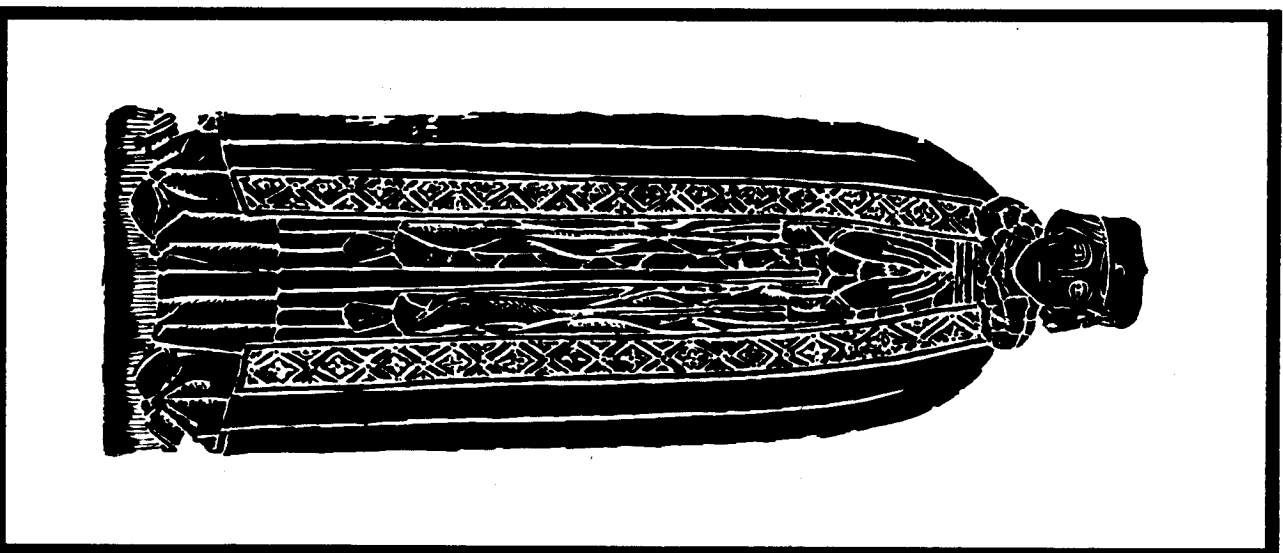
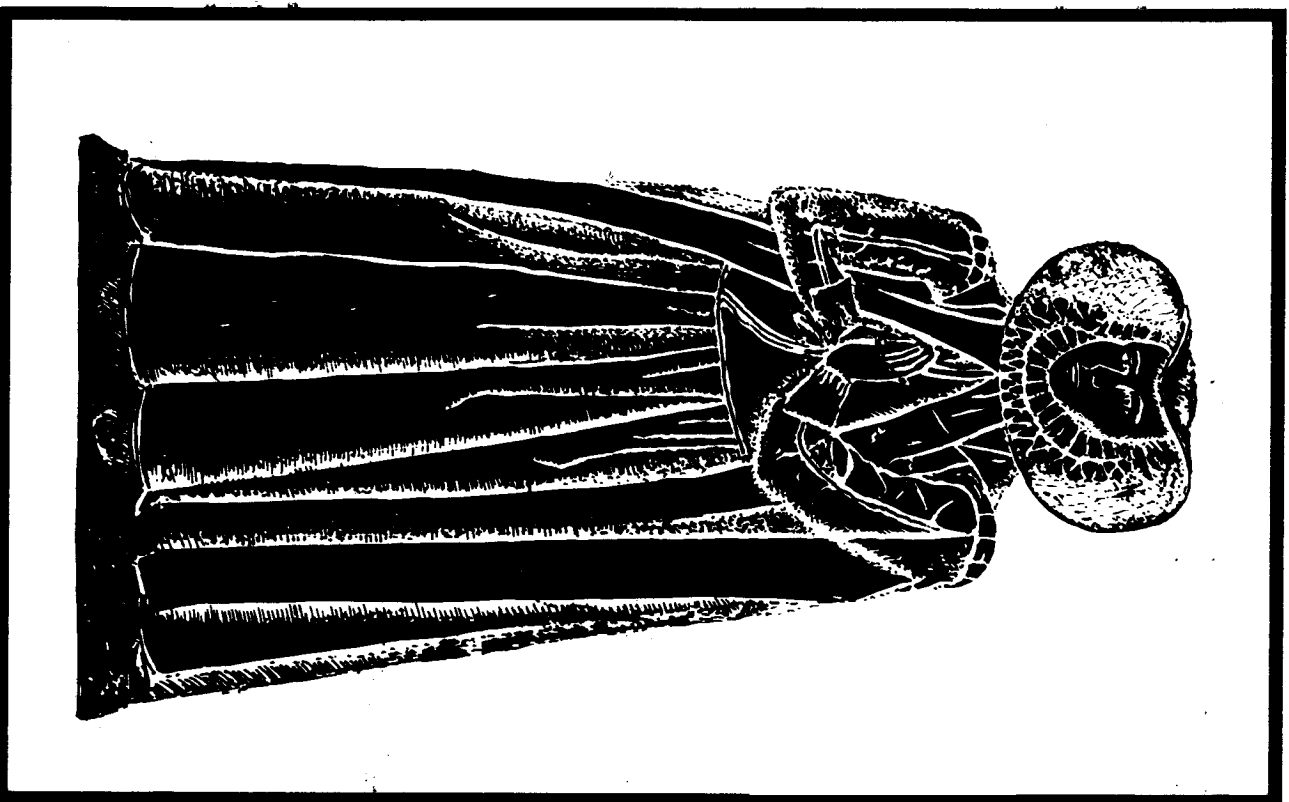


