

**INDEX TO WILLS PROVED AND  
ADMINISTRATIONS GRANTED  
IN THE COURT OF THE  
ARCHDEACON OF BERKS, 1508  
TO 1652**

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1508 to 1652 by W. P. W. Phillimore

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**W. P. W. PHILLIMORE**

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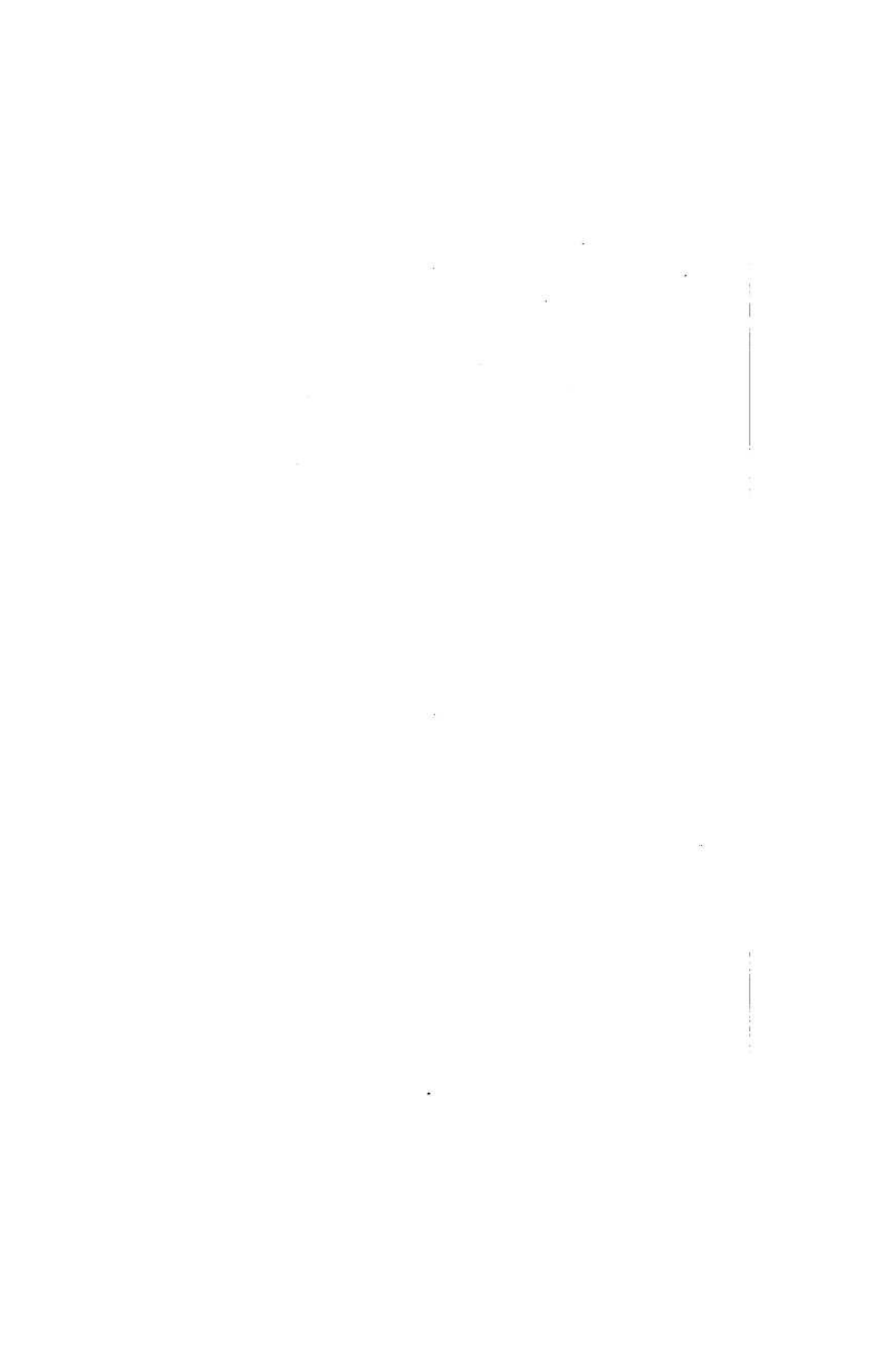
WILLS AND ADMINISTRATIONS

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ARCHDEACONRY OF BERKS

1508 TO 1652

O. H. S.  
VOL. XXIII



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COURT OF THE ARCHDEACON OF BERKS  
1508 TO 1652

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## P R E F A C E.



BERKSHIRE anciently formed a part of the diocese of Salisbury, and the bishops of that see consequently had cognizance, though not exclusively, over the testamentary affairs of persons dying within the limits of this county. Throughout the country the wills of persons of wealth and importance were most commonly proved in the Prerogative Courts, and consequently for Berkshire search must also be made in the records of the Prerogative Court of Canterbury, the P. C. C., as it is familiarly known to genealogists. These are now at Somerset House, and a new calendar of them, compiled by Mr. Challenor Smith, is being printed by the British Record Society. The first volume, arranged lexicographically, will include the period from 1383 to 1558. A good many of the wills of Berkshire people were proved in the Consistory Court of the Bishop of Salisbury, but the bulk of the wills of middle-class testators were recorded in the Court of the Archdeacon of Berks, and the present volume contains a lexicographical list of all the wills and administrations in this Court prior to 1653 which are known to be still extant. Before the year 1653 search then for Berkshire wills or administrations must be made in either—

- (1) The Prerogative Court of Canterbury,
- (2) The Consistory Court of the Bishop of Salisbury,
- (3) The Court of the Archdeacon of Berks.

