



## Wills in the Archives and Heritage Service of Birmingham Central Library.

Access to wills depends on when and where probate was granted. Before January 1858 wills were proved in the ecclesiastical courts and the place of probate is determined by where the property/goods of the deceased were located. From January 1858 probate has been granted in the civil probate courts.

### FAQs.

#### **Q. What is the difference between a will and a letter of administration?**

A. **Will** - a written statement in which a person regulates the disposal of property and rights after their death

**Administration** - a grant giving the right to administer the estate of someone who has died without leaving a valid will (intestate).

#### **Q. How do I find a pre 1858 will?**

A. As these were proved in the ecclesiastical courts in most cases you will find copies deposited at the Diocesan Record Office. Most wills for Birmingham are at Lichfield Record Office although some are at Worcester Record Office. Some wills were proved at the Prerogative Court of Canterbury rather than the local ecclesiastical courts. These wills are available online at the National Archives Documents Online see: <http://www.nationalarchives.gov.uk/documentsonline> The surname index is free to use but payment is required to download a copy of the document.

#### **Q. How do I find a post 1858 will?**

A. The National Probate Calendar from 1858 provides a short summary of the will and any letters of administration (admons) which will enable you to purchase a full copy.

Birmingham District Probate Registry currently holds the National Probate Calendar on microfiche from 1974-1996. They also have a searchable database ("will finder") covering 1921 to the present. The database is available on a single computer terminal and can be accessed during opening hours (there is no booking available for this.)

For details of Birmingham District Probate Registry see:

<http://www.hmcourts-service.gov.uk/HMCSCourtFinder> and enter the search terms "Birmingham Probate Registry".

Archives and Heritage has copies of the Prerogative Court of Canterbury calendars from 1853 to 1857 and all of the National Probate Calendars for England and Wales from 1858 to 1998. We also hold a set of full transcribed copies (not just an index) of wills proven in the years 1858-1941 at the Birmingham District Probate Registry, but this does not include Letters of Administration. The National Index of Wills and Letters of Administration (Probate Calendars) from 1861-1941 is also available on [www.ancestry.co.uk](http://www.ancestry.co.uk) There is free access to the library edition of the ancestry website in all Birmingham libraries.

**Q. How do I purchase a copy of a will or letters of administration?**

A. Copies can be ordered by post or by visiting:

The Birmingham District Probate Registry  
The Priory Courts  
Bull Street  
Birmingham  
B4 6DU

They can supply copies of wills/letters of administration in respect of any of the Probate Registries in England and Wales.

Copies can also be obtained from the postal service of the Probate Service at York or any Probate Registry.

Contact details for York are:

Postal Searches and Copies Department  
C/o York Probate Sub Registry  
1st Floor, Castle Chambers  
Clifford Street  
York  
YO1 9RG

**Q. What do I need to obtain a will?**

A. The information required is:

Full names of the Deceased  
Date of Death  
Date of Probate/Administration  
Place of probate

**Q. How much does a will cost?**

A. The cost of ordering a will from Birmingham Probate Registry is £6.00 and cheques/postal orders should be made payable to HMTCS.