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EAST LONDON HISTORY GROUP

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Bulletin Number Seven



THE EAST LONDON HISTORY GROUP.

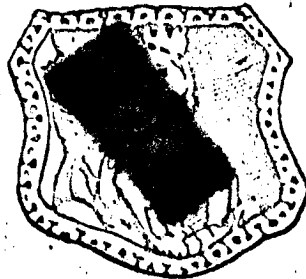
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SHIELD OF THE MERCERS COMPANY
(See page 6).

Bulletin Editor : Mr. A. H. French.
M.B.E., F.I.C.S.

EDITORIAL

For some years, East London's riverside wharves have been going through a difficult period, and during the past month or so, Gun Wharf and Buchanan's Wharf at Wapping have closed, as also have a number of City Wharves. The history of some of these old-established wharves will be published in the Bulletin later in the year, and it is hoped that some will continue to keep alive a centuries-old activity.

There is concern, too, for London's declining lighterage industry, but a new Canal has just been opened linking Limehouse Cut with the Regents Canal Dock. It is the first new length of canal to be dug in the south of England for 85 years. It will speed up traffic through the busy Lea Navigation which handles 2 million tons a year.

In a year or so, "The Widow's Son" public-house in Devons Road, Bow, is expected to be demolished to make way for a housing estate. The tradition was started by a widow who waited one Good Friday for the return of her son from Australia. His ship foundered in the Thames and he was drowned. The widow remained convinced that he would return, and kept for him a basket of hot-cross buns strung to the ceiling, a fresh bun being added each year. The tradition has lasted 130 years.

About 200 yards down Petticoat Lane (Middlesex Street) you will find 'Cockneyland', a newly-established "emporium of local history and atmosphere". It is a converted warehouse selling odds and ends mainly with old London associations and capturing something of the East Londoner's past.

A few weeks ago, the ceremony of blessing London Docks (soon to close) was carried out for the last time. The Rector of St. Peter's, Wapping, with choir, congregation, and a drum and fife band, went to Wapping Lane Bridge for the ceremony inaugurated by a Father Lowder 100 years ago.

