

# The Balli family in Australia and New Zealand

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## The Balli Family in Australia and New Zealand<sup>1</sup>

Christian Balli

### Zusammenfassung

*In der zweiten Hälfte des 19. Jahrhunderts sind viele Tessiner nach Kalifornien und Australien ausgewandert, um dort ihr Glück zu suchen. Unter jenen, die nach Australien ausgereist sind, findet man drei Mitglieder der Familie Balli: Alessio und Antonio verliessen im Jahre 1854 Caveragno, während Giovanni im gleichen Jahr aus Locarno auswanderte.*

*Alle haben sich im Staate Victoria niedergelassen, hatten aber unterschiedliche Lebenswege. Der erste war drei Monate als Bergmann in Spring Creek tätig, wo er dann an Ruhr starb. Der zweite arbeitete als Kohlenbrenner im Bezirk Bendigo, wo er sich mit Augusta Pabst aus Hannover vermählte. Heute leben in Australien zahlreiche Nachfahren des Ehepaares; bei den meisten wurde aber der Familienname auf englische Art eingetragen, und sie heissen nun Balle.*

*Was die Nachfahren von Giovanni Balli, der Marion Heasman geheiratet und als Bergmann gearbeitet hat, anbelangt, leben sie in Neuseeland und heissen Caldwell nach dem zweiten Ehemann von Marion Heasman. Somit wird heute in Australien der ursprüngliche Name fast nur noch von fernen Nachfahren von Pietro Antonio Anastasio (1797 in Caveragno geboren und nach Harlingen in Holland ausgewandert) geführt, da einer von ihnen, Marten Sikke Balli, sich im Jahre 1952 in Tweed Heads (NSW) niederliess, wo er mit seinem Sohn Ferdinand und drei Enkelkindern (Chelsea, Krisky und Cameron) lebt.*

### Résumé

*Dans la seconde moitié du 19<sup>e</sup> siècle, de nombreux Tessinois ont émigré en Californie et en Australie avec l'intention d'y faire for-*

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<sup>1</sup> Translation of „La famiglia Balli in Australia e Nuova Zelanda“, published in „Bollettino Generalogico della Svizzera Italiana“ n. 9, Poschiavo Dicembre 2005

tune. Parmi ceux qui partirent pour l'Australie, on compte trois membres de la famille Balli: Alessio et Antonio quittèrent Caverigno en 1854 et Giovanni partit de Locarno la même année.

Tous se sont établis dans l'Etat de Victoria mais n'ont pas eu la même chance. Le premier travailla trois mois à Spring Creek comme mineur et mourut de dysenterie. Le deuxième fit le charbonnier dans le district de Bendigo, où il se maria avec Augusta Pabst, née à Hanovre. De nombreux descendants de ce couple vivent aujourd'hui en Australie, mais la plupart portent un nom de famille écrit à l'anglaise et s'appellent Balle.

Quant aux descendants de Giovanni Balli, qui se maria avec Marion Heasman et travailla aussi comme mineur, ils sont établis en Nouvelle Zélande et s'appellent Caldwell, du nom du deuxième mari de Marion Heasman. Aujourd'hui, le nom d'origine n'est donc quasiment porté que par les lointains descendants de Pietro Antonio Anastasio (né à Caverigno en 1797 et émigré à Harlingen en Hollande). Un desquels, Marten Sikke Balli, s'établit en 1952 à Tweed Heads (NSW), où il vit avec son fils Ferdinand et trois petit-fils: Chelsea, Krisky et Cameron.

## Riassunto

Nella seconda metà del 19° secolo, numerosi ticinesi emigrarono in California e in Australia in cerca di fortuna. Tra coloro che emigrarono in Australia, si annoverano tre membri della famiglia Balli: Alessio e Antonio, partiti da Caverigno nel 1854, e Giovanni, partito lo stesso anno da Locarno.

