In a linked satire, "A Letter to a Friend. By the Lord R." (Harleian MS. 6913, p. 63), presumably written in the spring of 1680, the entertainment at "Ballock Hall" is referred to:

But above all I gladly would hear tell
Some passages of that most decent ball
Where Irish squire so cunningly contrived
At his own cost to have his lady swived.

Of course both satires are based on gossip, but there may well be some truth beneath the scurrility. Balls were very popular with the idle rich, and no doubt there were opportunities for hanky-panky at such affairs. Some "gallant meetings" seem to have been deliberately designed for ungallant couplings. For example, on January 19, 1677, a gossip wrote that Lord Purbeck had hired a house in St. James's Fields "for to make a ball to the masqueraders in . . . at which was none but the debauch[ed] men and lewd women, no civil [persons] being there but Lady Buckingham and Mrs. Middleton . . . in masks" (Rutland MS, II, 36).

The copy text is Douce MS. 357, f. 57v. In Portland MS. Pw V 43, the satire is called "Queen Street Ballad." In the Gyldenstolpe MS (p. 275) it is "A Ballad: to the Tune of an old Man with a Bedfull of Bones" (see Simpson, Broadside Ballad, p. 129), and it is so printed in POAS, 1716, IV, Pt. 2, p. 17, and The Poetical Works of Rochester, 1761, p. 224. For other MS versions see Harleian MS. 6912, p. 59, and Add. MS. 34, 362, f. 115. The author is unknown.

In a famous street near Whetstones Park,
Where there's commonly fiddlers so soon as 'tis dark,
There was a gallant meeting of many a fine spark,
With a fa-la-la-la.
ON SEVERAL WOMEN ABOUT TOWN

A matronly dame with a feathered fan,
Whose knight did formerly charge Tetuan,
Was thought most fit to lead up the van,
   With a fa-la-la-la.  

A decent person of riper years,
As by her want of teeth plainly appears,
For her wisdom was trusted to bring up the rear,
   With a fa-la-la-la.  

This feast was made for a lady of air,
Who from the dunghill was raised to a player,
And at last had the luck to bring Flatfoot an heir,
   With a fa-la-la-la.  

The lady of the house was an upright lass,
Invincible lewdness had adorned her face;
Her husband stood by and looked like an ass,
   With a fa-la-la-la.  

From two doors off as soon as 'twas night,
Came tripping along a damsel bright;
Had she kept better company she was wife for a knight,
   With a fa-la-la-la.  

Her partner, though more of a noble race,
Had his prick been no better than his wit or his face,
Had ne'er been so gracious with that pretty lass,
   With a fa-la-la-la.  

There was a bouncing widow with a patch on her nose,
Who loves fucking better the older she grows,
And has learned of the Tartar to frig with her toes,
   With a fa-la-la-la.  

She brought along with her a bonny young maid,
Who at sight of the gallants at first seemed afraid,
As if she had not much been used to the trade,
   With a fa-la-la-la.

A lusty young fellow they'd each of them got,
That trounced 'em and bounced 'em until they were hot,
Then took 'em aside to do I know not what,
   With a fa-la-la-la.

A Jew there was to make up the farce,
With a great bag of money and a swinging tarse,
Which was ready to thrust into everyone's arse,
   With a fa-la-la-la.

At first they all wondered what a devil he meant,
But he gave the women and men such content
That to his house the next day to dinner they went,
   With a fa-la-la-la.

Where after he had feasted this jolly crew,
Their innocent pastimes they did renew,
And were fucked up and down, both Christian and Jew,
   With a fa-la-la-la.

Take heed all you husbands and mothers all,
Keep your wives and your daughters from Ballock Hall,
Or 'tis forty to one but they get there a fall,
   With a fa-la-la-la.

1. *a famous street.* MS note, “Loftus House in Queen Street.” Queen Street, lined with the mansions of the wealthy, ran from Drury Lane to Lincolns Inn Fields. *Wheatstones Park*, a street north of Lincolns Inn Fields, was notorious for its brothels.

5. *A matronly dame.* MS note, “Sir Palmes Fairborne's wife.” Margery was the wife of Sir Palmes Fairborne, a soldier who had served for eighteen years at Tangier fighting the Moors and was at this time lieutenant governor of that military outpost. Fairborne had been in England on leave in the summer and winter of 1679-80, and had returned to Tangier in April, 1680. He was slain by a musket shot on October...
ON SEVERAL WOMEN ABOUT TOWN

20, 1680. Lady Fairborne was a friend of Nell Gwyn who in her will left her £50 “to buy a ring” (Peter Cunningham, The Story of Nell Gwyn, ed. John Drinkwater, 1927, p. 157).


9. a decent person. MS note, “Mrs. Jennings.” Frances Jennings, widow of Richard Jennings of Sandridge, and mother of Frances, Barbara, and Sarah (future Duchess of Marlborough), was famed as a Court bawd. She too was a friend of Nell Gwyn. In 1680 she was at least fifty years old.

13. a lady of air. MS note, “Mrs. Ellen Gwyn.” Airy, flighty Nell, the King’s cockney mistress, was much courted by those who sought preferment at Court.

15. Flatfoot. King Charles II. See “Flatfoot, the Gudgeon Taker,” POAS, Yale, II, 189. The heir was Charles Beaufort, Earl of Burbury and later Duke of St. Albans.

17. The lady of the house. MS note, “Loftus.” Lucy (Brydges), wife of Adam Loftus, “the Irish squire,” had an unsavory reputation. She died in France in April, 1681.

19. her husband. Adam Loftus, later Lord Lisburne; see Appendix, Loftus.


25. her partner. An MS note in Portland MS. PwV 38 identifies the gentleman as William, Lord Cavendish (see Gyldenstolpe, p. 356). In “The Ladies’ March,” 1681 (see below), is a quatrain:

Next in place comes Mrs. Porter,
But fools grow nice, not one would court her;
This short lived princess owed her fall
To the Principal of Ballock Hall.

Presumably Cavendish was the “Principal,” as if he were head of a school.

29. a bouncing widow. MS note, “Mrs. Brownlow.” Margaret (Brydges), widow of William Brownlow of Humby, Lincs., was Lucy Loftus’s half-sister. In “Satyr” (Harleian MS. 6913, p. 235) she is called “patch Brownlo,” probably because she wore a patch to cover a facial blemish.

31. the Tartar. John, “Tartar” Cox, who published The School of Venus, or The Ladies’ Delight; see below, note to line 78, “An Essay of Scandal.”

41. a Jew. Unidentified, but probably “The lustful buggering Jew” of “A Letter to a Friend. By the Lord. R.”

54. Ballock Hall. This indecent title for Loftus House is repeated at the end of “An Ironical Satire,” 1680 (POAS, Yale, II, 200). The poet concludes with the hope that “Mrs. Strafford” (Sarah Stratford, a famous bawd) will “yield to Ballock Hall.”