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SN 5620 - Summary of Selected Wills of West Northamptonshire, 1500-1700

User Guide

Introduction:

This data collection was created as a convenient way of summarising the data contained in the full text transcripts of 556 wills for the neighbouring parishes of Ashby St Ledgers, Barby (cum Onley), Braunston, Crick, and Kilsby, all in west Northamptonshire. These full text transcripts, by the same author, are also deposited with AHDS History as a separate collection, please refer to study number SN5328.

This data file contains summaries of all 556 transcribed wills, ie the whole body of extant wills for these 5 parishes for the period 1500-1700.

Field Names and Contents:

Field Name:	Explanation:
no.	Sequential item number of each entry. The entries are presented in chronological order of Will Date (see below); use of an Item No for each entry permits the list to be easily re-ordered to its original order if sorting has been carried out (eg by village or some other metric)
will_date*	Presented in the format "dd/mm/yyyy" * corrected to the modern calendar; dates given in the text of the will as between 1 Jan and Easter actually lie in the following year
village	The five villages are: Ashby St Ledgers (abbreviated as "Ashby SL"), Barby cum Onley (results for Barby and for its hamlet of Onley are segregated), Braunston, Crick, and Kilsby
sex	"m" = male testator, "f" = female testator
family_name	Surname of the testator
forename	First name of the testator
age_band	This is entered as "O", "M" or "Y" O = Old: testator typically has grandchildren who are themselves teenaged Y = Young: testator typically unmarried, or married but with no children yet M = Middle-aged: of intermediate age, typically with older/grown-up children
status _()=inferred	Where the testator's occupation or status is mentioned in the will, it is stated here. If the occupation or status is not explicitly stated but may be safely inferred from the text of the will, it is stated here in parentheses. For instance, a testator who bequeaths a plough, cart, implements of husbandry etc, may safely be inferred to be a farmer – if he is obviously wealthy, it is logical to infer that he is a yeoman, if comfortable or poor then he is inferred to be a husbandman; and so on.
named_relatives:	

spouse	If the spouse is still alive, they are generally named in the will. Where dead spouses are mentioned in a will, they are not always named – in such cases the spouse is indicated as “?”. In some cases, though no spouse is named it may be safely inferred that a testator has been married because he/she has children – in such cases, the spouse is indicated as “(?)”
sons	Where sons are named, their names are given here; an attempt has been made to estimate the order of ages, and to list the sons’ names in decreasing order of age. In some cases sons are mentioned but not explicitly named – these are shown thus “?”. In some cases sons are not explicitly mentioned at all, but the text of the will makes it clear that the testator almost certainly has a son – in such cases, the entry is shown as “(?)” to indicate that it has been inferred. Where several unnamed sons are either mentioned or may be inferred, they are shown thus “?, +?” or “(?), + (?)” etc. Hence, an entry “?, +?, + (?)” would indicate that the testator has two sons who are mentioned but not named, and that it is inferred from the text that there is also a 3 rd son.
daughters	Dealt with exactly as for sons above.
named_executors	Where executors are named in the will, their names are listed here.
named_overseers	Where overseers/supervisors are named, their names are listed here.
named_witnesses	Where witnesses are named in the will, their names are listed here.
named_priests	Where priests are named in the will, their names are listed here.
burial in	The abbreviation “CY” is used to denote “church-yard”; most testators request burial in their village churchyard, but a select few request burial in the body of the church (this denotes high social status), and one or two priests request burial in the chancel of their church.
named_locations	Any locations that are named in the will (either of specific houses, fields, closes, hills, streets, regions in the open fields, etc) are listed in this column
Church and Legal Formulae:	
gmh	Soul dedication to God, St Mary and the Holy Company of Heaven
ag	Soul dedication to Almighty God
sgb	Soul dedication to God the Son, Holy Ghost and celestial company of heaven
tbg	Thanks be to God
tlj	Thanks to the Lord Jesus
vmp	Virgin Mary to pray for me
fsh	Soul dedication to Father, Son and Holy Ghost
cp	Mention of Christ’s Passion
m&r	Soul dedication to Maker and Redeemer
Church and Community Bequests:	
m	For Mortuary
ha	To the High Altar
tf?	For Tithes Forgotten

oa	Bequests to other altars (usually named)
mc	To the Mother Church (Lincoln up to 1542, subsequently Peterborough)
b	To the Bells
t	To the Torches
rl	To the Rood Light
sl	To the Sepulchre Light
rt	For the Raiment
rp	For the Reparation
tq	For trentalls (the quantity nominated)
ts	For trentalls (whether to be Said or Chanted)
tm	For trentalls (amount of money bequeathed)
other	Here are listed in detail any other specific church/community bequests – eg to the poor, for bequests to other named churches, repair of specific features of the local church such as spire/paving/porch/etc, gifts of clothing, altar cloths, for church books, payments to named chantry priests, bell-ringers, etc.
Lay Bequests:	
1st 12 columns	The first 12 columns are grouped in pairs; a column naming the beneficiary followed by a column in which their legacy is summarised. A typical pair of columns would read, for instance: a) to son George b) 1 heifer and a plough.
13th column: Residue	The 13 th (final) column in this section shows the person named as recipient of the residue of the estate after all other bequests have been made and debts and funeral expenses paid. This is often (but not always) the same person as the chief executor nominated in the will.
length_(words)	Number of words in the complete text of the will.
prob_date*?	Where a probate date is appended at the bottom of the copy of the will, this is stated here, using the same format as for Will Date above, ie “dd/mm/yyyy” * dates given in text of will as between 1 Jan and Easter actually lie in the following year
inv?	There are three options for this column. If the will is accompanied by a detailed inventory, the comment here is “detailed inv.”; if there is no detailed inventory but merely a total sum appended at the bottom of the will against the probate date, the comment here is “summary in will”; if no inventory or inventory total is given, the column is left blank.
other_comments	This column contains any useful comments not possible to summarise in the preceding columns. If an inventory total is given, either as a summary appended to the will or as a detailed sum in a separate document, the total is listed in this column. This column is also used to summarise the author’s analysis of the testator’s status, family relationships, any cross-references culled from other records (eg 1674 Hearth Tax), and so on.
other_comments_II	This column of the data file also contains a few informal notes, added by the author as a result of more detailed investigation of one or two of the entries.

Further Information:

The author is willing to enter into discussion about the data summarised.

The author's original data file contains some further analysis sheets which are not included in this deposit (for example, attempted reconstruction of census data and parish registers from the data in the wills, for parishes whose parish registers no longer exist); these sheets are still under development and were therefore excluded from this deposit because they are incomplete – but they may be made available to interested parties on application to the author.