



LINCOLNSHIRE COUNTY COUNCIL
Education and Cultural Services - Heritage

LINCOLNSHIRE ARCHIVES
GUIDE TO SOURCES



WILLS, ADMINISTRATIONS AND INVENTORIES

For historical and administrative reasons, wills and other probate records are not found in a single series of records. This guide is intended to describe the main series of finding aids for probate records relating to Lincolnshire.

Before 1858

Until 1858 probate matters were the responsibility of ecclesiastical courts. In Lincolnshire, from the sixteenth century, wills were proved by a number of separate courts within the diocese, mostly at an Archdeaconry level. Most of Lincolnshire (the Archdeaconry of Lincoln) was under the jurisdiction of the bishop's Lincoln Consistory Court (**LCC**), and the north west of the county was under the jurisdiction of the Archdeaconry of Stow. There were also certain parishes, called Peculiars (shown on the Society of Genealogists' coloured Parish Maps of Lincolnshire), which were exempt from the Diocesan authority, and administered by the Dean and Chapter of Lincoln Cathedral or by the courts of individual Prebends. Each of these probate jurisdictions created separate series of records now held at Lincolnshire Archives. There are also a number of series of stray documents.

England and Wales were covered by two higher Archbishops' Courts: the Prerogative Court of Canterbury (**PCC**); and the Prerogative Court of York (**PCY**). These courts generally dealt with the probate matters of the landed gentry and persons with property in more than one diocese. Lincolnshire lay in the province of Canterbury and the records of the **PCC** are now held at the National Archives, Kew. However, a few Lincolnshire people appear among the records of the **PCY**, now held at the Borthwick Institute, York.

Wills: Wills are legal documents, produced and witnessed in order to determine the disposal of a person's possessions after death. After the death the will was taken to the relevant court to be proved. Wills were recorded in the Bishops Registers and records of the Dean and Chapter until the sixteenth century. From the sixteenth century onwards they appear among the records of the various ecclesiastical courts described above.

Administrations (Admons): When the deceased left money or property, but no will, their next-of-kin could be granted 'Letters of Administration'. This allowed them to wind-up the estate of the deceased. Admons could take a while to process, so check for a few years after the death. Admons were dealt with by the same courts as wills. They can also occur if a will was disputed.

Inventories: Probate valuation, until the 1890s, reflected the personal estate and money of the testator; it did not represent the value of real estate, houses or buildings. These inventories were also dealt with by the same courts.

Most original documents prior to 1858 are available to view in the Lincolnshire Archives. Reproductions can be obtained on request.

After 1858

In 1858 probate functions were taken from the ecclesiastical courts. A centralised Principal Probate Registry was established in London, together with a series of District Probate Registries. Volumes of office copy wills dated between 1858 and 1941, produced by the Lincoln Probate Sub-Registry, can be viewed at Lincolnshire Archives but not copied. Copies of post-1858 wills must be ordered from The Postal Searches and Copies Department, The Probate Registry, 1st Floor, Castle Chambers, Clifford Street, York YO1 9RG.

Finding aids for Lincolnshire Wills, Admons and Inventories

Printed Indexes (Shelved on the catalogue shelves near the Staff counter)

- Foster, C.W. - *Calendar of Lincoln Wills vol I, 1320-1600* (London: British Record Society Index Library vol XXVIII, 1902) [Contains Indexes of wills in the Bishops' Registers, 1320-1547, miscellaneous "Aylmer Wills", 1489-1588, and LCC Wills, 1506-1600.]
- Foster, C.W. - *Calendar of Lincoln Wills vol II, Consistory Court Wills, 1601-1652* (London: British Record Society Index Library vol XLI, 1910)
- Haines, Grace & Foster, C.W. - *Index of Lincoln Consistory Court Wills and Inventories 1660-1700* (London: British Records Society Index Library vol 101, 1991)
- Foster, C.W. - *Calendar of Administrations in the Consistory Court of Lincoln 1540-1659* (London: British Record Society Index Library vol LII, 1921, and Horncastle: Lincoln Record Society vol 16 for 1918, 1921)
- Foster, C.W. - *Calendars of Wills and Administrations at Lincoln vol IV (Archdeaconry of Stow; Peculiar Courts; and Miscellaneous Courts)* (London: British Record Society Index Library vol LVII, 1930) [Contains indexes of: Stow wills, probates & admons, 1530-1699; Dean & Chapter wills & admons, 1534-1834; Wills etc. of Various Peculiars within the Diocese, 1508-1834; Miscellaneous wills, probates & admons, bundles A-H; and Sundry Wills and Administrations in the Lincoln Diocesan Registry, 1508-1608. There is a unitary index of surnames for the smaller indexes.]

