

## **F. Balls of Northamptonshire**

### ***Rev.d Richard Ball (1570-1631)***

1. While the Rev.d Richard Ball has been identified as a potential English ancestor of Colonel William Ball of Millenbeck on the basis of the heraldic evidence, little was previously known about him or his family.

In the grant to Richard Ball of the addition of a crest to the family arms in 1613,<sup>F1</sup> he is described as the son of Lawrence Ball of Northampton, but no further information about his family pedigree is given. There is a transcript of the grant in Part A of Appendix VII.

It appears that Richard Ball was born in the early 1570s, as he went up to Magdalen College, Oxford as a Demie (i.e. Scholar) in 1588.<sup>F2</sup> An entry in the baptism register of Northampton, All Saints indicates that he may have been christened on 25 July 1570, although in the early entries parents are not identified.<sup>F3</sup>

Richard Ball became a Fellow of Magdalen College in 1590,<sup>F4</sup> taking his B.A. in 1591 and a M.A. in 1594. It seems that he found himself suited to academic life, and Ball was Prælector of Rhetoric at Magdalen College 1593-1597.<sup>F5</sup>

2. Following the establishment in 1597 of Gresham College in Bishopsgate in the City of London for the delivery of free public lectures pursuant to the 1575 will of Sir Thomas Gresham,<sup>F6</sup> Caleb Willis and Richard Ball were put forward by the University of Oxford as candidates to become the first Reader of the Rhetoric Lecture. Mr Willis was chosen in March 1597, but on account of sickness he appointed Richard Ball to deputise for him and Ball succeeded to the lectureship the following year.<sup>F7</sup>

Richard Ball became vicar of St. Helen's, Bishopsgate in 1603, when he would have been aged above 30, and established a lecture in 1606.<sup>F8</sup> He was granted annual leave of absence by Magdalen College 1604-1607, resigning his fellowship in 1608.<sup>F9</sup>

3. On 14 January 1613/14 Richard Ball resigned his lectureship at Gresham College.<sup>F10</sup> A clue as to why Richard Ball might have resigned may be found in Sir Thomas Gresham's will, which stipulated (in common with the regulations obtaining at ancient universities at the time) that "none shall be chossen to reade any of the said lectures, so longe as he shall be married, nor be suffered to reade any of the said lectures after that he shalbe married".

It seems that the immediate reason for resigning was in anticipation of assuming additional duties as rector of the nearby church of St. Christopher-le-Stocks in Threadneedle Street.<sup>F11</sup> Richard Ball did, however, have matrimony in mind, as the parish registers record that he married Elizabeth Child at St. Christopher-le-Stocks on 8 August 1614.<sup>F12</sup>

Although some writers have claimed that Richard Ball vacated the living of St. Helen's about the same time as, or shortly after, resigning his lectureship,<sup>F13</sup> it

appears that he instead held both livings in plurality from January 1614 until the summer of 1615.<sup>F14</sup>

At some stage Richard Ball had become chaplain to the Earl of Worcester, one of James I's close advisers.<sup>F15</sup> In May 1615 the Earl presented Richard Ball to the living of St. Michael's church in the parish of Chalton on the Hampshire/Sussex border.<sup>F16</sup> This triggered a dispute as to the ownership of the advowson (i.e. the right to present the incumbent) between the Earl and the Crown. James I instituted legal proceedings and presented a rival rector, but subsequently stayed the proceedings and confirmed Richard Ball's tenure.<sup>F17</sup> The King's change of mind was probably not unrelated to the Earl's appointment in 1616 as Lord Privy Seal.

4. The rationale for giving up two lucrative livings in the City of London and a position in the Earl's household in favour of what The Victoria History of the County of Hampshire describes as a "desolate and remote" country parish is unclear.<sup>F18</sup> The feelings of his recently wedded wife may have been a factor, although the St. Helen's parish registers record the baptism on 6 January 1616/17 of Rebecca, daughter of Richard Ball, 'Parson' of St. Helen's, and his wife, Elizabeth,<sup>F19</sup> indicating that he remained associated with the parish several years after resigning as minister.

Richard Ball remained rector of St. Michael's, Chalton until his death in 1631.<sup>F20</sup> Unfortunately he left no will as he died intestate.<sup>F21</sup> Apart from the burial of Richard Ball in 1631, the Chalton parish registers also record the baptism of a second daughter, Elizabeth, on 5 March 1617/18.<sup>F22</sup> There is no record of the christening of any other children of Richard Ball and Elizabeth Child in the registers of the three livings which he held.

5. The Victoria County History describes his tomb as the "most interesting monument in the church ... It is on the north wall of the chancel close to the east end, and shows a figure kneeling at a desk in the gown of a bachelor of divinity of Oxford, beneath a level cornice carried by Corinthian columns. On the underside of the cornice and in a frame above are the arms of Ball; argent a lion sable, on a chief sable three mullets argent."<sup>F23</sup> There are photographs of Richard Ball's tomb in Part B of Appendix VII.

