

Joan Briggs et al., eds. *Sunderland Wills and Inventories, 1601-1650*. Rochester, NY: Boydell for the Surtees Society, 2010. xlv + 304 pp. \$95.00. Review BY BR. BENET EXTON, O.S.B., ST. GREGORY'S UNIVERSITY.

Sunderland Wills and Inventories is a transcription of wills and inventories found in the special collections at the Durham University Library that illuminates what people in the early part of seventeenth-century England owned and to whom they bequeathed their property when they died. Volunteers transcribed over a period of three years the wills and inventories for Sunderland, Bishopwearmouth, and Monkwearmouth of the old English county of Durham for the Victoria County History Trust of Durham. Sunderland is in the modern day English county of Tyne and Wear on the northeast coast of England and includes the villages of Bishopwearmouth and Monkwearmouth.

The book has a short preface; then it gives the editorial method, a long introduction, a list of the wills, and then the actual wills and inventories. These are followed by an extensive glossary of terms and conclude with an index of persons and places connected with the wills.

The introduction, full of valuable information for the researcher, provides an overview of what one can find in the wills and inventories which. It discusses how many wills and inventories there are in this book and where they came from and describes Sunderland and the area. The author of the introduction explains the dating of the wills based on how the will was written or the date written on the will: many wills were written many months before death and some were written as the person was dying. The role of the clergy as witnesses is examined in the introduction, which states that their role changed over time as the people became more literate. The author of the introduction says that the inventories were not just a list of items but included their appraised value attached. The author also explains the process of probate of a will and that wills and inventories provide information as to how large and kind of family there was in early seventeenth-century Sunderland and how much a wife or widow would receive from the estate. One would think the widow would get a large portion of the estate, but this was not always case. Many wills provided money to be given to the poor and told how much the deceased owed to a creditor and how much was owed to him or her. The introduction also

discusses how wills and inventories describe houses of the period and what other property people used and owned. The occupations of the deceased were also given in the wills. Through their wills, the deceased also provided instructions for their funerals and gave money to insure how elaborate it would be, for an elaborate funeral was a sign of status.

The wills and inventories section of the book gives the transcribed wills and inventories, which start with the will portion that tells who the benefactors were and how the deceased wished to be buried. This is followed by usually three witnesses and then the inventory which gives the items and their value, and each will and inventory ends with the source information as to where the actual will can be located. The wills and inventories vary in length with most not being too long.

The glossary explains terms that its definition, spelling, or understanding is not in common usage today, such as akers for acre, apparan for apron, potle, pecke, sope for soap, and other terms. This glossary helps the user to understand better what the wills and inventories are describing.

This book on the wills and inventories of Sunderland is a great resource into what people of the village owned and used in the early seventeenth century. This is not a source though that one will find in every library; it will probably be found in large academic and public libraries that have a section on seventeenth-century English history or a strong genealogical section, or one may find it with the other Surtees Society publications, of which this one is number 214. The introduction is a great source for describing and clarifying terms and usages used in the wills and inventories. Scholars and general readers (genealogy researcher) will be able to read and understand this book and greatly benefit from it; this book is highly recommended to these kinds of scholars.