Tutti si stabilirono nello stato del Victoria, ma non ebbero la stessa fortuna. Il primo lavorò tre mesi a Spring Creek quale minatore, per poi morire di dissenteria. Il secondo fece il carbonaio nel distretto di Bendigo dove sposò Augusta Pabst, nata ad Hannover. Oggi vivono in Australia numerosi discendenti di questa copia, molti dei quali portano però un cognome scritto all'inglese e si chiamano Balle.

Quanto ai discendenti di Giovanni Balli, che sposò Marion Heasman e fu attivo quale minatore, vivono in Nuova Zelanda e portano il cognome Caldwell, ricevuto dal secondo marito di Marion Heasman. Tra i pochi a chiamarsi Balli vi sono oggi i lontani discendenti di Pietro Antonio Anastasio (nato a Caverigno nel 1797 ed emigrato

*ad Harlingen in Olanda). Uno dei quali, Marten Sikke Balli, s'è stabilito nel 1952 a Tweed Heads (NSW), dove vive con il figlio Ferdinand e tre nipoti: Chelsea, Krisky e Cameron.*

In his "History of the Vallemaggia", Michele Patocchi recounts that "in the year 1850 several courageous and robust young men emigrated to the remote lands of California and Australia and within a short time were able to send a great deal of money to their native country. This was sufficient to spark a great desire to emigrate in the whole valley due to the scarcity of food and exceptionally bad harvests in those years. Groups of 30, 40, 50 young and old at a time, from all walks of life, left for the harbours of Le Havre, London, Liverpool, and Hamburg in order to set sail for California and Australia".<sup>2</sup>

During the year 1854 in the wake of this exodus twenty men, both young and old, from Caveragno, decided to go to Australia in search of gold. They appealed to the town council for the financial support required for this voyage. The patrician assembly called a meeting to discuss the matter and on 18 June 1854 the assembly "unanimously approved on the followed conditions:

I° The patrician assembly shall provide each individual intending to leave for Australia with capital amounting to 1200 (one thousand two hundred) francs with 4 per cent interest payable annually.

II° Each person to receive the requested sum shall pay in advance a proportionate interest of 4 per cent by and including December 1854.

III° During a peremptory time period of two years neither the beneficiaries nor their guarantors may be badgered about the interest on the requested loans.

IV° The Town Council is authorized to execute the decision which was taken into consideration".<sup>3</sup>

Among the 22 patricians of Caveragno who requested a loan were **Alessio and Antonio Lotti Balli**. It may be assumed from the contract signed by them on 18 September 1854 that of the 1000 francs

<sup>2</sup> s. (11) p. 202; s. also (12) p.26.

<sup>3</sup> s. (I) (a) contract no. 2, File A; (3) Vol. 1, p. 299; (7) p. 13; (8) p. 101 – 102.

loaned to them, 135 francs were destined to reimburse councilor Valentino Alessandro Balli of Caveragno for the amount previously paid to the “Emigration Office Franz v. Erlach in Berne as a contracted advance on their transport from Basel to Melbourne”.<sup>4</sup>

As in the case of the other emigrants this loan agreement was “concluded and made public in the offices of Giacomo M. Balli of Caveragno on the second floor of his house” by his son, notary Giacomo Balli.<sup>5</sup>

A few days later the group left for Hamburg to board the “Luise” which set sail on 10 October 1854 and arrived in Melbourne on 18 March 1855. The voyage took 5 months and was not simple, as Giacomo Beltrami, who had missed the “Luise” and had to board the “Europa” on 8 November instead, arrived in Melbourne before the others!<sup>6</sup>

In Australia Alessio and Antonio Lotti Balli<sup>7</sup> settled in the state of Victoria but were not equally fortunate. The former left Caveragno at the age of 44 and worked for three months at Spring Creek (district of Hepburn) as a miner and died later of dysentery. His death certificate was witnessed by Pietro Dadò who embarked with him from Hamburg. The latter worked as a charcoal-burner in the district of Bendigo where in 1871 he married Augusta Pabst, born in Hanover (Germany) in 1848. According to one of his descendants the couple lived on a small island in Lake Crusoe, until they were forced to leave by the local authorities, which wanted to use the lake as a reservoir.<sup>8</sup>

Antonio and Augusta had six children, but only the first, John Baptist Balli (1867 – 1924), had descendants. While working in

<sup>4</sup> s. (I) (a) contracts no. 4 and 5; Valentino Alessandro Balli (1796 – 1863), Deputy of the National Council from 1852 to 1854, was a fabric merchant in Holland before settling in Locarno definitively, s. (1) p. 35 and (2) Tab. 4 (Branch of Locarno and Muralto – Villa Fiorita).