According to the text of the grant of the crest by Garter Principal King of Arms (Sir William Segar) in 1613,<sup>F24</sup> the description of the shield was: "Argent, a Leon passant sable langued & enarmed gules on a cheif of the second, three starres of the first" and the description of the new crest was: "On a Healse forthe of Clowde prop[er] a demy Lyon sables illu[st]rated w.<sup>th</sup> starres holding between his pattes an Orbe or globe of the earthe mantled & doubled as in the margent is depicted." In the pen and ink drawing of the new arms,<sup>F25</sup> the demi-lion in the crest is rampant and powdered with seven estoiles although the helmet is omitted.<sup>F26</sup>

In modern English the arms may be described as follows:

*Shield: a black lion passant, its tongue coloured red, on a silver background, with a black horizontal band across the top of the shield containing three silver stars (unpierced) with six points.*

*Crest: above clouds on top of a helmet, a black demi-lion [rampant] powdered with seven small silver estoiles (stars) holding a [gold] globe.*

Richard Ball's tomb includes two shields which conform with the description and drawing of the family arms in the grants books at the College of Arms, except that above the cornice the shield is supported on either side by a pair of pelicans (to symbolise piety) and, apart from a disproportionately large helmet, the crest granted in 1613 is absent.

### **Lawrence Ball of Northampton (died 1607)**

6. Likewise little is known about the Rev.d Richard Ball's father, Lawrence Ball of Northampton.<sup>F27</sup> It is evident from the surviving parish and borough records that there were two (conceivably three) families, the father and the son each answering to the name of Lawrence Ball, in Northampton, living in the parish of All Saints, in the first decade of the seventeenth century, engaged in the respective trades of grocer and linen draper/mercier.<sup>F28</sup> There is a list of the Ball entries in the All Saints' registers in Appendix VIII, although occupations of fathers are not given before 1611.

7. The trades of mercer, haberdasher, linen draper and grocer were the first-mentioned amongst nine different trades for which regulations were adopted by the town of Northampton in 1574.<sup>F29</sup> The mercers and haberdashers were treated as one trade. Mercers were involved in the export of woollen materials and the import of luxury fabrics such as silk, velvet, linen and cloth of gold. Linen drapers were cloth merchants distinct from woollen drapers. Grocers might also be involved in the importation of spices and other luxury items. In the City of London, mercers, grocers and drapers ranked first, second and third in order of precedence amongst the Great Twelve City Livery Companies.<sup>F30</sup>

8. A Laurens Ball of Northampton, grocer, was granted a lease of a stable and garden in Grope Lane in 1576.<sup>F31</sup> A Lawrence Ball (trade not given) was also mayor of Northampton in 1592-93.<sup>F32</sup> On the first day of his mayoralty, Lawrence Ball junior, grocer, was made a freeman without payment.<sup>F33</sup> The borough apprenticeship enrollments also record that in 1593 Henry Sillesbye was apprenticed to Lawrence Ball of Northampton, grocer, and Margaret his wife,<sup>F34</sup> and in 1602 Thomas Roe was apprenticed to Lawrence Ball the elder of Northampton, grocer.<sup>F35</sup>

9. Another Lawrence Ball the elder, linen draper, is mentioned in a trade receipt to Edmund Trafford in 1602 and a Lawrence Ball the elder, mercer, granted an acquittance to Edmund Trafford in 1603. The receipt and acquittance clearly relate to the same Lawrence Ball the elder, and the signatures appear to be the same,<sup>F36</sup> suggesting that Lawrence Ball the elder dealt in other cloths as well as linen.

10. The Rev.d Richard Ball's father may have been the Lawrence Ball who married Alice (maiden name unknown) at All Saints on 25 January 1568/69 by licence,<sup>F37</sup> in which case he was probably born around 1548. This would be consistent with the baptism of Richard Ball (father not identified) in 1570.<sup>F38</sup>

Between 1573 and 1585 'Lawrence Ball' is identified as the father in the entries in the All Saints' registers recording the christening of Lawrence (1573), the burial of

Joan (1575), and the baptisms of Elizabeth (1576), Baylie (1579) and Mathee (1585).

The All Saints' registers record the burial of Alice Ball, wife of Lawrence, on 5 April 1588, who could well have been the Alice who married Lawrence Ball in 1569. It is possible that Lawrence Ball re-married, for an entry records the marriage of Lawrence Ball and Margaret Hensman, widow, on 3 December 1588. The parish registers go on to record the baptism of "John Ball, son of Lawrence" in 1591, who could have been the son of Lawrence and Margaret (see paragraph 17 below). The wife of Lawrence Ball, grocer, to whom Henry Sillesbye was apprenticed in 1593, was also Margaret, but this could be a coincidence.

11. Another clue to the identity of the Rev.d Richard Ball's father may lie in the will of Lawrence Ball, mercer, who died in 1644. His will, made in 1642,<sup>F39</sup> in which he is described as son of Lawrence Ball, includes bequests to his four daughters by his third wife, Elizabeth, born between 1613 and 1624, and mentions that he also had a daughter by each of his first two wives. There is a transcript of the will in Appendix IX.