(Shelved on low level shelving, near the microfiche drawers)

- Spufford, Peter - *Index to the Probate accounts of England & Wales* (London: British Record Society vols 112 & 113, 1999)
- *Lincolnshire Wills & Administrations in the Prerogative and Exchequer Courts of York, May 1731 to January 1858, extracted from the probate indexes in the Borthwick Institute, York, for the Lincolnshire Family History Society* [Blue folder]
- Printed indexes of PCC Wills and Admons, 1383-1700 and 1750-1800, in numerous volumes published mainly by the British Record Society and the Society of Genealogists
- Printed indexes of Wills and Admons for other dioceses, in numerous volumes, mainly published by the British Record Society [some of these are now stored in the Repository].

Printed Abstracts

- Gibbons, Alfred - *Early Lincoln Wills: an Abstract of all the Wills & Administrations recorded in the Episcopal Registers of the Old Diocese of Lincoln ... 1282-1547* (Lincoln: 1888)
- Maddison, A.R. - *Lincolnshire Wills First Series A.D. 1500-1600* (Lincoln: 1888)
- Maddison, A.R. - *Lincolnshire Wills Second Series A.D. 1600-1617* (Lincoln: 1891)
- Foster, C.W. - *Lincoln Wills Registered in the District Probate Registry at Lincoln Vol I A.D. 1271 to A.D. 1526* (Lincoln: Lincoln Record Society vol 5 for 1912, 1914)
- Foster, C.W. - *Lincoln Wills Registered in the District Probate Registry at Lincoln Vol II, A.D. 1505 to May, 1530* (Horncastle: Lincoln Record Society vol 10 for 1914, 1918)
- Foster, C.W. - *Lincoln Wills Registered in the District Probate Registry at Lincoln Vol III A.D. 1530 to 1532* (London: Lincoln Record Society vol 24 for 1927, 1930)
- Hickman, David - *Lincoln Wills 1532-1534* (Lincoln Record Society vol 89, 2001)
- Johnston, J.A. - *Probate Inventories of Lincoln Citizens 1661-1714* (Lincoln Record Society vol 80 for 1989, 1991)
- Foster, C.W. - "Lincolnshire Wills proved in the Prerogative Court of Canterbury, 1384-1468" and "Lincolnshire Wills proved in the Prerogative Court of Canterbury, 1471-1490", *Associated Architectural Societies' Reports and Papers* vol 41, pp 61-114 and 179-218 (Lincoln, 1935)
- Foster, C.W. - *Abstracts of Lincoln Wills proved in the Prerogative Court of Canterbury* (Supplement to *Lincolnshire Notes & Queries*) [Entries cover 1639-1655]

Typescript and manuscript Lists and Indexes

(Folders shelved near Staff counter)

