

WILLS DEPOSITED.

65. During the year additional wills numbering 5,691 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, 1926	48,957
Add new wills from 1st April, 1926 to 31st March, 1927	5,691
Deduct wills withdrawn from 1st April, 1926 to 31st March, 1927 through death of testator or otherwise	1,117

Net increase in number of wills on deposit ..	4,574
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Total number of wills on deposit at 31st March, 1927	53,531
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The following return shows the yearly increase of wills deposited for the period commencing 31st March, 1916, and ending 31st March, 1927 :—

Number of wills on deposit at 31st March, 1916 ..	11,385
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Net increase for year ending :—

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
31st March, 1925	4,420
31st March, 1926	4,855
31st March, 1927	4,574

Number of wills on deposit at 31st March, 1927 ..	53,531
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These figures reveal that very satisfactory progress is being made in the extension of the Office operations, and establish the fact that it is rapidly growing more popular as it becomes better known amongst members of the community. It is gratifying to be able once more to record that increasing numbers of beneficiaries in estates and other clients as a result of their experience of the Office administration and methods appoint the Public Trustee executor of their own wills.

The conditions of a man's affairs and his family and other relationships often change to a considerable extent within comparatively short intervals. Thus testators find it necessary as time goes on to vary or modify the provisions of their wills, and so a large amount of redrafting of wills already on deposit has to be undertaken year by year. During the past year 3,109 such wills were redrafted.

The preparation and custody of wills are given special care. Careful attention is bestowed upon the interviewing of testators, the taking of their instructions, and drafting of their wills. Suitable accommodation is provided so that testators can freely and fully discuss matters pertaining to their wills in privacy and comfort, and no pains are spared in the typing and setting-out of the wills and recording matters pertaining to them.

A staff of officers skilled in that work superintends the preparation of and scrutinizes every will prepared in the Office before it is finally filed away for deposit. In previous reports I have referred to the special accommodation which has been provided for storage of wills deposited with the Public Trustee. A feature of this work is the precautions which have been taken to preserve secrecy. It is recognized that the contents of the wills are confidential and that a great deal of harm might result should there be any risk of these contents being divulged to unauthorized persons. The work is therefore performed by specially selected officers and the correspondence carried on under confidential cover and not prepared or despatched with the ordinary Office mail-matter.