

## E. Balls of Berkshire

The conventionally accepted English pedigree of Colonel William Ball of Millenbeck through the Balls of Berkshire is discussed below.

1. The Visitation of London 1633-35 gives the following information in respect of the Balls of Barkham, which was supplied in 1634 by William Ball of Lincoln's Inn.<sup>E1</sup>

- 1480 death of William Ball of Barkham
- 1543 death of his son, Robert Ball of Barkham  
(1546 per parish registers)<sup>E2</sup>
- 1550 death of Robert's eldest son, William, at Wokingham  
[1558] death of Robert's second son, Edward<sup>E3</sup>

When William Ball of Wokingham died in 1550,<sup>E4</sup> his heir was John Ball, who was married twice.<sup>E5</sup> John Ball's will made in 1591, eight years before his death, refers to two of his four children by his first wife, including his eldest son, William, together with his four children by his second wife, including their eldest son, also called John, who he made co-executor with his second wife (which could be interpreted as an attempt to sideline William).<sup>E6</sup>

On John Ball I's death in 1599 he was succeeded by John, his eldest son by his second wife, consistent with the impression given by the pedigree that both of John Ball I's sons by his first wife predeceased him without male heirs. John Ball II died in 1628, six years before his eldest son, William Ball of Lincoln's Inn, appeared before the Heralds.<sup>E7</sup> John Ball II was tenant of the manor of Evendons in Wokingham.<sup>E8</sup>

2. The information about the death of William Ball of Barkham in 1480 cannot be substantiated as the Barkham parish registers do not commence until 1538 and there is no record of William having left a will. Nor can the subsequent family pedigree recorded before the Heralds be fully substantiated as the parish registers of Wokingham, All Saints for 1538-1674 do not survive and the Bishops' Transcripts of the All Saints' registers do not commence until 1580 and are incomplete.<sup>E9</sup>

According to the pedigree recorded at the Visitation, Robert Ball of Barkham died 63 years (or, per the parish registers, 66 years) after the death of his father, William. This suggests the following possibilities:

- that William Ball died in 1480 at a relatively young age;
- that his son Robert lived to a ripe old age (outliving his wife);
- that the pedigree omits an intermediate generation.

Whilst none of the above possibilities is mutually exclusive, the second possibility postulated above finds support in the death of Robert Ball's eldest son, William, at Wokingham in 1550, four years after Robert's death according to the Barkham parish registers.

Robert Ball's surviving 1546 probate inventory also suggests that he was very elderly when he died. There is a marked paucity of possessions, eleven items being described as 'olde', which totalled a modest £10 8s. 1d., 76% attributable to the value of livestock.<sup>E10</sup> The inventory gives the impression that Robert Ball had already disposed of most of his possessions, and was occupying a couple of rooms in the farmstead at Barkham which was now the home of his second son, Edward (died 1558). There is a transcript of the inventory in Appendix V.

3. William Ball of Lincoln's Inn recorded his arms as four galtraps with a crest in the form of a larger galtrap.<sup>E11</sup> The heraldic description of this somewhat functional design is *Azure on a cross pierced of the field or, four galtraps of the first with a crest, A galtrap azure the upward point bloody.*<sup>E12</sup>

It is not known when the Balls of Berkshire became armigerous, as the Visitation of London 1633-35 merely confirmed the entitlement of the family to bear arms. In the absence of any record of a grant of arms to the Balls of Berkshire, it seems likely that the arms, suggesting military associations, were originally acquired by self-assumption. If so, the arms quite possibly were assumed before armorial bearings began to be regulated by Henry VIII in 1530 (see Section F.32). Nor is it known whether the Balls of Berkshire also had a family motto.

4. John Ball II's eldest son was William Ball, who appears to have been born around 1601-03. This is the William Ball traditionally asserted to have been the father of Colonel William Ball of Millenbeck.

According to the surviving Bishops' Transcripts, a William Ball was christened at Wokingham, All Saints in 1601, but the father was unidentified, and there were several other Ball families in Wokingham.<sup>E13</sup>

In 1639 Robert Ball of Holshot, Hampshire, gentleman, died.<sup>E14</sup> Robert was a brother of John Ball II and an uncle of William. As he held certain lands by feudal tenure his death necessitated an *Inquisition Post Mortem*. The document ends with a statement as to the relationship between Robert and William, who was his heir-at-law, which states that at the time of his uncle's death William was aged "36 years and more"<sup>E15</sup>, although if he was the William Ball who was christened in 1601 he would have been 37½.

