

An Account of the House and Estate known as Forest House and for a time as Goring House in Leyton and Walthamstow, Essex, by Frederick Temple

No. 4 in the 'Great Houses of Leyton and Leytonstone' series

First published in 1957 by Leyton Antiquarian Society, and re-published in 2008, with the very kind permission of the author's grandson John Temple,

by

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*Introduction by David Boote to the 2008 reprint of Frederick Temple's
essay on Forest House, James Lane, Leytonstone*

Forest House was a grand mansion and once the home of one of Britain's wealthiest men. Whipps Cross Hospital was built inside its grounds in 1903. The house survived on the corner of the hospital site, near the junction of James Lane and Whipps Cross Road, until it was demolished in 1964. An elaborate fireplace (*photo below*) preserved inside the original entrance to the hospital, and possibly sections of the perimeter wall, are the only remains.



Frederick Temple spent many years researching the history of Leyton and Leytonstone. His extensive notes are now in the archives of the London Borough of Waltham Forest but he was able to publish little other than local newspaper articles. The cost of printing his articles on Forest and Knotts Green Houses in 1957 was met from the remaining funds of Leyton Antiquarian Society, which had been inactive since the outbreak of the Second World War. (Similar booklets on Etloe, Moyer

and Park Houses were typed and bound and added to Leyton Libraries' reference collection, later transferred to the Local Studies Library of Vestry House Museum.)

Temple's opening and closing words on Forest House were written just a few years before it was destroyed. Forest House had been used as an institutional home for elderly men from about 1900.

Re-publication of this work has occurred mainly through the determination of David Ian Chapman, a committee member of Leyton & Leytonstone Historical Society, to see it happen. (His footnotes to the text here are marked 'DIC'). Another committee member Gill Nichols undertook research which enabled the Society to trace the author's grandson, John Frederick Temple, who very kindly gave us the essential copyright permission. The photographs of Forest House were located in the collection of Vestry House Museum by its staff member Gary Heales. Leyton & Leytonstone Historical Society is grateful to all those named in this paragraph and particularly John Frederick Temple.

My own footnotes to the text are marked 'DWB'.

AN ACCOUNT OF THE HOUSE AND ESTATE KNOWN AS

FOREST HOUSE

AND FOR A TIME AS

GORING HOUSE

IN LEYTON AND WALTHAMSTOW, ESSEX

BY

FREDERICK TEMPLE

PUBLISHED BY

LEYTON ANTIQUARIAN SOCIETY

1957

LEYTON ANTIQUARIAN SOCIETY

This Monograph and the preceding one, An Account of the House known as Knotts Green, have been published by the Society following a decision made on June 6th, 1957, by the remaining members of the Executive Committee to wind up the Society and to use the funds in hand in accordance with the objects of the Society.

The last elected Executive Committee was for 1939 and following the outbreak of the War the Society remained moribund.

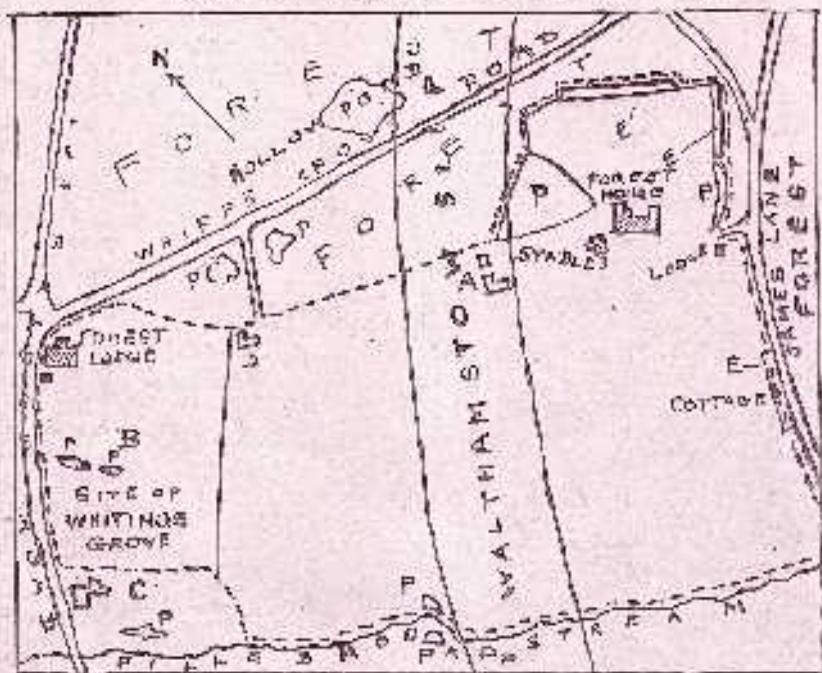
Executive Committee 1939

Chairman	Mr. J. Golding	(now deceased)
Deputy Chairman	Mr. H. Batchelor	(now deceased)
Members	Miss Baker	(now deceased)
	Mr. J. B. Bennett,	elected Acting Chairman
	Mr. E. J. Raynor	
	Miss Hopkinson	
	Miss Morgan	
	Mr. H. F. Starling	(now deceased)
Life Members	Mr. C. P. Eastman	co-opted
Hon. Secretary and Treasurer	Mr. F. Temple	

October, 1957.

FOREST HOUSE ESTATE

BASED ON LEYTON TITLE MAP 1843



- A. SURVIVALS OF OLD MESSAGE IN SLIP
 B. PART NOT SOLD TO WEST HAM IN 1889
 NOW BUILT ON
 C. OLD HOUSE - NOT IN ESTATE -
 WEST END AVENUE ON SITE
 D. OLD FARM BUILDINGS
 E. ENCLOSURES FROM MANOR WASTE
 P. PONDS. ----- ESTATE BOUNDARY

Hemmed in to-day by rows of houses, walls, fences and trees, and dwarfed by the massive buildings of Whipps Cross Hospital, only an occasional glimpse of Forest House, certainly the most pleasing of the few remaining old Leyton houses, can be obtained. In its heyday, when it stood, isolated, in open country, the house could be seen from afar, being, as the old writers said, 'loftily seated'.

