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DANCERS HILL AND THE MANOR OF MANDEVILLE

Dancers or Mandeville Hill, as it was alternatively called, lies about half way between Barnet and the village of South Mimms. It is part of the former Middlesex parish of South Mimms, latterly known as Potters Bar Urban District and soon to be amalgamated into the Hertfordshire conglomeration of Hertsmere.

Until Thomas Telford made the new straight road from Barnet to St Albans, the old main coaching route was by Kitts End, Dancers Hill and Mimms Wash. In the south, Dancers Hill rises from the valley of the brook flowing westward to Durham Park. On the west the hill slopes down through fields called Mandeville, now cut by the present St Albans Road to the Mimms Hall Brook winding north to pass under a footbridge, recorded as the high bridge in 1504¹ into Wash Lane, where, before the road bridge was made in 1772², the brook spread across the low ground known as Mimms Wash, an unwelcome hazard to travellers.

To the east the ridge of high ground continues and even rises slightly to Bentley Heath but the name Dancers Hill does not seem to have applied beyond the end of Baker Street, at least not until the road was renamed Dancers Hill Road in fairly recent times.

The Plan shows the area of the hill more or less as it was at the end of the 18th century. The shaded edge outlines what appears to be the original lands of the estate belonging to Dancers Hill House which was sold to George Byng of Wrotham Park in 1768, it includes land, which between 1575 and 1700, was described as belonging to the Manor of Mandeville³. The plan also gives the names of the other properties on and around Dancers Hill with a date to indicate when recorded or a query to show that it is so placed from written evidence only.

It is noticeable that besides the inn called Mandeville which belonged to the Manor of Mandeville, there are at least two other groups of fields called Mandeville on the hill, both copyholds of the chief Manor of South Mimms, while the hill itself had also the alternative name of Mandeville Hill.

The aim of this study has been not only to discover the history of the houses and lands on Dancers Hill, but also to try to trace the origin of this so called Manor

of Mandeville and the reason for this apparent concentration of property called Mandeville in this part of the parish. The name Mandeville in South Mimms is usually assumed to show a connection with Geoffrey de Mandeville who held South Mimms as part of the Manor of Edmonton at the Domesday Survey and whose descendant is said to have built the motte and bailey castle. But whether such a connection exists in the case of the lands on Dancers Hill is still undecided.

The lands called Mandeville

Besides the fields which are named Mandeville on the plan there are many other references to the property called Mandeville or variants of Mandeville which are not yet located. Some of these may be found to refer to the same lands. Briefly some of those found are: in 1394, land called Mandeville included in a lease of the manor of South Mimms by Roger Lewkenor⁴. In 1452⁵ and 1474⁶ Court Rolls of the same manor mentions fields called Mandeville. Also in Court Roll in 1489 there appears "Maundefield and Great Mandeville a croft lying adjacent to lands of Hasilrigg."⁷ In 1506 Roger Wright, who in his will had left a tenement and lands called "Maundwyles" is said to hold them of the lord by a charter for a rent of 20/-.⁸ Perhaps this refers to another freehold named Mawndefelds for which Humphery Reynolds paid 20/- rent in 1567.⁹ In this same rental of 1567 Henry Taylor paid 9/- for a copyhold parcel of Maundefelds. In the will of Thomas Pouns made in 1445 is listed a croft lying among Mandevyles lands.¹⁰

One document found among the records of the nearby Durham Park gives a hint of a link with the Norman Mandevilles. This is an undated rough draft of a claim of rights in Enfield Chase by the Lord of the Manor of Mandeville.¹¹ On the same sheet is a similar draft claim for the owner of Durhams. On the back is a copy of a completed claim for rights for Durhams signed by John Austen, stating that these rights had been granted by Hugh de Mandeville to Frowyke of the Fold. There is however no completed claim for the manor of Mandeville so we cannot tell on what its claim was based.

Shown on the plan on the south side of the hill are two sixteen acre copyholds of South Mimms Manor, one of which is named Mandeville. Both can be traced in the records of that manor. Attached to the first was a tenement with an acre of land called Foweslow Mead, which was the copyhold of Simon Flexmore at the end of the 16th century.¹² In 1657 it passed to Richard Broomer¹³ whose son Joseph is recorded in 1702 as also being the copyholder of 16 acres of land called Mandeville.¹⁴ Both pieces are described as adjoining Knightsland which lies to the south, and are also near Cuckold Corner, which was the name of the junction of Wash Lane and Dancers Hill Road.