5. On 1 September 1623, William Ball, "son and heir of John Ball of Wokingham, Berks, gentleman", was admitted to Lincoln's Inn to become a barrister.<sup>E16</sup> On 16 July 1627, at the parish church of St. Gregory by St. Paul in the City of London, he married Alice, daughter of Richard Waltham of London, merchant, by licence from the Vicar General.<sup>E17</sup> In 1633 William purchased Lock's Farm in Wokingham for £685, which he used as a country residence.<sup>E18</sup>

At some time between 1630 and 1634 he was appointed one of the four Attorneys of the Court of the Exchequer of Pleas.<sup>E19</sup> (His uncle Robert was also a member of Lincoln's Inn<sup>E20</sup> and a practitioner in the Exchequer of Pleas.)<sup>E21</sup> William was also an active supporter of the Parliamentary cause. He was nominated as a member of the Parliamentary Committee for Berkshire in 1644 and was MP for Abingdon from January 1646 until his death in late 1647.<sup>E22</sup>

6. The family pedigree recorded by William Ball of Lincoln's Inn at the Visitation in 1634 makes no mention of any children of William and his wife, Alice Waltham, although they had been married some seven years.

The pedigree does, however, record that he had four brothers called Thomas, George, Richard and Samuel. His will in 1647 authorises "my brother Cleydon and my brother Samuell Ball" to arrange for the sale of land to pay legacies.<sup>E23</sup> Cleydon may have been the surname of one of his brothers-in-law, as William also had six sisters. Samuel was his youngest brother.

7. In his will, William left legacies of £500 each to his four daughters and his sons, Richard and Samuel. There was no reference to a son called William or provision for his widow, Alice, although she was appointed his executrix. (Burke's *'American Families with British Ancestry'* in Burke's *'Landed Gentry'* (16th edition) erroneously states that he "had issue, six sons".)<sup>E24</sup>

While this might seem to suggest that William of Lincoln's Inn had no surviving son by the name of William, it is quite feasible that he had made separate provision for his eldest son and widow, unless, of course, son William was some sort of black sheep.

8. It transpires that William Ball of Lincoln's Inn did, indeed, have an elder son called William, and the evidence is to be found in *'A Parish Booke for Wokingham ex Dono Willelmi Ball'*, which William Ball had presented to the parish of Wokingham in 1636, into which local records (e.g. charity deeds) were copied.<sup>E25</sup>

The Parish Book contains a copy of a 1641 deed of appointment of new almshouse trustees, including William Ball of Wokingham, gentleman, and William Ball, "sonne and heir apparant" of William Ball.<sup>E26</sup> However, unless William was the son of William of Lincoln's Inn by some unknown previous marriage, the basis on which a minor aged no more than 13 was appointed a charity trustee, when the age of legal discretion was 14, is unclear.

9. Before leaving England William is reputed to have married a Hannah Atherold of Suffolk in 1638,<sup>E27</sup> when he could have been no older than ten if his father was William Ball of Lincoln's Inn. Hayden makes the equally improbable assertion that 'Colonel' William was born in 1615,<sup>E28</sup> when William of Lincoln's Inn would have been no more than 14, and perhaps only 12.

10. At variance with the tradition that William, son of William Ball of Lincoln's Inn, went to Virginia in the 1650s to found a new dynasty, there is evidence that son William continued to live in the locality until at least 1687. According to the hearth tax returns, a William Ball was living in Standrige tything in the nearby parish of Warfield in 1663-64 and was assessed for four hearths.<sup>E29</sup> A deed of appointment of new Wokingham almshouse trustees in 1670<sup>E30</sup> refers to William Ball esquire of Bracknell, part of which was in the parish of Warfield,<sup>E31</sup> as one of the outgoing trustees.

The Warfield parish registers record the baptisms of Samuel, son of 'William Balle Esq', in 1670 and of Richard, son of 'William Baile Esq', in 1675.<sup>E32</sup> In 1687 Samuel Ball (15), son of William Ball of Bracknell, esquire matriculated at Trinity College, Oxford.<sup>E33</sup> This raises the question whether William ever left England ?

11. The foregoing led Walne to opine that: "On the Berkshire evidence already quoted, the weight of probability is weighed heavily to the point of certainty against William Ball the younger being Colonel William of Millenbeck".<sup>E34</sup>