By his will, Lawrence Ball, mercer, devised to his six daughters by his three wives the house, malt kilns, stables, orchard, etc. left to him in his father's will then occupied by Martin Tomkins and previously by "my mother in lawe Margaret Ball widowe".<sup>F40</sup> The context suggests that Lawrence Ball was using the term 'mother-in-law' in its archaic sense meaning 'stepmother', in which case Margaret Ball could be the Margaret Hensman who married Lawrence Ball in 1588,<sup>F41</sup> and could have been the mother of John Ball born in 1591.

If so, this would mean that Lawrence Ball, mercer, was the second son of Lawrence Ball who married Alice (maiden name unknown) in 1569 and hence would be the Rev.d Richard Ball's younger brother.

The 1642 will of Lawrence Ball, mercer, shows that he was a prosperous merchant, and lived in a house in the centre of Northampton adjoining the Conduit Hall. It is unclear whether he was the Lawrence Ball who became mayor of Northampton in 1641.<sup>F42</sup> His father clearly was also a man of consequence, as in his will Lawrence Ball asks to be buried next to his father in the chancel of All Saints.<sup>F43</sup> Although Lawrence Ball's will refers to his having inherited property under his father's will, unfortunately this cannot be traced.<sup>F44</sup> There is a list of Northamptonshire Ball family wills (and administrations) in Appendix X.

12. As regards the family of Lawrence Ball, linen draper, the All Saints' registers record the baptism of a daughter and son of Lawrence Ball, linen draper, whose wife was called Elizabeth (as was the third wife of Lawrence Ball, mercer), in 1618 and 1622. His father could have been Lawrence Ball the elder, linen draper, mentioned in the 1602 receipt. He was probably also the father of John Ball, "son of Lawrence and Elizabeth his wife", who was christened in 1617.<sup>F45</sup> There are no clues, however, as to the identity of the father in the case of the baptism of "Lawrence Ball, son of Lawrence" in 1611.

13. A Lawrence Ball was elected Chamberlain in 1574,<sup>F46</sup> and the name of Lawrence Ball is regularly mentioned in the first Borough Assembly Book 1547-1627 from 1576 onwards, although occupations were not as a rule mentioned. As noted above, a Lawrence Ball was mayor of Northampton in 1592-93. He died in 1607, as the All Saints' registers record the burial on 11 December 1607 of "Lawrence Ball Senior, Alderman".<sup>F47</sup>

From 1596 up to 1607 there are regular references in the first Borough Assembly Book to the holding of various offices by Lawrence Ball the elder (or senior) and Lawrence Ball the younger (or junior). The respective terms 'elder/senior' and 'younger/junior' seem to be used interchangeably and appear to relate to one family. An entry in 1600 records the grant of a lease of a tenement in Checker Ward and of a stable and garden in Grope Lane to Lawrence Ball senior.<sup>F48</sup>

14. The foregoing evidence suggests that the same person was:

- the Lawrence Ball, grocer, who took the lease of Grope Lane in 1576;
- the Lawrence Ball who served as mayor of Northampton in 1592-93;
- the father of Lawrence Ball junior, grocer, who received the freedom of the town in 1592;
- the Lawrence Ball senior who took another lease of Grope Lane in 1600;
- the Lawrence Ball the elder/senior referred to in the first Borough Assembly Book between 1596 and 1607;
- the Lawrence Ball senior, Alderman, who was buried at All Saints in 1607.

15. If the Lawrence Ball who was the father of Lawrence Ball, mercer, who died in 1644, was a grocer as the circumstantial evidence would suggest, why did his eldest son, Richard, not follow in his father's footsteps, and how did his second son, Lawrence, who is described as a grocer in 1592, subsequently become a mercer ?

Richard Ball was clearly of an academic disposition, which would explain why he did not become a merchant. As to how Lawrence junior became a mercer, a possible explanation is that his stepmother, Margaret Hensman, may have been the daughter of a mercer or else that Lawrence increasingly dealt in goods more commonly associated with mercery. There is also evidence that the lines of demarcation between the different guilds were beginning to be less rigidly adhered to.<sup>F49</sup>

16. On the available evidence it seems likely that the Rev.d Richard Ball's father, who was twice married and died in 1607, was a grocer.<sup>F50</sup> In the City of London, grocers were second only to mercers in terms of economic and political power. A grocer, Thomas Chipsey, was mayor of Northampton three times, in 1514, 1527 and 1538, founding a free grammar school with a permanent endowment in 1551.<sup>F51</sup> The Rev.d Richard Ball may well have studied at the grammar school before going to Oxford in 1588.