Although we shall probably never see salmon leaping from the Thames off Limehouse Reach (as was known three centuries ago), it is good to know that the battle against pollution is being won and the Secretary of the Port of London Authority Angling Club is reported to have seen fish from time to time in the West India Dock.

The news of the death last month of Bill Cole, who directed Newham's oldest chimney sweep firm of W. Cole & Son, until his retirement eight years ago, was recorded with great regret. Before his death, he recalled the days when he swept chimneys at 6d a time. Little more than 50 years earlier, boys of 8/9 were made to climb up them and do the job for much less than a penny a time.

Theatre fans of the Group will have been enheartened by the old-time Variety shows which have been recently held at the Theatre Royal, Stratford. The old-time touch was strengthened by the serving of whelks, cockles and saveloys in the auditorium!

We are asked for information on the Zion (or Sion) Chapel which apparently existed in the Gt. Alie Street area of Whitechapel from 1790-1815. There appears to have been a Zion Itinerant Society which had some connection with Woodford Free Church. Could anyone with information on this inform Miss Sanson at East Ham Reference Library ?

A.E.F.

CAPTAIN JAMES COOK.

This is the Centenary year of Captain Cook's first voyage round the world. The following letter to the Rector from A.H. Carrington giving information from the registers and elsewhere about the family of Captain Cook will interest members:

The Rev. R. French,
Rector of Stepney.

18 Grantchester Road,
Cambridge.

February 22, 1936.

Last Monday I visited your church to search the records for information about the family of Captain Cook, which I found quite successfully.

Register of Baptisms, Nov. 1558 -
Records of St. Mary, Whitechapel
(otherwise St. Mary, Matfelon, Stepney).

Cook was master of a Whitby ship in the Thames in 1755, when he decided to volunteer for the Navy, which he did through a "resort" in Wapping. He served through the Seven Years War, including the Siege of Quebec, and as master of the "Northumberland", Lord Colville's flagship, was paid off in Plymouth on December 8th, 1762. He went to London and stayed at lodgings kept by a Mrs. Blackburne of Shadwell. She (nee Mary Smith) had first married John Batt, by whom she had a daughter, Elizabeth. Cook married Elizabeth Batt on December 21, 1762. (swift work). They continued to live with his mother-in-law until he went in April, surveying the coast of Newfoundland.

The first son, James, was baptized in St. Dunstan's on November 1, 1763. (I think this should be St. Paul's Shadwell. - Ed). Cook's second son, Nathaniel, was baptized in St. Dunstan's on January 8, 1765. They had moved to their house in Mile End Row, in the interval. I should think during Cook's leave in the winter of 1763/4.

Cook continued his annual visits to Newfoundland, and his Christmases at Mile End Row, until 1767/8, in the latter year he went off on his first voyage round the world

Elizabeth was baptized on September 22, 1766, aged 8 days, and died, aged four years, April 9, 1771. (? buried St. Dunstan's). (I have not checked this date of death, or any of the following ones).

Joseph, Sept. 5, 1768 - Sept. 13, 1768 (?buried St. Dunstan's)

George, July 18, 1772 - Oct. 1, 1772 (?buried St. Dunstan's).

Hugh, June 5, 1776 - at Cambridge, Christ's College, Dec. 21, 1793.

He is buried in St. Andrew's Church, Cambridge, with his brother James, and Mrs. Cook.

The first son, James Cook, was entered as a scholar at the Royal Academy, Portsmouth, October 14, 1774. In 1794 he was Master and Commander of the "Spitfire". She was lying off Poole when he was attempting to get on board in a bit of a gale. His boat was upset and he was drowned, January 25th, 1794, only a month after he had been to Cambridge with his mother to attend the funeral of Hugh.

I have not yet been able to fill the gap of twenty years in James's life.

