

## **A mapping and census history of Dancing Green with reference to the property on Bartwood Lane now known as The Cottage, Dancing Green**

The location now called Dancing Green sits at the top of the lane from Pontshill and before the lane enters the forest area known as Lea Bailey Inclosure.

The name Pontshill itself has developed over centuries. In a 1282 survey of the forest Panchille is named. Over the years it is recorded as Poneshull, Poncell, Pouncell, Pouncells, Pants Hill and Ponto Hill. And the lane, now named Bartwood Lane, has been recorded as Poncell Lane (1667) and Pouncells Lane (1787 and 1834).

The 1787 Drivers map names the general area of current Dancing Green as Palmers Hill which is itself part of the Lea Bailey Inclosure, the northern most part of the Forest of Dean.

In the census returns from 1841, other names for locations near Dancing Green include Palmers Hill, Palmers Tump, Hell Gay Gate, Bailey, Red House and Black Bottom.

Being on the very edge of the forest, settlement mainly occurred by encroachment on crown land. Over the centuries, the crown sought to prevent settlement within the forest boundary and, even when cabins and cottages were built by locals, the crown periodically evicted residents and demolished the buildings. By the mid-18th century however, encroachment was becoming more prevalent.

While houses and cottages around Palmers Hill and the side of Lea Bailey tend to be just inside the forest boundary, Lea Bailey is surrounded by the parishes of Hope Mansell and Weston under Penyard and, in the vicinity of Palmers Hill, a group of four cottages in Weston parish are positioned on the west side of Bartwood Lane and immediately to the north of, and outside, the forest boundary.



*1787 Drivers Map*



*1834 Ruardean Walk Map*

The four buildings are shown on the 1787 map to the west of 'Pouncells Lane' (now Bartwood Lane). A building to the south, now known as Alvaston House, is also shown. Of the four buildings, the easternmost no longer stands but the others are what are now [3 May Cottage], semi-detached Maytree Cottage and Tansy Cottage (formerly 2 and 1 May Cottage respectively), and 4 May Cottage nearest the lane. In the 1834 perambulation the houses are described as

belonging respectively to John Woodall, Thomas Marshall, John Marshall and Thomas Baring<sup>1</sup>. Early Ordnance Survey maps mark them collectively as May Cottage(s).

The house immediately south of May Cottages on Bartwood Lane, now named The Cottage<sup>2</sup>, does not appear on the 1787 map but the 1834 '*Plan of Encroachments in Ruardean Walk*' indicates that The Cottage was built by 1812 as it is marked as an encroachment prior to that date. On the Lea Bailey tithing map of 1834, The Cottage is said to belong to William Holmes.

The place name Dancing Green appears on the first general census in 1841. The origin of the name is unknown. It may be connected to the non conformist chapel built in 1836 down at Bailey Lane End. In the twentieth century at least chapel services were periodically held on the triangle of grass near Red House farm. Or perhaps there is some connection to the field named on the 1838 Weston tithing map as Dancox Hill to the east of Sparrows Corner.

### **The Reynolds family and their connection to Dancing Green, 1830 to 1989**

Elizabeth Reynolds was born on 23 January 1830 . She had two older sisters, Ann and Mary, and they were all were born in Walford to parents John and Mary Reynolds.

On 9 August 1846, twenty year old Ann Reynolds gives birth to a son who was christened George Reynolds, presumably because Ann was unmarried.

By 1851, Elizabeth is working at Street Farm in Hope Mansell village as the house servant and dairy maid for farmer Cornelius Marfell. Cornelius's wife Abiah, had died so he probably appreciated the help Elizabeth provided whilst he ran a busy farm of 110 acres.

Ten years later in 1861 Elizabeth's nephew, 14 year old George, joins her at Street Farm working as shepherd and herd boy for Mr Marfell.

Elizabeth is a loyal servant to Cornelius Marfell. She is still working at Street in 1871 but nephew George, now 24, has left and is married to Amelia. They live up near Dancing Green and George is working as a wood cutter. He and Amelia have just had their first child, Clara, and, at the time of the census, they have a lodger, Joseph Nemes [who also works at Street Farm].

Aunt Elizabeth needs extra help at Street and she is joined by 14 year old Cornelius Holmes. Still, she is keeping things in the family as Cornelius Holmes's father, also named Cornelius, is married to her sister Ann and they are living just over the tump from Hope Mansell at Bailey Brook with Ann's parents, John and Mary who have moved up from Walford (*Cornelius Holmes's (senior) father was William Holmes, probably the owner of The Cottage in 1834*).