### ***John Ball and Baylie Ball***

17. The St. Helen's, Bishopsgate, parish registers also record the burial on 29 April 1614 of a John Ball, who is described as the brother of "M.<sup>r</sup> Richard Ball mynifer" and the servant of Mr Isaackson, of Fenchurch Street, painter-stainer.<sup>F52</sup>

The only recorded baptism of a son of 'Lawrence Ball' called 'John' prior to 1617 in the Northampton, All Saints' registers is the christening of "John Ball, son of Lawrence" in 1591. If this John was brother to the Rev.d Richard Ball, this would make him only 23 (about twenty years younger than Richard) when he died.

This may be more plausible than it seems since, as noted in paragraph 10 above, it appears that the Rev.d Richard Ball's mother, Alice, died in 1588, and that his father, Lawrence, may have re-married eight months later. The next but one Ball family entry in the All Saints' registers is the baptism of John Ball, son of Lawrence, on 22 February 1590/91, indicating that John Ball who died in 1614 may have been Richard Ball's half-brother by his father's second wife. It is quite probable that John was apprenticed to Mr Isaackson.<sup>F53</sup>

It also seems that there was another family burial at St. Helen's, Bishopsgate, as the registers record the burial on 6 November 1618 of Baylie Ball, salter, "vppon his brother John Ball".<sup>F54</sup> One of the sons of Lawrence Ball by his first wife, Alice, who is recorded as having been baptised at All Saints in 1579, was 'Baylie Ball'.<sup>F55</sup>

### ***Nicholas Ball (1592-1638)***

18. It happens that a coat of arms closely resembling the arms of the Rev.d Richard Ball was recorded at the Visitation of London around 1633 by Nicholas Ball, who is described as a fishmonger of the parish of St. Michael near Crooked Lane in the City of London.<sup>F56</sup>

While superficially quite similar, the arms recorded by Nicholas Ball are differentiated from the arms of the Rev.d Richard Ball in the following respects:

- in the shield the tongue of the lion passant is the same colour as the rest of its body rather than red;
- in the black horizontal band at the top of the shield there are three pierced quatrefoils instead of three stars (unpierced);
- in the crest the demi-lion rampant is holding the stem of a pierced silver quatrefoil rather than a gold globe;
- the demi-lion rampant is powdered with six small pierced quatrefoils instead of seven estoiles;
- the crest does not sit on clouds above the shield and there is no helmet.

Inconsistently, in the drawings of Nicholas Ball's arms in two of the three manuscripts relating to the Visitation of London 1633-35 at the British Library, the quatrefoils are replaced by cinquefoils.<sup>F57</sup>

19. Nicholas Ball declared to the Heralds that his father was Richard Ball of Northampton and his mother was Elizabeth, daughter of William Yonge of London "descended out of Stafford".

The Northampton, All Saints' registers record that on 29 January 1572/73 Richard Ball married Elizabeth Young by licence, which suggests that Richard Ball of Northampton was probably born in the early 1550s.

The parish registers subsequently record the christening of two sons, William in 1574 and Richard in 1576 (who was buried five days later), and of a daughter, Alice, in 1577, of Richard Ball. It seems that Richard Ball and his family moved to the neighbouring parish of Northampton, St. Sepulchre's (a round Norman crusader church), whose registers record the baptism of three sons, John in 1580, Richard in 1585 (died 1587) and Nicholas in 1592, as well as the christening of two daughters in 1589 and 1595 and the burials of two other daughters in 1587 and 1594, of Richard Ball.

20. Nicholas Ball was therefore the youngest son of Richard Ball of Northampton. It appears that he was apprenticed to a member of the Fishmongers' Company in the City of London around 1610 (when he would have been about 18), and was admitted as a freeman in 1618, becoming a liveryman in 1631.<sup>F58</sup> The Fishmongers' Company registers record the binding of four apprentices to Nicholas Ball between 1622 and 1638,<sup>F59</sup> the year of his death.<sup>F60</sup>

It seems that Nicholas Ball married Ellen Cole at St. Magnus the Martyr, London Bridge, which was very close to St. Michael near Crooked Lane, in 1620.<sup>F61</sup> The lineal pedigree recorded by Nicholas at the Visitation suggests that his surviving elder brothers, William and John, both predeceased him without heirs before 1633,<sup>F62</sup> but his brief will, made on his deathbed, mentions a brother called John.<sup>F63</sup> The lack of any reference in Nicholas's will to any child of his own indicates that there was no issue, or surviving issue, of his marriage to Ellen Cole. There is a transcript of the will in Appendix IX.

It therefore appears that the Rev.d Richard Ball, his brother, Baylie, his half-brother, John, and their cousin, Nicholas, all found themselves in the City of London in the early 1610s.

### ***Richard Ball of Balsall***

21. In Nicholas Ball's pedigree recorded in the visitation books at the College of Arms, his grandfather is given as Richard Ball of 'Baufall', county Warwick, which adjoins south-west Northamptonshire.<sup>F64</sup> If so, it may well be that his grandfather came from the locality which today comprises Balsall Common, Balsall Street and Temple Balsall (which until 1863 were part of the 12,000 acre parish of Hampton-in-Arden).