With the grounds that in the course of years became added to it, Forest House formed a compact estate, rectangular in shape, bounded by James Lane, the forest along Whipps Cross Road, Lea Bridge Road and, in the valley, a little stream, the Fillebrook, rising in Upper Walthamstow and flowing into the Mill River not far from Temple Mills. This stream now runs in a conduit.

The Rev. John Strype in the 1720 edition of Stow's 'London' wrote, 'Another great messuage in Leyton, Forest House, once pertained to the Abbot of Waltham'. He was copied by the later Essex historians, Salmon, Morant and Wright. Now this is incorrect for there is clear evidence that the estate originated in a lease of land granted in 1492 by the Abbot of Stratford Langthorne. This Abbey had become possessed of the Church and the Manor of Leyton Grange about 1200, and so remained till the Dissolution of Monasteries (1538). The ownership passed through Sir Ralph Warren, his widow, his son (Richard), his daughter (Joanna) and her husband (Oliver Cromwell of Hinchinbrooke, uncle of the Protector). The latter in 1599 sold to Edward Rider who, dying insolvent in 1608, left it to his son, Edward, a minor in Wardship to James I. When this Edward came of age he made over the Manor to Sir Thomas Lake in 1617, from whom it devolved upon his widow, Lady Maria Lake, and then Sir Thomas Lake, the younger. In 1649 the latter

disposed of it to three men; Captain George Swanley, Bernard Osler (or Ozler) and John Smith. The Manor lands then remaining were shared among these three with the exception that the lease of the lands granted by the Abbot were to be kept intact, and each person was to take 1/3 of the profits. This proviso lasted till 1709 by which time David Gansell had acquired the shares previously held by Swanley and Osler. The other 1/3 share had in 1656 been willed by Smith to the Mayor and six senior Aldermen of Lincoln in trust for a charity to the poor of two parishes in that City. Gansell's 2/3 share were bought in 1783 and the 1/3 Lincoln share in 1794 by John Pardoe who thus became sole owner. Thus far we have traced the ground landlords of the land granted by the Abbot in 1492.

The whole of the Forest House estate, with the exception of a strip of land running through the centre and which was a detached part of Walthamstow, commonly known as 'The Slip' , was originally part of the 'Waste' belonging to the Manor of Leyton Grange, and in the early deeds called The Heath.

Scattered references to the history of Forest House have appeared in various books. Quite recently a member of the Bosanquet family deposited a large number of deeds relating to this property with the Essex County Record Office. They had previously been lent to the Leyton Borough Library, where they had been very efficiently calendered by Miss M. L. Savell, A.L.A., the reference librarian in charge of the Leyton and Essex collections.

Now to come to the original grant which was made by 'William, Abbot of the Blessed Mary of Stratford Langthorne', of a lease of 99, 99 and 99 years from 1492 (i.e. up to 1789) to John More, of London, Stock Fysshemonger, of 3 crofts of land containing 20 acres. One croft, on which later the house was

built, was to the South of 'the Slip'; the other two crofts were on the other side of 'the Slip' and nearer to the present Lea Bridge Road, but here called Phippes Cross Lane. These crofts are called Christmas Breche which name is often mentioned in later transfers of manorial ownership. In the deeds mention is made of two groves, 'Brode Saddles' and 'Sykermille Grove' and of a croft belonging to the 'Prioress of Hollywell' which abutted on the 3 crofts. If the survey map made in 1734 by Timothy Skynner for David Gansell, the younger, should ever come to light, we might be in a position to trace the location of these; our earliest large scale map is the Tithe Map of 1843 which is of too late a date to help. Then, too, there is mention of Ivie Lane, running along the south side of 'The Slip', called in a later deed Chase Lane. John More's tenant was Thomas Brooke who can probably be identified with one 'Thomas Broke with a tenement V acres and i rod of meadow' in the Ledger Book of Stratford Langthorne concerning tithes in Leyton (1484).

At some later but unknown date (no deed being included), the rest of the lease had passed to Richard Barnes; but by 1568 he was dead and the first chief messuage called 'Forrest House' and a 'little house neer into Phipps Cross' had been built. In this year Agatha, widow of Richard Barnes, had entered into the administration of 'all the goods, cattel and debts' of her late husband. A Trust Deed was drawn up indicating the succession of the property after her death. This took place in 1579 when her surviving children, a married daughter and a son, with the surviving trustee, Thomas Powle, of Chancery Lane, London, sold the residue of the lease to Henry Johnson, of Woodford, Essex. Thomas Powle had local connections, being mentioned in 1590 and 1594 as Chief Forester of Leyton and Wanstead Walk, signing the Roll as 'Seneschal or Steward' . At a Court of Attachment held in 1589 it is recorded that one buck

was served to the freeholders of 'Layton' and that he himself, twelve days later received one buck for his 'stewardshippe' of the Forest.

By 1592 Henry Johnson was dead and his widow, Dorothy, who became sole executrix of his will, found herself in serious trouble; she 'hath been arrested and impleaded for the debts of the said Henry, and is forced to sell the remainder of the lease for the other property he left was not sufficient to discharge his debts'. The purchaser was Ralph Colston, 'of Layton, Skyner'.

The Colston family is well known locally. A deed (1584) in Walthamstow Library tells us that Gabriel Colston¹, citizen and grocer of London, and Raffé, his son and heir apparent², sold to William Rowe woods and waste ground called Highams, otherwise Higham Bushes, in Walthamstow. Alice, daughter of Radulfe Colston, was baptised at Leyton in 1582; his sister, Elizabeth, married there in 1578 Henry Parvish, citizen of London. He was a merchant trading with Italy, who in 1592 bought the Manor of Ruckholt from William, Lord Compton. Their children were baptised at Leyton. Parvish died in 1593 - his burial place in the chancel of Leyton Church being marked by a plain, engraven stone. This was lost in a later church restoration; but was recovered in 1932 when the then Vicar, Rev. R. Bren, was searching under the chancel floor, during reconstruction, for the buried stone of the Rev. John Strype. Elizabeth Parvish married secondly Michael Hicks and continued to live at Ruckholt House till her death in 1634. Her effigy, with that of her husband, by then a Knight, appears on the large monument in Leyton Church. She is reclining and wears a long robe with tight sleeves, a ruff and a cap with long streamers covering her shoulders. Her eldest son, Gabriel Parvish in 1634 sold

¹ Gabriel Colston was born c1530 and married Alice Fox c1555. (DIC)

² Radulphe (Ralph) Colston was born at Leyton c1573. (DIC)

the Manor of Ruckholt to Sir William Hicks who was her first child by the second marriage.