<sup>5</sup> s. (7) p.15; Giacomo Balli (1823 – 1876) married Domenica Schenardi of Roveredo in 1852; he worked as an entrepreneur and was one of the building contractors of the “Grand Hotel” of Locarno, s. (10) p. 61.

<sup>6</sup> s. (6) p. 17 – 18, 20 and 122; for a description of the journey, s. (8) and (9); regarding the Chapel of Australia built by the immigrants at Mondada on the Val Bavona road, s. (7).

<sup>7</sup> Alessio Balli (1810 – 1855) was the son of Antonio M. Faustino (1762 – 1847) and Giovanna Lopredo (1777 – 1842); he married Elena Dadò (1812 – 1857) in 1834, without descendants, s. (2) Tab. 2 (Holland Branch). Antonio Balli (known “Lotti” 1819 – 1880) was the son of Giuseppe M. Faustino (1769 – 1824) and Giovanna M. Zanini (1776 – 1861), s. (2) Tab. 5a (Caveragno Branch); he is buried with a son in the cemetery of Eaglehawk.

<sup>8</sup> (II) (a); Antonio Balli was listed as a voter at Elysian Flat (Bendigo), s. (4) and (5) p. 211.

Bendigo as a miner, he married Charlotte Jane Taylor in 1892 who died there in 1951. The couple had seven children, one of whom, Percival Tyras (1895 – 1958), was enlisted in the Australian Imperial Forces during the Great War. Evacuated from Gallipoli (Dardanelles), he was sent to Amiens in France where he was wounded twice before being sent to Harewood House in England for convalescence. He died in Bendigo without children unlike the other sons of John Baptist Balli.<sup>9</sup> One of them, Stanley Sebastian (1900 – 1949), married Joyce Vercoe (1899 – 1976), and continued working as a miner in Bendigo. The family name, perhaps on the initiative of a registrar, began to be spelled differently in English. And that is why there are numerous descendants bearing the surname Balle.

In 1854 **Giovanni Balli** left Locarno and on 17 November of that year he boarded the “Almora” in Liverpool to arrive in Melbourne on 13 February 1855. Working as a miner, he married Marion Heasman (ca. 1842 – 1890) in Daylesford in 1863 where two sons were born: James in 1864 and George in 1865 (who was taken into custody by his maternal grandparents and died at Emerald Hill in 1870).<sup>10</sup>

Marion Heasman Balli who was already pregnant with her third child boarded the “Taranaki” on 11 October 1866 destined for Hokitika in New Zealand where gold had been found. In the meantime Giovanni was recovering in a hospital in Melbourne where he died on 19 May 1867.

On 2 May 1867 William Balli (1867 – 1958) was born in Hokitika in New Zealand as the third son of Giovanni. Marion Heasman Balli married William Caldwell, her second husband, who adopted the young child.

William assumed his adoptive father's surname, and thus his descendants in New Zealand are known by the name of Caldwell.

As the descendants of Antonio and Giovanni lost their original surname, the few still bearing the name Balli are distant relatives of Pietro Antonio Anastasio (born in Caveragno in 1797 having emigrated to Harlingen in Holland). One of them, **Marten Sikke Balli**, moved to Tweed Heads in Australia in 1952 where he lives with his

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<sup>9</sup> (II) (a).

