

## Divorce records (continued)

The **Central Family Court** in London holds copies of divorce records from 1858. To apply for a search for a Decree Absolute from 1858 onwards you will need to fill in a D440 form here: [www.gov.uk/copy-decree-absolute-final-order](http://www.gov.uk/copy-decree-absolute-final-order)

Alternatively if you know the year you can contact the court where the divorce took place, fees will apply.

The **National Archives** has divorce case files from 1858-1937. View their catalogue to search by surname here: [www.nationalarchives.gov.uk/records/looking-for-person/divorce.htm](http://www.nationalarchives.gov.uk/records/looking-for-person/divorce.htm)

**A word of warning:** Very few divorce case files survive after 1938. Files are now destroyed 20 years after the divorce but you can still apply to the local court for permission to see the file if it still exists.

## Visit or contact us...

Local and Family History Library  
2nd Floor, Leeds Central Library  
Calverley Street  
Leeds, LS3 1AB

**Tel:** (0113) 378 6982

**Email:** [localandfamilyhistory@leeds.gov.uk](mailto:localandfamilyhistory@leeds.gov.uk)

**Website:** [www.leeds.gov.uk/localandfamilyhistory](http://www.leeds.gov.uk/localandfamilyhistory)

## Opening times

Monday–Wednesday	9am-7pm
Thursday	9am-6pm
Friday	9am-5pm
Saturday	10am-5pm
Sunday	11am-3pm



# Local and Family History Wills and Divorce records

The Local and Family History Library does not keep records of divorces or copies of wills, but we have access to some online records via Ancestry.com

For more information call 0113 3785005  
or visit [www.leeds.gov.uk/libraries](http://www.leeds.gov.uk/libraries)

 leedslibraries  @leedslibraries



Leeds Library and  
Information Service  
*The world at your fingertips*



Leeds Library and  
Information Service  
*The world at your fingertips*

## Locating Wills and Administrations

*Whilst the Local and Family History Library does not have any original documents, we do have access to some indexes online:*

**The National Probate Calendar (Index of Wills and Administrations 1858-1966)** is available online via Ancestry.com (free to access in all Leeds libraries). This contains summaries of the vast majority of probate cases in England and Wales 1858-1966. It effectively forms an index to wills and probate records for this period. The records were created by the Probate Registry, which took control of proving wills and administrations in 1858. Before this, four different types of ecclesiastical (church) courts dealt with these cases. A Principal Probate Registry was established in London in January 1858, and several district probate registries were created around the country. From then on, the registries oversaw all grants of probate and letters of administration. This collection is the Calendar of these grants.

**UK Extracted Probate Records, 1269-1975**, is also available on Ancestry.com. This database is a collection of historical probate records from the United Kingdom. The records in this collection can range in date from the late 13th century to the late 20th century. The records include wills and other miscellaneous types of probate records. Currently no Yorkshire records are included.

The **National Wills Index** (pre-1858) is available on the Find My Past website (which requires a subscription to access). This is the largest online resource for pre-1858 English probate records and contains indexes, abstracts and source documents.

**Yorkshire Wills pre-1858:** The **Borthwick Institute's** probate archive (wills, inventories and associated records) is England's largest outside London. Records span the period from the 14th century until January 1858, when the business of granting probate was removed from the Church of England to a new civil probate court.

- Contact: Borthwick Institute for Archives, University of York, Heslington, York, YO10 5DD,
- Email: [borthwick-institute@york.ac.uk](mailto:borthwick-institute@york.ac.uk)
- Tel. (01904) 321 166

## Purchasing Wills and Administrations

Wills and Administrations are kept at the Probate Department in London but copies can only be ordered online or by post.

**If the person died after after 1858** an online search can be made and the will purchased online for £10:  
<https://probatesearch.service.gov.uk/#wills>

Alternatively, a copy can be purchased by post. Download the PA1S form online at: [www.gov.uk/wills-probate-inheritance/searching-for-probate-records](http://www.gov.uk/wills-probate-inheritance/searching-for-probate-records)

Wills of soldiers who died while serving in the British armed forces between 1850-1986 can also be searched online here.

For urgent enquiries contact: Postal Searches and Copies Department, Leeds District Probate registry, York House, York Place, Leeds, LS1 2BA. Tel: (0113) 389 6133

## Divorce Records

As with Wills, the Local and Family History Library does not hold copies of divorce records. However there is an index online via Ancestry.com entitled **UK Civil Divorce Records 1858-1911**. These records can contain petitions, certificates and copies of the Decree Nisi and Decree Absolute. The Decree Absolute gives the names of the petitioner, respondent and the place and date of the marriage.

**Before 1857** the only legal way of obtaining a divorce was by a private Act of Parliament; however, this was costly and relatively rare.

Copies of **Divorce Acts** from 1670-1857 can be found at: The Parliamentary Archives, House of Lords Record Office, London, SW1A 0PW. Tel: (0207) 219 3074  
Email: [archives@parliament.uk](mailto:archives@parliament.uk)