COUNTY: BERKSHIRE **SITE NAME:** CHAWRIDGE BOURNE

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

Local Planning Authorities: Bracknell District Council

National Grid Reference: SU894736

Ordnance Survey Sheet 1:50,000: 175 **1:10,000:** SU87 SE

Date Notified (Under 1981 Act): 1983 **Date of Last Revision:**

Area: 8.94 ha 22.08 ac

Other information: Part of the site is managed as a nature reserve by the Berkshire, Buckinghamshire and Oxfordshire Naturalists Trust.

Description and Reasons for Notification

An area of unimproved grassland, scrub and broadleaved woodland containing species of plants local or rare in east Berkshire.

The site is situated on London Clay soils and lies along the banks of a small stream. About half the area consists of unimproved neutral to acid grassland, a habitat which is rare in Berkshire because of agricultural development. The grassland which, in part, is invaded by thickets of hawthorn *Crataegus monogyna* and blackthorn *Prunus spinosa* scrub, ranges from rank, ungrazed areas through short grazed turf to almost bare ground where some topsoil has been scraped away in the past. The tall grassland is dominated by false oat-grass *Arrhenatherum elatius* with Yorkshire fog *Holcus lanatus*, cock's foot *Dactylis glomerata* and tufted hair-grass *Deschampsia cespitosa*. Locally there are many large anthills covered in red fescue *Festuca rubra*. The sward contains many plants characteristic of neutral and acid grassland including sneezewort *Achillea ptarmica*, dyer's greenweed *Genista tinctoria*, meadow barley *Hordeum secalinum*, adder's tongue fern *Ophioglossum vulgatum*, cowslip *Primula veris*, pepper saxifrage *Silaum silaus*, hoary ragwort *Senecio erucifolius*, pale sedge *Carex pallescens*, trailing tormentil *Potentilla anglica*, devil's bit scabious *Succisa pratensis* and hairy violet *Viola hirta*

The fauna has so far been little studied, but includes common blue *Polyommatus icarus*, dingy skipper *Erynnis tages* and grizzled skipper *Pyrgus malvae* butterflies and harvest mice *Micromys minutus*.

Some of the grassland is now being grazed by sheep, and this management regime will improve the botanical value of the site by controlling the spread of coarse grasses and scrub.

The adjacent area of woodland (Steven's Copse) consists largely of neglected coppice, dominated by maple and ash with oak and crab apple *Malus sylvestris*, but is particularly noted for its abundance of wild service trees *Sorbus torminalis*. The ground flora is fairly species-rich and includes Goldilocks buttercup *Ranunculus auricomus*, hart's-tongue fern *Phyllitis scolopendrium* and soft shield-fern *Polystichum setiferum* which are rare in Berkshire.

The site includes, on the east bank of the stream, an ancient parish boundary hedge which is diverse in woody species including scattered oak pollards and field maple.