The evidence of the similar coats of arms,<sup>F65</sup> and the All Saints' marriage register, suggests that the Rev.d Richard Ball's father, Lawrence Ball, and Nicholas Ball's father, Richard Ball, were brothers, and that their father was Richard Ball of Balsall in Warwickshire. This would indicate that Richard Ball of Balsall was probably born around the late 1520s (before parish registers begin), although he could have been born earlier. A conjectural family tree is set out in Part A of Appendix XI.

The possibility also exists that Richard Ball of Balsall was a son of the Lichfield branch of the family, as discussed in the last part of paragraph 25 below.

Richard Ball of Northampton was probably the younger brother of Lawrence, on the basis that Lawrence married four years earlier than Richard. Nicholas Ball's pedigree contains no reference to his presumed uncle, however, although if so, it would have been material to be mentioned to the Heralds to establish his right to bear arms through the line of the second son.

22. Although Balsall was not a separate parish, the manor or lordship of Balsall (often termed Temple Balsall) was extensive, including two-thirds of the parish of Barston and a good part of the parish of Berkswell.<sup>F66</sup>

The manor of Balsall was given to the Knights Templar in the twelfth century, and Balsall became a preceptory or cell of the Knights Templar, which order was dissolved in 1312. It subsequently became a commandery (i.e. manor or group of manors) of the Knights Hospitallers. Following the suppression of this order, Henry VIII granted the manor in 1544 to Queen Katherine Parr. Subsequently it passed through various hands, including the Earls of Warwick and Leicester.<sup>F67</sup>

23. The parish registers of Hampton-in-Arden do not survive before 1599 (and the early years are largely illegible). While Balsall (or Temple Balsall) was one of a small number of manorial courts in the diocese of Lichfield which exercised 'peculiar' probate jurisdiction, no wills survive before 1675.<sup>F68</sup> There is a list of Ball wills proved in the Consistory Court of Lichfield (and administrations) in Appendix XII. Nor is there any mention of the family in any of the Heralds' Visitations of Warwickshire made in 1563,<sup>F69</sup> 1619,<sup>F70</sup> and 1682-83.<sup>F71</sup>

Many of the manorial records of the lordship of Balsall do, however, survive, some from the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries.<sup>F72</sup> These confirm that there were Balls living in the manor of Balsall in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries.<sup>F73</sup> In 1515 a Henry Ball was amerced (i.e. fined) 7d. for not scouring a ditch,<sup>F74</sup> while the list of tenants in a manorial survey of 1540 includes a Richard Ball paying 4s. 2d. per annum for a copyhold property held by him since 1529.<sup>F75</sup> In the absence of other evidence, whether Henry Ball or Richard Ball was an ancestor of the Rev.d Richard Ball and Nicholas Ball is entirely a matter of conjecture.

### ***Rev.d Robert Ball of Lichfield (1551-1613)***

24. There is also heraldic evidence which pre-dates the arms recorded by the Rev.d Richard Ball in 1613 deriving from the arms of Robert Ball, who was educated at Winchester College between 1564 (when he was thirteen) and 1569,<sup>F76</sup> when he matriculated at New College, Oxford.<sup>F77</sup> After becoming a fellow in 1571,<sup>F78</sup> he took a

B.A. in 1573 and a M.A. in 1577.<sup>F79</sup> The Winchester and New College records describe him as being from the ancient cathedral city of Lichfield in Staffordshire.

The main lights of the windows in the Hall of New College contain armorial glass bearing either royal arms or the arms and names of benefactors. One of the stained glass shields on the north side of the hall bears the name 'Rob. Ball Socius [Fellow] 1571' and, apart from the fact that it is monochrome, matches the shield of the Rev.d Richard Ball recorded at the College of Arms in 1613.<sup>F80</sup>

The stained glass in the Hall windows dates from a Victorian restoration in 1865 by Sir Gilbert Scott, when the benefactors' shields were added to the window lights.<sup>F81</sup> It is known, however, that in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries there were a large number of wooden escutcheons, including the shield of Robert Ball, on the panelling at the upper end of the Hall.<sup>F82</sup> These escutcheons disappeared from the Hall at some stage, but have recently been rediscovered in a store room at New College. The surviving escutcheons include the shield of Robert Ball, which matches the shield of the Rev.d Richard Ball recorded in 1613, including the red tongue of the lion passant, although the background colour appears to be gold rather than silver, which could perhaps be attributable to weathering. There are photographs of the nineteenth century armorial glass and the earlier escutcheon in Appendix XIII.

Robert Ball was, indeed, a benefactor of New College. In 1610 he made a benefaction to the college of the advowson of the parish of Bucknell in Oxfordshire, on the condition that it always presented a fellow of the college, and preferably someone of his own "bloode and kindred". The right of patronage had been given to Robert in 1578 by his mother, Alice Ball of Lichfield, widow, who had purchased it in 1574.<sup>F83</sup> New College is still patron of the living.

