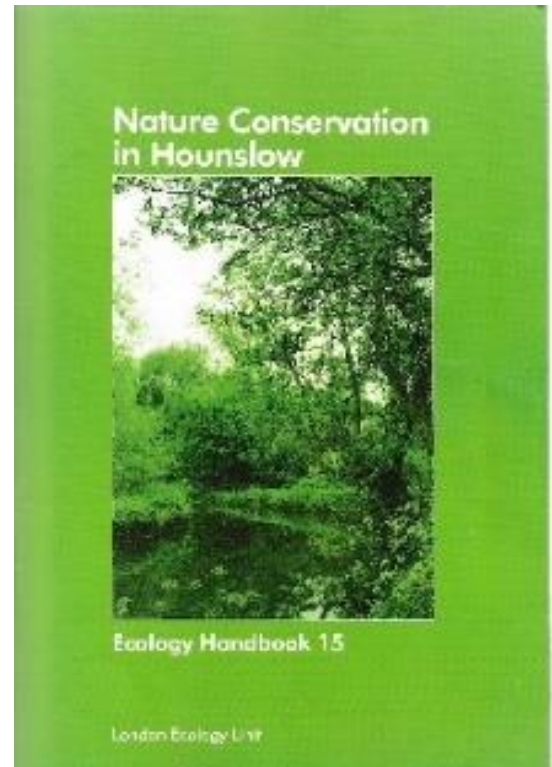


Feltham History Group Meeting
June 2022

Low Field – by Alan Rice

Feltham Fields



Some thirty years ago there was a forum called the London Ecology Unit that engaged with Local Authorities and the Nature Conservancy Council to identify areas within the 32 London Boroughs that merited special designation which included public access and use. These 'open spaces', 'parks' and indeed green belt lands were to be evaluated and graded in order to afford them special status, i.e. sites of Metropolitan importance, sites of Borough importance 'grade 1' and 2 and sites of local importance. Locally 'here' the various departments of the council were asked to contribute, in their areas of expertise as a means of producing an inclusive local plan for protection of the identified areas. The response was nothing less than remarkable; sadly, since that time the number of designated

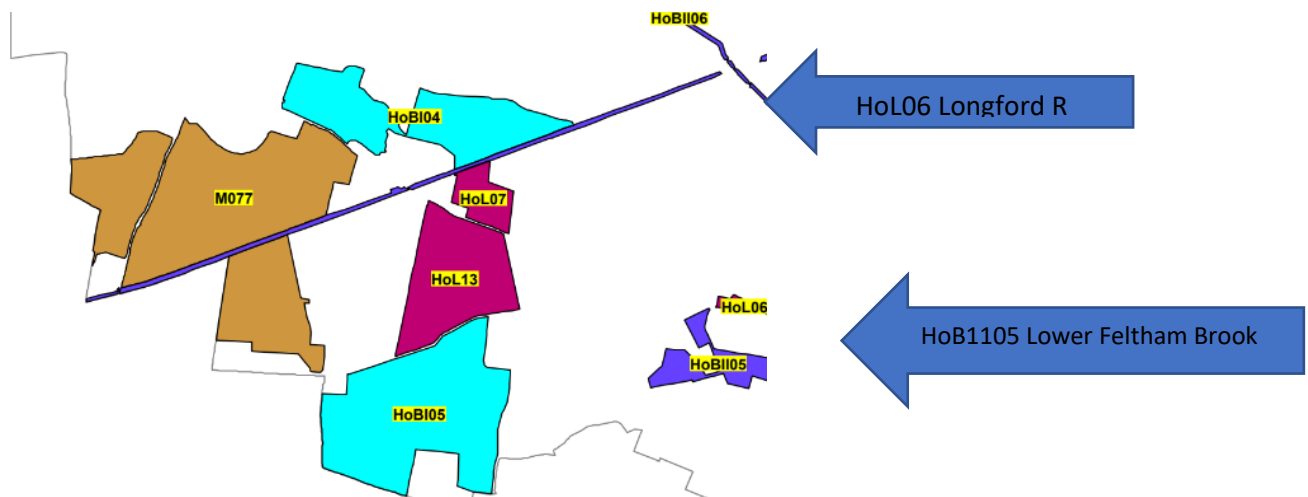
officers from each department have dwindled leading to areas of expertise that were once deemed necessary as no longer a requirement of the council. 'Ecology Officer being an example with the post longer existing! The publication of 1990 has been superseded by an updated Environmental Strategy and now by Hounslow Local Biodiversity Action Plan.

