



Wills

Wills After 1858

The records of the Probate Registry dating from 1858, that were formerly held at Somerset House, can now be consulted at:-

1st Avenue House
42-49 High Holborn
London WC1V 6NP

Tel: 020 7947 7000

Website: www.courtservice.gov.uk/using_courts/wills_probate/index.htm

Wills Before 1858

The jurisdiction for granting probate for a will was dictated either by where the deceased owned property or where they died. There are a large number of probate jurisdictions before 1858 (for details see the bibliography at the end of this leaflet). The records of the largest jurisdiction, the Prerogative Court of Canterbury, are held at:-

The National Archives (formerly the Public Record Office)
Ruskin Avenue
Kew, Richmond
London TW9 4DU

Tel: 020 8392 5200

Website: www.pro.gov.uk

Those for the Archdeaconry of Middlesex are at:

London Metropolitan Archives
40 Northampton Road
London EC1R 0HB

Tel: 020-7332 3822

Website: www.cityoflondon.gov.uk/lma

Those for the Commissary Court of London are at:

Guildhall Library
Aldermanbury
London EC2P 2EJ

Tel: 020-7332 1863/2

Website via the Corporation of London: www.cityoflondon.gov.uk

Those for the Peculiar of the Dean and Chapter of Westminster are at:

City of Westminster Archives Centre

Wills held at City of Westminster Archives, 1504-1829

There are two collections of wills, both available on microfilm. Individual wills are indexed in the Personal Name card index in the Searchroom.

Accession 120**Probate records of the Consistory Court of the Royal Peculiar of the Dean and Chapter of Westminster, 1504-1829**

These records were sent from Westminster Abbey to the Probate Registry at Somerset House in 1860 by Act of Parliament. At Somerset House a Calendar of the records was drawn up by G H Rodman and published in 1864. This Calendar still provides the main finding aid to the collection and will continue to do so until all the information it contains is entered onto the Wills Database. The will registers, filed wills and Act Books were deposited at City of Westminster Archives in January 1956, and the remaining probate records including the inventories were sent to the Guildhall Library (from where they were returned to the Abbey in 1981).

Jurisdiction of the Dean and Chapter of Westminster

The jurisdiction of the Abbot of Westminster included:-

- The Precincts of Westminster Abbey (1504-1829)
- St Margaret (1504-1829)
- St John the Evangelist, Smith Square (1728-1829)
- Paddington (until c1669)
- St Martin-in-the-Fields (until c1669)
- St Anne and St Agnes (until c1669)
- St Leonard, Foster Lane (until c1669)
- St Martin-le-Grand (until 1829)
- St Mary Maldon, Essex (until 1829)
- Creshall (Crishall), Essex (until c1540)
- Great Easter, Essex (until c1540)
- Newport, Essex (until c1540)

Many of the wills do not give details of the parish, and others simply state London or Westminster.

Calendar

The calendar is arranged alphabetically by first letter of the surname, and then within that chronologically starting with wills entered in registers, then filed wills, then administrations entered in registers and finally administrations entered in Act Books.

Accession 120 (continued)**Will registers**

There are six will registers named after the surname of the first person entered in each register:-

Wyks (1504-1559)
Bracy (1528-1566)
Elsam (1566-1610)
Camden (1622-1636)
Todd (1636-1642)
Smith (1660-1668)

The name of the register and the relevant folio number are given in the calendar. From 1566 wills entered in the will registers are also recorded in the Act Books, and from that date the appropriate Act Book number and Act Book folio number are also supplied in the calendar.

Filed wills

There are 2,672 numbered filed wills dating from 1591 to 1829. The main collection of filed wills relating to St Mary, Maldon, Essex is numbered 70-107. Each filed will is also entered in an Act Book, and the appropriate Act Book number and Act Book folio number are also given in the calendar.

Administrations and other probate records entered in will registers

From 1504 to 1565 administrations are entered in the will registers and the name of the appropriate will register and folio number are given in the calendar.

Administrations and other probate records entered in Act Books

From 1566 to 1807 administrations are entered in the Act Books and the appropriate Act Book number and folio number are given in the calendar.

Inventories

The inventories that are recorded in the Wills Calendar have not all survived for the period covered by Act Books numbered 5 to 12. We only have microfilm copies of the inventories, the originals of which are still held at:-

Westminster Abbey Muniment Room and Library
London
SW1P 3PA
Tel: 020-7222 5152 x 228

Other testamentary records still held at the Abbey include accounts of administrators 1607-1638, letters of request 1719-1777, returned letters of request 1748-1763, renunciations of administrations 1718-1719, papers concerning administrations 1717-1751, and other probate papers 1696-1748.

Accession 1144**Wills of the Consistory Court of the Royal Peculiar
of the Dean and Chapter of Westminster, 1568-1715**

This additional collection of 645 wills was purchased from Winifred A Myers (Autographs) Limited, of 91 St Martin's Lane, in May 1981. All these wills have been entered onto the Wills Database, and a bound printout is available in the Searchroom (arranged both by name and date).

BIBLIOGRAPHY

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