

Accessibility : The route is on paved and asphalted surfaces, with many streets to cross. There are no hills.

How to get to the start : Leyton is a station on the Central Line. Bus routes 58, 69, 97 and 158 go past it. Route W15 along Grove Green Road and Ruckholt Road is a short walk away. Route W14 terminates at Asda in Leyton Mills retail park.

Toilets and refreshments : Leyton Mills retail park has American fast food chains. There are cafes at various points on Leyton High Road and two pubs.

Route : from Leyton Central Line Station, cross the road and turn right over the dual carriageway to the retail area 'Leyton Mills'. Turn left down the ramp or the steps beside it, then walk straight on.



Walk all the way round Asda, turning right under the large entrance canopy to cross in front of its doors and out to a corner of the car park.

History : There have been claims that a permanent Roman military camp or 'station' existed in this area. A stone coffin was found but we do not know what happened to it. Descriptions were written of a double rampart 36 yards square divided by a ditch, enclosing a circular embankment, on a small eminence later planted with trees.

Early Ordnance Survey maps show a site for 'Ruckholt' on the low ground that is now the Asda car park. This was once crossed by a stream that could have filled a moat for the medieval Ruckholt manor house and provided a water supply and liquid waste disposal. Construction of a railway yard altered the landscape here. It is unclear how many historic sites existed, and whether the remains were from the period of Roman Britain, earlier or later.

Down this part of the Lea Valley, on the east side, was a string of houses close to and overlooking the Lea Valley

just on to higher ground. Each had land, its manor, stretching east to the belt of forest and wasteland which survives today. Ruckholt was the most southerly in what is now Waltham Forest (the others were Leyton Grange, Mark House, Low Hall, Higham Benstede, Chingford St Paul and Chingford Earls). Ruckholt Manor included Leytonstone. In 1066 it was held by 'Swein the swarthy' including a mill on the Lea which had closed down by 1086 when Peter de Valognes held the manor. A house was in existence by 1257. 'Rocholte Hall' is mentioned in 1284 or 1285. Overlooking what is now a car park is a steep slope up to a block of flats. From Elizabethan times, if not earlier, Ruckholt Manor House was on this prominent location with views over the Lee Valley marshes. The word Ruckholt means 'wood with rooks'.

Route : Go to the far end of the car park and turn right, away from the petrol filling station, along Marshall Road beside the railway. Keep to the pavement as it turns right and upwards beside a slip road. Turn right to a line of Victorian or Edwardian cottages now called Ruckholt Close. The modern Thant Close on the right has been built near the site of Ruckholt House.



History : Henry Parvishe, a dealer in clothing accessories ('haberdasher'), owned, and probably built or rebuilt, Ruckholt House. After he died his widow Elizabeth married Michael Hicks, the son of a Cheapside merchant who went to Trinity College, Cambridge University when it was a centre of Puritanism. Hicks became secretary to Queen Elizabeth's chief minister, William Cecil, Lord Burghley. Elizabeth I visited Ruckholt House in August 1597. Hicks wrote to Sir John Stanhope, Treasurer of the Chamber, "the resplendence of her Majesty's royal presence and princely aspect did on a sudden so daunt all my senses and dazzle mine eyes as, for the time, I had use neither of speech nor memory". Hicks added that "men of great spirit and very good speech have become speechless in the like case, as men astonished

This is a publication of Leyton & Leytonstone Historical Society, of 2007, slightly revised in January 2013 and January 2017. The author David Boote welcomes enquiries about membership of Leyton & Leytonstone Historical Society and about the contents of this booklet. His contact details are : 27 The Croft, Friday Hill, London E4 6EZ
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www.leytonhistorysociety.org.uk

www.leytonpast.info/

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and amazed at the majesty of her presence". Burghley died in 1598. Hicks had been his private secretary from 1580. Hicks did not become a secretary to Burghley's son and successor Robert Cecil, later Earl of Salisbury. From Burghley's death Hicks was active in local administration at county and wider level, and spent more time at Ruckholt.

In 1603 Hicks sent Robert Cecil some apricots, complaining he had lost a lot through birds and earwigs. King James I visited Ruckholt in 1604 and Hicks was knighted soon afterwards.