To these must be added, for particular parishes,—

- (4) The Prebendal Court of Faringdon,
- (5) The Prebendal Court of Langford Ecclesia,
- (6) The Peculiar Court of the Dean of Sarum,
- (7) The Peculiar Court of the Dean and Canons of Windsor.

The records of these seven Courts are now at Somerset House. Some few of the wills of Berkshire testators which were proved in the Prerogative Court of Canterbury, or in the Consistory



Court of Sarum, were re-registered in the books of the Archdeacon of Berks, and will be met with accordingly in the present volume.

From 1653 to 1660, during which period all testamentary matters were dealt with by the Probate Judges appointed under the Commonwealth administration, search must be made solely in the records of the Prerogative Court of Canterbury.

Afterwards, in 1660, the old system of concurrent jurisdictions was reverted to, and this lasted until 1858, when the Probate Court was constituted and the old Ecclesiastical and Manorial Courts ceased to exercise jurisdiction in matters testamentary. Since then, and at the present time, the wills and administrations of Berkshire people have been recorded either in the district Registry at Oxford or in the principal Registry at Somerset House. It must be borne in mind, however, that the principal Registry, unlike the old Prerogative Courts, contains duplicate records of the wills and administrations in the various district Registries, and that now a lexicographical calendar is yearly printed and comprises in one alphabetical list the names of all testators and intestates throughout England and Wales.

The testamentary records of the Archdeacon of Berks were removed from Oxford in 1868 to the principal Registry at Somerset House, where they still remain. As the old official calendars proved upon examination to be quite inadequate for their purpose, a new one has been compiled under the directions of the present record keeper, Mr. G. H. Rodman. It covers the whole of the records, from the earliest extant document, in 1480, down to 1767 inclusive. This new index is as perfect as such a work can be, for every separate paper has been specially examined for the purpose with minute care. The residence and occupation of testators is given whenever it occurs, and a very useful feature is the insertion of the designated burial-place whenever the place of residence is not mentioned in the will. Often this affords a valuable means of identification, for testators sometimes omitted to state their residence when describing themselves in their wills. In the present volume the place of burial, when given, is distinguished by the prefix of *b*. The new official index is arranged alphabetically, though not in dictionary order, but for this volume the entries therein have been transcribed down to the

year 1653 and rearranged lexicographically. The latter portion still remains in manuscript, though we may hope that, should this calendar be appreciated, it will be found feasible to print the subsequent portion down to at least 1800.

This printed volume also differs from the official manuscript in the matter of spelling. The official list necessarily had to record the exact spellings both of names of persons and of places, though, on account of the very irregular orthography of early times, this exactitude is in truth a disadvantage for the main purpose of a calendar, that is, ready reference. Therefore Christian names and place-names have been uniformly modernised in this printed index; the only exceptions admitted being cases where any doubt exists as to the proper modern equivalent. Surnames had to be dealt with somewhat differently, for it is not always feasible to select their present-day form. The system has been adopted of selecting the most usual spelling of a name, or preferably its ordinary modern form, whilst adding immediately after it the principal variants and supplementing the entry by an adequate number of cross references to other forms. The advantages of adopting this method are clearly shown by the Rev. Andrew Clark, in his preface to the *Register of the University of Oxford*, who also deals fully with the difficulties, such as the confusion existing between the forms for *u* and *n*, *K* and *R*, *L* and *H*, &c., which render the decipherment of surnames not infrequently a matter of extreme difficulty. By grouping the names it is often found possible to solve these manuscript puzzles.

To take an example of arrangement: a group of some twenty names appears under the heading 'Buckeridge,' with the added variants of Buckareidge, Buckaridge, Buckridge, Buckeredge, Buckereyge, Bukrige, and Buckaryge. The testators named in this group used one or more of these forms, though the precise spelling adopted in any particular case must be ascertained from an inspection of the will. Occasionally a noticeable variant is added, as in the case of William Pukrige, of Pangbourne, 1529. At the end of every name, whenever needed, are given cross references to testators who may belong to the group; and in the present case is to be found a cross reference to Bockridge. In several such instances the names might, perhaps, have been better

arranged under one group, but in the process of sorting it is not always easy to allocate the numerous variants, which moreover in not a few cases have developed into surnames which now are quite distinct. Thus it would be undesirable to group Atwell, Atwellis and Wells, or Atfield and Field, though they were once interchangeable forms. So again we find in this volume Filmore, Fynmore, Finemore and Fenymore, the common origin of which is clearly established. Amongst other instances which may be given is the name which occurs under five different initials as Attyllysley, Hildesley, Ildisle, Ildeslie, Illesley, Isdeley, Tillesley and Ylsley. In like manner the local name of Pusey may be found under *A*, for the will of Philip Apusey of Pusey, gentleman, was proved in 1574.

A few stray wills from other counties—notably Hampshire, Wiltshire and Oxfordshire—will be found in the present list. As might be expected a considerable number of wills of University men, besides clergymen, are here recorded.

This volume contains about 19,000 wills and administrations, and whilst primarily valuable to the genealogist and topographer, will afford much material for the studies of those who direct their attention to the origin and local distribution of family surnames, since those contained in the present list relate mainly to middle-class people and to a period when the rural population was far more stationary than it has been at any subsequent date.

For the present volume the thanks of the reader are especially due to the Right Hon. Lord Hannen, lately President of the Probate Division, to whom the antiquarian world owes so much for the readiness with which he has always granted permission to print this and similar calendars. To Mr. G. H. Rodman and Mr. E. Cheyne of the record department I am much indebted for advice and assistance in settling various points which arose as the work passed through the press. I should add that the lexicographical arrangement of the latter portion of the alphabet was undertaken by Mr. Leland L. Duncan, F.S.A., who also rendered me valuable help in reading the proofs of that part of the volume.

W. P. W. P.