



Wales Probate Records

Mark E. Gardner, AG[®]

British Research Specialist – Family History Library

gardnerme@familysearch.org

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Probate Records are valuable to those who are recipients of the estate, lawyers, families, neighbors, friends, taking care of the poor, religions and also to Genealogists, Family Historians and those who work online. This class is to show what probate records can be located online from Wales and England and how to access these as indexes and some images.

Probate records are those created by a court process to authorize the distribution of the property of a deceased person to their heirs.

What is the Value of Probate Records?

- Help determine a time and place of death
- Name family members
- Name relatives
- Name friends
- Name business associates
- Identify properties
- Help track transfer of property

History of Grants of Probate in England and Wales

- Ecclesiastical (Church) Courts established
- Later Civil Courts 1858
- Records mostly exist after 1400 (some aged and from WWII bombing destroyed)

Post-1857 Probate Records

After 1857, most wills and administrations were recorded by the Principal Probate Registry and can be obtained through their offices. There were two jurisdictions, the Principal Court and the District Courts. You can obtain district court wills through district courts and at the Principal Probate Registry. The Family History Library has only the registered wills 1858-1925 and indexes to the records 1858-1957 on microfilm. Record offices in England have indexes and records. Indexes 1858-1966 are available online at www.ancestry.co.uk. All these documents up to the present can be obtained through the Principal Probate Registry by mail or in person.

There can be other places where wills were proved for those who served in the military, as seafaring people, and in the East India Company as well as other areas of the British Isles and world.

Pre-1858 Probate Jurisdictions

An estate was probated by the Church of England in one of over 300 ecclesiastical courts. These courts were not equal in importance and jurisdiction. A will was usually probated where the testator owned land. If the testator owned land in more than one jurisdiction, the will was probated in a higher court. You may have to search more than one court in looking for your ancestor's will. The court with the highest jurisdiction was the Prerogative Court of Canterbury. If your ancestor lived overseas at the time of his or her death, the probate would have been handled by the Prerogative Court of Canterbury.

Exceptions to the ecclesiastical jurisdictions were the peculiar courts. These courts consisted of "parishes situated in one archdeaconry or diocese but subject to the jurisdiction of another archdeacon or bishop, some other religious or lay authority or even a local lord of the manor." (*Ancestral Trails*, Mark D. Herber, p. 184)

Handwriting or Paleography

- Probate records can be wonderful to read and in some places the handwriting can be difficult to read
- Probate records can be partially written in Latin
- There may be legal language
- Probate records can follow a standard format and might be easier to understand if the format is known
- Administrations quite often have a form that is filled in

Definitions of Probate Terms

- Testator/Testatrix: The person who made a will.
- Intestate: A person who died without a will.
- Executor/Executrix: The person named in a will by a testator who is authorized to administer the terms of the will.
- Codicil: An addition to a will made after the first will was written and signed.
- Administration (or Admon): Short for letters of administration, a grant to the next-of-kin (or another) who applied to administer the property of an intestate.
- Act Book: A day-by-day account of the official grants of probate proceedings.
- Inventory: A list of a testator's personal and household goods, with their appraised value.
- Noncupative Will: A will made orally by the testator
- Probate: The process of proving a will and also the evidence that a will has been accepted by the court and that the executor has been granted permission to carry out the terms of the will.
- Will: A written statement in which a person regulates the disposal of property and rights after his/her death.
- Inventory: A list of personal and household goods left by the deceased together with their appraised value.

Websites for Welsh Probate Records

www.gov.uk

This is a brand new Index listing and the Probate Records can be ordered online. These are for all probate records proved 1858-2014 in the Principal Probate Registry. There are also Soldiers wills 1850-1986 indexed with most probate listed are years around WWI and WWII. All the records indexed can be purchased for 10 pounds. The document is a registered copy and can be downloaded: 10 working days.

www.llgc.org.uk

The National Library of Wales has put up as indexed and imaged probate records pre-1858 for most of the Wales Courts and Hawarden Peculiar Court. Index is very useful and information is good.

www.ancestry.com

This subscription website has some great indexes and images to probate in England and Wales.

Index: Principal Probate Registry/National Probate Calendar 1858-1966 check for people who died before 1858.

Index and images: Prerogative Court of Canterbury pre-1858 Wills only to PROB 11.

www.findmypast.co.uk

Indexes and images to indexes: Go to A-Z Listing and put in the word Duty. This will bring up the Estate Duty Death References Index. This leads to Taxed Probate records. Not all Probate records were taxed and not all show up in this index. It is worth looking at.

www.thegenealogist.co.uk

Index and images: All pre-1858 PCC Prerogative Court of Canterbury wills.

www.nationalarchives.gov.uk

Index and images: Prerogative Court of Canterbury pre-1858 wills only downloadable for a fee.

Index: Seamen's Wills pre-1886, Death Duty Registers 1796-1811

Discovery Catalog PROB series incomplete also access of County Record Office Probate record Information.

www.familysearch.org

This website provides access to abstracts of pre-1858 probate records and references to microfilm in the Family History Library which film numbers can be accessed through the catalog on the website.

More Online Probate Helps

- www.genuki.org.uk: A great website for information on many British Sources including probate for Wales. Look under county for index .
- wiki.familysearch.org: A way to learn about Welsh Probate records and access information online and through the Family History Library. The online listing which is also listed above and below can be found under England and Wales probate records. Each county of England with probate records and online probate indexes is listed in the wiki.