

William Bellingham

{1639, Rowley}

Version of April 1, 2024.

A New England settler sketch
by Ian Watson.

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ORIGIN: Rowley, Yorkshire.

PREVIOUS RESIDENCES: Presumably Brumby, Lincolnshire (see *COMMENTS*).

MIGRATION: By 1639 (on 3 November 1639, Ezekiel Rogers wrote a letter referring to “Mr. Will[iam] Bellingham” and implying that Bellingham was at Rowley [WP 4:151]; see *COMMENTS*).

FIRST RESIDENCE: Rowley.

OCCUPATION: Gentleman [ILR 1:71, 77, 2:124; marriage license]. Usually called “Mr.”

CHURCH MEMBERSHIP: Admission to Rowley church prior to 12 October 1640 implied by freemanship.

CIVIL STATUS: Massachusetts Bay freeman, 12 October 1640 [MBCR 1:378].

EDUCATION: Sufficient to be appointed to handle court matters at Rowley [MBCR 1:307]. Sent a well-composed letter to John Winthrop [WP 5:200-201].

CIVIL OFFICES: Authorized to “take caption or cognizance, & to make replevies” at Rowley in the absence of a magistrate, 7 October

1640 [MBCR 1:307]. “Appointed to see marriages solemnized at Rowley & Neweberry, & to keep record thereof,” 14 June 1642 [MBCR 2:14].

PROPERTY: According to the “survey of the town of Rowley,” which was “taken” 10 January 1643[/⁴] but evidently started some time before that (see GMN 10:27-30), William Bellingham had been granted the following parcels of land:

- (1) “one house lot, containing four acres ... part of it lying on the east side of the street, and part of it on the west side” [RowTR 5];
- (2) “thirteen acres of upland” in the “northeast field” [RowTR 8];
- (3) “three acres of upland ... lying towards ... Satchells meadow” [RowTR 10];
- (4) “five acres of meadow” in “Satchells meadow” [RowTR 14];
- (5) “ten acres” in the “first division of salt marsh,” with “the east end butting upon a salt creek” [RowTR 16];
- (6) “ten acres” in the “second division of salt marsh” [RowTR 21];
- (7) “five acres” in the “second division of fresh marsh, commonly called the first division of rough meadows” [RowTR 23];
- (8) “five acres” in the “third division of fresh marsh, commonly called the second division of rough meadows” [RowTR 27];
- (9) “ten acres of upland, six acres and twenty rod of it joining upon his second division of salt marsh” in “the second division of upland, laid out in the field called the Marsh field” [RowTR 29].

In three subsequent divisions (the third division of salt marsh, the “certain parcels of upland,” and the “certain parcels of meadow”), “Mr. Samuel Bellingham” was allotted land but William Bellingham was not [RowTR 32, 35, 43]. Evidently, William Bellingham died part way through the process of dividing Rowley’s lands and recording the divisions, so subsequent grants were made to Samuel as William’s heir [GMN 10:29-30].

Further descriptions of these same parcels of land are in the ex-

tended litigation over William Bellingham's estate [ILR 1:71, 77, 118, 153, 2:76, 87-89, 124, 141, 147, 157, 188; EQC 2:360-362, 395-401, 5:390-391, 8:153-154].

In his undated will, proved at an Ipswich court 24 September 1650, "William Bellingham" gave detailed instructions (omitted here for brevity) on how his debts and potential debts to "John Smith," "John Aslet," "Hugh Smith," Mychaell Hopkinson," "Richard Holmes," "Mr. Broughtons father in law," and "Mr. Rogers" should be paid; these reveal that he had an "upper lot" and property "at Merimacke" that had both needed fencing. He directed that "whatsoever is due to me from the town shall be remitted" and put "toward a common stock for the town"; he gave "my servant Jeremy Northende" £4 and directed that he serve the remainder of his time "wholly to Mr. Rogers." He gave to my "loving friend Mr. Thomas Nelson my smallest Bible which was my wife's"; to "Mr. Rogers my gold ring which was my wife's"; to "Jeremy my man two cloth suits, a white one & a brown"; to "Margret Cross my old w[hi]t[e?] cloth coat"; to "Eliz. Jackson Mr. Rogers maid," 20s; to "William Hobson five shillings, & as much to Hannah Grant"; the "remainder of my goods, lands & whole estate" to "my loving nephew Samuell Bellingham." Witnesses were "Ez. Rogers (who writ this)" and "Tho. Nulson" [ILR 1:83; EQC 1:199; EP-D 1:120-121].

