



Benjamin Ashe of Bath (1741-1808)

Reference documents:

- (1) Cover letter from the 21st Baron Saye and Sele to Danny Smith dated 11 October 2002;
- (2) Memorandum by the late David Fiennes of Broughton Castle, Banbury Oxfordshire, dated 25 April 1976;
- (3) Hand-written Ashe Family pedigree (dated 19th century) held at Broughton Castle;
- (4) Research document on the children of Richard Ashe and Anne Deane by noted genealogist, Rosemary ffoliot (re-typed as original hardly legible).
- (5) Pedigree of Richard Ashe and Anne Deane by Rosemary ffoliot;
- (6) Letter from Sir Geoffrey Ramsden dated 9 Feb 1956;
- (7) John Burke's 1835 "[A Genealogical and Heraldic History of the Commoners of Great Britain and Ireland](#)".

Benjamin Ashe has long been of interest, partly because of his two surviving daughters and co-heiresses who married into important families, partly because of his assumed relationship with Lt. General St. George Ashe, and partly because of the mystery surrounding his parentage.

It is apparent that much confusion surrounds the children of [Richard Ashe](#) (b. bef. 1686-1728), of Ashfield, and his wife, Anne Deane, on the one hand, and, on the other hand, Bishop St. George Ashe and Lt. General St. George Ashe and how they fit into the family tree.

Let us first deal with [Bishop St. George Ashe](#) who was born in 1657. His life has been fairly well documented, and he was the son of Thomas Ashe, of St. John's, and Mary St. George, daughter of Captain Richard St. George, which appears to be how the forename, St. George, was first introduced into the Ashe family, thereby sewing the seeds of later confusion. Thus, the hand-written Ashe Family pedigree (see (3) above) is incorrect in stating that Bishop St. George Ashe was the third son of Richard Ashe of Ashfield.

Let us next look at the Rev. Dillon Ashe. This adds to the general confusion because there were two of them:

- a). [Rev. Dillon Ashe](#) (1668-1716), who was the brother of Bishop St. George Ashe (above). To add to the confusion, both Bishop St. George Ashe and his brother, Dillon, married sisters, daughters of St. George St. George, Bart of Dunway (NB. apparently a different branch of the St.

George family, to which Captain Richard St. George, father-in-law of Bishop St. George Ashe, belonged).

b). [Rev. Dillon Ashe](#) (1712 - d. aft. 1780), who was the second son of Richard Ashe, of Ashfield.

Reverting back to the first son of Richard Ashe, of Ashfield, this was Joseph Ashe (1707-d. aft. 1760), from whom, through Major William Ashe (b. 1736), the estate of Ashfield appears to have devolved to [Lt. Col. William Wellesley Ashe](#) (b.1800), whose two children died young. Some of the Ashfield estate was sold off in 1764 (ref. The Farnham Papers in the National Library of Ireland):

The final purchase of urban property was made by Robert, 2nd Baron, in 1764 when he acquired from the Ashe family of Ashfield, county Meath, 'fifty cottages, fifty lofts, ten orchards, ten pigeon houses, fifty acres of arable land, fifty acres of meadow, one hundred acres of pasture, fifty acres of wood and underwood, fifty acres of furze and fifty acres of moor and marsh, with the appurtenances in the towns and lands called the Abbeylands of Cavan and the town and lands of Keadue otherwise called the two polls of Keady' at a cost of £1,500.

In addition, another Deed dated 1764 appears to involve the sale of the main part of the Ashfield estate:

March 22, 1764 "Registered 22nd day of March 1764 at ---- past 11 O'Clock in the fore noon