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Nathaniel also went into the Navy, and at the age of sixteen was a midshipman in the "Thunderer" when that ship was lost with all hands in a hurricane near Bermuda - October, 1780.

Mrs. Cook lived on until 1835, aged 93. I do not know exactly when she moved from Mile End Row, but she spent her last years in Clapham.

James was born a month before Cook got home from Newfoundland. Nathaniel was born and died during his absence. Joseph was born six to seven weeks after Cook sailed on his first voyage, during which Elizabeth died.

George was born five days before Cook sailed from Plymouth on his second voyage. He left Sheerness on June 21, and Plymouth on July 13, 1772. George was born on July 8. Could the news have reached Plymouth in that time? Hugh was born about May 23, 1776. There is a letter by Cook dated Mile End, June 15, but he was in Plymouth June 30, and he sailed on his third and final voyage on July 12.

A. H. Carrington.

(Author of "The Life of Captain Cook," 1939.

C. S. T.

"DESTRUCTION OF A TRAINING-SHIP BY FIRE - GREAT LOSS OF LIFE".

(From the "Stratford Express" December 25th 1875).

The "GOLIATH", an old-line battleship of 81 guns, was destroyed by fire on Wednesday. The vessel was stationed off Grays, opposite Gravesend, and in connection with the Forest Gate Training School, served as a training-ship for boys from the several Metropolitan and other unions. There were nearly 500 lads on board and breakfast was just over. A few minutes before 8 the fire showed itself. A lamp in the lamp-room was upset and the flames quickly began to spread. Captain Jenkins, the Harbour-Master, was quickly informed. He resides at Gravesend and soon reached the scene. Captain Bourchier, of the "Goliath" and the Officers belonging to the ship, were hard at work to extinguish the fire but in vain. Pumps were rigged but in half an hour from the outbreak the main deck was in flames. Two boats were at once lowered and manned. A third was being let down when it fell and capsized a boat laden with boys underneath. Captain Bourchier's wife and two daughters jumped into the water from a height of 25 feet. They were picked up by a boat and taken to Grays. The Captain was badly burned, together with other Officers.

By 9 o'clock the training ship "Cornwall" from Purfleet, with Captain Arthur Nowell in command, ran alongside and offered refuge to the boys, and with the "Arethusa" under Captain Walter, assisted in landing a number of the boys at Grays. At 10 o'clock the mast of the "Goliath" fell over the side, the head moorings broke adrift. Captain Jenkins telegraphed to the Thames Conservancy and the authorities at Sheerness, as it was feared the ship would break adrift and set fire to other property, but the "Goliath" was driven ashore by a strong south-west wind.

The roll was called over and there were more than thirty missing but this was later reduced to 19 and the Schoolmaster, Wheeler. Two bodies of boys were washed shore (McGrath and Denhall) now in the mortuary of the infirmary at Grays, known as Sherfeld-house. Five of the injured boys are at the infirmary.

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Insurance to the amount of £15,000 has been effected on the vessel and its contents. The "Goliath" was still blazing on the 23rd.

The boys who were able were despatched by train and other means to their different parishes, many of them proceeding to London.

"THE GOLIATH DISASTER"

("Stratford Express Jan. 1.1876 p.3).

A Committee has been formed to receive subscriptions to recoup Officers.

An Inquest was held at the King's Head Hotel, Grays, on Friday afternoon, December 24th, on the bodies of William McGrath, aged 15 of St. James Industrial School, Westminster, and Joseph Denholme, of Stepney Union. A Committee of the Forest Gate Industrial School Board of Managers was present.

Mr. Barringer, Chairman of the Board of Managers of the F.G.Schools, said that the oil would not explode, but would increase in inflammability as the heat increased. The Managers had on many occasions been inspecting the ship when the fire-bell was rung as a trial, and he had known the boys to be all in their proper positions in $1\frac{1}{2}$ minutes.

