

The estate of Ellen Watson Richards

STATUS — WILL IDENTIFIED · *Bona Vacantia* reference BV985203/1 · died Stroud, Gloucestershire, 3 March 1996

Conclusion: Ellen Watson Richards, known as Ella Richards, died at Stroud, Gloucestershire, on 3 March 1996, and the Crown's list records nothing more about her than that: no date of birth, no place of birth, and a marital status of unknown. She left a valid will, made in 1988, and the first of the two executors it names proved it at Bristol in July 1996, four months after her death. The will gives ten legacies to ten named people — £800 in cash between nine of them, and six pieces of household furniture — and stops there: it has no residuary clause, no substitution and no gift of the remainder. Everything the will did not give passed as on an intestacy from the day she died, and it is that undisposed residue, not the estate, that fell to the Crown. The grant certifies that the gross value of the estate does not exceed £145,000 and that the net value does not exceed £25,000, so the Crown's interest is at most a little over £24,000 net once the legacies are set against the net ceiling, and possibly much less. Her own death entry and her birth have not been read, so her age is not established, and no class of her kin has been searched. The thirty-year bar fell on 3 March 2026; the case has left the Crown's list, and no claim by anyone is now possible.

HD Genealogy & Technology · 30 September 2026 10:12 BST, third edition · claim bar 3 March 2026, now passed

This edition brings the second edition of 18 September 2026 to the house standard: a status on the top line, the conclusion in one paragraph, and the ladder stated rung by rung. Two passages of the second edition are withdrawn, and are listed here rather than quietly changed. First, the sentence in "The woman on the list" that quoted the Crown caseworker's note on her row word for word is withdrawn; it is replaced by a statement, in this file's own words, of what the row records. Second, the two sentences in "The grant" that said nothing in the probate index would ever have revealed a Crown case and that only the caseworker's note did, together with the clause that said the grant's type was what made the case worth reading, are withdrawn: they characterised what a source would or would not reveal rather than what it holds, and they are replaced by the finding itself, that the grant issued as probate to a named executor and that the Crown's own row records the residue as administered by the Division. The framing paragraph that opened the second edition's account of why the file is shown in full is also dropped, and the sections "Summary and actions" and "What this edition adds" are folded into the conclusion and this paragraph. Every other finding, negative and reference of the first and second editions stands, and both remain on file exactly as supplied.

Supplied complete and without restriction on internal circulation. No living person is named in this file.

The thirty-year limit on claims against this estate ran out on 3 March 2026. The case no longer appears on the Crown's list, and no person — heir, firm or stranger — can now claim any part of it. This file is published as a worked demonstration of the quietest way an estate reaches the Crown: a will that was proved, and worked, but only partway. Nothing in it entitles anyone to anything.

THE WOMAN ON THE LIST

The Crown's archived list of January 2022 carries less about this woman than about almost any neighbour on it: Ellen Watson Richards, died 3 March 1996 at Stroud, Gloucestershire; marital status unknown; no date of birth and no place of birth.¹ Not even her age is on public record there. Her row does carry a note of the case's own shape, which most rows lack: it records that a grant of probate is held on file, that the will dealt with part of the estate only, and that the residue was administered by the Division.¹ Both halves of that record are confirmed below from the documents themselves.⁵⁶

Her own will gives her the fuller name the Crown's list never printed. She styles herself Ellen Watson Richards, known as Ella Richards, of Bracelands, Eastcombe, Stroud, in the county of Gloucestershire, and the grant issued in the same name at the same address.⁵⁶ She died domiciled in England and Wales, so the estate is governed by English succession law throughout.⁶

The bar fell on 3 March 2026. The live list read on 20 August 2026 no longer carried the case, while it still carried six other estates of the surname and seventeen references from later 1996 deaths,³ and the list read again on 30 September 2026 still does not carry it.⁷ No deceased-estates notice stands in the official journal

under this case's reference, on a reading in which a known reference returned its own single notice.⁴

THE WILL, READ IN FULL, AND THE CLAUSE THAT IS NOT IN IT

The will was made on **15 March 1988**, eight years before her death; the date is typed, not manuscript, and carries no ambiguity.⁵ She revoked every earlier will, appointed two executors, both men living in the villages immediately around her own, and directed that her debts and funeral expenses be paid.⁵

Then comes the disposition, and it is the whole of the case. She gives **ten gifts to ten named people**. Nine of them carry cash: seven gifts of £100 and two of £50, **£800 in all**. Six of them also carry a single named household object: a washstand and jug set, a gold watch and a round table, a dining table and chairs, a radiogram and a pair of china ornaments, a dressing table, and a chiffonier.⁵ None of the ten is described as a relative; the will states no relationship for anybody at all, and none is asserted here. The ten are not named in this file, because a person remembered in a 1988 will may be living.

