

Mersey families inherit £100k thanks to TV team

RELATIVES of a Wirral man have received a share of his £100,000 fortune after they were traced by a TV programme.

Researchers on the BBC 1 daytime programme *Heir Hunters* attempted to find the relatives of Christopher Bett who died in 2008.

Mr Bett, from Bebington, was adopted by the Bett family in 1946 at nine months old but his background was kept a secret from him until his mum's death in 1995.

He died last March aged 63 without having made a will, leaving no indication of who he wanted to inherit his estate.

By this time he had become estranged from many members of his family and lost touch with the rest.

Probate researchers Fraser and Fraser started their quest to find the rightful heirs to Mr Bett's money, and were followed by TV cameras for the BBC show.

The company started with Mr

by **KIMBERLEY LONG**

Betts' death certificate for which they had to pay £7. In total they spend over £100,00 a year on death certificates alone.

They then use birth certificates, parish records and the electoral register to find the rest of the family.

Neil Fraser, partner at the firm, said: "We trace people using the same techniques as amateur genealogists, but we can do it much faster because of the resources available to us.

"We managed to trace most of the relatives in 24 hours.

It can then take up to 12 months to complete paperwork and be certain we have the right people."

Fraser and Fraser traced 16 relatives with most

living on Merseyside but some as far away as Durban in South Africa, who each take a share of his estate.

It is thought up to 70% of the population have not made a will.

When people die without a will they are defined legally as being intestate.

If they have no beneficiaries such as a spouse or children their estate become property of the Treasury.

However in the North West it goes to the Duchy of Lancaster and becomes property of the Queen.

Fraser and Fraser employ 30

researchers full time in their London offices and are the country's oldest probate company.

The firm have made 60 programmes for *Heir Hunters*, which regularly attracts 1.2 million viewers.

● The programme will be shown on July 23 at 9.15am on BBC 1.



Christopher Bett