

WILLS DEPOSITED.

91. During the year additional wills numbering 5,097 were deposited by testators with the Public Trustee for safe custody. The following table gives detailed figures for the year:—

Wills on hand on 31st March, 1923	..	..	35,502
Add new wills deposited from 1st April, 1923 to 31st March, 1924	..	..	5,097
Deduct wills withdrawn from 1st April, 1923, to 31st March, 1924, through deaths of testators or otherwise	..	..	917
Net increase in number of wills on deposit	..	4,180	4,180
Total number of wills on deposit at 31st March, 1924	..	..	39,682

In addition to the foregoing, 2,175 wills already on deposit were redrafted during the year.

The following return shows the yearly increase of wills deposited for a period of ten years from 31st March, 1914, to 31st March, 1924:—

Number of wills on deposit at 31st March, 1914	..	6,427
Net increase for year ending—		
31st March, 1915	..	1,417
31st March, 1916	..	3,541
31st March, 1917	..	4,884
31st March, 1918	..	4,781
31st March, 1919	..	3,187
31st March, 1920	..	1,555
31st March, 1921	..	2,564
31st March, 1922	..	3,483
31st March, 1923	..	3,663
31st March, 1924	..	4,180

Number of wills on deposit at 31st March, 1924	..	39,682
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In regard to the foregoing table, it should be remembered that from the outbreak of war until peace was declared a large number of soldiers' wills were deposited, so that the number now being received has overtaken that reached during the war period.

In regard to soldiers' wills, many of these were made in camp or on active service, and as conditions in many cases would probably have materially altered the soldier testators were communicated with with a view to seeing whether the wills made during the war were to stand or whether any alterations were to be made. Wherever testator required a fresh will completed this has had attention.

In addition to placing their wills in the Office for safe custody many testators who have appointed the Public Trustee executor have deposited valuable documents for custody. As the testators frequently desire to refer to these documents it was considered that it would facilitate their dealing with them to have them readily available in the districts in which they resided. Accordingly, in pursuance of the scheme of decentralization, these documents have now been despatched to the office of the District Public Trustee controlling the district in which the testator resides.

Owing to the large number of wills now deposited it is deemed advisable to have the most up-to-date appliances so that the work may be facilitated and expedited as much as possible. The Public Trustee accordingly decided during the year to have installed in a special safe steel filing-cabinets, which will enable the wills to be filed in such a manner that they can be readily handled, and at the same time ensure absolute safety for their custody.

As an additional safeguard an annual stock-taking is carried out, when every will held in custody is checked with the records.