

Introduction to the Giggleswick Wills Project

The Giggleswick Wills Project

The aim of this project was to ascertain as much information as possible about the changing way of life in the ancient parish of Giggleswick in North Craven with a view to comparison with other localities and communities in the North of England (e.g. Swaledale for which a similar exercise has been published by the Yorkshire Archaeological Society) and particularly Horton in Ribblesdale, Clapham and Ingleton parishes. The wills for Ingleton have been published in book form (C. Howard and S. Gordon, *Voices from the Past*, Ingleborough Archaeological Group in 2015) and those for Clapham and Horton are gradually being collected and transcribed.

The work of photocopying and transcription of wills has been carried out mainly by Sheila Gordon, and Mary and Michael Slater, and some by David Johnson and Reg Postlethwaite, between 2005 and 2015. A few of the Somerscales wills were transcribed by Roy Price.

Anyone may use the information for their own research purposes but acknowledgement of the source is requested in any publication or website using the material.

The work of transcription was carried out in three parts: the first from 1390-1603 ends with the death of Elizabeth I: the second period chosen was from 1603 to 1702 – the year of death of William III: the third period was from 1702 (Queen Anne) to 1750. After 1750 wills became much more in number, rather more wordy and generally less interesting from an historical point of view. Work with the third set was funded by the Heritage Lottery Fund as a project run by Sheila Gordon with the objective of recovering, flattening, copying and transcribing the wills and inventories not catalogued or filmed at the Borthwick Institute of Historical Research at the University of York. Altogether 940 wills and inventories have been transcribed which allows an understanding of aspects of life in North Craven over 350 years.

An analysis of the first two parts of the project is available on this website and an article in the North Craven Heritage Trust Journal online at NorthCravenHeritage.org.uk (The Giggleswick Wills project by S.Gordon, M. and M. Slater, NCHTJ 2011, pp12-16). An article about the third part has been published in the North Craven Heritage Trust Journal (*Aspects of life in Giggleswick and Horton parishes during the eighteenth century*, Sheila Gordon, 2016, pages 12-15). Other articles are by Jenny Dodd (*Stainforth wills: a study of kinship*, NCHTJ, 2009, pp2-6) and by Claudia Minett (*Patterns of bequest among the 'Middling Sort' in the parish of Giggleswick:1600-1750*, NCHTJ, 2017).

Any search for names must bear in mind idiosyncracies of spelling. The year dates used are usually those in the will but the probate year recorded in catalogues may be later. The old-style year end was March 31st until 1752. The file names of transcriptions do not allow a date such as 1650/1 to make a link from a spreadsheet to the document so the date written in the will is used.

Frank Woodhams carried out the large amount of work necessary for putting the spreadsheets and Word documents on to the North Craven Heritage Trust website, for which we are extremely grateful.

Wills from 1390 to 1603

The 231 wills transcribed in this set go up to the end of the reign of Queen Elizabeth, 24th March 1603 (new style date).

Virtually all the wills seen are the probate copies lodged at York and not the originals. The Borthwick Institute of Historical Research at the University of York hold the copyright of the documents themselves but not the transcriptions. Photocopies made from the microfilms at the Borthwick Institute vary very much in quality and sometimes are very difficult to read. The accuracy of transcription cannot be guaranteed.

All the wills have been located using the Yorkshire Archaeological Society Record Series volumes for Wills in the York Registry, 1389 to 1688, vols. 6, 11, 14, 19, 22, 24, 26, 28, 32, 49, 60, 68, and 89; YAS Yorkshire Wills Registered in London 1649-1660; and YAS Consistory Court Wills vols. 73 and 93. There are no inventories to be found with the probate copies of these wills on the microfilms.

The administrations (admons) have not been looked at except for two or three of local interest.

The style of transcription varies with some wills transcribed into modern English using voice-activated software (with inevitable mistakes not noticed), some transcribed as written in the original spelling, and some typed directly in modern English. Short forms and elisions have not generally been recorded. The main concern was to investigate content and not spelling of words or names.

The few Latin wills have been translated with the expert help of John Harrop of Austwick but remaining errors are the fault of the authors. The texts of these wills are very difficult to read with many word endings missing.

Wills from 1603 – 1702

The work was then continued as described for the first set. Many more wills had to be copied and transcribed but the handwriting was generally easier to read. There were 409 wills and 57 separate inventories. Inventories were found only after 1672. The YAS lists up to 1688 were used together with further lists for later times held at the Borthwick Institute and wills found at The National Archives for the Commonwealth period.

Wills from 1700 to 1750

Many more inventories were found for this period, many with no corresponding will and many of the wills were not accompanied by an inventory. In total there were 300 wills and inventories. There were 229 inventories. A detailed analysis of the inventories remains to be carried out.