Ralph Colston was Chief Forester of Leyton and Wanstead Walk in 1594. Sir Robert Wrothe, of Loughton Hall, in a letter to Sir Michael Hicks, asks him to see that his brother-in-law, Colston, should order 'his discreetest Keepers to keep a sharp look-out on dark nights between Snaresbrook and Temple Mills for certain lewd fellows, both horsemen and footmen, disguised with beards, who doe frequent about Layton Heath and Snaresbrook, and having obtained that they came for, separate and ride over by Temple Mills or sometimes Hackney'. Another letter by the same writer invites Hicks and his wife, his brother-in-law, Colston, and his wife, and others to stay with him at Loughton Hall. He suggests they could go to Fairmead and have sport with Mr. Colston's hounds and his own. In 1599 Oliver Cromwell, the then Lord of the 'Manner of Leighton', leased a piece of land to Ralph Colston, for use as an orchard, for two periods of 99 years, dating back, however, to 1591 to coincide with the earlier lease dates granted by the Abbot. Further extensions to the estate were made by subsequent lease-holders until by about 1800 the whole rectangular estate had been secured.

Colston, in 1601, sold the remainder of all his leases to Thomas Baker, of Sissinghurst, Co. Kent; and the same year a Marriage Settlement was drawn up whereby all the property leased, now said to be 33 acres, was to be the jointure of his wife, Constance, daughter of Sir William Kingsmylle, of Maltsanger, Co. Southampton. A later deed says that Baker built the Great House (i.e. the second one); and an Inquest Post Mortem 1625/6 shows that he was in possession of 'a messuage wherein one, William Bennett, had lived and then in

the occupation of Richard Collard, in Walthamstow, Co. Essex, a meadow belonging thereto of 2 acres, 2 closes of 7 acres, and a grove, called Braches Grove, containing 7 acres which he had of Edmund Withepole'. it was said 'to be holden per Knight Service'. A later deed says 'it was held of the King in Capite'. The addition of this piece of freehold land refers to the 'Slip' and brings in an early member of an ancient Walthamstow family going back to John Colarde of Phypys Cross of 1517. 'There is no mention of time or way of conveyance of this conveyance from Withepoole' comments a later lawyer.

The Leyton register records the baptism of Elizabeth, daughter of Sir Thomas Baker, Knight, in 1608. He had another seat, that of 'Wittingham Hall, Freesingfeild', Co., Suffolk, an ancient building, now in use as a farmhouse. It was at this house that he made his will in 1622³. He left three children, all under age, Thomas, Richard and Elizabeth. He bequeathed to his eldest son, Thomas, his executor, all his property in the counties of Lincoln, Sussex and Kent, being a full third part of all his lands. Before his death he had created a Trust whereby certain property in Co. Gloucester and Co. Essex should be sold for the purpose of educating and providing for his children. Dame Constance, his widow, retained the Forest House leases as her jointure. Her will, dated 1625, says: 'Whereas I am possessed of the Wardshipp of my sonne, Thomas Baker, his now Majesty's Ward and that I have a lease thereof, I do give to my sonne, Thomas, the whole benefit of the said lease in his marriage and wardshipp. All plate, linnen, household stuffe and other implements at Wittingham Hall, also at the house at Leighton and all other plate, providing that the cupboard used in my bedchamber is to be given to his wife upon his marriage and to continue to the wife of the sone for the time being

³ Sir Thomas Baker died in 1625. (DIC)

successively'. One wonders what hidden story or romance lies in this last bequest! Good provision was made for Elizabeth with a portion of £3,000 and all jewels and wearing linen and apparel. Richard, too, was to be well looked after. To each of the parishes of Leyton and Walthamstow was bequeathed £10 for their poor.

Little is mentioned in the deeds about Thomas Baker. He married Alice, daughter and co-heiress of Robert Leman of Brightwell Hall, Co, Suffolk, and by 1641, when the forty Gentlemen of Essex made their Perambulation to fix the bounds of the Forest of Waltham, he was certified to be the holder of 'a messuage and 16 acres freehold in Walthamstow and two other messuages and 24 acres leasehold in Leyton'. By this certificate he upheld this same claim before the Trustees for Disafforestation, Sale and Improvement of Forests sent out by the Lord Protector in 1654, declaring that he and his ancestors had held the freehold 'by the space of sixty yeares'. His name appears in the earliest existing Leyton ratebook (1651), as contributing £1.10s, out of £42.11s, towards the Repair of the Church and Churchyard; and as 'Mr. Thomas Baker, Esq: in the raite for repairing the high waies according to an order sett foorth by the Lord Protector and his Council'. By 1657 he was dead and Letters of Administration were granted to Alice, relict of Thomas Baker, of Great Yarmouth, to the deceased goods, chattells and debts. There seems to have been no issue of the marriage.

The next year Alice married Charles, Lord Goring. His father, George Goring, was a great favourite at the Court of James I and was one of the most assiduous and loyal supporters of Charles I. He negotiated the King's marriage to Henrietta Maria; and in the years that followed received high offices, grants

of monopolies, and the title of Lord Goring. When Civil War broke out his wealth was readily used to assist the royal cause. The King chose him to take his Queen to Holland in 1642 and to be his envoy the next year to France to endeavour to secure money and arms from that country. Impeached in his absence by Parliament in 1644, he was rewarded by his Royal master by being created Earl of Norwich. After the surrender of Charles, the Earl was largely responsible for the Royalist risings in Kent and Essex which culminated in the Siege of Colchester (1648). Placed on trial by Parliament for these actions, it was only by the casting vote of Speaker Lenthall that he escaped the death sentence. Impoverished now, he went to the Continent to live with Prince Charles and his associates. It must have been a great joy to him, as an old man then, to accompany his Prince to be crowned as Charles II. Dying shortly afterwards, he was buried in Westminster Abbey.