<sup>10</sup> Giovanni Balli (1837 – 1867) was the son of Giacomo (1806 – 1869) and Maria Frizzi (1808 – 1893), s. (2) Tab. 5 (Locarno Branch). Regarding an accident at sea, s. (7) p. 32. Concerning the uncle advocate Giuseppe Balli of Locarno, author of many emigration contracts, s. (3) p. 151.

son Ferdinand and three grandchildren: Chelsea, Krisky and Cameron.<sup>11</sup>

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- (3) Cheda Giorgio, *L'emigrazione ticinese in Australia*, Locarno 1976
- (4) D'Aprano Charles, *From Goldrush to Federation*, Pascoe Valley South 1997
- (5) D'Aprano Charles, *Dalla Corsa all'Oro alla Federazione*, translated by Maria Cristina Marras, Ascot Valley 1997
- (6) Gentili Joseph, *The settlement of Swiss Ticino immigrants in Australia*, Nedlands 1988
- (7) Martini Luigi, *Caverognesi in Australia*, Caveragno 2004
- (8) Martini Plinio, *Caverognesi in Australia*, in: Almanacco Valmaggese, Locarno 1960
- (9) Martini Plinio, *Caverognesi in Australia*, in: Delle streghe ed altro, Locarno 1979
- (10) Mondada Giuseppe, *I Balli di Caveragno*, in: Almanacco Valmaggese, Locarno 1962
- (11) Patocchi Michele, *Cenno storico sulla Vallemaggia*, 1864
- (12) Perret Maurice, *Les colonies tessinoises en Californie*, Lausanne 1950

## Other Sources

- (I) State Archives, Bellinzona
  - (a) Notarised deeds, Balli Giacomo di Giacomo, Caveragno
  - (b) Christian Balli, Australian and New Zealand archives: documents concerning the Balli family, Vol. 1 and 2, November 2005

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<sup>11</sup> s. (1) p. 36 and 40, (2) Tab. 2 (Holland Branch); the wife of Marten Sikke, Jenneke, died on 24 September 1995 in Tweed Heads.

## (II) Information obtained from:

*Australia:*

- (a) Sybil Jacks, Cloverdale
- (b) Barry Millar, Higgins
- (c) Yvonne Izatt, The Genealogical Society of Victoria, Melbourne

*New Zealand:*

- (d) Frank and Laurie Rands, Silverdale
- (e) Elaine Bell, New Zealand Society of Genealogists, Auckland

**Abbreviations in the following Appendix**

- Vic. = Victoria (State of)
- NSW = New South Wales (State of)
- AUS = Australia
- NZ = New Zealand
- marr. = married



## Appendix

### Branches of the Balli family in Australia and New Zealand

#### *Genealogical table no. 1: Australia (Antonio Lotti Balli)*

1. Antonio Lotti Balli  
Cavergno 1819 – Raywood Vic. 1880, marr. 1871 at Sandhurst Vic.
- 1a. Augusta Pabst  
Hanover 1848 – Bendigo Vic. 1898  
C. John Baptist (2), Josephine Carolina (3), Joanna Maria (4), Augusta Rosa (5), Antonio William (6), Hannah Bridget (7)



*Pic. 1 Group of miners in Bendigo (1920 ca.): in this picture John Baptist Balli can be recognized (at the bottom right) and his son Stanley Sebastian (3rd from the left, last row); source: (II) (b)*

