

COUNTY: KENT      SITE NAME: BOURNE ALDER CARR

DISTRICT: TONBRIDGE AND MALLING

Status: Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI) notified under Section 28 of the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 as amended.

Local Planning Authority: Tonbridge and Malling District Council

National Grid Reference: TQ 607550      Area: 15.3 (ha.) 37.8 (ac.)

Ordnance Survey Sheet 1:50,000: 188      1:10,000: TQ 65 NW, SW

Date Notified (Under 1949 Act): 1968      Date of Last Revision: 1981

Date Notified (Under 1981 Act): 1987      Date of Last Revision: –

Other Information:

The boundary of the site incorporates one major and several minor adjustments, including extensions. This site was formerly known as Buttons Bourne Alder Carr.

Reasons for Notification:

Bourne Alder Carr is a representative example of Wealden valley alderwood, with a rich flora including several locally-distributed plants.

The site is situated at the base of a shallow valley formed by the river Bourne cutting down through Hythe beds to expose the impervious Atherfield Clay below. The springline at the juncture of these beds is responsible for continuous flushing of the woodland with nutrient-rich water. This is significant to the botanical communities which have developed.

The woods consist mostly of coppiced alder *Alnus glutinosa*, with frequent willows *Salix spp.* In some localised areas osier *S. viminalis* dominates. The ground flora varies in its diversity and is extremely rich in places; pendulous sedge *Carex pendula* and great horsetail *Equisetum telmateia* occur throughout, with abundant wild angelica *Angelica sylvestris*, meadowsweet *Filipendula ulmaria*, and opposite-leaved golden saxifrage *Chrysosplenium oppositifolium*. The rare alternate-leaved golden saxifrage *C. alternifolium* is also found here, together with other locally-restricted plants including large bitter-cress *Cardamine amara*, and common valerian *Valeriana officinalis*.

Drier woodland away from wet flushes on the valley sides is of coppiced hazel *Corylus avellana*, ash *Fraxinus excelsior*, and Sycamore *Acer pseudoplatanus*, below pedunculate oak *Quercus robur* standards. Elder *Sambucus nigra*, guelder-rose *Viburnum opulus* and the introduced snowberry *Symphoricarpos rivularis* are also present. The ground flora here also reflects the drier conditions, dominated by dog's mercury *Mercurialis perennis*, brambles *Rubus fruticosus*, and bluebell *Hyacinthoides non-scripta*. The parasitic plant toothwort *Lathraea squamaria* is found here associated with the roots of hazel.

A small area of open swamp surrounding an artificially-created fish pond is dominated by reed sweet-grass *Glyceria maxima*, and adds to the habitat diversity of the site.