The second 16 acre copyhold was unnamed, it also was described as at Cuckold Corner and together with a tenement, barn and cowshed was in 1690 held by Thomas Jackson.¹⁵ It seems possible that these two copyholds were together the same as one copyhold of about 28 acres, listed in 1594 as belonging to Thomas Fox, which also adjoined Knightsland and was called Great Mandefielde, with a newly erected tenement on it called Mandefielde.¹⁶

Both these 16 acre copyholds passed through several hands until in 1788 and 1790¹⁷ they were sold to George Byng and added to the Dancers Hill property.

The other copyhold lands called Mandeville or Dancers Hill were attached to a freehold house known as Wicks Place in 1709 and later as Laurel Cottage or Lodge. In 1709 it belonged to John Niccoll of Hendon Hall and was part of a settlement

made on the marriage of his son John to Mary Pym.¹⁸ The property was described as a freehold farmhouse called Wicks Place or Dancers Hill with barns, stables and gardens, occupied by Richard Rush. With it was a copyhold cottage and 11 acres of land in two closes called Mandeville and another 18 acres in three closes called Mandeville or Dancers Hill. On first reading, this appears to refer to Dancers Hill House, but later records show that it was sold in 1808 to Henry Heyman, who renamed it Laurel Cottage and had a plan made of the property in 1810.¹⁹ While there is no actual proof of earlier ownership by other Niccolls, a lay subsidy of 1671 lists Paul Niccoll as holding property in South Mimms with Richard Rush as his tenant.²⁰ The will of Paul Niccoll of Hendon Hall states that certain of his property had already been settled on his eldest son John at his marriage to Sarah Baker.²¹ Other Niccolls in earlier records of South Mimms Manor may also refer to this property. In 1653 Elizabeth Niccoll paid 9/- rent for copyhold land called Mandefels.²² In 1595 Roger Niccoll having died, his brother William was admitted heir, to a close called Great Mandefeldes in the tenure of Henry Danis.²³

If this is a mis-spelling of Dancer, it may be a clue to the name of Dancers Hill, which both Mr Cass and Dr Brittain in their histories of South Mimms suggested might have originated in a family of that name. The will of a Henry Dancer who died in 1601²⁴ a few days prior to the burial of a Henry Dancer at South Mimms, suggests by a reference to "bushells of malt, stored at my Mr Niccolls house at the Hall", that he was connected with the Niccolls of Hendon Hall and may be one of the family of Dancers who as occupiers of property on the hill gave it their name.

The heirs of John Niccoll continued to own Wicks Place until 1804 when it was sold to Thomas Wilson who sold it to Henry Heyman in 1808.²⁵ The fields are still listed as the Mandeville or Dancers Hill fields in 1824.²⁶ Later it was bought by the Trotters of Durham Park and re-named Laurel Lodge became the dower house of their estate. During the last war it was occupied by soldiers and was in such a poor condition by the late 1950's that it was pulled down. The site was put up for auction in 1970 with planning permission for new houses in place of the former house and cottage.

There are two other small properties shown on the plan at Cuckold Corner which were both encroachments on the manorial waste. In 1712 James Hinton was before the manor court for enclosing a piece of waste and building a cottage and shop and other buildings upon it at Cuckold Corner.²⁷ By 1726 it was licenced as the White Lion.²⁸ In 1732 he was again before the court for enclosing another small piece of waste opposite, on which he had erected a small cottage and a blacksmiths shop.²⁹ In each case he paid a fine and was allowed to keep the land on payment of a small yearly rent. In 1742 the White Lion was sold to John Searanke of the Hatfield Brewery. Both the White Lion and the blacksmiths shop continued to flourish until after the new St Albans road was made. By 1836 the trade of the White Lion had deteriorated and it was sold as a house and garden to James Catnach a London printer of ballad sheets.³⁰ The blacksmiths shop continued for a little longer but both were finally sold to the Trotters of Durham Park who built the present brick cottages on the site of the blacksmiths shop and cottage in 1875. The White Lion remained as a cottage until the late 1960's when it was pulled down.

