



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.

	Surname	Given Names	Age	Trade or Occupation	Degree of Instruction		
Accused	Bailey	Thomas	28	Labourer	Does not read or write		
	Alias Batt						
Date of Birth	1842						
	Surname	Given Name	Title	Address			
Committing Magistrate (1)	Waylen	G.	Esq.	Devizes			
Committing Magistrate (2)	Clapham	E.	Esq.	Devizes			
Court Devizes							
Name of Victim (1)	Amada	Mary Ann					
Date of Warrant	1870	19-Jan					
When Received into Custody	1870	06-Jan	On remand		Date of Trial	1870	02-Apr
Offence as Charged in the Commitment	Wounding Mary Ann Amada at Devizes on the 5th January 1870						
	Surname	Given Names	Title				
Before Whom Tried	Prideaux	C.G.	Esq., Q.C.				
Verdict of Jury	Guilty of Common Assault						
Particulars of Previous Convictions Charged in the Indictment and Proved in Court	None						
Sentence or Order of the Court	Imprisonment with hard labour for one calendar month						
Other	None						

crimes Committed	
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