A CALENDAR OF PROBATE AND ADMINISTRATION ACTS 1407-1550 IN THE CONSISTORY COURT OF THE BISHOPS OF HEREFORD

Edited by M A Faraday [1]

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Before 1858 the Consistory Court of the Bishops of Hereford had jurisdiction over grants of probate or administration for all persons who died owning property within the diocese of Hereford (other than the deanery of Hereford itself and in certain peculiars). From the middle of the 16th century large numbers of original wills and grants of administration have survived, but from before that time there are few original wills. There are however the *ex officio* act books of the court which have survived for some years, starting with 1407/8 and including, entire or in part, about half the years between 1442/3 and 1549/50. These provide a very valuable source of probate and administration acts, typically giving the name of the deceased and his executors or administrators and their parishes. The later books also include the figures for inventory-valuations accepted for assessing court fees on the estates. These act books also contain quite a few registered copy wills. The 15th century *ex officio* books also include a number of testamentary disputes which, from the 1490s, appear in a separate series of *ad instantiam partium* act books. The names of the court apparitors, who operated in the respective deaneries, are often recorded. Many of the books are very difficult to read owing to deterioration over the centuries; some of the records are now unfit for production, so this Calendar may be the only means of seeing their contents.

The probate and administration acts, the copy-wills and testamentary disputes (where the deceased is named) from the period 1407-1550, together with 378 registered copy wills from 1552-1581, have been abstracted and embodied in "*A Calendar of Probate and Administration Acts 1407-1550 in the Consistory Court of the Bishops of Hereford*" which has recently been privately published in hard covers (719 pages including full index, June 2009) by the editor, Michael Faraday. This is a completely revised and greatly augmented version of a similar *Calendar* by the same editor and the late E J L Cole, issued by the British Record Society in microfiche form in 1989, and which it replaces. It includes some 13,500 probates and administrations and some 36,000 references to personal names. It is footnoted, particularly with relevant detail from actions in the Court of Common Pleas relating to some of the probates in the calendar; some of these show widows' subsequent marriages. Also included are facsimiles of act book pages from different periods and a map of the diocese showing a typical itinerary.

To obtain a copy please see the advertisement inside the back cover of this journal.



[1] Michael Faraday is the author of '*Ludlow 1085 –1660*' (1991), and editor of various works including '*Herefordshire Taxes in the Reign of Henry VIII*'; '*Herefordshire Militia Assessments of 1663*'; '*The Lay Subsidy for Shropshire 1524-7*'; '*Worcestershire Taxes in the 1520s*'; and the forthcoming '*Bristol and Gloucestershire Lay Subsidy of 1523-1527*'.

Email address: f2594255@btinternet.com