John Henry Hall, Chief Officer, said that at about $\frac{1}{4}$ to 8, the boy Loeber went to him and told him the lamp-room was on fire on the main deck. In his judgement everything was done to allay the progress of the fire but in about 20 minutes the flames had spread down to the lower deck. All the boys were taught to swim. Robert Loeber said he was 13 years of age and had been aboard about two years. He had to perform the duty of lamp-trimmer since 17th December. Three lamps were allowed to hang all night and he took them one at a time to the lamp-room. He did not put them out, he only turned them down. He dropped one on the deck of the lamp-cabin which was oily and greasy, and it was on fire immediately. He took off his clothes and placed them over the fire but it burned his clothes and he then sat upon it. The Captain replied to the Coroner that directions were given to the officer-in-charge of the main deck that every lamp should be put out before it was moved.

A.J.C.S.

DEBT DODGING

While some young gentlemen were drinking lately at a tavern in Whitechapel, one of them who happened to be considerably in debt, was informed of two bailiffs loitering about the door; on which they held a council and came to a resolution to send for two men who lived just by, who were ordered to nail the two bailiffs by their clothes to the post which they leaned against. This being affected unperceived they gave the men a crown for their trouble, and, paying their reckoning, went out; when the bailiffs going to do their duty, and attempting to move from their station in a hurry, each of them got a most violent fall on the stones, and before they could disengage themselves, the young gentlemen made off. The mob who gathered about the bailiffs were highly diverted with the affair.

("Annual Register" June 3 1761).

WHAT ARE WE DOING ?

It is right that, from time to time, we should take stock of our position in any organisation or society to which we belong. It is right, too, that others should know what we, as a Group, are doing, and as we receive a small but valuable financial contribution from the three Councils whose area we cover, this right is reinforced.

In the past year, the Group has had its usual programme on various aspects of East London's history, both in lectures from competent lecturers and in visits to little-known parts of the area. Two coach outings and visits to several exhibitions made it a full programme.

But what about the voluntary work behind the scenes? Our Development Officer, Mr. C. S. Truman, well-known for his long service to East London in the administrative, academic and trade union field, continues to lecture on local history and, in co-operation with Tower Hamlets Library, has lectured to children of a number of local schools. He is currently engaged on research into the part played by East Londoners in the early days of American settlement.

Mr. Michael Power, with a small team, has been examining the registers of Stepney Parish Church and has already published an excellent Report for the benefit of Group members on the population of Stepney in the early 17th Century. Mr. S. C. Tongue has been engaged in the mammoth task of cataloguing the records of Shoreditch Parish Church in conjunction with the Church Authorities and this will continue for some time. Would you like to help in this during the coming winter ?

Mr. Granick, always around East London with his camera, has taken some remarkable photographs of buildings (especially those threatened with spoliation or demolition) and of anything of interest that is likely to disappear at some future date.

Our architectural members have assisted in presenting alternative plans for representation to the appropriate authority when buildings or areas of historic interest are threatened. We are always on the alert to do what we can to preserve the historic character of East London, trying to be constructive as well as protestant.

Mr. Andrews compiled a full and meritorious history of the Poplar Hospital, involving a great deal of research.

Mr. Hellicar, Mr. Meadows and Mr. Royden, have all greatly assisted in our tape-recording project and the next few months should see further recordings from local personalities.

Miss Sanson has maintained an essential and continuous liaison with some 15 local history groups as well as the archaeological and kindred societies with which the Group is in contact. The Group has also brought to the notice of members and others new (and often old) books of importance to the study of East London, most of them available at local libraries. The Librarians and their staffs in the three boroughs are of inestimable value to the Group.

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Other members have given lectures on East London to professional and other bodies outside the area, and more are planned for the coming winter. Some of our members are in constant touch with developments in the Lea Conservancy area, the Epping Forest area, the Regents Canal Redevelopment Scheme, Thames-side reconstruction, etc.