Elizabeth remains with Cornelius Marfell at Street Farm, moving out only after his death in 1888. At that time he owns The Cottage on Bartwood Lane at Dancing Green which is occupied by Thomas Phillips, a neighbour of George Reynolds. In his will, Cornelius Marfell makes a very generous bequest of one hundred and fifty pounds to Elizabeth and nineteen pounds and nineteen shillings to Joseph Nemes, George's lodger. We might assume that Cornelius was recognising the long service that Elizabeth had provided.

In 1889, Marfell's executors sell The Cottage to George Reynolds for the princely sum of fifty two pounds and ten shillings and by the 1891 census George and his family are living there - wife Amelia, sons John (15) and Alfred (11) and daughters Amelia (6) and Elizabeth Emma (9 months). Aunt Elizabeth is living a couple of doors away as is his now-widowed mother, Ann Holmes. George's immediate neighbour is cousin Cornelius Holmes (junior) and family, the youngster who had been working with Elizabeth at Street Farm in 1871.

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<sup>1</sup> In a later survey, 4 May Cottage is said to belong to Lord Ashburton. Alexander Baring, Lord Ashburton, bought Rudhall Manor in Ross in 1830 and owned many local properties according to the 1838 Weston under Penyard tithing map . He and Thomas Baring were members of the wealthy banking family.

<sup>2</sup> The Cottage is the most northerly house in the Forest of Dean

In 1901, Elizabeth is now 71 years old and has moved in to live with George and his family at The Cottage. George died in 1909, survived by his wife Amelia.

In 1911, Elizabeth is living at Palmers Hill Cottage, opposite the old oak trees at Dancing Green. On 7 April 1911 she dies at Herberts Cottage, the house next to the cross roads at Dancing Green.

George's wife, Amelia Reynolds continues to live at The Cottage until her death in 1924. Her son, Alfred, arranges the sale of The Cottage later that year. And that might have been the end of the Reynolds connection to The Cottage...except that one day in 1989 Mr Henry Roberts from Cinderford called by to explain his connection. Amelia was his grandmother. His mother was Elizabeth Emma Roberts, George and Amelia's youngest daughter. She had married Frederick Roberts. Henry told of his "many happy memories" visiting Gran Reynolds at The Cottage.

### **Occupants of The Cottage 1841 - 1891**

George Reynolds and his family were living at the Cottage in 1891. When he bought it in 1889, Thomas Phillips was living there. It is not possible to say for certain who lived at The Cottage before 1889. The Lea Bailey/East Dean census returns from 1841 don't identify houses by name but group them together by general location.

The closest description possibly identifying The Cottage is in 1851. Between the entries for 'Dancing Green' and 'Near Dancing Green' is 'Pouncell Lane'. Two households are recorded - Ann Baker and her husband, Peter, a stonemason, and Hannah Meek, a widowed charwoman. We could presume that these two houses are The Cottage and Alvaston House (we can rule out the May Cottages as they are in the Weston census as are Red House and Bartwood).

In 1841, Hannah Meek is listed as 'Near Dancing Green' with her husband John, an agricultural labourer together with one other household, William Peak, a paper maker, and his wife Jane.

The 1861 census lists 5 households at 'Dancing Green' including Hannah Meek and the next entry is for a household at 'Bartwood Lane' then three at 'Black Bottom' which is the collection of cottages down the lane at the turn to the east at the cross roads (now called Oak Cottage, Fernlea etc). The 'Bartwood Lane' household is Ann Baker, the same person as 1851.

So The Cottage was probably occupied between 1841 and 1861 by the Meek, Peak or Baker families.

In 1871 and 1881, the census descriptions are even more vague, simply listing 16-20 households at 'Dancing Green'. Looking at the order in which the names are recorded, knowing that Thomas Phillips was living at The Cottage in 1889 (Cottage deeds) and noting the names adjacent to George Reynolds in 1891, we could presume that in 1871 The Cottage was occupied by either Samuel Morgan, a mason, or William Taylor, a miner and in 1881 by Thomas Phillips, a miner.

The census returns for 1841 to 1891 for Lea Bailey and the Dancing Green area show other families that were long term residents:

- Mary Ann Smith (between 1851 and 1891) - her husband was Enoch and they probably lived at Black Bottom throughout
- James Marshall (1851 to 1891) - living at Dancing Green, Newtown and Palmers Hill
- Cornelius Holmes (senior), stone mason and his wife Ann (1841 to 1881) - Bailey Brook and Dancing Green
- Asneath Holmes (1851 to 1871) - mother to Cornelius Holmes senior, Bailey Brook
- John Nelmes (1851 to 1891) - in 1851 at one of the May Cottages then at Bailey Brook then lodging with George Reynolds and others at Dancing Green
- Caleb Mansell (1841 to 1881) - Palmers Tump and Dancing Green

And of course there are many variations of family names that presumably derive from Hope Mansell - Mansell, Marfell, Marshall.