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Title

Wills from England and Ireland, and why you should use them. Finding and reading wills, and what they contain.

Summary

Wills can be an invaluable resource for family historians. They can help piece together family groups and can give an insight into a person's wealth and lifestyle. The presentation will help you understand where to search for these wills, and what they might contain.

Abstract

This presentation will focus on English wills from the 16th century through to the 20th century. It shows how to familiarise yourself with old handwriting by taking advantage of the formulaic nature of wills, and will show some of the types of bequests they contain. It will illustrate how wills can be used to piece together families, and can help to find the marriage of a daughter. The wills of childless people are particularly valuable in this regard as they often include bequests to various nieces and nephews, as well as brothers and sisters. All wills since 1858 have been centrally proven, but before this date they may have been proved in a Diocesan Court, an Archdeaconry Court, a Consistory Court, a Prerogative Court or by a Peculiar Court, and this presentation will give some guidance as to how to find where the will was proved.

Audience

Intermediate