Hicks had a musician as a member of his household

who would play during meals. In 1606 Hicks was one of the three chief guests at the wedding dinner of Francis Bacon, who wrote to Hicks in January 1612 that he could not remember whether he had borrowed carnation stockings from Lady Hicks or her daughter, and so sent a pair to each woman as a New Year gift. Hopefully this was a joke Hicks appreciated !

Robert Cecil and Michael Hicks died in the same year, 1612. Hicks was a companion to Robert Cecil in the month before Cecil died at Bath.

Gabriel Parvishe, Elizabeth's son by her first husband, inherited Ruckholt manor but sold it in 1635 to his half-brother William Hicks, who had been made a baronet by James I in 1619. Hicks helped raise money for Parliamentary troops at the start of the Civil War but was refusing help from October 1643. He was made to comply but in 1648 he was a leading member of the Royalist resistance to Parliament at Colchester. In November 1649 he fled England. By 1655 Hicks was back in England and was arrested with 18 other Essex gentlemen for opposing the Commonwealth government. In 1658 Ruckholt House was searched for arms.



John Evelyn, a staunch Anglican and a supporter of Charles II, wrote up this entry in his diary for 23rd May 1659 : "I went to Rookwoods & din'd at Sir William Hicks's, where was a great feast, & much company: 'Tis a melancholy old house inviron'd with Trees & rooks: return'd the evening".

The other great 17th century diarist, Samuel Pepys, made an entry for 11th September 1665 : "I took boat and over to the ferry, where Sir W. Batten's coach was ready for us, and to Walthamstow, drove merrily. Excellent merry discourse in the way, and most upon our last night's revells. There come, we were very merry, and a good plain venison dinner. After dinner to Billiards, where I won an angel. And among other sports, we were merry with my pretending to have a warrant to Sir W Hickes (who was there, and was out of humour with Sir W Doyly's hav[ing] lately got a warrant for a lease of Buckes, of which we were now eating one), which vexed him. And at last would compound with me to give my Lord Bruncker half a buck now, and me a Dow for it a while hence when the season comes in, which we agreed to - and had held, but that we fear Sir W. Doyly did betray our design, which spoilt all. However, my

Lady Batten invited herself to dine with him, this week, and she invited all us to dine with her there - which we agreed to only to vex him, he being the most niggardly fellow, it seems, in the world." Samuel Pepys's Diary entry for 13th September 1665 : "Here we Rendezvoused at Captain Cocke's and there eat oysters; and so my Lord Brouncker, Sir J. Mennes and I took boat; and in my Lord's coach to Sir W Hickes's, whither by and by my Lady Batten and Sir Wm. comes. It is a good seat - with a fair grove of trees by it, and the remains of a good garden. But so let to run to ruine, both house and everything in and about it -so ill furnished and miserably looked after, I never did see in all my life. Not so much as a latch to his dining-room door - which saved him nothing, for the wind blowing into the room for want thereof, flung down a great Bowpott that stood upon the sidetable, and that fell upon some Venice-glasses and did him a crown's worth of hurt. He did give us the meanest dinner - of beef - shoulder and umbles of venison which he takes away from the keeper of the Forest - and a few pigeons; and all in the meanest manner that ever I did see - to the basest degree. After dinner we officers of the Navy

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growth of dreary ugly streets, slums, and wildernesses of brick . . . there is nothing left in Leyton that comes up to the Great House for beauty. I know that . . . it still has some little scrap of its fine gardens, that it is

admirably placed opposite the County Cricket Ground . . . I know of no other house so near London, in such a splendid condition".

Route : This is the end of the route, on Leyton High Road beside the plaque to Leyton Great House. Bus routes 69 and 97 will take you back to the starting point at Leyton (Central Line) Station.



A painting by George Carpenter of Essex County Cricket Ground with the Great House on the right

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The House was bought in 1758 by Major Richard Oliver (born 1694, died 1763), a merchant and planter in Antigua where he had been a Member of Assembly and a Member of His Majesty's Council. The family supported John Wilkes. Richard's son Thomas, born in Antigua in 1740, died at Leyton in 1803 aged 62. In 1785 the Great House was assessed for 98 windows, the highest number in Leyton.