His elder son, George, called Lord Goring from 1644, although a valiant fighter for his King at Marston Moor and the 2nd Battle of Newbury, lacked the consistency of his father owing to his inclination for ambitious intrigues. He became a professional soldier on the Continent, fighting in the Netherlands for the Prince of Orange and later engaging in fighting in Spain. He died in Madrid in 1657, whereupon his younger brother, Charles, took his title of Lord Goring. He, too, had been an active participant in the Civil War, being taken prisoner at Marston Moor and charging with his brother at Newbury. For a time he was a prisoner in the Tower. He became Earl of Norwich at his father's death in 1663. With the family wealth largely dissipated, his prospects improved when he married a widow with a jointure of £1,000 per annum and a personal estate of £10,000. In a letter from Antwerp the old Earl wrote; 'I have received a very kind letter from my son Charles's wife. I am told she is a

virtuous, rich and wise young lady'; in another: 'I am promised more (money) from them both; but, till then, I cannot stir, for all my clothes but the very old ones are in pawn'. Following the Restoration, Charles received grants and offices from the King, being made Clerk to the Council of Wales and Captain of the Yeomen of the Guard.

So, in the Leyton Rate Book for 1659, there first appears the name of Lord Goring for Forest House which, during his lifetime and for some years after, was often called Goring House. Two small additions to the grounds were made by him. (1) a grant of nearly 1 acre from the Waste made by the Lords of the Manor in 1664, and (2) a piece of land in 'The Slip', 11 acres, called Foxe in the Hole which was conveyed to him and the Countess in 1665 by Sir John Hammer, Knt., of Co. Flint. In a rather obscure manner, this piece had come to Hanmer, he being the son and heir of the husband of Elizabeth Baker, previously mentioned. Mention in the deed is made of 'a certain way' still existing to the south east part of 'The Slip'.

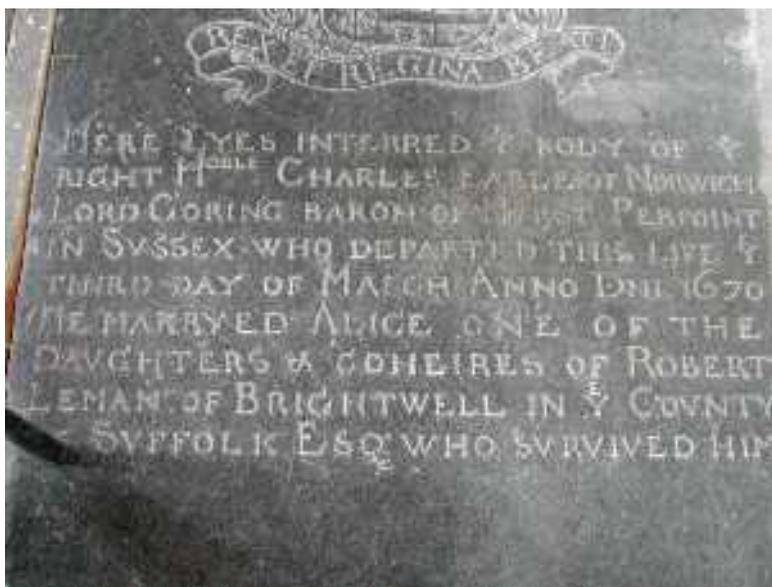
The entry made in his Diary on September 2, 1669, by John Evelyn is worth recalling: 'I was this day very ill of a pain in my limbs which continued most of this week and was increased by a visit I made to my old acquaintance the Earle of Norwich at his house in Epping Forest where are many good pictures put into the wainscot of the rooms, which Mr. Baker, his Lordship's predecessor there, brought out of Spain; especially the Historie of Joseph and an incomparable one of old Breugle'. Not very long after this the Earl was dead. In the church of St. Mary, Leyton, his body was interred; and there a wall monument in colours (*photo on next page*)



and a floor slab (*photo below*) were placed 'To the memory of the most accomplished Cavalier and right valiant Commander, Charles Goring, Baron of Hurst-Pierpont, and Earl of Norwich, who, 3 Mart. 1670, in the 46th year of his Age departed this life'.

'This Christian Hero, having passed his Youth
In those wild Mazes which fond Mortals tread,
Finding at length the peaceful Paths of Truth,
There Saints accompany and Martyrs lead:
In those he walked worthy his second Birth,
Till, tired, Death laid him to rest in Earth.'

His coat of arms is given in full by Daniel Lysons in his 'Environs of London'.



In his will, dated one day before his death (i.e. March 2, 1670/1) he acknowledges 'that the greatest part of my personal estate wherewith God hath pleased to bless me came from my dearly beloved, the Lady, Countess of Norwich.' He left to her Forest House in the parishes of Leyton and Walthamstow (which he had by marriage) and all lands and leases relating; and also the lease of his town house in Queen Street, St. Giles, with its contents and various other property. The Countess was to be sole executrix.

Alice, now widowed for the second time, continued at Forest House till her death, and as Countess of Norwich is given pride of place in the Leyton Rate Books. In an early Walthamstow Rate Book of 1676 we find her rated for her land in that parish. By 1673, however, she began to get into financial difficulties, raising a mortgage of £500 on the house and its leases of land from John Sayer, of Westminster, His Majesty's Cook, and, three years later, with Thomas Burgh of Grays Inn as her surety, of a further sum of £100. Burgh was also her surety for smaller amounts she borrowed from various people. Early in 1680 the Countess gave a Deed Poll by which she assigned all the leases and grounds pertaining to the house to Sir Henry Capell, Knt., and Dorothy, his wife. Dorothy was the only surviving child of Richard Bennet, of Kew, who had married Mary Leman, sister of, and co-heiress with, the Countess, and thus was her next-of-kin. A proviso in the deed, however, declared that Capell and his wife were to permit her to have and enjoy the house during the rest of her life. She was not long in the enjoyment of Forest House for in July of that same year she was dead. She was buried in the Churchyard at Leyton, Capell paying the fee of £2.10s. and giving the other £2.10s. to be bestowed upon the poor of the parish for her 'not being buried in Woolen'. Her will, appointing Capell and his wife as executors, was duly proved by them;

reference to it in the deeds says, 'Mentions ye Forrest House to be otherwise already settled and excepted',

Sir Henry Capell was the younger son of that noted Royalist, Arthur, Baron Capell of Hadham, Co. Herts., who raised a troop of horse for Charles I. His estate was confiscated by Parliament and in 1643 he was appointed lieutenant-general of the King's forces in Shropshire, Cheshire and North Wales. He aided Charles to escape from Hampton Court in 1647; and with Goring and Lucas put up that splendid resistance at the Siege of Colchester. After the surrender he was imprisoned in The Tower from which he managed to escape; but, being recaptured, was beheaded in 1649. His elder son, Arthur, fought for the King and for so doing his estate was under sequestration but later compounded for over £4,000. At the Restoration he was created Earl of Essex and given several important offices of State. Accused with Lord William Russell of complicity in the Rye House plot of 1683, he was imprisoned in The Tower in the very room from which his father had been taken out to execution. He was not to endure his father's fate, however, for his warders on entering the room found him dead, with his throat cut and a razor by his side.