Dancers Hill House and the Manor of Mandeville

Last and probably the most interesting property on the hill was the estate which was sold to George Byng of Wrotham Park in 1768.³¹ It was built up from a number of small properties between 1530 and 1596. It included the house called Dancers Hill as well as nearly all that is known about the Manor of Mandeville.

Unfortunately there is no known plan of this estate before the tithe map of 1842, by then other lands had been added and the field names altered or lost. So that it is almost impossible to do more than guess which fields belonged to each of the original properties.

To start with the Manor of Mandeville. It was owned in 1575 by Jasper Annesley and his wife Joan. Two years later they sold all their rights in the Manor and a number of named fields to Henry Isham. A court roll of the Manor of South Mimms of that date records the sale of some of the fields and states that they were held in free socage of that manor and paid an annual quit rent.³²

Henry Isham had already purchased three other small properties which are of interest because they introduce the names of Mandevilles Hill and Dancers Hill for the first time. The first which is shown on the plan was the Roundabout of about 6½ acres, "called Maundevyles, lying at Maundevyles Hill" which William Nicholson had bought in 1530 from William Beter. This is almost certainly the triangular field surrounded by roads at the top of Wash Lane, as suggested by Dr Brittain who said it was known as Roundabout in the 1930's.³³

The second was 8½ acres of land, later called Ripleys Grove and Welks Field which John Annesley sold to John Walker in 1542.

The third was a house called Dancers Hill with 6 acres of land sold in 1558 to Christopher Troughton by William Dodd and his wife Elizabeth who had previously been the wife of John Conningsby of North Mimms, by then dead, and her son Henry Conningsby. It seems probable that this is the same house and 6 acres of land on "Dauners Hill" which is valued at 40/- in the will which John Conningsby made in 1543.³⁴

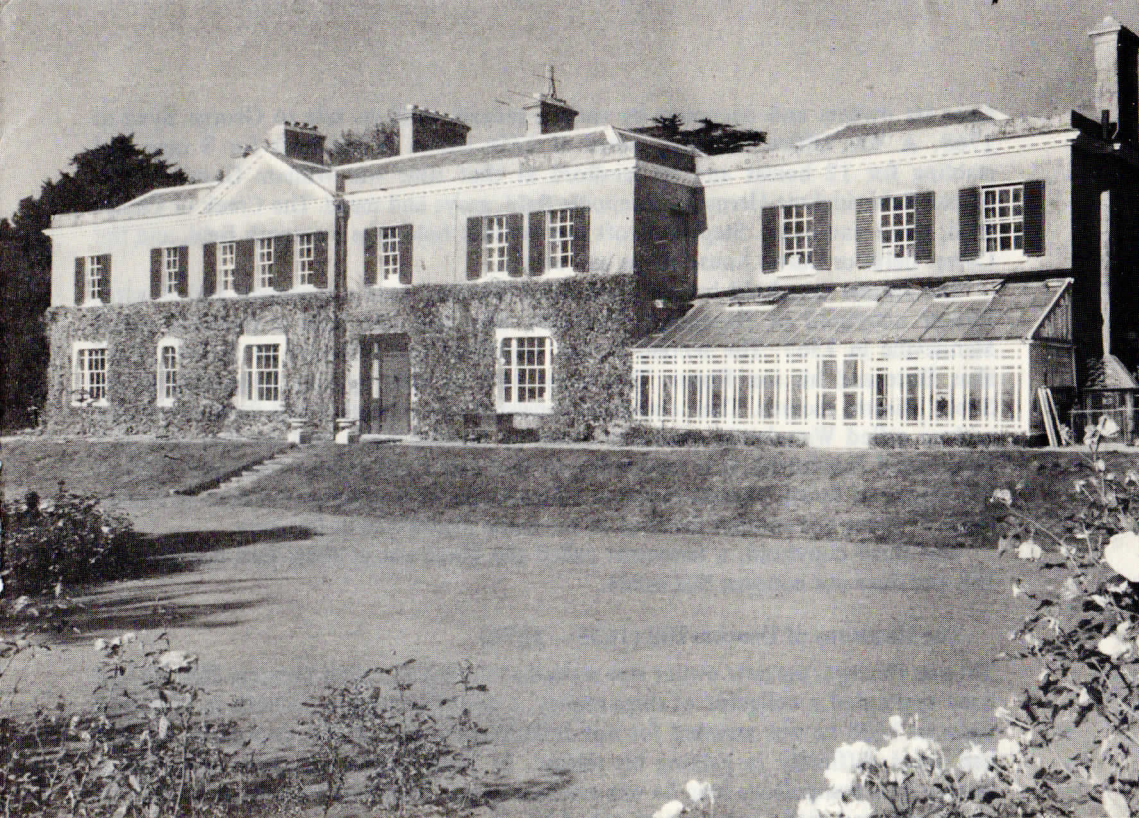
By 1559 Christopher Troughton had also bought the Roundabout and the 8½ acres and he then sold all three to Thomas Meryck, from whom Henry Isham bought them in 1564. First Henry then John and finally Gregory Isham, held this property comprising the Manor of Mandeville and the three other small pieces, until 1596 when it was conveyed to Richard Ketterick.