The little Anglo-Saxon village of Feltham pre-dates Domesday and is Anglo Saxon in origin and was once known, amongst other names, as 'Feltha'. It has witnessed steady growth throughout the centuries, *but proportions [build] as indicated in your 'sales pitch' is in the current climate woeful.* These words were part of my written response in 2003 to an application to build upwards of 800 dwellings on this most rural area of Feltham, 'Low Field'

The land 'Low Field' together with its sister plot 'Middle Field' - to the northwest is part of Green Belt Land, which, in itself, is most essential in maintaining, if nothing else, a buffer zone with this place and the now Surrey related Ashford.

As noted, Low Field has a very rural quality and since the extraction of gravel ceased c1960 a range of habitats have developed making for havens for a vast number of wildlife, flora and fauna.

This map is but a section from Hounslow's publication dealing with 'sites of importance for nature conservation' SINC C2010



The area we are looking at is coloured cyan [blue](#) and classified as a 'site of Borough importance 'grade 1' and named by the Ecology Unit as 'Lower Feltham Rough' – to orientate - between the cyan [blue](#) area and the [red area](#) is Ashford Road and the white area is part of Middle Field. At the bottom of the map is British Petroleum's complex, a further note you may be interested in is that the red section at one time was London Diocesan Lands which is Middlefield and includes areas north of Bedfont Road near the railway bridge 'Raleigh Park'

Whether the area's noted still hold the conservation status needs clarification but it shows the extent of importance that these areas were identified in 1990. It could well be that Hounslow NOW has other priorities.



Low field today has two lakes, the northern of which sits within a landscape of *attractive scrub with its banks supporting lush waterside flora and the surface of the lake interspersed with water lily* (see publication Nature Conservation in Hounslow for a fuller description) and the southern section was once known as Victors Nurseries and as far as can be seen is filled



Low Field is but one amongst a number of fields - pre 1800 that were grouped under one heading, i.e. **Feltham Fields**. Singularly [within the field] they had a description which gave a pointer as

to ownership. These appear on the pre-Enclosure map of 1799.

Low Field contains 15 separate 'worked' areas and are named thus

- 1 Mary's Furlong..... abuts Sunbury Parish
- 2 Close at Cutlers..... as above
- 3 Rugmore Close..... as above
- 4 Rugmore..... as above
- 5 Cutlers Close..... as above
- 6 Cutlers Corner..... as above
- 7 Cutlers Coppice..... as above
- 8 Pitt Mead Shott..... middle of Low Field
- 9 Short Blackengrove..... west of Chertsey Rd
- 10 Long Blackengrove..... middle of Low Field
- 11 Long Stein..... rear of Gravel Pit Cottages
- 12 Short Stein..... south of Ashford Rd
- 13 Long Ditch..... near Ashford Gate
- 14 Long Lands..... near lake on Low Field
- 15 Windmill Hill..... rear of Sawyers Arms

As a means of identification these areas of land 'small and large' were enclosed by a Baulk or balk – which generally was a wall of earth or turf in place between worked areas in order to maintain the structural divide of each plot. This system is noted on P64 of So Make A City Here – wherein it says the "*open fields were shared by small cultivators, being divided into long plots which were separated by baulks of grass*". The word 'Bawk' as referenced in my large old 1929 dictionary under '*glossary of Scottish words and phrases*, p1210 and hints at a *bank or a strip of un-ploughed land so as to enclose it*. There was also an Anglo-Saxon word 'balca' meaning a ridge.



Access to Low Field is restricted but Roger and I were able to gain entry December 2020 and took the following images



As can be seen Low Field is an area of Feltham that maintains a rurality of landscape which for us and generations to come deserves to be retained.