BIRTH: Say 1609 (based, very uncertainly, on marriage in 1634). Son of William Bellingham, who was of Brumby, Lincolnshire, in 1612 (see *COMMENTS*).

DEATH: Rowley, Massachusetts, about 1642-1643 ("about nineteen years ago" according to an undated deposition by his brother, which was made for a 1662 court case [EQC 2:400-401]; see *COMMENTS*). The last record of him in life is from 14 June 1642 [MBCR 2:14].

MARRIAGE: Rowley, Yorkshire, 29 May 1634 **Elizabeth Wivill** or Wivell, "spinster" of "Rowley" [BT at DGS 7588402:279; *Paver's*

Marriage Licences, vol. 1 (n.p. 1909), 44]. She was buried at Rowley 9 May 1636 [BT at DGS 7588402:281].

CHILDREN: None seen, and none are mentioned in his will or in the subsequent litigation over his estate.

ASSOCIATIONS: Brother of RICHARD BELLINGHAM {1634, Boston, GM 1:243}. Their relationship is documented in Richard's lawsuit over William's estate (see *COMMENTS*) and in Richard's land sales before leaving England (abstracted at NEHGR 36:385-386).

Very probably a brother of Hester (Bellingham) Hibbins, who died in England but whose husband WILLIAM HIBBINS {1638, Boston} subsequently came to New England [GM 3:315-316] (see *COMMENTS*).

At the time of William Bellingham's death, his nephew Samuel Bellingham (who was then newly graduated from Harvard) was living with him [EQC 2:397].

JEREMIAH NORTHEND {1639, Rowley} was William Bellingham's servant.

COMMENTS: Other early references in New England records: On about 17 October 1638, Thomas Lechford worked on "diverse writings for Mr. Humfrey to Mr. Will[ia]m Bellingham, about £100 borrowed & cattle engaged for it" [Lechford 3].

On 3 November 1639, Ezekiel Rogers wrote from Rowley to John Winthrop, "humbly crav[ing] your advice to Mr. Will[iam] Bellingham" about a possible "[court] action against" GEORGE LAMBERTON {1639, New Haven} [WP 4:151].

On 25 February of a year not stated, William Bellingham wrote to John Winthrop, reminding Winthrop about two debts which Bellingham had asked Winthrop to settle for him. One debt was from "one Ambrose Leach" to "Mr. William Ting" and the other from "John Remington" to "Robert Barker." Bellingham also asked Winthrop to make rye and Indian corn ready which Bellingham would arrange to pick up "when the rivers are open" [WP 5:200-201]. The editors of the

Winthrop Papers assigned a year of 1647/8 to this letter, but as William Bellingham was dead by then, it must have been written several years earlier. Of the four men mentioned in the letter, Ambrose Leach is the one whose first independent appearance in New England records is the latest, namely from about 1643 [SuTR 1:21; Alfred Sereno Hudson, *The History of Sudbury, Massachusetts* (Sudbury 1889), 93-95].

Arrival year: It is difficult to decide whether William Bellingham's arrival in New England should be placed in the year 1638, or whether the possibility that he arrived in 1639 should be left open. With an abundance of caution, we have taken the latter approach and have said that he arrived by 1639.