Sir Henry, the younger son, lived in an old timber house at Kew, where, according to Evelyn, 'he had the finest fruit of any plantation in England'. His interest was chiefly in the House of Commons, of which he was a member for a long period. A strong Whig and anti Romanist, he was a leading supporter of the Exclusion Bill (1680). Under William III he was made a Lord of the Treasury and created Lord Capel of Tewkesbury in 1692. He finished his career in Ireland where he was one of three Lord Justices. He died in Dublin in 1696, leaving no issue.

Sir Henry and his wife, in a series of transactions, paid off all the mortgages and debts that the dead Countess had incurred and were thereby able to establish a clear title to the ownership of the Forest House and grounds which by then comprised 40 acres. Sir Henry and his wife disposed of the whole estate to James Houblon in 1681-2, after Sir Henry had secured a licence from the Chief Justice of His Majesty's Forests to replace the hedge and pales round the grounds with a brick wall, 'being in length about 150 Rodd' (i.e. nearly 1/2 a mile), this with the approval of Sir William Holcroft and William Maynard, both of Walthamstow, verderers of Leyton Walk.

James Houblon came from a family of famous London merchants. Pierre Houblon, a Huguenot Fleming, fled to London when the Spanish Duke of Alva was so bitterly persecuting the Protestants in Flanders. His son, James, became highly successful and well esteemed by his fellow merchants in the capital, and died in 1682 in his 90th year. His three sons, James, John and Abraham, had even greater success; and both Pepys and Evelyn record enjoying their rich hospitality. John, Knighted in 1689, and James, in 1692, were largely instrumental in the establishment of the Bank of England. All three brothers were Directors of its first Board and John became its first Governor. It was on the site of John's house and garden that the Bank's first permanent building was erected in Threadneedle Street. James was M.P. for the City of London, 1698-1700. One part of their business was the import of wine from the Continent; in the accounts book of the 5th Earl of Bedford for 1684 is recorded the purchase of Port Wine from James Houblon which is the first mention of that wine in these accounts. The family had one of its members as their representative in the town of Oporto. A picture of Sir James and his wife

(Sarah Wynne) and another of Wynne and James, their sons, both painted by Kneller, were sold at Sotheby's in 1931.

James Houblon must have very soon commenced building a new Forest House, the third one, (although no mention of this is made in the deeds as the following extract from Evelyn's Diary indicates: '16 March, 1683. After visiting Sir Josiah Child I dined at Mr. Houblons, a rich and gentile French merchant who was building a house on the Forest near Sir Josiah Childs (i.e. at Wanstead), in a place where the earl of Norwich lived some time and which came to him from his lady, the widow of Mr. Baker. It will be a pretty villa about 5 miles from Whitechapel'. The burial of Samuel Hollowman, bricklayer at Forest House, in the same year is recorded in the Leyton Register, The date assigned to the building in the Schedule from the Provisional List of buildings of architectural or historic interest in Leyton, viz: late 17th century agrees with this. The large stable block, still standing, was also erected at the same time. Whether the long boundary wall was built at this time in accordance with the grant previously mentioned is uncertain, as most of the estate is bounded to-day by modern walling or ditch and pales; although there was till recently part of what appeared to be very old, red brickwork behind the pond in James Lane.

During his residence in Leyton Sir James Houblon took but little part in local affairs, the only office he held being that of Churchwarden in 1691-2 and even then John Tarbraham acted as his deputy. He made occasional appearances at Vestry Meetings and it is recorded that he contributed £5 towards the building of the new chancel in the parish church in 1693.

In the Forbes Map of Walthamstow (1699) in the Library there, may be seen the details of that part of the estate that lay in that parish. Four fields, via: Broome Field, Brickill Field, Fox in the Hole and Grove Fields are marked as belonging to Sir John Hubland, The Leyton Rate Books often have his name spelt similarly. Unfortunately, this early map does not show the Leyton part of the estate - this is left blank.

Dying in 1700, Sir James left a bequest of £10 to be distributed to the poor of Leyton. His son, Wynne, is rated for Forest House for the years 1701-2, but in 1703 he sold the whole of the estate to Sir Gilbert Heathcote. This was in accordance with his father's will, the money realised by the sale to go towards providing legacies for his daughters Sarah, Catherine and Dorothy, spinsters.

Sir Gilbert Heathcote is certainly the most colourful of the many owners of the house. Born in Chesterfield, Co. Derby, C.1651, after a good education he came to London where he engaged in trade, of which the import of wine formed a considerable part. In this business he became connected with the Houblons and is named with them and a few others as being 'the Gentlemen' who established the Bank of England. He was alone in being chosen twice as Governor of that institution, 1709-11, 1723-5. When in 1697 peace came after the War (largely financed by the new Bank), waged by William III against the French in Flanders and the shares of the Bank rose in value from £60 to £98 it was believed at that time that Heathcote had been able to profit to the extent of £60,000 thereby. Holding very strong Whig principles, he promoted a new venture, 'The English Company trading to the East Indies' in opposition to the much older East India Company which was dominated by that strong Tory, Sir Josiah Child of Wanstead. This led to affairs going badly for both ventures

until in 1702 a working agreement was brought about. Heathcote was asked to compose the differences between the two companies by the most proper methods he could with the result that a complete fusion of the companies was effected in 1709, under the title of 'The United East India Company', with eminently satisfactory financial results,

Besides serving in five Parliaments, he was closely associated for long with the government of the City. He was Alderman of Walbrook Ward (1702-1725) and of Bridge Without Ward (1725-1733), during which latter period he was 'Father of the City'. Elected as Lord Mayor in 1710, when Tory influence was dominant, he had a hostile reception when riding in the Mayoral Procession to Westminster on horseback, whilst the Livery Companies went there by water. He is said to have been the last Lord Mayor thus to ride, a coach being thereafter used.