*First generation: 6 offspring*

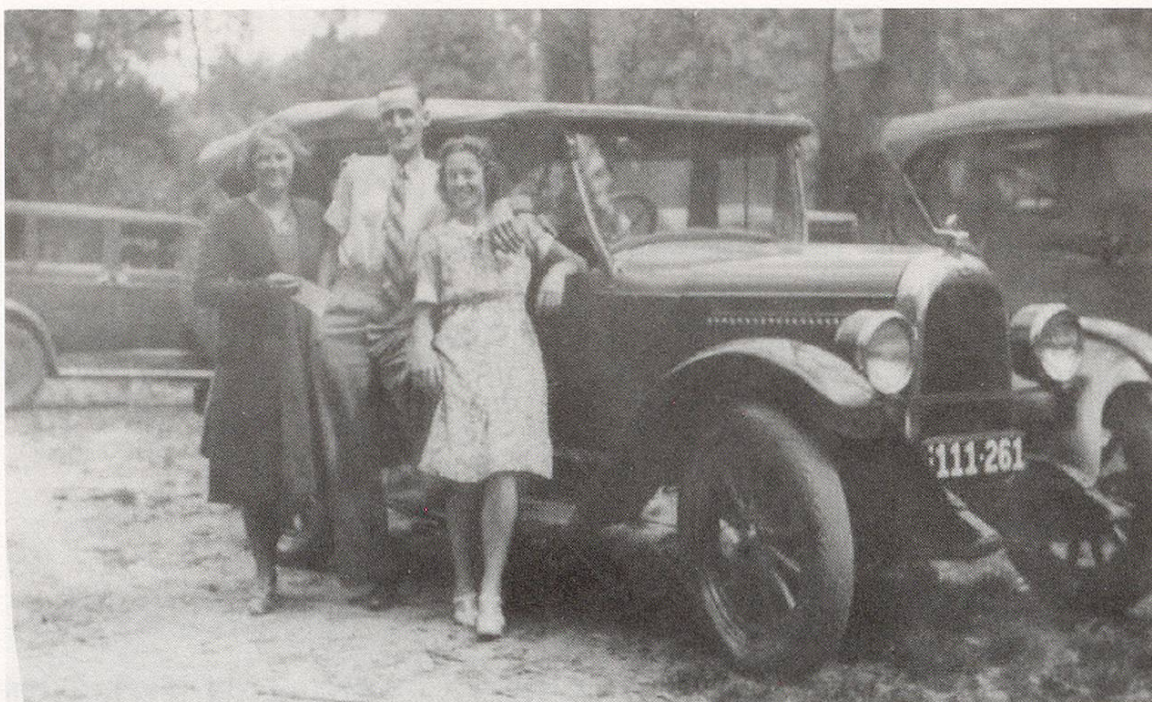
2. John Baptist Balli (1) (Pic. 1)  
Bendigo Vic. 1867 – Bendigo Vic. 1924, marr. 1892 at Bendigo Vic.

- 2a. Charlotte Jane Taylor  
Sandhurst Vic. 1874 – Bendigo Vic. 1951  
C. John Baptiste (8), Percival Tyras (9), Lawrence Reuben (10), Stanley Sebastian (11), Charlotte Lousia (12), Leslie Allan (13), Silvia Maria (14)
3. Josephine Carolina Balli (1)  
\*1870
4. Joanna Maria Balli (1)  
\*Raywood Vic. 1873
5. Augusta Rosa Balli (1)  
Raywood Vic. 1875 – Bendigo Vic. 1892
6. Antonio William Balli (1)  
Raywood Vic. 1877 – Sebastopol Vic. 1879
7. Hannah Bridget Balli (1)  
Eaglehawk Vic. 1880 – Bendigo Vic. 1893

*Second generation: 7 offspring*

8. John Baptiste Balli/e (2)  
Bendigo Vic. 1893 – Fitzroy Vic. 1955, marr. 1913 Vic.
- 8a. Clarice Ellen Thompson Reddie  
1891 – Heidleburg Vic. 1979  
C. Margaret Ellen (15), John Andrew (16), Dorothy May (17), Sylvia (18), Jean (19), Betty (20)
9. Percival Tyras Balli (2)  
Long Gully Vic. 1895 – Bendigo Vic. 1958
10. Lawrence Reuben Balli/e (2)  
Long Gully Vic. 1898 – Wandin Vic. 1969, marr. 1922 Vic.
- 10a. Isabel Rossmoor Rigby  
1899 – 1993  
C. Sybil Isabell (21), John Lawrence (22), William Percival (23), James Maurice (24), Nancy May (25), Stanley George (26)
11. Stanley Sebastian Balli (2) (Pic. 1 and 2)  
Bendigo Vic. 1900 – Melbourne Vic. 1949, marr. 1919 Vic.
- 11a. Joyce Esme Vercoe  
Bendigo Vic. 1899 – Geelong Vic. 1976  
C. Stanley Colin (27), Lawrence Russel (28), Mervyn Roydon (29), Melva Pearl (30)
12. Charlotte Lousia Balli (2)  
\*Bendigo Vic. 1903, marr. 1922 Vic.
- 12a. James Palmer Holborn
13. Leslie Allan Balli (2)  
Bendigo Vic. 1905 – Geelong Vic. 1956, marr. 1936 Vic.