Robert Ball became rector of Eastington in Gloucestershire in 1581, resigning his fellowship of New College the following year, and remained at Eastington until his death in 1613.<sup>F84</sup>

25. The shield recorded by the Rev.d Richard Ball in 1613 was not differenced from the shield of the Rev.d Robert Ball. If the heraldic rules of cadency had been complied with, this would indicate that Robert and Richard were each eldest sons descended through the same line, but this seems unlikely on the available evidence. As the observance of the rules of cadency was more honoured in the breach,<sup>F85</sup> it appears more probable that Robert Ball and Richard Ball were descended through different lines of the family. There is no reference to the Ball family in the Visitation of Staffordshire in 1583.<sup>F86</sup>

Unfortunately, the surviving records at Winchester College and New College do not indicate the identity of Robert Ball's father, nor are there any surviving wills made by Robert's father or mother.<sup>F87</sup>

Although no registers of any of the Lichfield parishes survive from before 1566,<sup>F88</sup> a census-style list of families in the Archdeaconry of Stafford, containing more than 50,000 names, both living and dead, survives from c.1532-33.<sup>F89</sup> While neither comprehensive nor reliable, the list records twenty-four Ball family households in Staffordshire living in sixteen towns and villages. There is a transcript of the Ball

entries in Part A of Appendix XIV. There were two Ball families living in Lichfield in the early 1530s, John Ball and Elizabeth his wife, who appears to have been married before, in Bore Street, whose three children (and/or those of Elizabeth's previous marriage) were deceased, and John Ball and his wife, Sibyl, in nearby Conduit Street, together with eight dependants or other relatives (5 male, 3 female).

The other members of John and Sibyl Ball's household named were Thomas, Margery, Richard, Edward, Elizabeth, Katherine, John and Roger. If the five males listed include one or more sons, he or one of them could have been the father of Robert Ball, who was born some 18 years later around 1551. John Ball of Conduit Street is therefore a strong candidate to be the grandfather of Robert Ball. That he is listed as having eight dependants suggests that he was probably born in the 1490s.

Given the lack of surviving evidence, the family relationship between John Ball of Conduit Street and Richard Ball of Balsall (probably born late 1520s or earlier) is uncertain. As Lichfield is only some 25 miles distant from Balsall, it is quite plausible that John Ball of Conduit Street could have been a brother of the father of Richard Ball of Balsall and hence Richard Ball's uncle, although whether Richard Ball's father also came from Balsall is unknown. A conjectural family tree based on this hypothesis is set out in Part B of Appendix XI.

If the family groupings recorded in the 'census' were listed in order of seniority, it is conceivable that Richard, the third named dependant of John Ball of Conduit Street, subsequently settled at Balsall and hence could have been the 'Richard Ball of Balsall' mentioned in Nicholas Ball's pedigree. In this case, Richard Ball of Balsall would be brother to the Rev.d Robert Ball's (unidentified) father and his sons, Lawrence Ball (c.1548-1607) and Richard Ball of Northampton, would be Robert's cousins. If Richard Ball of Balsall was the third of eight children of John Ball of Conduit Street, he would probably have been born in the early rather than the late 1520s as postulated in paragraph 21 above. A conjectural family tree based on this hypothesis is set out in Part C of Appendix XI.

26. From 1387 to 1548 the *de facto* governing body of the city of Lichfield was the Guild of St. Mary and St. John the Baptist, headed by a Master. In 1548 the Guild was dissolved upon the incorporation of the city. The senior officers of the corporation were two bailiffs (rather than a mayor).

A John Ball, capper, was Master of the Guild in 1540-41 and, following the incorporation of the city, served as bailiff in 1550 and again in 1556.<sup>F90</sup> John Ball was clearly a leading citizen,<sup>F91</sup> although the trade of making woollen caps was one of the poorer occupations, and by the 1570s had become "greatly decayed".<sup>F92</sup> It seems likely, therefore, that John Ball had other commercial interests.

It is impossible to say with any certainty whether the John Ball mentioned above was the John Ball of Bore Street or the John Ball of Conduit Street named in the 'census' of c.1532-33.<sup>F93</sup> The circumstances of the household of John Ball of Bore Street suggest that he may have been a senior citizen while the information about the household of John Ball of Conduit Street suggests someone more in their prime who could have become Master of the Guild in 1540 whilst still relatively young.

While John Ball would need to have been a prominent citizen to have been elected Master of the Guild in 1540, the lack of Ball references in the register of members of the Guild prior to 1540 could be interpreted as signifying that John Ball's family was not a long-established Lichfield family. If so, this could be consistent with the theory that the Balls of Lichfield originated from neighbouring Warwickshire. The surviving parish registers of Lichfield, St. Mary's unfortunately commence too late to be of assistance.<sup>F94</sup> There is a transcript of the Ball entries between 1566 and 1589 in Part B of Appendix XIV.