For a time he was Colonel of the London Blue Regiment, Master of the Vintners Company (1700), President of St. Thomas's Hospital and of the Hon. Artillery Company. He received a Knighthood in 1702, and a Baronetcy just a few days before his death in 1733, when he was said to have been the wealthiest Commoner having a fortune of £700,000.

During his 30 years occupation of Forest House we have record of several local affairs connected with him. In 1711 Leyton Vestry 'gave permission to Sir Gilbert Heathcote, now Lord Maior, to make a family vault in the Church' . He was to pay £10, make good any damage when digging and pay the accustomed fees for each interment. Situated at the west end of the Church, the vault was to measure 7 feet by 6 feet. At the next Vestry he asked for extra room 'because his family is large and ye ground cannot be digged deep, ye

springs lying high thereabouts'. His wish was granted and 'ye Vestry left it to Sir Gilbert's good will to gratify the parish for this addition'. The accounts show he paid only the £10. In 1713 his brother was buried therein and in a letter to the Vicar he complains of the excessive burial fees charged; but the accounts show he paid the usual fee of 6s.8d. The miserly spirit he had developed was satirised by Pope in: 'starting from millions and three groats to pay'. In the vault were later buried Dame Hester, his wife, (1714), Mr. John Heathcote from London (1727) and Henrietta and Maria, the twin daughters of his son and heir, Sir John Heathcote (1733). Sir Gilbert, himself, was buried at Normanton, Co. Rutland. When the new gallery was built in the Church at Leyton, Sir Gilbert who had subscribed £5 was given the right to a pew in it for the Forest House servants. He was occasionally seen at Vestry Meetings, including one held at 'The Three Blackbirds Coffay House'. One of his descendants, by marriage to Lydia Moyer, last of an old Leyton family, acquired the Moyer estate, Near the site of an old farmhouse on it was built the present Heathcote Hotel, in Grove Green Road, which thus perpetuates his name.

There is no indication of his making any additions to the house; but in 1709 he secured a manorial grant 'to make a walk upon the common Waste lying before his house and to plant the same walk on both sides with trees'. In front of the house to-day are two very old plane trees which probably were among those planted. One I measured had a girth of 18 feet at 4 feet above ground level and I was told that it exceeded 100 feet in height. The upper branches had to be severely lopped a few years ago.

At this time Jean Rocque must have been in the neighbourhood making his survey for the large scale map (published in 1746) of London and Environs. In the Leyton section is shown Forest House with an avenue of trees and some laid-out gardens, but strangely its name is printed Boreham House. Rocque, a Huguenot, with his limited knowledge of English, may have been told the house was Goring House and mis-heard it as Boreham to which it bears a certain assonance. The map shows that the old lane or way alongside the 'Slip' no longer exists. The estate boundary then as now is the present James Lane, marked on the map as Forest Lane.

The ownership passed to Sir John Heathcote, Bart., who is rated for the estate but who sold it in 1743 to Samuel Bosanquet. At this date one, Hugh Roberts, a brewer of Old Gravel Lane, had a lease of the house for 7 years from 1742. In this lease was a schedule of the area of the fields and an exhaustive list of the rooms with their permanent contents. Space forbids enumeration of this list, but mention should be made of 'the Grotto in the Grove paved with black and white marble'. Roberts was quite willing to relinquish the lease. The legal adviser of Bosanquet, examining the Title Deeds, comments on the insufficiency of the deeds relating to the 'Slip' land.

The Bosanquets originated in Languedoc, S.W.France, and one, David, escaped to London at the Revocation of the Edict of Nantes (1685). His eldest son, David, merchant and antiquary, has a monument in Woodford Church. Samuel (1700-1765), the second son, the new owner of Forest House, was followed by four generations who held the estate for nearly 150 years. He was a London merchant who in 1733 married Mary, then the only daughter of William Dunster, a very wealthy London merchant owning a considerable

estate in Leytonstone. The couple had lived with the Dunsters before coming to Forest House in 1744. Samuel had previously purchased the Manor of Low Hall, Walthamstow in 1741, was Churchwarden of Leyton 1742-3 and Trustee of Ozler's School from 1744. The Dunsters in C.1748 went to live at Forest House where both passed away in the same year, 1754, leaving Mary as sole heiress.

In 1750 Samuel Bosanquet planned to alter and improve the house, but before doing so secured a renewal of the old lease (expiring in 1789) for a further period of 300 years (i.e. to 2089). He paid David Gansell (2nd), owner of 2/3 of the manor, £280; and the Mayor and 6 Aldermen of Lincoln, owner of 1/3, £140 for this renewal at practically a nominal yearly rent.

What precisely the alterations were is uncertain; but he is said to have built the portico, raised the parapet and rebuilt the back of the house from the foundations. Probably the entrance hall was paved with large black and white marble squares, and a fine new oaken central staircase inserted. The sides of this were panelled in oak and the ceiling painted with an allegorical scene, with scrolls in the corners intertwining his initials: S and B. This ceiling was so badly broken by bombing in the last war, that it was quite beyond repair and had to be taken down. A room to the right of the entrance hall has a finely moulded ceiling and a fireplace, both in the Adams style. One other room had a handsome marble fireplace of the same style; this was a few years ago removed and placed in the entrance hall of Whipps Cross Hospital.

Both Samuel and his wife died in 1765 and were buried in a great vault in Leyton Churchyard, designed by the architect of the Bank of England. Mrs. Dunster 'ordered this monument to be erected to the memory of her husband,

but she lived not to see it completed'. An armorial mural monument to him is in the church. Of their children mention here can be made of only three; Samuel (2nd), William and Mary.