- 13a. Daisy May Plane  
1907 – Geelong Vic. 1965  
C. Gwenda (31)
14. Silvia Maria Balli (2)  
\*Vic. 1908, marr. 1927 Vic.
- 14a. Arley Arthur Dunne



*Pic. 2 Stanley Sebastian Balli with his wife Joyce Vercoe and their daughter Melva; source: (II) (b)*

*Third generation: 17 offspring*

15. Margaret Ellen Balli (8)  
Preston Vic. 1914, marr. 1935 Vic.
- 15a. Harold Francis Mulcahy
16. John Andrew Balli (8)  
Northcote Vic. 1917 – Northcote Vic. 1917
17. Dorothy May Balli (8)  
\*South Fitzroy Vic. 1918, marr. 1938 Vic.
- 17a. Arthur William Humphries
18. Sylvia Balli (8)
19. Jean Balli (8)
20. Betty Balli (8)
21. Sybil Isabell Balle (10)  
Heidleburg Vic. 1923, marr. 1949

- 21a. Kenneth William Jacks  
\*1922
22. John Lawrence Balle (10)  
1925 – 1993, marr. 1959
- 22a. Eileen Doris Smith  
C. Geoffrey John (32)
23. William Percival Balle (10)  
\*1923, marr. Sydney NSW
- 23a. Hilary Calvert  
C. Noel (33)
- 23b. Noreen Halowell  
C. Michelle (34)
- 23c. Wilma Boardman
24. James Maurice Balle (10)  
1929 – 1989 Vic., marr.
- 24a. Dorothy Bragg  
\*Queensland  
C. Susan (35), Judith (36), Lynette (37), Diane (38)
25. Nancy May Balle (10)  
\* 1931, marr. 1952
- 25a. Roland Philipps  
\* 1928
26. Stanley George Balle (10)  
\* 1923, marr.
- 26a. Valerie Oliver  
C. Gretchen (39), Kim (40), Anthony (41)
27. Stanley Colin Balle (11)  
Long Gully Vic. 1919 – Yarraville Vic. 1978, marr. 1949 at Melbourne Vic.
- 27a. Audrey Joan Aminde  
1923 – Melbourne Vic. 1986  
C. Raelene Peta (42), Sharon Faye (43)
28. Lawrence Russel Balle (11)  
Golden Square Vic. 1920 – Cessnock NSW 1988, marr. 1945
- 28a. Edith May Hitchcock  
\*1924  
C. Suzanne (44), Peter (45)
29. Mervyn Roydon Balle (11)  
Bendigo Vic. 1921 – Melbourne Vic. 1989
30. Melva Pearl Balle (11)  
\*Bendigo Vic. 1925, marr. 1944 Vic.
- 30a. Archibald James Millar  
Koondrook Vic. 1922 – Queenscliffe Vic. 1993

