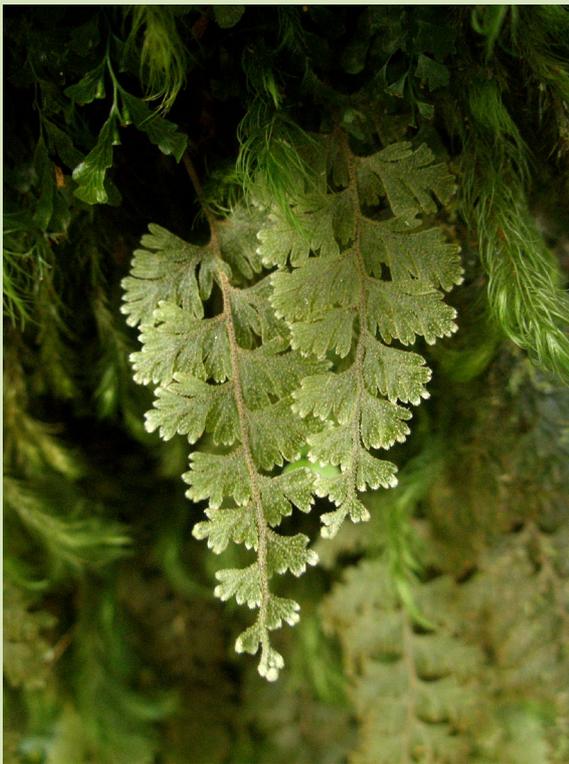


Jane Franklin (1791 – 1875)

Jane Griffin was born on 4 December 1791, the second daughter of John Griffin, a prosperous London silk weaver and liveryman, and his wife Mary Guillemard, both of Huguenot stock. Jane was well educated at home and at a small boarding school in Chelsea, and travelled widely in both Britain and the European continent; a portrait painted in Geneva when she was 24 portrays a pretty girl with charm and vivacity. She had been a friend of John Franklin's wife, who had died early in 1825, and in 1828 at the age of 36 she married the widowed naval captain and Arctic explorer. He was knighted in 1829, and for three years Lady Jane travelled in the Mediterranean area while he was on duty there.



Hymenophyllum frankliniae

Characterised by very thin, often translucent fronds, and marginal sori protected by tubular or two-flapped indusia, filmy ferns are plants of damp bush or high rainfall areas. *Hymenophyllum frankliniae* is immediately recognisable by its olive-green laminae, 5–20 cm long, densely covered with tawny or rusty-brown stellate (star-shaped) hairs. Usually epiphytic on tree fern trunks, it is common in lowland to montane forest of the North Island from Kaitaia southwards, the West Coast of the South Island, and Stewart Island, and is also found in South America.

In 1836 Sir John was appointed lieutenant governor of Van Diemen's Land, and in January 1837 the Franklins arrived in Hobart. For the next seven years Lady Jane threw herself into the affairs of the colony. She established Ancanthe, a private botanical garden featuring Tasmanian native plants and a natural history museum, at Lenah Valley, near Hobart. With her husband, she set out to improve the educational, scientific and cultural facilities, establishing secondary schools for both boys and girls, and the scientific society that later became the Royal Society of Tasmania. She also corresponded with Elizabeth Fry about the plight of female convicts and tried to better their conditions, and gave help and hospitality to officers of exploration vessels that called, among them Dumont d'Urville, James Clark Ross and Joseph Dalton Hooker.

Lady Jane was an indefatigable traveller who resented the traditional constrictions of life as a governor's lady, and made journeys to Melbourne, Adelaide, and in 1841, New Zealand. Accompanied by her lady-in-waiting and Sir John's aide-de-camp, she spent six weeks visiting leading officials and missionaries at Wellington, the French settlement of Akaroa, Auckland, Bay of Islands and Hokianga. She met Ernst Dieffenbach, finding him "a most agreeable and pleasant person," and William Colenso, who so impressed her that on her return to Hobart she sent him a microscope and initiated his entry into scientific publication. Colenso in appreciation named a newly discovered filmy fern *Hymenophyllum frankliniae* in her honour. In *The Tasmanian Journal of Natural Science* 1:378-379 he wrote, "It has been named after Lady Franklin by the discoverer, in commemoration of her recent visit, and of her patronage afforded by her Ladyship to the different departments of Natural Science."

In 1843, when conflict with other colonial officials came to a head, Franklin was recalled, and the couple arrived back in England. In 1845 Sir John was appointed commander of yet another expedition to search for the Northwest Passage, but by 1847 had not returned, and for the next ten years Lady Franklin devoted her time and resources seeking help to determine the fate of the expedition. It is said that its loss achieved more than its success could have done, and for the wealth of valuable knowledge gained about the Arctic regions, she was awarded the Royal Geographic Society's Gold Medal – the first woman to receive it.

A compulsive diarist and traveller until well into her seventies, Lady Jane Franklin died in London at the age of 84, on 18 July 1875.