27. Whoever he was, Robert Ball's father, or else his widowed mother, Alice, would need to be reasonably well-to-do (or have a generous patron) to be able to send their son to Winchester College and, subsequently, New College. Robert must have shown early academic promise, and most likely attended the free grammar school in the city.<sup>F95</sup>

Four years after becoming rector of Eastington, in 1585, at the age of 34, Robert Ball married Alice Fowler at Stonehouse, a small town three miles distant.<sup>F96</sup> Robert and Alice had four sons, Nathaniel, Samuel, John and Daniel, who were born between 1586 and 1594, and three daughters. Sadly, Alice died giving birth to their third daughter, Judith, in 1602. Robert re-wed in 1612, marrying Ursula Clutterbuck who came from a local family.<sup>F97</sup> Robert Ball died not long afterwards, elsewhere than at Eastington, during the summer of 1613.<sup>F98</sup> There is a transcript of his will in Appendix IX.

Any of Robert Ball's four sons could be a candidate to be the father of Colonel William Ball of Millenbeck, who was reputedly born around 1615. The family does not appear to have had any great social pretensions, despite being armigerous, and it seems that three of his sons remained in the locality.<sup>F99</sup> Robert's third son, John, followed in his father's footsteps, and went up to New College, Oxford in 1609, taking his B.A. in 1613 and a M.A. in 1617.<sup>F100</sup>

The surviving evidence provides no support for any theory that Colonel William's father could have been one of the sons of Robert Ball. It may be material that the christian names of Robert Ball's children and (where known) grandchildren have little in common with the principal family christian names favoured by the Balls of Virginia.

### ***Balls of Scottow***

28. It transpires that there was another Ball family with arms bearing some resemblance to the arms of the Staffordshire and Northamptonshire Balls, albeit a simpler version. According to the Visitation of Norfolk in 1589, the arms of 'Ball of Scottow' were *Argent, a lion passant sable* with a crest, *A demi-lion rampant-guardant sable*.<sup>F101</sup>

In the case of the shield, the difference was that the design of the Staffordshire and Northamptonshire Balls included three silver stars on a black horizontal band across the top part, while on the crest of the Balls of Scottow the head of the demi-lion rampant is facing the spectator (*'guardant'*) rather than a side profile and is not holding anything in its paws or otherwise embellished.

29. The deponent at the visitation in 1589, Robert Ball,<sup>F102</sup> belonged to the fourth generation of the family recorded by the pedigree, which commences with Sir Henry Ball, knight, of Derbyshire.<sup>F103</sup> His son, Ralph, lived in Suffolk, while his grandson, John, took up residence at Scottow in north-east Norfolk.<sup>F104</sup> It seems that John Ball, who was Robert Ball's father, was already deceased at the time of the preceding visitation in 1563.<sup>F105</sup> The limited dating evidence suggests that Sir Henry Ball could have been born around the third quarter of the fifteenth century.

If Henry Ball was a knight, as recorded in the Norfolk visitation pedigree, he almost certainly would have been entitled to bear arms, either by grant to himself or an ancestor or by self-assumption by himself or an ancestor. The unembellished design of the arms of the Balls of Scottow is supportive of the proposition that they originated in the fifteenth century, or earlier, when arms tended to be simpler.<sup>F106</sup>

Henry Ball has been identified with the family of Ball of Ambaston (in the parish of Elvaston), 7 miles south-east of Derby, who were living there around 1330 to 1430,<sup>F107</sup> and with a Henry Ball who was living at Horsley, 7 miles north of Derby, in 1488.<sup>F108</sup>

The gentry status of the Balls of Scottow is exemplified by the marriage of Robert Ball to Mary Brandon, one of the illegitimate children of Charles Brandon (1484-1545), first Duke of Suffolk of the second creation.<sup>F109</sup> Brandon, who was a favourite of Henry VIII, married four times. His third marriage, in 1515, was to Mary Tudor, youngest sister of Henry VIII and Queen Dowager of France.

30. The Northamptonshire Balls were already using a similar shield to the Balls of Scottow, with the addition of a band of three stars across the top, in 1613, when the Rev.d Richard Ball applied to the College of Arms for the grant of the addition of a crest featuring a demi-lion rampant, compared with a demi-lion rampant guardant on the crest of the Balls of Scottow, and otherwise with a more elaborate design than the crest of the Norfolk family.

The apparent similarities raise questions whether:

(i) the Balls of Staffordshire, Warwickshire and Northamptonshire were anciently related to the Balls of Derbyshire, Suffolk and Norfolk; or

(ii) the Staffordshire and Warwickshire Balls simply assumed, with adaptations, the shield, and the Northamptonshire Balls later adopted (with the sanction of the College of Arms) a variant of the crest, of their namesakes, the armigerous Balls of Derbyshire, Suffolk and Norfolk; or

(iii) the similarities are no more than coincidence.