31. Gwenda Balli (13)  
\*Bendigo Vic., marr.

31a. Ron Petrie

Fourth generation: 14 offspring

32. Geoffrey John Balle (22)  
marr.

32a. Maree

C. Hely Maree (46)

33. Noel Balle (23)  
\*1950

34. Michelle Balle (23)

35. Susan Balle (24)  
\*1950

36. Judith Balle (24)

37. Lynette Balle (24)

38. Diane Balle (24)

39. Gretchen Balle (26)  
marr.

39a. Trevor Paul

40. Kim Balle (26)  
marr.

40a. Coral Roberts

C. Shane (47), Brett (48), Thomas (49)

41. Anthony Balle (26)

42. Raelene Peta Balle (27)  
\*Coburg Vic. 1955

43. Sharon Faye Balle (27)  
\*Coburg Vic. 1959, marr. 1981 at Pascoe Vale Vic.

43a. Kevin Desira  
\*Carlton Vic. 1957

44. Suzanne Balle (28)  
\*Cessnock NSW 1950, marr. 1969 NSW

44a. Peter Nicholas Larkin  
\*North Sydney NSW 1945

45. Peter Balle (28)  
\*Cessnock NSW 1953, marr. 1975 at Cessnock NSW

45a. Dianne Joy Warby  
C. Mathew Peter (50), Renae Lea (51), Belinda Gai (52)

Fifth generation: 7 offspring

46. Hely Maree Balle (32)  
\*2002
47. Shane Balle (40)
48. Brett Balle (40)
49. Thomas Balle (40)
50. Mathew Peter Balle (45)  
\*Cessnock NSW 1977
51. Renae Lea Balle (45)  
\*Cessnock NSW 1978, marr. 2002 at Newcastle NSW
- 51a. Mark James Draper
52. Belinda Gai Balle (45)  
\*Cessnock NSW 1983

Sources: (II) (a), (b) and (c)

For a table of all descendants (regardless of surname): s. (I) (b)

***Genealogical table no. 2: New Zealand (Giovanni Balli)***

1. Giovanni Balli  
Locarno 1837 – Melbourne Vic. AUS 1867, marr. 1863 at Daylesford  
Vic. AUS
- 1a. Marion Heasman  
Melbourne Vic. AUS ca. 1842 – Melbourne Vic. AUS 1890  
C. James (2), George (3), William (4)

First generation: 3 offspring

2. James Balli  
\*Daylesford Vic. AUS 1864
3. George Balli (Heasman)  
Daylesford Vic. AUS 1865 – Hemerald Hill Vic. AUS 1870
4. William Balli (Caldwell) (Pic.3)  
Kanieri Hokitika NZ 1867 – Pt Chevalier Auckland NZ 1958, marr.  
1890 at Sandhurst Vic. AUS
- 4a. Mary Jane Elizabeth Dobbin  
Croxtton Vic. AUS 1867 – Bendigo Vic. AUS 1903  
C. William Henry John (Dobbin) Caldwell, Alfred James Caldwell,  
Marion Jane Caldwell, Catherine Elizabeth Caldwell, Ellen Amelia  
Caldwell, William Henry John Caldwell, Fredrick Joseph Caldwell

Sources: (II) (c) and (d)

*William Balli was adopted by William Caldwell, second husband of Marion Heasman Balli. William assumed his adoptive father's surname as well as his sons who were born in Bendigo Vic. AUS. They later moved to New Zealand with their father. For the Caldwell genealogy see the website "Descendants of Giovanni Balli" (<http://aumarire.co.nz/caldwell/>); copy in (I) (b).*



*Pic. 3 William Balli Caldwell with his daughters Catherine Elizabeth, Marion, Ellen Amelia and his son William Henry John (from left to right, top to bottom); source: (II) (d)*

Christian Balli ist 1951 in Zürich geboren und im Tessin aufgewachsen. An der Universität Freiburg i.Ue. erwarb er das Lizenziat in Volkswirtschaft (1974) und in Jus (1979). Er ist als Jurist im Dienste des Bundes auf dem Gebiet des nationalen und internationalen Wasserrechts tätig. Mit seiner Familie lebt er in Wabern (BE). Bürger von Caviggno (neu Cevio, TI), hat er in verschiedenen Publikationen den Ursprung und die Verbreitung seiner Familie in Europa und in Übersee geschildert. Er ist Mitglied der Schweizerischen Gesellschaft für Familienforschung (SGFF) und der Società Genealogica della Svizzera Italiana (SGSI) und pflegt fachliche Kontakte im In- und Ausland.