- **LCC Wills** 1700-1750 4 vols
1751-1800 4 vols
1801-1858 ❖ 3 vols [entries arranged in decades]
- **LCC Admons** 1724-1744 3 vols [2 vols for 1638-1699 & 1730-1810 are fragile and stored behind staff counter]
1800-1857 ❖ 5 vols
- **Stow Wills** 1700-1834 ❖ 1 vol
- **Stow Admons** 1700-1834 ❖ 1 vol
- **Dean & Chapter Wills & Probates from the Chapter Act Books**
1305-1534 ❖ 1 vol
- **Miscellaneous Wills J-Q** 1513-1862 ❖ 3 vols, with 1 vol unitary index.
[Bundles A-H indexed in Foster, C.W. *Calendars of Wills and Administrations at Lincoln IV*]
- **Wills from Peterborough** Additional Wills, Inventories and Admons from the Prebends of Empingham (Rutland) & Nassington (Northamptonshire) 1 vol
 2 EMPINGHAM 1745-1835 ❖
 2 NASSINGTON 1748-1844 ❖
- **Wills Other Counties** Before 1653 1 vol
1701-1800 1 vol
- **LCC Inventories** 1504-1760 20 vols
- **LCC Inventories** 1760-1831 }
• **Stow Inventories** 1539-1853 } 1 vol
• **Dean & Chapter Inventories** 1581-1739 }
- **Inventories with Admons: LCC** 1697-1851 }
 Stow 1700-1812 } 3 vols
- **Ad/Ac (Administration Accounts)** 1567-1853 4 vols

Computer Indexes (search room)

- **CALM Catalogue** This currently contains the indexes above which are marked with the symbol ❖, together with **WILLS**, 1858-1910. **LCC Admons**, 1660-1799 will be added shortly.
- **Lincolnshire Archives Wills Index** 1700-c.1910
(This contains the index for post-1858 wills and also duplicates some of the information in the typescript folders. It is useful for keyword & occupation searches.)
- **Probate Index** (This contains the contents of the obsolete CD-ROM *Lincolnshire Archives, index of Wills 1700-1900*)
- **Inventories Index** (This duplicates some of the information in the folders, and is useful for place-name & occupation searches.)

Card indexes

- **Dean and Chapter Wills** Wills, 1335-1534
- **Diocesan Records: Parishes** Many Wills, Admons & Inventories are indexed by place.
- **Personal Names** Miscellaneous drafts, copies etc.
- **Subjects** Various Wills, Admons & Inventories (arranged by occupation)
- **Transcripts, Abstracts, Lists etc.** Various Wills, Admons & Inventories

Microfiche

- **National Probate Calendars** 1858-1943
- **PCC Wills & Admons Indexes** 1701-1749 and 1853-1857
- **Wills Beneficiary Index** (Produced by the Lincolnshire Family History Society)

Useful publications available in the Search Room

- Gibson, Jeremy S.W. - *Wills and Where to Find Them* (British Record Society, 1974)
- Gibson, Jeremy S.W. - *Probate Jurisdictions: Where to Look for Wills* 3rd edition (Solihull: Federation of Family History Societies, 1985)
- Thornton, Richard - *Genealogical Sources in Lincolnshire* 3rd edition (Lincolnshire Family History Society, 2002)
- Johnston, J.A. - *Probate Inventories* (Lincolnshire Family History Society Magazine vol 8 no. 2, pp 84-85, 1997)
- Milward, Rosemary - *A Glossary of Household, Farming & Trade Terms from Probate Inventories* 3rd edition (Chesterfield: Derbyshire Record Society, 1986)
- Public Record Office - *Prerogative Court of Canterbury: Wills & other Probate Records* Public Record Office Readers Guide No. 15)
- Bank of England - *Equivalent Contemporary Values of the Pound: A Historical Series 1270-2000* (London: Bank of England, 2000)

Glossary of some useful terms

- Administrator** : The person authorised to administer an estate.
Bona Notabilia : When goods involved are valued at £5, or more.
Codicil : A signed and witnessed addition to a will.
Executor (-trix) : Person(s) appointed by Testator, to carry out the intentions of the will.
Inventory : (Probate inventory) A list of personal & household goods & their values.
Nuncupative : A Will that is dictated, instead of written by the Testator.
Personalty : Personal belongings, goods etc.
Probate Act : Passed by Probate Court, allowing executors to proceed with carrying out provisions of the will.
Proved : When Probate is granted.
Relict : The Widow
Supervisor : (Overseer) A person appointed by the testator to supervise the executors.
Testator : The person making the Will.
Testament : Covers personal estate; belongings, debts etc.
Will : Covers real estate; Property, land etc.

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