

WILLS DEPOSITED.

87. For the year under review additional wills numbering 6,053 were deposited by testators with the Public Trustee for safe custody. This constituted a record in the history of the Office, and is the first occasion on which the number of wills deposited in any one year exceeded six thousand. The following table gives detailed figures for the year:—

Wills on hand on 31st March, 1928	58,065
Add new wills from 1st April, 1928, to 31st March, 1929	6,053
Deduct wills withdrawn from 1st April, 1928, to 31st March, 1929, through death of testator or otherwise	1,277

Net increase in number of wills on deposit	4,776
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Total number of wills on deposit on 31st March, 1929	62,841
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The following return shows the yearly increase of wills deposited for the past ten years:—

Number of wills on deposit on 31st March, 1919	24,237
Net increase for year ending—	
31st March, 1920	1,555
„ 1921	2,564
„ 1922	3,483
„ 1923	3,663
„ 1924	4,180
„ 1925	4,420
„ 1926	4,855
„ 1927	4,574
„ 1928	4,534
„ 1929	4,776

Number of wills on deposit on 31st March, 1929	62,841
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Many testators, by reason of the changes which take place in their own circumstances and the circumstances of their dependants in the course of a few years, find it necessary to modify or vary the provisions of their wills, and in consequence a large amount of redrafting of wills already deposited has to be undertaken. During the past year 3,440 wills were so redrafted. The total of the wills prepared during the year, including new wills and redrafts, reached the large figure of 9,493.

With over 62,000 wills on deposit, and with a large number of wills being handled daily, it is imperative that a most rigorous system of check and safeguards be provided. Accordingly, in addition to scrupulous care in the handling, filing, and safe-keeping, “stock-takings” of all wills on deposit are carried out at regular intervals. The last stock-taking, completed during the year, shows that matters in connection with the care and custody of the wills are in good order as regards every detail.

Modern appliances ensure the safe storage of the wills on deposit, which are kept in steel filing-cabinets in a specially constructed strong-room solely devoted to this purpose.

A will is a highly confidential document, and its contents should be held inviolate during the testator's lifetime. Most carefully thought-out machinery has been devised by the Office to maintain the strictest secrecy in regard to the wills entrusted to the Public Trustee for safe custody.

88. Will-making is a most important and necessary service. Where there is no will, or where the document is crudely drawn up, complications and expenses are increased. To the layman it might seem a simple matter to collect a man's assets, pay his debts, and hand over the balance of his estate to the beneficiaries under his will, or his next-of-kin under intestacy. Often, however, the position is