*Donnerayle Joseph Ash of Ashfield in the county of Meath Esq. & Richd Ash Esq the oldest son & heir apparant of The sd Joseph of the one part & the right Honble Nathaniel Clements of the city of Dublin Esq of the other part the release made between the Righ Honble James Earl of Clanbrafaill Chief Remembraineer of his Majistys Court of Exchequer in Ireland of the first part the said -----
--- Viscount Donerayle Thomas Tyrrell of Garngain in the County of Kildare Gent & John Burhoe of Palmertown in the County of Kildare Esq of the second part he & Joseph Ashe & Susanna Ashe his wife & heir & Richd Ashe of the third part the sd Nathaniel Clements of the fourth part and Patk Brady of the city of Dublin Gentl of the fifth part by which deed of release the sd ----- --- Vicount Donerayle Thomas Tyrrell John Burke Joseph Ashe and Richd Ashe in presence of a decree of the said court and beg the direction & Approbation of the sd Earl of Conforandun to the said Nathaniel Clements all that & those The Manour or ----- Manor of Ashfield otherwise Drumsheel & also all that and those the town and landes of Ashfield Cortober Corrabegh Carlaquilll Carrickgalway, Tonaghbane Corweelis Drumlaghan Drumery Killcreeny Duharrick Birragh Poorton Drumsheel Largy Lisngeer Lillermore Derrynahad --ullaghbog? ----- of ther-- Manor of Ashfield called or known by the names of Denominations of Corglafs Dromeen Cullagh & Lugaigg otherwise -unamalagh situate lying and being in the county of Cavan to hold the said lands & ---
----- with the appurtances to the Nathaniel Clements his heir and assigns forever which said deed of same was duly executed by the said ---- Viscount Lord Donerayle in the presense Adam William of the city of Dublin gent and Gilbert Allavon of the same Pubk Notary & by --- - ----- Richd Ashe in the presense of Saml Charlton of the said city gent & ----- Gilbert Allavon & the ---- was duly executed.*

Thus, by the time of Lt. Col. William Wellesley Ashe, there was probably little left of the Ashfield estate.

Turning now to [Lt. General St. George Ashe](#), Burke is incorrect in assigning him as the third son of Richard Ashe, of Ashfield. This is apparent from the 1843 Asiatic Journal and Monthly Miscellany, which announces his death on 8 Feb 1843 at the age of 86 (the date of death is also confirmed in the UK BMD Registry). This therefore gives him a date of birth in 1756, which is 28 years after the death of Richard Ashe, of Ashfield. Examining the research carried out by Rosemary ffoliot (see (4) above), it is apparent that the [St. George Ashe](#), third son of Richard Ashe, is the Rev. St. George Ashe, and is a missing generation between the two brothers, Lt. General St. George Ashe and [Benjamin Ashe](#), and Richard Ashe of Ashfield. Sir Geoffrey Ramsden's letter (see (6) above) alludes to them being brothers, and this appears to be confirmed in David Fiennes memorandum (see (2) above). Following enquiries with the records in Bath, Benjamin's dates of birth and death have been confirmed as 1741 and 1808 respectively.

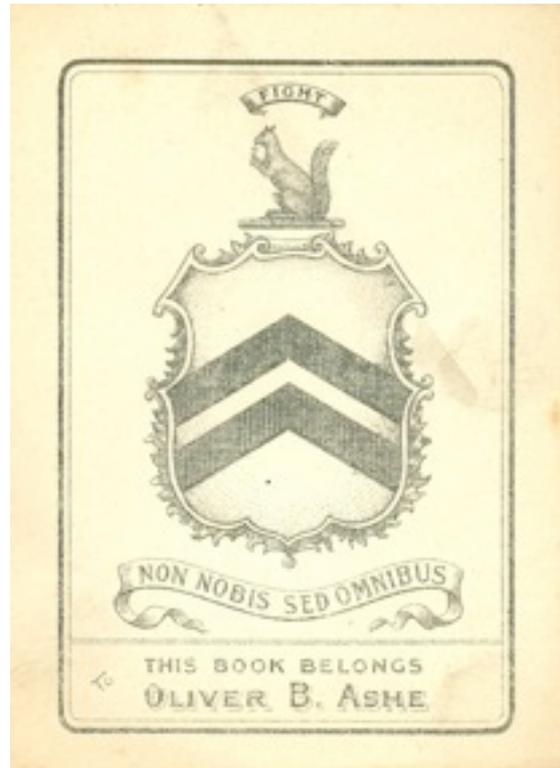
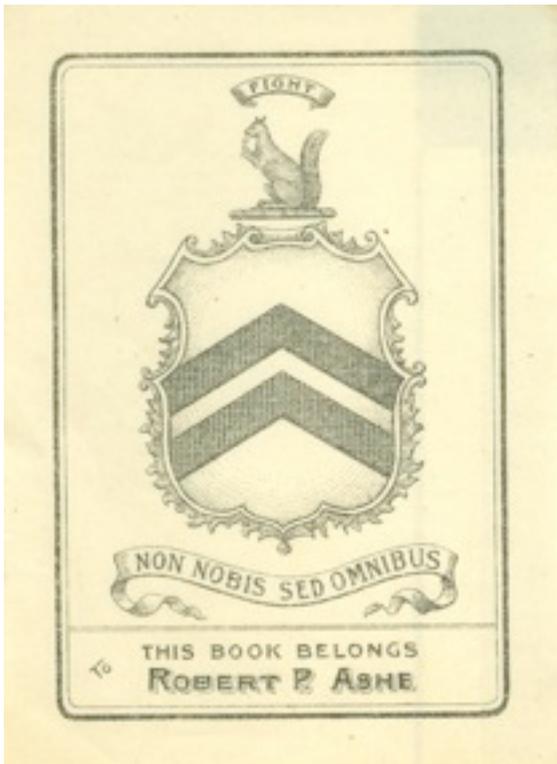
With regard to (2) above, I can find no documentation which refers to a Mr. Nixon, as a distant relative of Anna's father.

