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Bra197. Bourne Brook Complex (73.0 ha) TL 843284

This site comprises a mosaic of habitat extending along the Bourne Brook. Grassland, marsh, woodland and plantation provide for wide diversity floral assemblages.

On the north-west side of the main grassland block are the two sections of Bullock Wood dominated by Sweet Chestnut (*Castanea sativa*) coppice with lesser quantities of Hornbeam (*Carpinus betulus*), Small-leaved Lime (*Tilia cordata*), Ash (*Fraxinus excelsior*), Field Maple (*Acer campestre*) and Hazel. Standards of Pedunculate Oak (*Quercus robur*) are thinly scattered. The ground flora is moderately varied and includes Bluebell (*Hyacinthoides non-scripta*), Yellow Pimpernel (*Lysimachia nemorum*), Wood Anemone (*Anemone nemorosa*), Yellow Archangel (*Lamium galeobdolon*) and Wood Sage (*Teucrium scorodonia*). Between the two sections of Bullock Wood, is a sheltered strip of grassland and scrub provides an interesting habitat as a form of wide woodland ride. Amongst the ground flora are Primrose (*Primula vulgaris*), Yellow Pimpernel (*Lysimachia nemorum*), Greater Bird's-foot Trefoil (*Lotus pedunculatus*) and Field Wood-rush (*Luzula campestris*).

Located to the south of the grassland is Homely Ash Grounds, comprising woodland with a very varied canopy composition. Whilst old Sweet Chestnut coppice with Pedunculate Oak standards predominates, there is much Ash (*Fraxinus excelsior*) coppice to the west and Alder (*Alnus glutinosa*) along the streamsides. Hazel and Elder (*Sambucus nigra*) form the understorey. On drier ground, the ground flora is typified by Bramble (*Rubus fruticosus* agg), Bluebell and Dog's Mercury (*Mercurialis perennis*). In wetter areas, the presence of both Opposite-leaved Golden-saxifrage (*Chrysosplenium oppositifolium*) and Alternate-leaved

Golden-saxifrage (*Chrysosplenium alternifolium*) is notable. Other species present include Moschatel (*Adoxa moschatellina*), Remote Sedge (*Carex remota*) and Primrose (*Primula vulgaris*).

Adjacent to Bullock Wood, is the complex of grassland, woodland and plantation, which lay either side of Bourne Brook. The poorly drained areas of the grassland are typified by stands of Willowherb (*Epilobium* sp.), Meadowsweet (*Filipendula ulmaria*), Thistle (*Cirsium* sp.) and Nettle (*Urtica dioica*). The drier areas display a range of grasses such as Meadow Foxtail (*Alopecurus pratensis*), Smooth Meadow-grass (*Poa pratensis*), Meadow Fescue (*Festuca pratensis*) and Creeping Bent-grass (*Agrostis stolonifera*). A diverse and interesting flora includes Cuckooflower (*Cardamine pratensis*), Creeping Jenny (*Lysimachia nummularia*), Wood Club-rush (*Scirpus sylvaticus*), Ragged Robin (*Lychnis flos-cuculi*), Common Sedge (*Carex nigra*) and Tubular Water-dropwort (*Oenanthe fistulosa*), which has suffered a drastic decline in recent decades.

To the west of the minor road bisecting the two halves of the site, the mosaic continues with plantation, grassland and woodland. Small-leaved Lime and Midland Hawthorn (*Crataegus laevigata*) are present on the lower slopes near to the brook. Toothwort (*Lathraea squamaria*), a small plant parasitic on the roots of a range of plants, is found, along the Bourne brook, which is consequently an important site for this scarce Essex plant. Other species of interest include Moschatel (*Adoxa moschatellina*) and Marsh Marigold (*Caltha palustris*).

Selection Criteria: HCr1(a), HCr2(d), HCr13, SCr13, HCr14