

Family History Interest Group November Report

Half a dozen members of the group listened to a talk on using wills to assist your family history research. The low numbers (due to rain?) meant a much more interactive talk.

Wills are an invaluable resource for the family historian and efforts should always be made to discover if the subject of research made a will and, if so, what were the contents of the will. There will always be information identifying the testator (the person making the will) – their name, abode and occupation. Anybody benefiting from a bequest will be named, usually together with a relationship to the testator.

From 1530 to 1782 every executor had to appoint three or four local men to appraise or value the testator's personal estate at the time of death and provide the probate court with a full inventory or list. This provides an insight into the testator's lifestyle and wealth though real estate (land) was not included.

There is also valuable information if the individual was mentioned in someone else's will but these wills are harder to find. Alan related how he was able to positively identify his grandmother's great-grandmother from mentions in the wills of her brothers and sister.

The next talk will discuss probate records, where to find wills, and their use to progress your family history research. It will be held on the second Thursday of December (11th), at 13:30 in Enterprise House and followed by a practical session "Help your neighbour", so please all bring laptops or your usual devices.

Alan Swindale