The reference in (2) above to a salver dated 1782 is intriguing, especially with the crest of a squirrel. Fairbairns "Crests of the families of Great Britain and Ireland: Volume 1" (1860) does indeed contain the description:

ASH of Ashbrook, Ireland, a squirrel, non nobis sed omnibus.

The Ashbrook branch of the Ashe family is descended through two different female members of the family after the male line died out. The beginning of the two branches, Ashfield and Ashbrook, come from the same ancestor, [Thomas Ashe](#) (1529-1582). One son, John Ashe (of Ashfield), began the Ashfield branch. Another son, Josias Ashe, began the Ashbrook branch. [Alderman George Ashe](#) (1712-1796) inherited Ashbrook, and passed it on to a nephew (by marriage), [William Hamilton](#), whose son, William, took the additional name of Ash upon inheriting Ashbrook from his parents. His son had only one daughter, Caroline, who married [John-Barré Beresford](#), whose son also took the additional name of Ash upon inheriting Ashbrook. While I have not yet discovered how the squirrel came to become their crest, instead of the cockatrice, I am not convinced that the squirrel on the salver at Broughton Castle can be taken as proof that Benjamin Ashe and St. George Ashe are part of the Ashbrook branch. This is for two reasons:

- (a) Alderman George Ashe (1712-1796) died 55 and 40 years, respectively, after the birth of Benjamin and St. George Ashe, and 12 and 47 years, respectively, before their deaths, and therefore could have bequeathed Ashbrook to one of them if they were part of the Ashbrook branch, rather than to the husband of his niece, as that would have retained it within the Ashe family.
- (b) The substitution of a squirrel for the cockatrice appears to have taken place in my own branch of the family, as evidenced by the two book plates below -- one of my grandfather and the other of an uncle.



My branch of the family is descended from the Ashfield Ashes, which definitely used the cockatrice as its crest. However, in view of the fact that my grandfather inadvertently used the squirrel as his crest, it is not impossible that another branch may have made the same mistake.

Document (2) above refers to an account of the family up to 1736. This is most probably “The Ash MSS, written in the year 1735, by Lieut. Col. Thomas Ash”, which was published in 1890. I have a copy of the book and, although both Benjamin and St. George were born after 1735, I have not been able to find any evidence which would suggest that any of the descendants of John Ash (of Cornerrin, later called Ashbrook), who died in 1684 and about whom the book mostly revolves, had children as eminent as Benjamin and St. George Ashe. There is also the aspect that the Ashbrook Ashes dropped the “e” from their name and used the surname “Ash”, whereas Benjamin and St. George Ashe retained the “e”. However, that does not mean that we can definitely exclude the possibility that Benjamin and St. George Ashe were part of the Ashbrook branch. John Ash married three times and had, as far as I can ascertain from the book, some 24 children. His son, and the author of the book, Lt. Col. Thomas Ash, also married twice and had a total of 19 children. Many of these children died at a young age, so the number who produced children and grandchildren was reduced. However, I think the preponderance of evidence suggests that Benjamin and St. George Ashe were part of the Ashfield branch, rather than the Ashbrook branch.

Document (3) above refers to a “Thomas Deane Ashe, of Dublin, died 1769, buried at St. Georges, Dublin”. I have been unable so far to find any record of a Thomas Deane Ashe, but document (4) above may shed some light on the confusion between generations.

While there are clearly some errors in documents (2) and (3), there is also information which (i) corroborates some of what is already known, and (ii) gives interesting leads for further research.

[Robert Ashe](#)

Lombok, 8 July 201144