

Wills and Probate Records

Wills were not just for the wealthy. A surprising number of "ordinary" people (labourers, weavers etc) made wills.

The deciding factor was the desire to put ones affairs in order. Wealthy people who do not make a will leave an estate which needs to be administered.

So wills and administrations (admons) are found in the same places.

After 1858

Wills in England and Wales are now centralised under the auspices of the Principal Probate Registry (PPR) in London.

<https://probatesearch.service.gov.uk/#wills>

Some large towns and cities have Probate Registries of their own. Wills are public documents - anyone can look at anyone else's will - so there are indexes of recent wills in probate registries. In many cases the local registries have deposited their older indexes (up to 1970 say) in local record offices, so start looking there. The complete set for the whole country is available at the PPR.

Scottish wills were centralised in 1876. Wills, both after then and before, are at the Scottish Record Office, Edinburgh.

Before 1858

The will of a testator who owned moveable goods in a single archdeaconry had his will proved (ie validated) in the archdeaconry court. If more than one archdeaconry court was involved, the relevant court was the bishop's court. If two bishop's courts were involved the will went to the in a single archdeaconry had his will proved (ie validated) in the archdeaconry court. If more than one archdeaconry court was archbishop's court (Prerogative Court of Canterbury (PCC) or York (PCY). If both provinces were involved, PCC took priority.

After about 1750 almost all wills were proved at the PCC. Records at The National Archives, class number PROB11 (wills)

<https://discovery.nationalarchives.gov.uk/details/r/C12122>

PROB11 records are available over the internet for a fee.
PROB6 (admons).

<https://discovery.nationalarchives.gov.uk/details/r/C12117>

PCY records are at the Borthwick Institute in Yorkshire.

If you suspect a will was proved in the period 1796 to 1858 but cannot find it at the PCC, the Death Duty Indexes in TNA class number IR27 will identify the relevant probate court.

<https://discovery.nationalarchives.gov.uk/details/r/C9365>

Don't worry too much about probate jurisdictions. Simply look at the holdings of all possible record offices. Don't overlook the India Office Library for British subjects who died in India.

Findmypast indexes are found at

<https://search.findmypast.co.uk/search-world-Records/england-and-wales-published-wills-and-probate-indexes-1300-1858>

Ancestry

https://www.ancestry.co.uk/search/categories/clp_wills/

Administration And Tuition/Curation Bonds

The people administering the estate of someone who died without making a will, or those taking responsibility for bringing up an orphan, would give surety for their proper performance of these responsibilities. These documents give little more than names and occupations but can be useful for making links.

Inventories

Before probate was granted, death duties had to be paid, and before the duties could be assessed, an inventory had to be taken. The deceased's goods were listed and valued. Inventories give a fascinating insight into the furnishings of our ancestors' houses and furnishings, and the tools of their trades.

Reading old script

For help with reading early writing the

The National Archives has tutorials at <https://www.nationalarchives.gov.uk/palaeography/>

Cambridge University have an excellent site <https://www.english.cam.ac.uk/ceres/ehoc/>

BYU have also a comprehensive section on English records at <https://script.byu.edu/Pages/the-englishdocuments-pages/the-english-documents>

Latin

Tutorial on Latin (needs Flash player)

http://broadcast.lids.org/elearning/FHD/Community/en/FamilySearch/Handwriting/English/Lesson_2/player.html

Whitaker's Word Online gives a grammar context to the Latin <https://latin.ucant.org/>

For direct translation try

https://www.webtran.eu/latin_english_translator/

To look up **Genealogical Latin Terms** try

<http://www.genealogyintime.com/dictionarie/genealogy-latin-dictionary-pageA.html>

Usual Contents

The Will will include some or all of the following

1. The name, place of residence and occupation of testator
2. A statement of health
3. Statement of faith (especially in early wills)
4. A statement of mental capacity
5. Details of bequests - personal estate
6. Details of Real Estate
7. Provision for widow
8. Provision for children & other legatees
9. Instruction for burial
10. The testator's signature
11. Names of witnesses
12. Appointment of executor(s)
13. Date of will
14. Codicil
15. Probate Clause

LFHHS Chorley Branch

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Wills and Probate Records

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