The Rowley minister, Ezekiel Rogers, is one of the Rowley settlers for whom an arrival date of 1638 can be positively confirmed. John Winthrop, writing in his journal under the date 2 December 1638, mentioned "Ezekiel Rogers ... lying at Boston with some who came out of Yorkshire with him ... being desirous to partake in the Lord's supper with the church of Boston, did first impart his desire to the elders ... and before the sacrament, being called forth by the elders, he spoke to this effect, viz.: that he and his company (viz. divers families, who came over with him this summer) had ... withdrawn themselves from the church communion of England" [WJ 1:334-335]. In another passage, dated April 1639, Winthrop said that Rogers's group consisted of "some twenty families" and discussed Rogers's hesitation about whether they should settle at "Quinipiack" (i.e., New Haven) or at Rowley. He explained that Rogers had "sent divers of his people thither [to New Haven] before winter" who he had then tried to bring back [WJ 1:354-355]. In a third passage under the date 3 December 1639, Winthrop wrote that Rogers, "being now settled with his company at Rowley, was there ordained pastor, etc." [WJ 1:390]. Under the same date, he also, it seems, added a similar text as a postscript to the 2 December 1638 entry: "being settled at Rowley,

they renewed their church covenant, and their call of Mr. Rogers to the office of pastor” [WJ 1:335].

Winthrop’s account, which is confirmed by other sources, makes it plain that many of the first Rowley settlers — roughly twenty families — arrived in New England in summer 1638. But Winthrop records none of their names aside from that of Ezekiel Rogers. In 2009, Patricia Law Hatcher published an analysis of the first settlers of Rowley [GMN 18:19-22, 27-30]. She tried to assign an arrival year to each one, and she constructed a list of twenty-seven families or individuals who, she conjectured, probably arrived with Rogers [GMN 18:30]. William Bellingham is among these.

Some of these twenty-seven definitely did arrive in 1638. For example, some joined the church at Boston in December and January of 1638-1639 but were dismissed to Rowley a few months later, such as Michael Hopkinson and Richard Swan.

Others are not recorded in New England until 1639, and late enough in the year that they could have arrived that summer. For example, Robert Haseltine married at Rowley 23 December 1639 [original VR at DGS 7009689:216] and thus was assigned an arrival year of 1639 in the *Great Migration Directory*, although it is possible that he came with Rogers in 1638.

We think it probable that William Bellingham was among the settlers who came with Rogers in summer 1638. His appearance in Lechford’s notebook in October 1638 is, however, difficult to take as evidence of presence in New England, because it gives the impression that Bellingham was, at the least, not at Massachusetts Bay (since John Humfrey needed Lechford’s help to write to him). If Bellingham was in New England at all, he may have been at New Haven just then. Indeed, Rogers’s November 1639 reference to Bellingham in connection with George Lamberton also raises the possibility that Bellingham had been involved in the Rowley group’s flirtation with New Haven. Neither of

these references, however, excludes the possibility that Bellingham came to New England only in 1639, and that Lechford's "writings for Mr. Humfrey to Mr. Will[ia]m Bellingham" were to be sent to England.

The arrival year of Jeremiah Northend, who was William Bellingham's servant at the time of Bellingham's death, has often been placed at 1638, and on that basis one might argue for Bellingham's arrival that year too. But on closer inspection, this line of reasoning falls apart. First, there is no certainty that Northend traveled with Bellingham, or that Northend was Bellingham's servant as early as 1638. Second, the basis for claims that Jeremiah Northend migrated in 1638 is flimsy, no more than a note in the Rowley parish register saying that "Mr. Jerimiah Northend died Ap. 12 1702. He went with Mr. Rogers in to America when about 12 years old, & stayed there about 9 years" [DGS 100512186:3; EIHC 12:71]. (Northend returned from New England to Rowley, where he inherited property.) This note in the register was made retrospectively, at some point after 1733, which we know because another part of the note refers to Daniel Neal's *History of the Puritans*, volume 2, a book published that year. Even though we know that Rogers went to New England in 1638, we should not be too certain from this note that Northend did too. After all, this note was written a century later, and one can easily imagine someone from that vantage point saying that Northend "went with Mr. Rogers" even if he actually sailed the following year. Also, even if Northend did travel with Rogers in 1638, that does not exclude the possibility that Bellingham came in 1639.