In 1805 the house was bought by John Theophilus Daubuz from heirs of Thomas Oliver. He died in 1831 and the house was inherited by daughter Ann Hand Mary Daubuz, and in 1836 by Lewis Charles Daubuz. The main line of the Daubuz family had an estate near Truro, Cornwall. The Great House in Leyton was let out from 1840.

In 1803 the Great House was described as :

"The capital RESIDENCE of the late THOMAS OLIVER, ESQ. deceased, 6 miles from the Royal Exchange, at Layton, near Epping Forest; containing lofty bed chambers, capacious hall, palladian staircase, and drawing room of fine proportions; 30 feet by 21, with windows to the floor, opening to an elegant lawn,

plantation, and pleasure grounds, a dining room, 30 feet by 16, breakfast parlour, library, morning room, and offices of every description, with excellent dry arched cellaring, standing for 4 carriages, standing for [horses ?], extensive gravel and shady walks, green [houses ?], beautiful flower gardens, and avenue of ornamental yew trees, lofty fruit walls, four kitchen gardens, stocked and planted with prime fruit trees, and several rich meadows, together upwards of 50 acres."

The sash windows in the front had been replaced by 1902 and the stonework had been heavily painted.

In 1894 C R Ashbee (founder and controlling mind of the Guild of Handicraft, Essex House, 401 Mile End Road), shocked by the demolition of a fine early seventeenth-century manor house in Bromley by Bow, set up the committee for the survey of the memorials of Greater London, to guard against the loss of historic buildings in London. He wrote an introductory note to a monograph for the Committee for the Survey of the Memorials of Greater London :

"the Leyton neighbourhood is being spoiled by the immense inrush of the population of greater London, the

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stepped aside to read some letters and consider some business, and so in again. I was only pleased at a very fine picture of [the] Queene Mother -when she was young, by Van Dike; a very good picture and a lovely sweet face."

In 1663 Charles II visited Ruckholt after hunting, probably in Wallwood and Epping Forest. The deer in Epping Forest were diminishing and in 1670 Sir William, as Lieutenant of the Forest, was fined £ 50 for not enforcing a warrant for restraint in destroying them and allowing them to be killed, particularly for himself.



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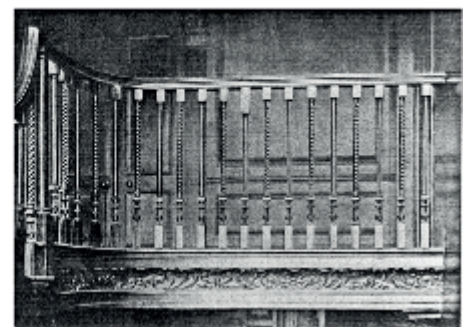
William Hicks' son, also called William Hicks, succeeded his father in 1680, and at great expense encased Ruckholt house in brick and improved it in other ways. His effigy and his wife Marthagnes's as a Roman senator and wife were placed either side of his father's effigy in St Mary's parish church.



Then came Sir Harry Hicks, Bt, grandson of Sir William, who sold the manor in 1720 to Robert Knight, cashier of the South Sea Company.

Benjamin Collyer held the manor under arrangements with his brother-in-law Robert Knight, who had to hide his assets from Parliament when the South Sea Company collapsed and the irresponsibility and political corruption of the scheme was revealed. A map of 1721 shows Ruckholt house standing on the south side of Temple Mills Lane (now Ruckholt Road), its main axis lying north-south with wings projecting on the east front and facing down an avenue to the road to Leytonstone (now Grove Green Road). Between 1721 and 1728 Benjamin Collyer dammed up the Phillebrook stream to make an ornamental lake with an island at the west end.

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have come from Wanstead House (demolished 1824), doors and fine plaster ceiling. The front part of the hall was single storey and had "a ceiling painted on canvas in the style of Thornhill with columns and balustrading in perspective"; the rear portion of the hall had stairs and was 2 storeys surmounted by a shallow internal dome, the dome and ceiling over the 1st floor landing painted with allegorical figures attributed to Thornhill; floor of the hall black and white squares of marble in a simple design. Two rooms west of the hall predated the 'Adamisation' and were panelled and had marble chimney-pieces and until 1901 carved over-mantels

with mirrors and paintings.

