as *Hortus Sanitatis* which was celebrated for several hundred years.

Then a Frankish-Merovingian (or even Irish) Benedictine priest, St. Rupert (mid-600s - 718) who is the patron saint of salt miners and mining. He was initially Bishop of Worms and from 696 the first Abbot-Bishop of Salzburg. While Bishop of Worms his ability and good name is said to have spread widely and on the strength of this Duke Theodo II (before 665-c.716) sought his help in reviving and strengthening Christian belief throughout Bavaria. At his death the Duke left a two square-mile region (now occupied by Salzburg, Germany originally known Iuvavum) to St. Rupert and his successors within which St. Rupert established not only the first church in that area (the Church of St. Peter) but also the Benedictine monastery of St. Peter and the convent of Nonnberg (Salzburg Cathedral was built by his successor, St. Virgil, whose remains with part of St. Rupert's remains rest under the high altar there). Traditionally St. Rupert is said to have encouraged salt mining in the region which explains why in Christian art he is depicted

holding a salt cellar, barrel or vessel. His feast day, 24<sup>th</sup> September, is observed in the Salzburg area where at about that time too a fair (going back centuries, known as Ruperti Kirtag and originally of economic significance) is still held.

Then a French Benedictine priest, St. Robert de Turlande (c. 1000-c. 1067) who founded the Abbey of Chaise Dieu in the Auvergne in France. In about 1018 he became a canon at St. Julian's Church in Brioude (Auvergne) and while there founded a hospice for the poor. A period as a monk at Cluny (where he accepted spiritual guidance from St. Odilo) followed, after which he made a pilgrimage to Rome. On his return however he turned to a new life of prayer near Brioude, with one or two companions, and committed himself to serving the poor. He attracted a large following and founded the Benedictine Abbey of Chaise-Dieu which he led as Abbot and which, although still a hermitage (it fell to Pope Leo IX to erect the subsequent Abbey) at the time of his death, had about 300 monks. His feast day is 24<sup>th</sup> April.

Finally today's legendary English folk hero and outlaw, Robin Hood of Sherwood Forest in northern England (otherwise known as Robert or Robin Goodfellow, who to complicate matters further was associated by some people, including Shakespeare, with the Roman god Mercury). If a real person, he is believed to have lived in the 1200s. The numerous descriptions of him over the centuries have varied from one extreme to the other, from criminal to nobleman. Today it is in a phase when stories recount daring exploits of how he stole from the rich to give to the poor and defied an autocratic local sheriff.

North American Cree Indians used the crushed leaves not only as a mosquito repellent but also applied them to mosquito bites.