Siblings and parentage: Our knowledge of the Bellingham siblings and their parentage has long left much to be desired. The 1882 article on the two Bellingham brothers' English origin and ancestry by Charles Hervey Townshend [NEHGR 36:381-386] is dated, and a new study using modern methods would be welcome. We have made

a start here, but there is surely more to be discovered.

William Bellingham's brother Richard was born about 1591-1592, as he was seventeen at matriculation at Oxford on 1 December 1609 and in his 81st year at death on 7 December 1672 [Foster 104; NEHGR 7:206]. The record of Richard's admission to study at Lincoln's Inn on 4 April 1612 shows that Richard was the son of William Bellingham of "Brombye Wood" (i.e., Brumby, part of Frodingham parish), Lincolnshire [*The Records of the Honorable Society of Lincoln's Inn*, vol. 1 (1896), 158; Foster 104] (see also NEHGR 36:381-382; *Lincolnshire Pedigrees*, vol. 1 (London 1902), 118).

Richard Bellingham was the brother of Sarah Bellingham, who married William Goodrick at Frodingham 9 November 1612 [BT at DGS 8071454]. This relationship is made clear in letters sent by the Goodrick children (in England) to Richard Bellingham in the 1660s, using the terms "niece" and "uncle" [NEHGR 7:186-187, transcribing letters in "the Mass. Archives"]. On William Goodrick and his career and family, see Charles Alfred Goodricke, *History of the Goodricke Family* (London 1885), 44-47; NEHGR 36:383-386.

The father, William Bellingham of Bromby, reportedly was aged 60 in 1615 and had his estate administered in 1620. Two visitation-style pedigrees trace his paternal ancestry, call him also of Manton, Lincolnshire, and note that he married Frances Amcotts of Aisthorpe, Lincolnshire. One notes that he had children Richard, Susan, Sarah, and Judith [*Pedigrees Recorded at the Herald's Visitations of the Counties of Cumberland and Westmorland ... in 1615, and ... in 1666*, ed. Joseph Foster (Carlisle 1891), 5; *Lincolnshire Pedigrees*, ed. A. R. Madison, vol. 1 (London 1902), 16, 118].

Three references in the National Archives catalog, which we have not examined, possibly relate to the father. A William Bellingham obtained a certificate in 39 Elizabeth I (i.e., 1596-1597) showing a current tax residence in Lincoln, Lincolnshire, and a previous tax residence

in the wapentake of Manley, Lincolnshire (which contains Bromby) [TNA E 115/55/9]. A William Bellingham obtained a certificate in 1609 showing a current tax residence in Lincoln, Lincolnshire, and a previous tax residence in the hundred of Haytor, Devon [TNA E 115/31/46]. In 1616 Richard Cogdale sued William Bellingham about property in “Bromley” (Bromby?), Lincolnshire [TNA C 5/598/130].

Hester Bellingham, who married William Hibbins at Boston, Lincolnshire, on 4 March 1632/3 [BostParR 2:163], was very probably a sister of Richard, William, and Sarah Bellingham. The key evidence for this relationship (not mentioned in most previous treatments of the family) is a 1639 statement by John Winthrop referring to “Mr. Hibbins, brother-in-law to the treasurer” of Massachusetts Bay Colony [WJ 1:385]. The treasurer was, at the time, Richard Bellingham [MBCR 1:264, 287]. “Mr. Hibbins” was WILLIAM HIBBINS {1638, Boston}, a Shropshire native who, nonetheless, appears to be identical with the Lincolnshire groom [GM 3:316]. Richard Bellingham held the office of “recorder” at Boston from 1625 to 1633 [BostHist 428; BostParR 2:137, 143], so it would not be surprising if he had a sister who married there at that time.

Ann Hibbins, William Hibbins’ second wife and widow, was executed for witchcraft in 1656 [MBCR 4:1:269]. James Savage mistakenly called Richard Bellingham her “brother” in a footnote to Winthrop’s journal [WJ 1:386], but Bellingham was the brother only of William Hibbins’s *first* wife. This error was unfortunately repeated [NEHGR 14:237; Savage 2:409] and lives on today, despite corrections in print [NEHGR 48:74; GM 1:248].