31. As regards whether the Staffordshire, Warwickshire and Northamptonshire Balls and the Balls of Derbyshire, Suffolk and Norfolk might be anciently related:

(a) The simple design of the arms of the Balls of Scottow is consistent with an early assumption as is the relatively plain design of the shield of the Staffordshire and

Northamptonshire Balls and the absence of a crest from the family arms prior to 1613.<sup>F110</sup>

(b) The form of a demi-lion rampant guardant (facing the spectator) is quite distinct from the form of a demi-lion rampant (which presents a side profile).

(c) The principal family christian names favoured by the Balls of Warwickshire and Northamptonshire (e.g. Richard, Lawrence, Nicholas) do not appear to have much in common with the christian names recorded in the pedigree of the Balls of Derbyshire, Suffolk and Norfolk (e.g. Henry, Ralph, John, Robert).<sup>F111</sup>

(d) It does not necessarily follow that families with the same name, and between whose arms there is some resemblance, are descended from the same forebears. There are various instances where the arms of armigerous families have been adopted, with alterations, sometimes minor, by persons who have no relationship apart from sharing the same name, without dissent by the Heralds.

(e) Staffordshire has a long boundary with Derbyshire, Derby in the south of the county being 25 miles north-east of Lichfield, while Staffordshire, Warwickshire and Northamptonshire are contiguous Midlands counties.

(f) The Staffordshire, Warwickshire and Northamptonshire Balls do not appear to have been a gentry family like the Balls of Scottow.

### ***Interpretation of evidence***

32. Prior to 1530 heraldry was unregulated in England, and (apart from inheritance) self-assumption was the normal way to acquire arms. Nor was the adoption of arms restricted by social status, and from the fourteenth century arms began to be assumed by (e.g.) merchants and craftsmen. Grants of arms were very rare until the end of the fifteenth century. As no record survives of the grant of arms to any of the Balls of Staffordshire, Warwickshire and Northamptonshire (apart from the crest in 1613) or the Balls of Derbyshire, Suffolk and Norfolk (disregarding Papworth),<sup>F112</sup> it seems likely that the arms were acquired by self-assumption.

We do not know why the Rev.d Richard Ball applied to the College of Arms in 1613 for the grant of the addition of a crest to the family arms. This may well have been a device to secure confirmation by the Heralds that he was entitled to bear arms and to avoid the risk of fines, as by then only arms granted or confirmed at a visitation were considered lawful and the family arms had not previously been confirmed at a visitation. The application may have been prompted by the death of the Rev.d Robert Ball in the summer of 1613.

33. While several previous writers have interpreted the heraldic evidence as indicating a line of descent from the Rev.d Richard Ball to Colonel William Ball of Millenbeck, the evidence for this is lacking. In particular:

- Richard Ball did not marry until 1614, when he was aged above 40;

- the only recorded family baptisms are those of his daughters, Rebecca, in January 1617 at St. Helen's, Bishopsgate and Elizabeth, in March 1618 at Chalton;

- according to Hayden, 'Colonel' William was born around 1615.

34. A fuller study of the heraldic evidence instead suggests that there are two earlier candidates with better potential for investigating Colonel William's English ancestry:

- Robert Ball of Lichfield (1551-1613), whose shield matches that of the Rev.d Richard Ball; and

- Richard Ball of Balsall, county Warwick (probably born late 1520s or earlier), on the basis of the pedigree recorded by Nicholas Ball (grandson) and the Northampton, All Saints' marriage register.

It is conceivable that one of Robert Ball's four sons (who were born between 1586 and 1594) could have been the father of Colonel William, but this finds no support from the surviving evidence.

If the Rev.d Robert Ball was not Colonel William's grandfather then, unless the arms of the Northamptonshire Balls were unilaterally assumed by Colonel William or his English forebears, it is instead necessary to seek a line of descent through a collateral line of the family.

While Richard Ball of Balsall, who may have been the grandfather of the Rev.d Richard Ball, appears to belong to a different line of the family from Robert Ball and his (unidentified) father, there is circumstantial evidence that they may have had a common lineal ancestor in Richard Ball's grandfather and Robert's great-grandfather, perhaps born in the 1470s, from whom it is conceivable that Colonel William was descended.

Although the circumstantial evidence also indicates that Richard Ball of Balsall would need to have been born by the late 1520s if Lawrence Ball of Northampton, who married Alice in 1569, was his first son, there is no reason why he could not have been born earlier. If so, it cannot be excluded that Richard Ball of Balsall was another son of the Rev.d Robert Ball's grandfather, John Ball of Conduit Street, Lichfield, probably born in the early 1520s, in which case he and the Rev.d Robert Ball's father would have been brothers.

The heraldic evidence also suggests that there might be some ancient link with the Balls of Derbyshire, but there is no corroborative evidence and the similarities may be no more than coincidence.

35. Trying to trace a line of descent this far back becomes increasingly difficult. With certain exceptions (e.g. court proceedings), there are progressively fewer contemporaneous written records (e.g. there are no parish registers prior to 1538), which are often in Latin, and many do not survive or else are illegible.

