



# Treasury Solicitor's Department

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Our reference: BVFOI/174/14 re Hilda Gertrude Twells

## Freedom of Information Act 2000 Request

You asked for the following information from the Treasury Solicitor's Department ("the Department"):

I understand that the estate is unclaimed, and that your department are administering the estate.

I have been contacted by two heir hunting companies, before I answer their letters, I would like as much information as possible concerning the estate.

Your request will be dealt with by the Bona Vacantia Division ("the Division") under the Freedom of Information Act 2000.

I have interpreted your request to mean that you require any information about the deceased held by the Division and any information held by the Division about the assets and liabilities or value of the estate.

The Division holds all the information that you have requested.

Any information held by the Division regarding the deceased is published on the unclaimed estates list which can be found here: <https://www.gov.uk/government/statistical-data-sets/unclaimed-estates-list>. The information is reasonably accessible to you by other means and is therefore exempt from disclosure under section 21 of the Act. This exemption confers absolute exemption from the requirement to provide information pursuant to section 1(1)(b) of the Act.

The Division holds information about the value of the estate. I am withholding this information as it is exempt from disclosure under section 31(1)(a) of the Act. Section 31(1)(a) provides that information is exempt from disclosure if that disclosure would, or would be likely to, prejudice the prevention or detection of crime. We believe that disclosure of the requested information to any member of the public would, or would be likely to, help enable the commission of fraud or other criminal activity. In applying the exemption, we have had to balance the public interest in withholding the information against the public interest in disclosing the information.

There is a strong public interest in ensuring that the Division's activities are conducted in an open, transparent and honest way. However, disclosure of the exempt information could help enable the commission of fraud which would be likely to result in a loss to the public purse. There is a strong public interest in protecting the public purse and it is therefore considered that the public interest in maintaining the exemption in section 31(1)(a) in this case outweighs the public interest in disclosing the information.