

BANBURY WILLS PROVED IN THE PREROGATIVE COURT OF CANTERBURY 1800-1857

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In the preceding issue of *Cake & Cockhorse* (vol.17, no.2, pp.56-63) an explanation was given of the status of Banbury as a Peculiar for probate purposes, with the only alternative (and higher) court being the Prerogative Court of Canterbury. A list of Banbury (town) P.C.C. wills from 1700 to 1799 was provided.

By 1800 the Peculiar Court was falling into disuse, and P.C.C. was increasingly used (especially as the Bank of England did not recognise lesser courts).

Recently The National Archives (T.N.A.), formerly the Public Record Office, utilising modern technology, have been able to create new indexes to the testators in P.C.C. for all the period to 1857. These are freely available on line through the internet, with the additional facility that searches can be made for place names as well as personal names. I was thus able (through the good offices of Bob Boyd) to have a print-out listing around 600 wills from Banbury itself (there may be others under Neithrop, Calthorpe etc.). These have been arranged chronologically with, where identified, dates of burial. The later section, for 1800 to 1857, is now published. The list concludes with an index to surnames, by year. It should be noted that as yet there is no modern index to letters of administration (admons.) for those who died intestate.

Thus we now have a simple list of many of the men (and their widows or unmarried daughters) who were influential in Banbury's government and trade from 1700 (here 1800) to 1857. It is of course confined to those who lived, or at least died, in the town. No attempt has been made to include the wealthy landed magnates such as those living at Wroxton or Broughton, or in London.

It is interesting, too, to discover those whose residence and livelihood were in the town, but who were evidently not recorded in the burial registers. Dissenters' burials were abstracted where possible from their own registers and shown in the published parish registers to 1838. They must account for some, but certainly not all, of the P.C.C. testators whose burial record has not been found.

This listing has been confined just to Banbury, as it should be simple for village historians to access the far fewer testators from their own locality.

Copies of the wills themselves are available, at a modest charge (currently £3.50), via the internet [DocumentsOnline (images of documents from TNA)]:

http://www.nationalarchives.gov.uk/search/advanced_search.

Burial dates are from parish registers to 1812 (BHS 18), 1813-38 (BHS 22) and the later transcript by OFHS, with ages and addresses from 1813 on.