Strype was enthusiastic about the gardens which in his time were extensive : "the Magnificent and beautiful seat & habitation of the late Sir Fisher Tench, Bart, adorned with large and most delightful gardens, plantations, walks, groves, mounts, summerhouses, & pleasant canals stored with fish and fowl, and curious vistles & prospect,"

Sir Nathaniel Tench, son of Sir Fisher Tench died a year after his father, in 1737.

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Route : retrace your steps slightly to cross the High Road on the pedestrian crossing, and then back to Jesse Road.

On the left side of Jesse Road, but one end facing the High Road, is Walnut Tree House, the oldest building in Leyton and Leytonstone, and Listed Grade II*. This 16th century timber-framed building was remodelled about 1700 and again in the early 19th century, giving the long front facing Jesse Road and the two sides a largely Georgian appearance with sash windows and a Doric column porch. The house contains an early 18th-century staircase with twisted and turned balusters.



Carry on up the High Road past Francis Road. There is a plaque to Leyton Great House on maisonettes 542-548 on the High Road.

The date the Great House was built is uncertain. Strype refers to it in 1720. Fisher Tench is said in 1712 to have had a "handsome mansion house" and a map of about 1700 shows a "Tench Hall". As mentioned already Sir Fisher Tench was the son of Nathaniel Tench one of the first directors of the Bank of England who died in 1710.

The house was built in the style of Christopher Wren, the "bricks deep red brown with a distinct purple tinge". The central main block contained hall & main staircase. The facade had pilasters, pediment and porch. The Great House had its main rooms, including drawing room,

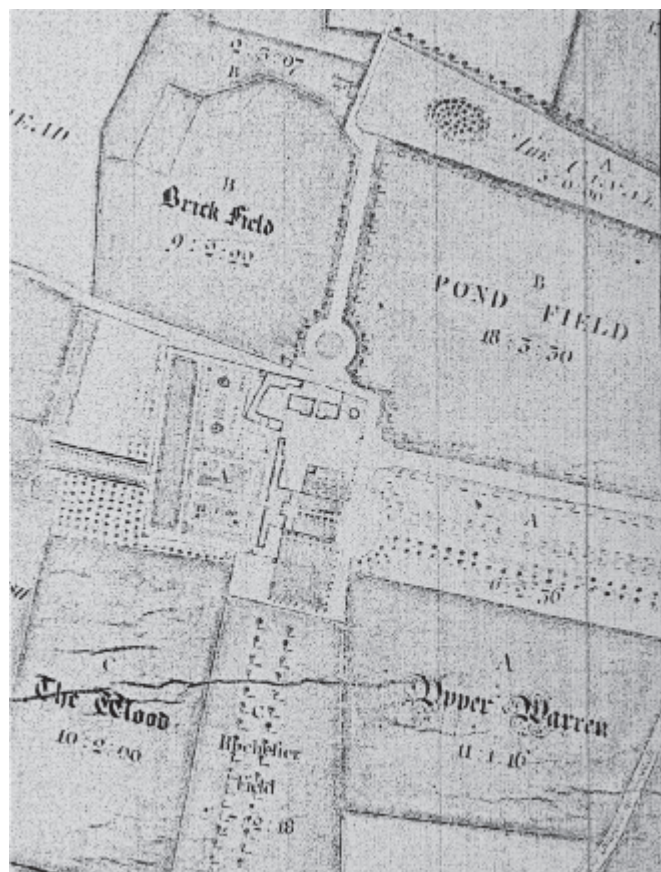
dining room and first floor, remodelled to designs of the Adam brothers, commissioned in the later 18th century. The plans are in the Soane Museum. The drawing room survived into the 20th century with delicately carved marble chimney-piece almost Greek in style, and said to

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Knight was imprisoned in the Austrian Netherlands (Antwerp) and had to wait many years before it was safe to return to England. His son, also Robert Knight, sold Ruckholt in 1731 to the trustees of Frederick Tylney of Tylney Hall, Rotherwick, Hampshire. Ruckholt from this time was part of the Wanstead House estate. The Tylney family did not occupy the house.

