



## *Prison Registers in Institutions And Organisations*

Prisons were often in old buildings, such as castles. They tended to be damp, unhealthy, insanitary and over-crowded. All kinds of prisoners were mixed in together, men, women, children; the insane; serious criminals and petty criminals; people awaiting trial; and debtors. Each prison was run by the gaoler in his own way. He made up the rules. If

you could pay, you could buy extra privileges, such as private rooms, better food, more visitors, keeping pets, letters going in and out, and books to read. If you could not, the basic fare was grim. You even had to pay the gaoler to be let out when your sentence was finished.

Law and order was a major issue in Victorian Britain. Victorians were worried about the huge new cities that had grown up following the Industrial Revolution – how were the masses to be kept under control? They were worried about rising crime. They could see that transporting convicts to Australia was not the answer and by the 1830s Australia was complaining that they did not want to be the dumping-ground for Britain's criminals.

Discovering your ancestor in prison records doesn't necessarily make them a hardened criminal, nineteenth century law was harsh and children as well as adults were imprisoned for minor misdemeanours . These records are often very detailed and can include physical descriptions of height, weight and eye colour.

### **Edward Francis Avenell**

|   | Surname  |        | Given Names         | Age                  | Trade or Occupation | Degree of Instruction |  |  |  |
|---|--|--------|---------------------|----------------------|---------------------|-----------------------|--|--|--|
| <b>Accused</b>                              | Avenell  |        | Edward Francis      | 35                   | Relieving Officer   | Reads and writes well |  |  |  |
| <b>Birth Year</b>                           | 1835   |        |                     |                      |                     |                       |  |  |  |
|   | Surname  |        | Given Name          | Title                | Address             |                       |  |  |  |
| <b>Committing Magistrate (1)</b>            | Power  |        | J. E.               | Esq.                 | Purton, Swindon     |                       |  |  |  |
| <b>Court</b>                                | Devizes  |        |                     |                      |                     |                       |  |  |  |
| <b>Date of Warrant</b>                      | 1869   | 03-Aug |                     |                      |                     |                       |  |  |  |
| <b>When Received into Custody</b>           | 1869   | 29-Jul | Bailed on committal | <b>Date of Trial</b> | 1869                | 01-Apr                |  |  |  |
| <b>Offence as Charged in the Commitment</b> | <p><b>Charge 1.</b> Embezzling the sum of six pounds, ten shillings and eight pence, the property of the Highworth and Swindon Board of Guardians at Swindon on 1st July 1869</p> <p><b>Charge 2.</b> Embezzling the sum of thirteen pounds, four shillings and sixpence, the property of the Highworth and Swindon board of Guardians at Swindon on 21st July 1869</p> <p><b>Charge 3.</b> Embezzling the sum of twenty one pounds eighteen shillings and ninepence, the property of the Highworth and Swindon Board of Guardians at Swindon on 21st July 1869</p> <p><b>Charge 4.</b> Embezzling the sum on one pound and eleven pence halfpenny, the property of the Highworth and Swindon Board of Guardians, Swindon, on the 21st July, 1869</p> <p><b>Charge 5.</b> Embezzling the sum of five pounds and upwards the property of the Guardians of the Swindon and Highworth Union at Swindon on the 25th October 1869</p> |        |                     |                      |                     |                       |  |  |  |

|  |  |                    |              |  |  |  |  |
|--|--|--------------------|--------------|--|--|--|--|
|  | <b>Charge 6.</b> Embezzling diverse sums of money, the property of the Guardians of the Swindon and Highworth Unions, at Swindon on the 18th November 1868 |                    |              |  |  |  |  |
|  | <b>Surname</b>   | <b>Given Names</b> | <b>Title</b> |  |  |  |  |
| <b>Before Whom Tried</b>   | Hannen   |                    | Justice      |  |  |  |  |
| <b>Verdict of Jury</b>   | Not guilty of Embezzlement on all counts   |                    |              |  |  |  |  |
| <b>Particulars of Previous Convictions Charged in the Indictment and Proved in Court</b> |  |                    |              |  |  |  |  |
| <b>Sentence or Order of the Court</b>  | Acquitted  |                    |              |  |  |  |  |
| <b>Other crimes Committed</b>  |  |                    |              |  |  |  |  |