

Wills and their whereabouts 2009 England (& Wales). Hyde Park Family History Centre

INFORMATION	WHO HOLDS THESE RECORDS?	THAT SOUNDS GREAT. . . BUT HOW CAN I GET MY MITTS ON THEM?!	Indexes Copy wills	AT LDS HYDE PARK?
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Estate proved 1858-date

**NEW SYSTEM**  
Grants of Probate, Admon were made at secular probate registries  
1) Principal Probate Registry (London)  
2) District Probate Registries e.g. Exeter, Bodmin, Bristol.  
Indexes alone are v useful

All grants after 1858 are the responsibility of the Court of Probate  
Visit: Central court in London (High Holborn) or district registries  
Postal ordering service: York

Visit: large probate registries to view 'calendars' in book form by year then by last name. London has a crude electronic index 1920-date.  
Visit: larger libraries, LDS FH centres, record offices, TNA Kew to view calendars in microfilm/fiche form  
Online: Ancestry have indexed 1861-1940 but see also one-name study sites

By post: from York for £5  
In person: order at any probate registry for £5. A very few district probate registries could provide copies of original local wills for 25p/page

LDS have microfilmed copies of the actual wills for period 1858-1925 in two series:  
1) Those issued by Principal Probate Registry (London) - available at Hyde Park  
2) Those issued by district probate registries - available at Hyde Park  
LDS also have microfilms of the calendar indexes which provide the month of probate

**OLD CHURCH-BASED SYSTEM**

Estate proved 1066-1857

Grants of Probate, Admon were made at church courts in order of seniority - firstly the Archbishops' Courts  
1) PCC (Canterbury), administered from London  
2) PCY (York); then  
3) The district church courts e.g. Lancaster, Taunton, ACC

National, county and local public archives have assumed responsibility for these documents:  
1) TNA, Kew  
2) The Borthwick Institute, York  
3) County and local archives

1) PCC: see Documents Online. Indexes free to all, well worth checking first.  
2) PCY: indexed on origins.net but a charge is made  
3) Many county archives have catalogues of their wills online. Or the supplementary sources could help you find the will

Check any indexes first to find the reference number:  
1) Images normally £3.50/will from documentsonline.gov.uk.  
2) Copies can be ordered on origins.net or from Borthwick Institute for ££  
3) You can visit the county archives, or order by post

1) PCC Images free at LDS.  
2) PCY. LDS have microfilms of the indexes and the original wills. Consult the indexes first, then ask staff how to find the will on microfilm  
3) District church courts. Records for some courts e.g. AC Cornwall have been filmed

**Supplementary sources for your convenience**  
**ESTATE DUTY REGISTERS also known as DEATH DUTY REGISTERS or IR26 series**

Will/admon proved 1796-1857

The Tax Office recorded legacies for tax purposes. EDRs may flesh out a will. The series serves as proxy for an online index of grants of probate/admon, proving that a will existed or alerting you to a will you didn't know about.

TNA Kew has these records, the indexes are known as IR27 and the registers themselves are IR26.

1796-1811: There's a free electronic index for at Documents Online access to the scanned registers (££)

1796-1811: after finding your entry in the free indexes, you can view a scanned image of the registers for £3.50  
1796-1857: microfilms at TNA Kew and through LDS

1796-1811: view scanned registers at Documents Online, free at LDS Hyde Park  
1812-1857: order reels for £7.50+ at LDS or view at TNA Kew or East Yorks FHS

Will/admon proved 1858-1903

The indexes provide limited info, the executor's name but not the month of probate, req'd to access LDS copy wills

**WHOLE PERIOD:**  
Findmypast.com has online images of these indexes  
Microfilm copies are at TNA Kew and in LDS catalogue

You could view the will (see above), or view the IR26 itself at TNA Kew in book form

**WHOLE PERIOD:**  
Findmypast.com is free at LDS Hyde Park, so you can view indexes

Information you might get:  
WILL: I declare that if my child leaves this Kingdom her legacy be void. EDR: legacy void. WILL: I bequeath to the heirs of my brother £100. EDR: could name those heirs

Tip: Locate relative's date of death from National Burial Index, gravestone, Freebmd, best guess (e.g. John Jones 1861-1871), parish registers, cemetery burial record, newspaper article