Ruckholt was converted into a place of entertainment by William Barton from 1742. For about six years the place was popular with the gentry on Monday mornings during the summer. Handel's Alexander Feast was performed there in 1743 but the season must have been disastrous, because the advertisement for the following year, 1744, promised that "As desired by several gentlemen the last season, not one of those who performed then will be engaged this. Proper cooks are provided every day in the week and plenty of fish."

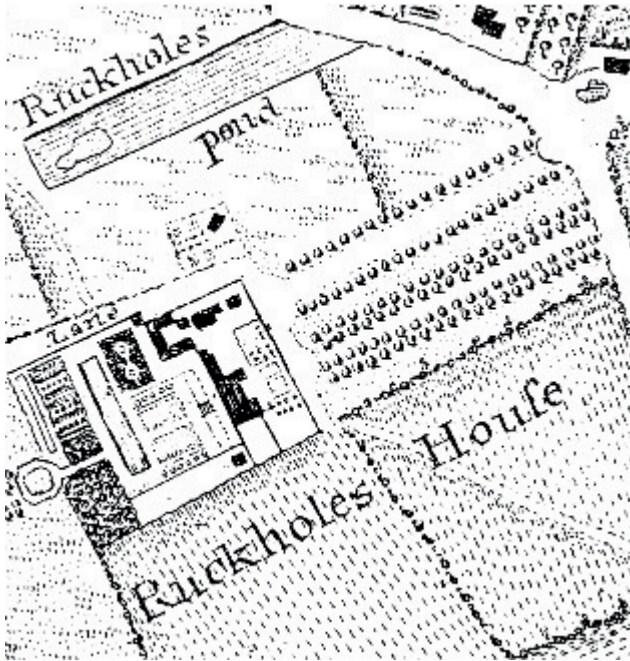
The house was pulled down in 1755-7; the materials sold included "exceeding good Oak and Firr Timber, several sorts of Deal and Oak Wainscotting, Marble and other Chimney-Pieces, a fine large Hall Chimney-Piece of white and vein'd Marble, with Slab and Covings the same, the whole complete, with Trophies and Entablature, about thirteen Feet high".



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By the time of the demolition a farm-house was the other side of the road, and farm buildings came to occupy part of the site of the manor house.

Route : from Ruckholt Close go past the Greek Orthodox Church (previously St Lukes Mission Church) into Ruckholt Road. At the traffic lights cross left to go along the west side of Oliver Road.



Map by John Roque

*Delia in whose form we trace
all that can a virgin grace
Hark where pleasure is blythe as May
Bids us to Ruckholt haste away
Verdant vistas, melting sounds
Magic echoes, fairy rows
Beauties everywhere surprized
Pure that spot dropt from the skies
Delia*

(A ballad of the 1740s)

History : Note the slight dip in Oliver Road opposite Coronation Gardens. In its heyday Ruckholt House had an ornamental lake that was longer than the present Gardens, formed by damming up the Fillebrook stream before it reached the River Lea.

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Strange, Master of the Rolls, Thomas Bladen a former Governor of Maryland, and Thomas Lane a lawyer and slavery plantation owner.

There is a dip in Grange Park Road where it meets Primrose Road. This marks contained an ornamental lake in the grounds of the house.

Past Grange Park Road a block of flats called John Strype Court shows where a vicarage was built for Strype in 1677-8. It was a two-storeyed brick building with a symmetrical front, sash windows, and a pedimented doorway. The interior fittings included an original staircase with turned balusters. A later, Victorian vicarage was built next to it but the older one continued to be used as a church house up to bomb damage in 1941.



On the other side of the road junction used to be the Lion & Key pub. The Waltham Forest Oral History Workshop publication on its website "Behind the Bar, The Licensed Trade in Waltham Forest" believes there had been an inn on this site since the pilgrimages of the Middle Ages and that the remains of the medieval building survived until the 1930s. The earliest record of this establishment is 1756 when it was to be the site of the stocks and whipping post.

Route : turn up Leyton High Road, cross Crawley Road and look through the railings at the Cricket Pavilion (photo left), erected for Essex County Cricket Club.