Samuel (1744-1806) who succeeded to Forest House was appointed a Director of the Bank of England in 1772 and Governor in 1792, when he presided at a great meeting in the City of merchants, bankers and traders 'to uphold the English Constitution of 1688' in opposition to the French Revolution. He held offices such as High Sheriff of Essex, Chief Forester and Verderer of Waltham Forest but all the while was taking an intense interest in Leyton affairs. He was partner in a firm of bankers at 73 Lombard Street which ultimately became absorbed by Lloyds Bank. His chief interest in his Forest House estate was to secure possession of outstanding pieces of land and thus consolidate it. He bought the freehold house, for long known as Forest Lodge, and 12 acres of land attached, situated at what is now known as Whipps Cross and in use for some years as Territorial Army headquarters. In 1783 he also purchased two fields of 10 acres adjoining the grounds of Forest Lodge lower down the Lea Bridge Road. This land was the property of Edward Rowe Mores, the sole heir of his father of the same name who built Etloe House in 1760. The old name of this land was Whittings Grove, described by Newcourt, writing in 1708, as one of the three ancient woods of Leyton, the other two being Wallwood and Lee Spring. He also redeemed the Land Tax on the whole of the property. Dying in 1806 he was buried with his parents. An obituary notice in the Gentleman's Magazine says: 'His charity was not confined to giving alms, he thought humbly of himself and seldom censured others'.

William Bosanquet (1746-1813) was for 40 years a Director of the Royal Exchange Assurance Company and had banking connections. He lived at Forest House with his brother and took great interest in local affairs. He was a generous supporter of Ozler's School to which he left a legacy of £200 the interest from which was to provide writing books, pens, paper for the use of its scholars. By will he also left the interest on £300 for the benefit of the people in Smith's Almshouses which years before he had substantially repaired at a cost of £120. A very beautiful mural tablet by Flaxman in Leyton Church (*photo below*) says he was born at Forest House and died there.

age, she left her home to go to live in two rooms at Hoxton, where she mixed with people of similar persuasion so that she became still more convinced in her beliefs. In 1762 a house in Leytonstone which had been left to her by her grand-father, Dunster, became empty and she moved there. In this house at the end of Davis Lane⁴ she started a little centre of Methodism and an orphanage. Here she had visits from John Wesley who warmly approved of her plans. This she maintained till 1768, when she transferred her work to Yorkshire and became a Methodist preacher. In 1781 she married the Rev. John Fletcher, Vicar of Madeley in Shropshire, a very great friend of John Wesley⁵. After her husband's death in 1785 she continued at Madeley where she devoted the rest of her life to spreading her religious beliefs and helping the poor. It is of interest to recall that the Mary Fletcher Memorial Chapel in High Road, Leyton, was built in 1877 on land given by a later member of the Bosanquet family⁶. A plaque to her memory was placed in front of Forest House in 1949.

The 3rd Samuel Bosanquet (1768-1843) who succeeded in 1806 to Forest House was for a time very zealous in local affairs. He was Superintendent of the Loyal Leyton Volunteers during the Napoleonic Invasion scare, Trustee of the Bread Fund and the Alms House, and Treasurer of Leyton Church Rebuilding Fund to which he subscribed £200 (1822). Two outside charities especially engaged his interest and financial support:- The School for the Indigent Blind and the Society for the Reformation of Criminal Children. During most of his later years, however, his interest was chiefly concerned with affairs in the county of Monmouth, where his father had purchased

⁴ Now called Davies Lane. (DWB).

⁵ John Fletcher was born as Jean de la Flechere at Nyon, Switzerland, 12 September 1729. (DIC)

⁶ The Mary Fletcher Memorial Church closed in 1969 and was demolished in 1971 (DIC). The site is now a petrol station and shop on the corner of Fletcher Lane (DWB).

Dingestow Hall⁷. Here he mostly lived although retaining Forest House. In 1816 he became High Sheriff of Monmouth and was for a time Deputy Lieutenant. He took a very active part in the Quarter Sessions of the county, thus maintaining the family tradition of acting as unpaid magistrates as his father and grandfather had done at Leyton⁸.



In Forest House, to-day⁹, may be seen a tiny room, with a heavily barred window and a strong door with a small peep-hole, which is said to have been the temporary 'lock-up' used by three generations of Bosanquets in their capacity of local justices of the Peace.

⁷ Dingestow Court (as the Bosanquet family call it) in Gwent (Monmouthshire) was purchased by that family in 1789, and remains in their ownership. (DWB)

⁸ His memorial tomb is in Dingestow churchyard (*see photo next page*) (DWB)

⁹ Temple is of course writing of his own time before Forest House was demolished. (DWB)

In 1820 Leyton Vestry was discussing the re-allocation of the Bosanquet pews in the parish church as the family visits to their Leyton house became less and less frequent. In 1831 they made Dingestow Hall¹⁰ their permanent home and Forest House with 13 acres was let to Mr. Edward Parsons whilst the larger part was farmed by John Hyem. The next tenant was Mr. William R. Robinson (1838-1840) who in turn was succeeded by his brother-in-law, Mr. John Hubbard, a Russian merchant previously living at Stratford Grove. John Gellibrand Hubbard, his eldest son, maintained the Forest House tradition of being connected with the Bank of England when he became a Director in 1838. He was Conservative Member of Parliament for Buckingham (1859-1868) and for the City of London from 1874 till 1887 when he was created Lord Addington of Surrey. He was a Privy Councillor (1874) and was Chairman of the Public Works Loan Committee from 1853 till his death in 1889. He built and endowed the Church of St. Alban, Holborn, but later strongly protested against the high ritual used there. John Hubbard died in 1847 but his widow continued to reside at Forest House till her death in 1851. Their remains are in a large vault in Leyton Churchyard.