In the same year Richard Ketterick negotiated with Henry Lord Windsor for the purchase of the freeholds of three other properties which had previously been held as copyholds of the Manor of South Mimms. Two of these were then added to the other lands to complete the Dancers Hill estate.

The Kettericks of Dancers Hill (1596 – 1635)

The Kettericks, or Ketteridges as it is sometimes spelt, lived in the house called Dancers Hill for about 39 years. Richard Ketterick became a governor of Barnet Grammar School in 1589. Parish registers show that the youngest of his four sons was born at South Mimms and his four daughters were married there. He died in 1621 and was buried at South Mimms beside his first wife Prudence who had died in 1602.³⁵

His estate at South Mimms passed to his son Thomas, who also became a governor of Barnet Grammar School in 1634. In 1635 sold the Dancers Hill estate



Dancers Hill House

to Thomas Harrison, but apparently continued to live in the neighbourhood as he is listed as renting some of Lord Salisbury's lands in 1639.

It was a period of unrest and civil war and a document in the Chancery Proceedings for 1652 shows that his fortune had been lost in the troubles of the times. He declared that he and his wife had now no estate with which to maintain themselves and their twelve children other than £2000 held in trust as part of a marriage settlement made for his wife and future heirs. He begged to be allowed to withdraw at least £1000 from the trust to provide for the needs of his children.³⁶ They were then living in Ridge and do not appear again in the South Mimms records, although he continued to be a governor of Barnet Grammar School until 1664.

The Dancer Hill Estate

Both the deed of sale to Thomas Harrison in 1635 and an Inquisition Post Mortem in 1623,³⁷ after the death of Richard Ketterick describe the whole estate in detail and show slight changes that have taken place. Attached to the house called Dancers Hill were gardens and an orchard and a housecroft consisting of the Roundabout, Ripley Grove, Welk Field and Welsh Field. The Manor of Mandeville had an inn called Mandeville with landlord Richard Sheffield in 1623, by 1635 it was renamed The Green Dragon under its new landlord Henry Cooke. This is undoubtedly the old Green Dragon which stood opposite the end of Kitts End Road. It is possible to

trace its owners and occupiers by various records until its sale to George Byng in 1768. A War Office billeting return of 1756 shows it had beds for 8 men and stabling for 12 horses and its landlord at that time was William Grant.³⁸ The named fields include HERNS or ERNEPOOLE field, grove and mead. The Creek or Crekes field, grove and mead. Stephen Croft and Bennett field alias Footpath field, and the Culver fields or Culver house closes and others.

The former copyhold bought from Lord Windsor were a tenement and 27 acres former copyhold of Humphery Reynolds who had also held a freehold called Mandeville in 1567. The second former copyhold had belonged to Andrew Daye alias Birte and his son Roger. This name with its alias appears frequently in the South Mimms records. Their copyhold consisted of a tenement and three crofts and a close called Waterlands, probably down by Mimms Wash, and another part of a field called Northfield. It is interesting to find that court rolls in 1345 and 1503 of the Manor of South Mimms mention a Mandeville Oak which stood next to Northfield,³⁹ giving yet another instance of the name Mandeville in this area.