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The graveyard also has a hexagonal monument with cupola to Benjamin Moyer who died in 1759. Benjamin Moyer was the son and heir of Samuel Moyer, a member of a group of Whig merchants and financiers who resented the domination of the East India Company in the 1680s by a Tory, pro-court clique headed by Sir Josiah Child of Wanstead. In 1821 the Hackney watch was rewarded for apprehending someone who had robbed a Leyton grave of its body.



Pass the church and cross Goldsmith Road. Take the next turning, Grange Park Road.

Grange Park Road is the site of the Grange House, about which our Society has published a booklet (by David Ian Chapman). The House of which we have records was designed by the owner David Gansel, one of several wealthy Huguenots who bought properties in Leyton. Later occupiers included a senior judge Sir John

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Route : Pass Leyton Orient Football Ground and keep straight on to Leyton Fire Station. At the traffic lights turn right to cross to the further side of Church Road.



On this corner used to be the parish workhouse and vestry meeting room.

The workhouse was built in 1742. Inmates picked oakum, and from 1797 also stripped feathers and spun flax. They were allowed part of their earnings. A few went out of the house to work. Between 1797 and 1836 there were seldom fewer than 30 in the house; in 1801 there were 53. Part of the workhouse was used as the Vestry Room for local government meetings.

Sir William Hicks, Lord of Ruckholt Manor, used to chair most meetings of the Vestry. John Strype, a historian of the English Protestant Reformation, was in effect vicar 1669-1737. From 1695 he usually took the chair of the Vestry. He spent much of his early life collecting old charters, letters, and various documents, concentrating



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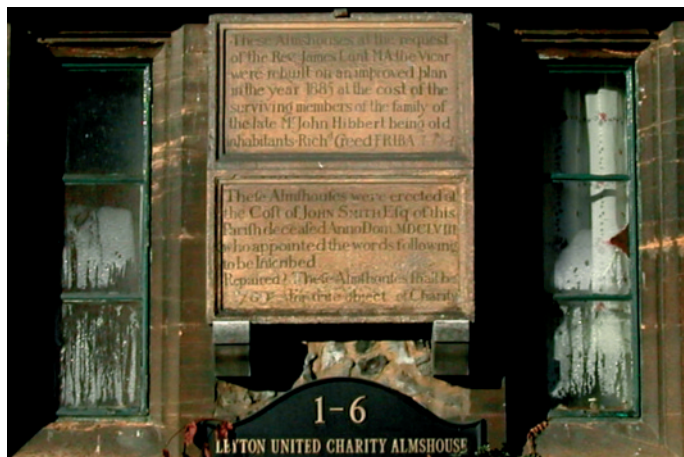
on the Tudor period. When he became infirm he went to live with his son-in-law, Mr. Harris, an apothecary at Hackney, and died there on 11th December 1737 at the age of 94.

The parish had a fire engine by 1790. When a fire-engine and buckets were bought by subscription in 1768, the vestry provided an engine-house by the church porch and maintained the engine. A fire engine building was later erected.

John Smith, merchant, one of the joint purchasers of Leyton manor in 1649, built almshouses of 8 rooms near the Church. Life must still have been harsh even for those given a place in the almshouses. On 22 March 1680 Elizabeth Searl, widow, of the Almshouse, was found dead in Wallwood. By 1734 the roof leaked and in 1738 the parish agreed repairs and improvements including the construction of 4 porches, each porch to serve 2 doors. The present almshouses date from 1885 and were designed by the same architect, Richard Creed, as the Essex County Cricket Ground Pavilion (see later in this walk).



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In the graveyard by the road is a monument, topped with a pyramid, to Sir Fisher Tench of the Great House (see later in this walk). He was the son of Nathaniel Tench, one of the first directors of the Bank of England. Fisher Tench died in 1736.



Leyton parish was like others anxious to minimise the expense of looking after the poor. In 1723 the accounts record a payment "for removing of foure bige bellyd woemen out of ye parish when like to be chargeable" but in 1733 "To cost for nursing ye woman Delivered at the stocks".

The church of St Mary the Virgin served the medieval parish of Leyton (including Leytonstone). The present building is mainly of the early 19th century. It is attractive and interesting inside, listed Grade II. It contains splendid monuments to 3 generations of the Hicks family.

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