By this time the 3rd Samuel was dead and had been succeeded in 1843 by Samuel Richard Bosanquet, M.A. (1800-1882), who had a successful practice as a barrister and was for years Chairman of the Monmouthshire Quarter Sessions. He was the author of a number of books including one entitled 'Hindoo Chronology and Antediluvian History'. By reason of his holding of Forest House, the Epping Forest Commissioners acceded to his claim of the right to take gravel from the 'Waste of Leyton' (c.1877), and he it was who

¹⁰ See footnote 7 page 34 (DWB).

gave the land (part of old insanitary Frog Row) for the site of the Mary Fletcher Memorial Church.¹¹



Forest House continued to be let and, after the death of Mrs. Hubbard, Charles Morley Robison, a merchant previously living at Etloe House in Church Road, Leyton, became the next tenant. By 1866 William Fowler, J.P., M.P., was renting the house. He will be remembered for his valuable work in connection with Leyton School Board, of which he acted as Chairman of the first three Boards (1874-1883), during which period Kirkdale Road, Church Road, Harrow Green and Newport Road Schools were built. During his residence here, the hitherto pleasant little stream, the Fillebrook, which formed the boundary between his lands and those of Joseph Gurney Barclay, began to

¹¹ A memorial tomb is in Dingestow churchyard (*see photo next page*) (DWB)

cause both gentlemen great concern. Considerable building in Walthamstow had been taking place and the sewage from thence was thrown into the stream, at times overflowing on to their lands. In 1878 Mr. Fowler was given £25 as compensation by the Leyton Local Board for the destruction of his hay crops by sewage flooding. Action at law was taken by that Board against the offending Walthamstow Board but it was several years before matters were remedied. By 1884 Mr. Fowler had removed to Moor Hall, Harlow, Essex, and no new tenant could be found. On 10 March, 1885, an Order in Council declared that the Walthamstow 'Slip' was henceforth to form part of the parish of Leyton and thus the whole of the estate was now Leyton territory.

In 1886 a Mr. Creed¹² wrote soliciting the Leyton Local Board's support for his plan for laying out the estate as a proprietary cemetery [sic]. This met with very fierce opposition from both the Board and a Committee of Local residents. A Public Enquiry by an inspector from the Home Office was held, and, following his report, the Board went 'in person' to interview the Home Secretary and was able to secure the rejection of the scheme.

Samuel Courthope Bosanquet (1832-1925), fifth member of the line to hold Forest House, succeeding in 1882, found a purchaser of the major part of the estate in 1889. This was the West Ham Board of Guardians which acquired the Mansion House and outbuildings, the Lodge and cottage in James Lane, the cottage (near to the present Hospital gates), together with grounds of 44 acres. The intention of the Board was to build a Poor Law School but consent to a loan for this purpose was refused by the Local Government Board unless a comprehensive system of drainage was installed. Then the Board decided to

¹² Could this have been the architect of the Essex County Ground cricket pavilion and the almshouses in Church Road ? (DWB)

use the house as a branch workhouse, the main workhouse in Union Lane, Leytonstone, having by this time become greatly over-crowded.

In 1894 plans for the erection of Whipps Cross Infirmary were approved, but building was not started till 1900 owing to continued delay caused by the refusal by the Local Government Board to sanction the required loan.

However, by 1903 the great new Infirmary was completed, at a cost of £186,665, giving accommodation for 674 patients.

Early in the 1st World War the Board offered the free use of Forest House and grounds as a convalescent home for wounded soldiers but the offer was refused by the authorities. In 1917, however, the number of wounded having increased so alarmingly, the War Office very willingly accepted a second offer of one block of the Infirmary with Forest House as an annexe. Official recognition of this valuable help was given by a visit paid by George V, with Queen Mary and Princess Mary. This is commemorated on a brass plate with a suitable inscription, Since then many additions have been made, especially from 1930 when the administration passed from the West Ham Union Board of Guardians to the West Ham Public Assistance Committee. To-day Whipps Cross Hospital is recognised as being one of the most efficient and best equipped in the country.

Forest House and the old stable buildings still house a large number of men, not bed patients but suffering from various afflictions, who are looked after by a matron and staff in a very kindly and sympathetic way. Certain adverse official reports on the unsuitability of the premises for this purpose have been

made. In due course these defects will have to be remedied but it is to be hoped that means will be found to preserve these old buildings for posterity¹³.

¹³ Sadly this was not to be. (DWB)

EXTRACT from the provisional list of buildings of architectural or historic interest for consideration in connection with the provisions of Section 30 of the Town and Country Planning Act, 1947.

Schedule dated April, 1953.

Map No.11. Grade II. Forest House

Late C.17, with later alterations, possibly including the addition of the top floor. Three storeys, modern cement finish, colour washed, eleven sash windows in cased frames, band over 1st floor. Capped parapet¹⁴. Tetrastyle Doric porch with cornice and blocking course, with two round headed doorways, and central sash window, Left-hand side with C.19 brick additions, right-hand return with six similar windows, two being large round headed staircase windows, Rear elevation of stock brick, various alterations and additions.

Interior Late C.17 panelling and black and white marble floor to entrance hall, right-hand front room with Adam period decoration - segmental coffered ceiling, classical plaque ornament, fireplace, dado etc. Room at left-hand end of house, now partly a corridor, with C.16 - C.17 panelling, painted. Staircase hall with fine well staircase on large scale with solid strings handrails and newels, barley sugar balusters, bolection moulded panelling up to ceiling of 1st floor, The ceiling, painted with Classical subjects and the initials of Samuel Bosanquet, fell down during the war. First floor has a number of panelled or half panelled rooms of late C.17 date, one at least with bolection moulded fireplace surrounds, one with shorn corner fireplace with built up top (cf.

¹⁴ Not visible on photographs (DWB)

Hampton Court Palace) and doors with contemporary escutcheons, knobs and locks.

History. The house is of late seventeenth century date, and is generally said to have been built by Charles Goring, Earl of Norwich. In the eighteenth century it became the home of the Bosanquet family and Mary Fletcher (nee Bosanquet) one of John Wesley's early preachers was born here 1.9.1739. (Plaque). Sir Gilbert Heathcoate (1651? - 1733) (D.N.B.) the Lord Mayor who was thrown from his horse on Lord Mayor's Show day, lived here. For other history and associations see Temple "History of Forest House, Leyton", etc.

Map No. 12. Grade II Former Stable Block to Forest House

The former stable block is late C.17 or early C.18. Two storeys, brown brick with red dressings, and red angle quoins to the projecting centre. Rubber brick band. Pediment with wood modillioned cornice, plain eaves elsewhere. Two-three-two casement windows, one-three-one to ground floor, central and ends with doors and transom lights. Wooden staircase across front. Hipped old tile roof.