Susanna (Bellingham) Pormort, wife of PHILEMON PORMORT {1634, Boston, GM 5:491}, was *not* a sister of the immigrants William and Richard. This error (which unfortunately made its way into Philemon Pormort’s sketch in the *Great Migration* books [GM 5:493]) can be found as early as 1907 in Charles H. Purmort’s *Purmort Genealogy ...*

(Des Moines 1907), 40. The error resulted from conflating Susanna's father, William Bellingham of Alford, Lincolnshire, with William Bellingham of Bromby, the father of William and Richard. Susanna Bellingham was baptized at Alford in 1601. Her father William, a yeoman, married at Alford in 1600 and died there in 1606. His will and inventory make it clear that he was an entirely separate person, of much more modest means and probably much younger than his namesake at Bromby [NEHGR 68:79-80; Lincolnshire Archives INV/101/319]. We concur with Victor Channing Sanborn's view that "[Pormort's] Bellingham connection is interesting, although I do not believe that the Alford yeoman was closely if at all related to the more and aristocratic Puritan, Richard Bellingham" [NEHGR 68:80].

The disposition of his estate: Immediately after William Bellingham died, the terms of his as yet unproven will were known, and his brother Richard Bellingham was already unhappy with them. In 1662, "Andrew Hidden of Rowley" deposed that "he was sent to the Bay by Mr. Samuel Bellingham to ask his father, Mr. Richard Bellingham, to come to the burial of Mr. William Bellingham. A few days after, deponent desired Richard Bellingham, Esq., to pay for his journey and he replied 'Go to my son Samuel for he hath all that was my brother's and must pay all.' Mr. Samuel gave deponent a red waistcoat of Mr. William's" [EQC 2:397].

On 23 July 1650, Samuel (who would soon depart for England) sold the property he had inherited from William Bellingham to Joseph Jewett. Among the witnesses was "Lucy Bellingham" (Samuel's wife) [ILR 1:71]. Only after that, on 24 September, was William's will finally proved in court [ILR 1:83], perhaps because the parties realized that a recorded will would strengthen Samuel's title to the land. For good measure, Samuel's wife Lucy also executed a separate deed to Jewett on 23 October [ILR 1:77]. Samuel never returned to New England [Abandoning 49], and meanwhile Jewett sold some of the land to

others. In 1662, Richard Bellingham, assisted by his son John, filed suit against the various owners of the property, claiming title for himself. He lost both in the lower court and on appeal [EQC 2:360-362, 395-401; ILR 2:87-89, 124; Mass Arch 39:162-164; MBCR 4:2:48].

For this lawsuit, Richard Bellingham deposed that “Mr. William Bellingham about nineteen years ago falling sick,” Richard on “hastening thither found that he was both dead & buried.” Richard’s son Samuel Bellingham was then a “youth & under age.” Richard said that he “being the right owner” of William’s land “was possessed about eight years of the said estate,” which was rented out. He explained that “afterwards Joseph Jewet got possession of the farm,” but unfairly, as the price was “inconsiderable” and Jewett only did so by “meddling” in the affairs between father and son [EQC 2:400-401]. Richard’s opponents argued that William’s will was valid despite being undated and irregularly probated, that the land was Samuel’s to sell, and that the price Jewett paid was not unfair.

During this litigation, “Richard Longhorne” mentioned that “Mr. Richard Bellingham” had spoken with him “about a young gentleman, called, as he supposed, Samson Eaton, who was a kin to Mr. William Bellingham, now deceased. Mr. Richard seemed to be affected that the young gentleman was disappointed in the result of his coming over, the latter having expected to inherit a great portion of Mr. William’s estate, which he might have done had he arrived before the decease of Mr. William. However, said Mr. Richard, ‘my brother gave it to my son Samuel’ ” [EQC 2:362]. We are not aware of any attempts to trace “Samson Eaton.”

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