

K. Conclusions

1. There is no link between the Balls of Berkshire and the Balls of Virginia.

William Ball of Lincoln's Inn, the reputed father of Colonel William Ball of Millenbeck, was no more than 14, and perhaps only 12, when 'Colonel' William is said to have been born.

In the absence of any record of William Ball of Lincoln's Inn marrying before 1627, 'Colonel' William could have been no older than ten when he is reputed to have married Hannah Atherold in 1638, if William Ball of Lincoln's Inn was his father.

There is evidence that William Ball, identified at Wokingham in 1641 as the eldest son of William Ball of Lincoln's Inn, continued to live in Berkshire until at least 1687.

2. It is entirely credible that the William Ball who is said to have married Hannah Atherold in 1638 was born around 1615.

3. The arms claimed by Colonel William as the family arms match the arms of the Balls of Staffordshire, Warwickshire and Northamptonshire (which are contiguous Midlands counties).

The arms of the Balls of Berkshire recorded by William Ball of Lincoln's Inn before the Heralds around 1634 are completely different.

4. The heraldic evidence strongly suggests a line of descent from the Balls of Staffordshire, Warwickshire and Northamptonshire to the Balls of Virginia.

5. While the heraldic evidence has previously been interpreted as indicating a line of descent from the Northamptonshire line through the Rev.d Richard Ball, vicar of St. Helen's, Bishopsgate 1603-1615 and rector of Chalton 1615-1631, the records indicate that he married late and had only female issue.

6. A fuller study of the heraldic evidence instead suggests that there are two earlier candidates for investigating the English ancestry of Colonel William Ball of Millenbeck:

- Robert Ball of Lichfield in Staffordshire (1551-1613), rector of Eastington 1581-1613, whose shield at New College, Oxford matches that of the Rev.d Richard Ball recorded in 1613; and

- Richard Ball of Balsall, county Warwick, the grandfather of Nicholas Ball (1592-1638), who was probably born in the 1520s.

7. It is conceivable that one of the Rev.d Robert Ball's four sons (who were born between 1586 and 1594) could have been the father of Colonel William, but the surviving evidence provides no support for this proposition. It is therefore necessary instead to seek a line of descent through an as yet unidentified line of this armigerous family.

8. The heraldic evidence also suggests the possibility of an ancient link with the Balls of Scottow, who originated from Derbyshire (adjacent to Staffordshire), but there is no supporting evidence and the similarities may be no more than coincidence.

9. In the absence of any documentary evidence that the Virginia Balls were related to the Balls of Staffordshire, Warwickshire and Northamptonshire, it cannot be excluded that Colonel William, or an ancestor, simply unilaterally assumed the arms of their armigerous namesakes.

10. The ancestry of Colonel William's wife, Hannah Atherold, is no less enigmatic. There is uncertainty whether Hannah's maiden name was Atherold, Atherall or Athereth, or whether she was of the Atherold family at all. To date no public record of either her baptism or marriage (or of the marriage of her reputed parents) has been found. It is highly unlikely that she was the daughter of Thomas Atherold III of Burgh as tradition has it.

11. Even though the true English ancestry of Colonel William Ball of Millenbeck remains elusive, hopefully this monograph advances the available knowledge about his family origins and will serve as a basis for further, potentially more conclusive, research.