The third copyhold, a tenement called the Moat was at Kitts End not Dancers Hill and does not concern this estate.

The Harrisons of Dancers Hill (1635 – 1674)

Thomas Harrison the new owner also settled at the house called Dancers Hill. He had been appointed a collector of ships money, a doubtful honour, as both in 1636 and again in 1638 he was arrested for not collecting enough of this unpopular tax and had great difficulty in gaining his release. In 1644 when parliament was raising money by a compulsory loan he was assessed to pay £500 but after some trouble he was discharged with a payment of only £250.⁴⁰

He was married twice, first to Ann Tilney who died in 1640 and later to Katherine Bland. In 1645 he became a governor of Barnet Grammar School and was also a magistrate for Middlesex. He died in 1667 having already settled the Dancers Hill estate in trust for his son Richard at his marriage in 1663 to Elinor Lowther, daughter of Sir William Lowther of Yorkshire.

There were provisions in the settlement that allowed Thomas Harrison to raise money on the estate, during his lifetime, by mortgage, to provide portions for his younger children. One such to raise £2000 was to James Hickson, at that time Lord of the Manor of Williotts. The repayment of these mortgages and the raising of promised portions for younger sisters continued to trouble Richard Harrison and in 1674 he sold the greater part of the Dancers Hill property to Sir Henry Blount of Tittenhanger.

It was agreed at that sale that Sir Henry should be given a schedule of all the deeds and evidence of title for the whole estate.

In the deed of sale of 1674 some of the field names had already changed and except for the Roundabout which is listed alone, were grouped in twos and threes with an overall acreage for each group. Because of the new names it is not possible to tell how much of the original land was included in this sale; but in 1710 an heir of Richard Harrison still owned the house called Dancers Hill and about 4 acres of garden and 30 acres of land.

With the grouping of the names it is possible to guess at the position of some of the fields. The farm on Dancers Hill with 62½ acres of land was let to William Greening. Its lands included the Roundabout and a group of Crick field and two Footpath Fields, together 25 acres. These were possibly the three fields opposite the Green Dragon where a footpath exists today.

Another farm was described as being in Water Lane, a name given to the lower part of Wash Lane. It was let to William Stephens and its lands included the former copyholds of Waterlands with a Middle and Homefield together 21 acres and Northfield of 22 acres with Welsh field 12 acres, adjoining. They appear to be the groups of fields on either side of Wash Lane. The Green Dragon inn was let to Tobias Fentman with 21 acres of land with the new names of Green Dragon Mead or Hillfield, Days Mead and Bean Croft. The several Culver House fields were not included.

John Rocque's map of Middlesex of 1754 shows a group of buildings on the east side of Wash Lane near the road bridge. These may include the buildings of this farm in Water Lane. The adjoining fields to the north were a copyhold farm of South Mimms Manor whose buildings were probably in this same group. In 1712, George Howes the owner of this adjoining farm is said to have pulled down a part of a mansion in Water Lane.⁴¹

Sir Henry Blount had purchased the Dancers Hill property as part of a marriage settlement for his second son Charles on his marriage to Elinor Tyrell. There are several complicated deeds of trust for the children of the marriage but no other details except that Stephen Westwood had become the landlord of the Green Dragon in 1697. He held its licence until 1722.

Charles Blount died in 1697 and his eldest son Henry who inherited the property sold it to Thomas Andrews in 1700. Four years later Thomas Andrews sold it to David Hechstetter a merchant of Hamburg, then living at Southgate.

The conveyances for these last two sales were complicated by the various trusts and mortgages on the estate for portions for the younger children of Charles Blount and it was 1712 before the property was cleared of all encumbrances.