East London has a tremendous history and much of it is still unexplored. If, by research, investigation, education and exchange of information we can not only satisfy our own curiosity and put more and more of the 'jig-saw puzzle' of local history into place, but spread this knowledge far and wide and, above all, inculcate in East Londoners a sense of pride in this great area in which they live, we shall indeed have served our purpose.

A.H.F.

THE DEAN COLET ESTATE.

How many Group members know the little shield stuck inside the cover of this Bulletin? It is approximately 18" by 18" and shows a crowned bust in high relief, set in a patterned shield. These plaques are fairly common in central Stepney and can be met with as far south as King David Lane (Cable Street) and Adelina Grove (almost on the Mile End Road) in the north, a distance of almost half a mile.

This shield is the property mark of the Mercers Company, one of the City of London's 12 senior Companies. Walk through Ironmonger Lane, off Cheapside, where the Company Hall is situated, and this crowned figure can be seen in many different forms, some with and others without its shield - basically the same. These property signs can also be seen in Cheapside, at the corners of King Street and Queen's Street - the road leading to the Guildhall.

The Mercers Company has very old connections with Stepney - 450 years to be exact. Miss Jean Inray, archivist to the Mercers Company, in her first article in the East London Papers (Vol.61 No.2, 1963) outlining the Company's earliest associations with East London, pointed out that Sir Henry Colet, Lord Mayor of London 1486-1495, father of John Colet, Dean of St. Paul's, wishing to have a country retreat where he could retire occasionally from the rigours of City life, yet be close enough at hand to keep a watch on his business interests, acquired a large estate in Stepney between the years 1482 - 1497.

John Colet inherited his father's estate in 1505 and his mother had a life interest in it. In the year 1513, Dean Colet and his mother ceded this estate to the Mercers Company and it is from this date that the Company's connections with East London began.

We find from Miss Inray (Vol.9, No.1 East London Papers) that with few exceptions, for three centuries, very little building took place on the Dean Colet Estate. Until the beginning of the 19th Century, most of the land remained rural, both arable and pasture - for a number of reasons the Company were reluctant to develop the estate by building on it.

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Pressure of events - the opening of the London & West India Docks, the building of Commercial Road, and the development of housing on adjacent estates, forced the Company to reconsider its ideas. After much deliberation and planning, over a period of 10 years, building began about 1817 and carried on until 1850. We can say that these shields in the Dean Colet Estate date from this period.

A few years ago, the G.L.C. acquired this estate, and it is now in the process of being demolished. A complete new housing estate is being built, including new shops and a new market. One wonders whether the old name, the Dean Colet Estate, will be retained.

Enquiries made at the Mercers Company Hall, regarding the origins and history of the shield (not mentioned by Miss Inray in her articles) elicited the following reply :

The shield in question was one of the Mercers Company property marks. It was customary to place these marks on Company property for a very long time, at least since the 17th Century. The mark itself was an adaptation of the Company's coat-of-arms and the crowned head has been used since time immemorial. It is not known for certain whom she represents, but it is thought to be the Virgin Mary, as St. Mary was the Patron Saint of the Mercers Company.

Note: According to Sir Ernest Pooley, Master of the Drapers Company, the Mercers Company, whilst not quite the oldest City Company, take rank as first Company in order of precedence. ("Guilds of the City of London"). Oxford Dictionary : Mercer, meaning a dealer in textile fabrics, silks and costly materials.

David Granick.

THE MANOR OF ALDERSBROOK.

The manor is first heard of in the early 16th Century, when it belonged to George Monoux, the founder of the Monoux School at Walthamstow. King Henry VIII bought it from him. The King granted it to Sir John Heron about 1520 - later his son forfeited it, and it was granted again to Antony Knevett for life. In 1544 it was granted to Catherine Adington, a widow, and her son Thomas.