And after the tenth gift the will stops. The remaining ruled lines of the form are empty, and the next words on the page are the attestation clause.⁵ **There is no residuary clause: no gift of the rest, residue and remainder, no residuary beneficiary, no substitution and no sweep-up words of any kind.** That absence is stated from a complete reading of both pages of the purchased copy; the empty ruled lines between the last gift and the attestation are themselves the evidence.

This is the partial intestacy on the face of the document, and its species matters. **It is omission, not lapse.** Nobody had to predecease her and no gift had to fail: every gift in the will is specific or pecuniary and every one of them was capable of taking effect. The partial intestacy existed from the day the will was made in 1988, because the will never says what happens to everything else. Set the £800 and six pieces of furniture against the value the grant certifies, and the overwhelming bulk of this estate was never given to anyone.⁵⁶

THE GRANT: AN ORDINARY ADMINISTRATION, AND THE ONLY STATED VALUE

Probate was granted at the **District Probate Registry at Bristol on 10 July 1996**, four months and a week after the death, and the digital index of grants records the same grant as probate.²⁶ **The first of the two executors named in the will proved it**, and the document records power reserved to the other, the ordinary form of words where a second named executor does not join in the application; the grant states no reason, and none is inferred here. The grant expands the acting executor's name by one middle name the will does not carry.⁵⁶ A firm of solicitors in Stroud extracted the grant.⁶ The Treasury Solicitor appears nowhere on the document: the grant issued to a private executor, and it is the Crown's own row that records the residue as administered by the Division.¹⁶

The value, from the document entitled to state it. The grant certifies that, on the information supplied with the application, **the gross value of the estate in the United Kingdom does not exceed £145,000 and the net value does not exceed £25,000.**⁶ These are the certified brackets of the 1996 grant forms, ceilings the estate falls within and not a valuation of it, and this file states them as ceilings and nothing more. The digital index of grants prints no value; the number printed against a grant there is its sequence number.²

From those two figures the Crown's interest follows arithmetically: the undisposed residue is the net estate less the £800 of cash legacies and the six chattels, so **at most a little over £24,000 net**, and possibly a great deal less. That figure is a ceiling derived from a ceiling, and it is offered as such.

No property-based estimate is offered. The grant states the value, and a comparable does not sit beside a document that does. No document read states that she held any interest in the property at her last address, and no property in her name is shown by anything on this file; tenure is unknown.

TWO LEADS, RECORDED AS LEADS

Both are carried forward from the first edition, untested then and untested now.

— **Watson sits in the middle-name position**, where English custom carries a married woman's maiden surname, and her marital status is unknown on the Crown's row.¹ Her own will does not settle it: she styles herself Ellen Watson Richards and gives no husband, no widowhood and no relationship of any kind.⁵ If Watson is a maiden name there is a Richards–Watson marriage in the indexes, and the whole Watson side

of the ladder opens from it. A lead, not a finding: middle names are sometimes only middle names.

— **A cluster of legatees a hundred miles away.** Seven of the ten people she remembers lived within a few miles of her, in Eastcombe, France Lynch, Chalford Hill and Stroud. The other three share a single surname between them and were living at addresses in and around Derby.⁵ The will states no relationship for any of them, and this file asserts none: they are recorded as a cluster and nothing more.

HOW FAR THE LADDER IS CLIMBED

Spouse

open

Issue

open

Parents

open

Brothers & sisters

open

Grandparents

open

Aunts & uncles

open

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solid box: a record states the relationship - dashed: our candidate - a rung with no box carries the reason instead

THE SECTION 46 LADDER, RUNG BY RUNG

Section 46 of the Administration of Estates Act 1925 governs the residue the will did not dispose of, and ranks the classes of kin in order. On this case no class was searched at all, and this file says so rather than dressing silence as findings.

— **Spouse** — UNTRIED: her marital status is unknown on the Crown's row,¹ and the will names no husband and states no widowhood;⁵ the marriage and death indexes were not read for her.

— **Issue** — UNTRIED: not searched.

— **Parents** — UNTRIED: not searched; her birth has not been read, so her parents are not named by any record read.

— **Brothers and sisters of the whole blood, and their issue** — UNTRIED: not searched.

— **Brothers and sisters of the half blood, and their issue** — UNTRIED: not searched.

— **Grandparents** — UNTRIED: not searched.

— **Uncles and aunts of the whole blood, and their issue** — UNTRIED: not searched.

— **Uncles and aunts of the half blood, and their issue** — UNTRIED: not searched.

"Not searched" is not a nil. A nil is a search that ran and returned nothing, carrying a control that proves the source was answering. This file contains exactly two controlled nils, the absence of a notice⁴ and the case's absence from the live list,³⁷ and neither is a kinship fact. **The ten legatees are not a rung.** None of them takes any part of the residue, whoever they were to her; the ladder runs on her own next of kin and on nobody else.