David Hechstetter died in 1721 and his son David became the new owner. In 1738, William Keppell the owner of nearby Durham Park, decided to enlarge his property and bought a strip of 3 acres adjoining his eastern boundary from David Hechstetter, and then in 1743 another adjoining strip of 2 acres.⁴²

To go back to the main house called Dancers Hill with its gardens and 30 acres of land which was still owned by the Harrisons. Richard Harrison died in 1682 at South Cave in Yorkshire, probably near his wife's home. All his property was left to be divided between his five daughters, his only son having died in 1667.⁴³

There is nothing to show how much property he owned or how it was divided, but in 1710 Charles Noden of Woodmansterne, Surrey and his wife Mary who was one of the daughters and co-heiresses of Richard Harrison, leased the property on Dancers Hill to John Marten. The house was described as that Manor house called Dancers Hill with gardens and a 4 acre close called the Bowling Green Close and four other closes of 10 acres, 4 acres and two of 6 acres, in occupation of Hugh Noden, who appears to have been their son.⁴⁴

After 1710 there is no further mention of the Nodens or of any other heir of Richard Harrison. The house and land passed through many hands by transfer of the lease or mortgage, until in 1748, it was bought by David Hechstetter and reunited to the rest of the Dancers Hill estate which he already owned. The house in 1748 was described as that old manor house and the gardens are given as 4 acres in addition to the fields of 1710, and it was then occupied by Edward Arnold.⁴⁵

Two years later in 1750 David Hechstetter again leased Dancers Hill House with 10 acres of land which included the garden and orchard and the Bowling Green Close, to Charles Ross a carpenter and builder of Westminster for a lease of 80 years.⁴⁶

David Hechstetter died in 1757 and his estates passed to his wife Charlotte for life and then to a succession of nephews.⁴⁷ In 1768 Charlotte Hechstetter his widow with the agreement of one of the nephews broke the entail and sold the property to the trustees of George Byng.⁴⁸

There was still 73 years of Charles Ross's lease to run and he was at that time also tenant of the Green Dragon Farm lands which were then described as eight fields to the north and west of the Green Dragon and three fields to the south across the main road. Dancers Hill farm was let to William Howes, its fields are also described by their position and include those of the Water Lane Farm which is not mentioned. The Roundabout was included and a Great Wash Field and a Wash Field and one by Mimms Wash Bridge which must be the footbridge as the road bridge was not then built. Two fields of 3 acres and 8 acres lying on either side of the road to Durhams were, during the transfer of the estate, sold to William Keppell of Durham Park⁴⁹ and added to the 5 acres purchased earlier making 16 acres in all. These fields appear to be a group of 16 acres called Stephen Croft and Hernspole in 1674. If Hernspole is derived from Heronspole, there was a mention in 1448 of a Herons Grove which lay in the northern part of the manor of Thomas Frowyke who owned both Old Fold and Durhams at that date.⁵⁰ The fields adjoin the brook which is now a great lake, a likely haunt of herons.

Charles Ross died in 1770 and his nephew William Gowan inherited the remainder of his lease. His name is shown on John Cary's Road map of 1790 as occupant of Dancers Hill House. The lease changed hands many times in the following years, the tithe map of 1842 shows Thomas White as occupant of the house and as farmer of most of the fields to the east of Wash Lane.

The Green Dragon had been moved to a site on the new road, its landlord Richard Frazer farmed all the land to the south of Dancers Hill Road.

We cannot tell from any of these records when the present Dancers Hill House was built. The Kettericks and the Harrisons are the only owners recorded as living in the house. Their ownership covered 104 years. In 1748 when it was sold to David Hechstetter it was called "that old manor house", but during Charles Ross's long lease it was called that mansion house. It is possible that Charles Ross, who was a builder by trade, held the property on a building lease and re-built the house during his twenty years of occupation.

In 1856 a dispute between John Byng, Earl of Stafford and John Chapman a builder shows that the house at that time was being extensively altered and improved, using old bricks and other materials from buildings that were being pulled down. Work on the boundary walls is mentioned but there is no suggestion that the house was being more than improved.⁵¹

The great lawn on the south side of the house appears to be the only level stretch of ground belonging to the house so it may be the site of the bowling green.

Of the many fine houses built in South Mimms in the late 18th and early 19th century, many have been pulled down and others are in institutional or public use. Only this house on Dancers Hill and Wrotham Park are still owned and occupied by members of the family of Byng who owned them 200 years ago. But the lands of this estate are changing today as a new motorway is carved across them destroying the old boundary trees and hedges and closing for ever the old St Albans road through Mimms Wash.

PLAN SHOWING AREA OF
DANCERS HILL

OUTLINE OF FIELDS & ROADS
FROM 1ST 6" ORDNANCE SURVEY
OF 1868. FIELD NAMES FROM
TITHE MAP & OTHER RECORDS.

