The Man – Balchen Connection.
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The aim of these notes is to present examples of the claims that have been made by the Man and Cumberland families that a relationship exists between the Balchen family of London, represented by Mary (Balchen) Man and her sister Elizabeth Cumberland, and that of Admiral Sir John Balchen.

These claims can be overt such as claiming in a marriage announcement that so-and-so is a niece of the admiral’s or covert such as using the armorial shield of the Admiral’s.

And yet in spite of all these claims it is safe to conclude that the admiral was NOT the uncle of Mary and Elizabeth and that at best one can say only that the Admiral and the Balchen sisters had some form of distant kinship relation but it is not possible to say what that was.

Mary Balchen was born in 1721 in London, the third daughter of Richard and Martha (Hitchcock) Balchen, and was baptized on 26 April 1721 at St. Mary Aldermary, London. She married John Man on 26 February 1746/7, two years after the admiral had drowned. Mary died in October 1798 at the home of her son James in Walworth Common, St Mary Newington, Surrey, but was buried on 23 October at St. Mary Matfellon, Whitechapel, Middlesex.

In the possession of the descendants of James Man (1755 - 1823), the youngest son of John and Mary Man, are many pieces of silver in the form of spoons, knives, plates, coffee pots, etc. Engraved on each of these items is a crest which is known as James Man's “ship crest” and which looks as follows:

![Ship Crest](image)

In other words, what we see here is a large anchor with a sail or banner across it and on the banner or sail are three small objects. Given the size of the crest on the silver it is not possible to know what exactly the three small objects are.

After Admiral Sir John Balchen’s unfortunate death on 4 Oct 1744 at the age of 77, his widow Susannah, aided by public donations, paid for a monument to be erected in her husband’s memory in the North Transept of Westminster Abbey (see below).
Sir Robert Balchen has written the following description of the Admiral’s monument:

“When I first saw this memorial in the 1960s, I was surprised to notice that, although on top of the coat of arms there was a knight's helmet (visor open and facing front), there was no crest on top of it. One day I took advantage of a wooden stepladder, which someone had left nearby, to investigate further. It was then obvious that there had been a crest at some previous time: clearly visible was the hole in which it would have fitted, and the stone was ragged at that point. I wrote to the Dean and Chapter about it, and their records revealed that the crest had been knocked off and damaged by the erection of scaffold poles for the Coronation of William IV in 1830! It took a little research to find that, appropriately enough, John Balchen's crest had been an anchor, and from its cross bar depended a blue banner bearing three fleurs de lis, probably symbolising three sea battles with the French fleet. In 1970 I paid for its reconstruction in memory of my father Leonard George Balchin who had died not long before, and for the repainting in the correct colours of the coat of arms below. Thus it appears in its true glory today. [see picture below]”

It is interesting that Robert Balchen expended so much time and energy on a person to whom he was related in a way that neither he nor any other member of the Balchen family has been able to properly describe. It seems that Mary and Elizabeth are not the only ones who have felt the need to lay claim to the admiral.

When one compares the crest of James Man with that of the Admiral’s they are virtually identical, each consisting of an anchor with a banner forming a sail, etc. This then raises a question as to whether James may have freely helped himself to the crest.
Another piece of evidence that has been used to claim a possible relationship between the London Balchens (Mary Man’s family) and the Admiral’s comes from notes made by Hubert Man (1876 – 1956). These notes were made while Hubert was looking at an old silver coffee pot, which had been in the Man family for some time.

But first some background: on 17 May 1777 Eleanor Ann Thompson married Henry Man (1748 - 1799). Henry was the eldest son of John Man and Mary Balchen, and hence James Man’s brother. James Thompson, the father of Eleanor Ann Thompson, after the death of his wife Ann Eastham, married Susannah Balchen in 1752. Susannah was the sister of Mary and Elizabeth Balchen. Hence James Thompson, the father-in-law of Henry Man, married Henry’s maternal aunt.

Here are Hubert’s notes:

“*A silver Coffee Pot*
Presumably it was inherited, but I first saw it in possession of Mrs. William Lionel Man (widow of Uncle Bill), thence it passed to his brother Edward Garnet Man, thence to the latter’s son myself Hubert William Man. The date was given by Rouge Croix of the Heralds College as 1755 but Stenhouse, art dealer of Folkestone, said that it is an old tankard beaten into an old coffee pot, the tankard dating from a date between 1650 & 1700. The coffee-pot bears a coat of arms added Stenhouse says when it was converted into a coffee-pot, the arms are;


The Thompson arms on the coffee pot are the same arms as those born, by the family of Eleanor Ann Thompson who married Henry Man.
For Balchen: Impaling: A crescent with a bordure of eight etoiles [stars] of six points.

Note that Stenhouse dates the coffee pot around 1750, which is close to the marriage date of James and Susannah. The Balchen half of the shield as described by Hubert Man bears an almost identical resemblance to the arms shown on the monument to Admiral Sir John Balchen in Westminster Abbey. In fact the Admiral’s arms as described by Sir Robert Balchen are:

“... vert a crescent within eight mullets in lozenge or (eight gold stars surrounding a crescent on a green background).”

Here they are side by side:

1. A crescent with a bordure of eight etoiles of six points. (Hubert Man)
2. ... vert a crescent within eight mullets in lozenge or (eight gold stars surrounding a crescent on a green background) (The Admiral’s memorial).

Hubert Man goes on to note that:

“The arms show that a male Thompson married a female Balchen”.

Since Hubert is looking at an engraved silver coffee pot there is no color so he cannot supply ‘vert’ for the Balchen background or ‘gold’ for the stars.

The Balchens were of humble origins and probably did not have a crest or shield until these were granted to the Admiral. It is therefore more than likely that the London Balchens were freely borrowing from what belonged to the Admiral.

A third and much more direct example of a claim of a relationship comes from Richard Dennison Cumberland’s memorial at Driffield church (see below). Richard’s mother was Eliza Balchen, Mary (Balchen) Man’s sister.

Beneath the alter of this chancel are deposited the remains of the Revd RICHARD DENISON CUMBERLAND L.L.D. Vicar of this parish, and Rector of Harhill adjoining: who during forty eight years administered its sacraments in commemoration of the sufferings and death of his redeemer, on whose intercession and merits alone were founded his hopes of Salvation. He died 31st January, 1825, aged 72.

His descent was from honourable ancestors, being grandson to JOHN CUMBERLAND, whose life and fortune were devoted to his country in producing that invaluable discovery the bending ship-timbers by steam.

By blood he was connected with Richard Cumberland a learned divine, author of several classical productions, a mild and pious priest, who without suspecting or soliciting promotion was called to the see of Peterborough, in 1668, solely for his eminent virtues.

On his mothers side he was lineally descended from the gallant Admiral BALCHEN, to whose memory having perished in the Victory, his country has dedicated a monument in Westminster Abby.
He married SUSANNA TIMBRELL, youngest daughter of ROBERT and REBECCA TIMBRELL, of Ewen in Wiltshire, by whom he had issue CHARLES DENISION (who died young and repose near his father) and SUSAN WILLET, wife of the Revd. JOHN JONES A.M. of Brecon in South Wales.

A fourth example comes from two notices placed in newspapers announcing the marriage of George Cumberland to Elizabeth Balchen. Unfortunately the printer made an error and named Elizabeth’s sister Ann as the wife of George. The first notice is from the Whitehall Evening Post or London Intelligencer and the second (I believe) from the Gentleman’s Magazine.
Note that Richard Dennison Cumberland’s memorial says his mother was a *direct* descendant from the Admiral (not possible) and the newspapers say she is a niece.