WHAT REMAINS OPEN

— **Every rung of the ladder**, as above. On this estate the work was never needed: the bar fell first.

— **Her death entry and her birth.** A death registered in 1996 carries her date of birth on the index, which is the age the Crown's row never published; neither the death index nor the birth index was read for her.

— **A Richards–Watson marriage**, which would test the maiden-name lead and, if it held, date the

marriage and open the Watson side.

— **Two small ambiguities on the face of the purchased documents**, recorded so that a later reader meets them already flagged. The will styles the second executor's address by one village in the appointment and by an adjacent one in the gift made to him; whether that is one man or two is not stated on the page.⁵ And both witness signatures are manuscript, with neither surname settled by the purchased image.⁵ Nothing on this case turns on either.

THE DECISIVE DOCUMENTS

Both were bought and read, and the case turns on nothing further that a document could settle now that the bar has passed.

The will, made 15 March 1988.⁵ It names the executors and the ten legatees, it fixes the legacies at £800 and six chattels, and by what it does not contain it is the whole explanation of why a proved estate reached the Crown. Digital copy, £1.50.

The grant of probate, 10 July 1996, Bristol.⁶ It certifies the gross and net value ceilings, it shows the named executor proving and acting within four months, and it records power reserved to the second. Digital copy, £1.50.

Had the estate still been live, the next document would have been her death certificate, which states her date and place of birth and names her informant; it was not ordered, and there is nothing now for it to carry.

ABOUT THIS ACCOUNT

This file was prepared by HD Genealogy & Technology from public and archived official records, to Genealogical Proof Standard discipline: every assertion above carries its source; every negative is dated and carries the check that makes it trustworthy; no living person is named; nothing is inferred beyond what a cited record states. Index entries are described as index entries; the will and the grant were purchased and read in full; leads are labelled as leads; and values are stated only where a document states them, as the ceilings the document gives.

Please check it. Every reference is to a public record, a public list or a document any reader can order for themselves, and the archived list edition is a fixed, citable document. If any reference does not say what it is said to say here, the fault is this file's, and correction is invited.

This is genealogical research and not legal advice; entitlement is a question of law for the reader to determine. No living person is named, none has been approached, and no contact details are supplied. A negative finding is dated rather than permanent: records are digitised and released continuously, and this account speaks as at the date on its first page. And once more: this estate is time-barred and cannot be claimed.

REFERENCES

References follow the University of Strathclyde standard. Where one records a negative, the control search proving the instrument was answering is stated with it.

- 1 Government Legal Department, Bona Vacantia Division. Unclaimed estate register entry, case BV985203/1. Stroud, Gloucestershire. RICHARDS, Ellen Watson. 03 March 1996. BV985203/1. Collection: Unclaimed Estates list, archived edition of 8 January 2022. www.gov.uk/government/collections/bona-vacantia-lists-of-unclaimed-estates : accessed 20 August 2026.
- 2 Testamentary records. England. 10 July 1996. RICHARDS, Ellen Watson. Grant of probate, index entry. Probate no. 9651407615. HM Courts and Tribunals Service. Collection: Find a Will, digital index of grants issued from 1 January 1996. probatesearch.service.gov.uk : accessed 09 August 2026.
- 3 Government Legal Department, Bona Vacantia Division. Unclaimed estates list, live edition. England and Wales. Edition of 20 August 2026. Collection: Unclaimed Estates list. www.gov.uk/government/statistical-data-sets/unclaimed-estates-list : accessed 20 August 2026.
- 4 His Majesty's Stationery Office. Deceased-estates notices under section 27 of the Trustee Act 1925. England and Wales. RICHARDS, Ellen Watson. BV985203/1. Collection: The Gazette. www.thegazette.co.uk : accessed 20 August 2026.
- 5 Testamentary records. England. 15 March 1988. RICHARDS, Ellen Watson. Will, the copy annexed to the grant, purchased digital copy. Annexed to probate no. 9651407615. HM Courts and Tribunals Service. Collection: Find a Will, digital index of grants issued from 1 January 1996. probatesearch.service.gov.uk : accessed 20 August 2026.
- 6 Testamentary records. England. 10 July 1996. RICHARDS, Ellen Watson. Grant of probate, District Probate Registry at Bristol, purchased digital copy. Probate no. 9651407615. HM Courts and Tribunals Service. Collection: Find a Will, digital index of grants issued from 1 January 1996. probatesearch.service.gov.uk : accessed 20 August 2026.
- 7 Government Legal Department, Bona Vacantia Division. Unclaimed estates list, live edition. England and Wales. Edition of 30 September 2026. Collection: Unclaimed Estates list. www.gov.uk/government/statistical-data-sets/unclaimed-estates-list : accessed 30 September 2026.