Thomas Adington conveyed the manor to John Traves in 1539, and his son sold it to Henry, Earl of Pembroke, in 1578. It passed again to Nicholas Fuller in 1580, and to Robert, Earl of Leicester, soon after. He left it by will in 1587 to his natural son, Sir Robert Dudley, who sold it to Edward Bellingham in 1595. In 1636 it passed to Cecily West, his neice, and her son Thomas West sold it to Henry Osbaston or Osbaldeston.

His son Francis Osbaston was High Sheriff of Essex in 1678 and died the same year. He is buried in Little Ilford parish church (St. Mary's). His widow sold the estate to Sir John Lethieullier or his son John in 1694. It remained in the Lethieullier family until 1760. The Lethieulliers were Protestant refugees from Brabant. Sir John Lethieullier's great-grandfather was burnt at the stake, and his grandfather moved to Cologne where his father was born. His father came to England in 1605, and after moving to Amsterdam during the Civil Wars, settled again in this country. Sir John Lethieullier was born in 1633. He was a prosperous merchant in the City, trading with

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Turkey and the Near East. He became Sheriff of London in 1674, and died in 1718. He was succeeded by his eldest son, also called John, who died in 1737, and was succeeded by his son Smart.

Smart Lethieullier lived the life of a country gentleman. He considerably increased the size of the family estates, buying the Lordship of the Manor of Barking, one of the most important locally. He was also interested in history and antiquities, and collected works of art and fossils. He was a member of the Royal Society and the Society of Antiquaries. He never published anything, but he left a valuable history of Barking in manuscript. He left no children, and on his death in 1760, the estate passed to his niece Mary, who married Edward Hulse. In 1768 it was sold to Sir James Tylney Long, of Wanstead House.

There was a manor house at Aldersbrook at least as early as 1544. The Lethieulliers improved (or maybe rebuilt) the house, and laid out the grounds with ornamental avenues and ponds. There was a lake about 500 yards long, called the "Great Pond" or "Aldersbrook Pond", probably a natural pond, but enlarged, and avenues of trees led south to Romford Road, and west to Aldersbrook Road, which formed the boundary of the grounds. We have copies of 3 plans, made about 1725, 1740 and 1748, which show the layout, in East Ham Reference Library - the originals are in Essex Record Office. Smart Lethieullier built an ornamental "Hermitage" in the park to house his collections. The house itself does not seem to have been very large, and we have no illustrations of it.

The southern boundary of the estate was Romford Road, the eastern one the Roding. The northern one was near Wanstead Park - the exact boundary was disputed with the Tylneys of Wanstead House. Aldersbrook Road formed the boundary of the grounds, but part of Wanstead Flats was claimed as common grazing belonging to the manor. One of the most notable features of the estate was a rabbit warren on the north side of Aldersbrook Pond - this may have given the name to "The Three Rabbits" public house, which appears on early plans as "The Three Coneyes". Besides the manor house, there was a farm house, first mentioned in 1535. It was also known as the warren house, as the farmer was also warren keeper.

When Sir James Tylney Long bought the manor in 1786, he pulled down the manor house, and turned the grounds into farm land. The farm was thus enlarged to more than 200 acres. In 1854 the City of London bought most of the farm for a cemetery. They pulled down the farm house, and filled in the Pond. The City of London Cemetery still stands there.

When some areas of Epping Forest were enclosed by local land-owners in the middle of the 19th Century, and the City of London sought to oppose this, they were able to do so successfully as the owners of Aldersbrook Farm, and thus entitled to grazing rights.

This is only an outline of Aldersbrook's history - further information can be obtained from two articles by C.A. Iyan Chown in the Essex Review. The first "The Lethieullier family of Aldersbrook House" appeared in Vol. 35 p.203, and Vol. 36 p.1+, and the other "Aldersbrook Farm and the preservation of Epping Forest" in Vol. 50 p.20+, 118+, and 163+.