



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.

John Bailey

	Surname	Given Names	Age	Trade or Occupation	Degree of Instruction			
Accused	Bailey	John	38	Labourer	Neither read or write			
Date of Birth	1834							
	Surname	Given Name	Title	Address				
Committing Magistrate (1)	Graves	R.	Esq.	Charlton, Ludwell				
Committing Magistrate (2)	Grove	T. F.	Esq.	Fern House, Salisbury				
Court	Devizes							
Name of Victim (1)	Lampard	Eli						
Date of Warrant	1872	30-Oct						
When Received into Custody	1872	31-Oct			Date of Trial	1873	01-Jan	
Offence as Charged in the Commitment	Stealing a silver watch value 15s. the property of Eli Lampard, at Donhead St. Mary on 21st October 1872							
	Surname	Given Names	Title	Address				
Before Whom Tried	Lopes	Ralph Ludlow Esq	(Chairman)	Sandridge Park Melksham				
Verdict of Jury	Guilty of larceny from the person							
Particulars of Previous Convictions Charged in the Indictment and Proved in Court	Nil							
Sentence or Order of the Court	Imprisonment with hard labour for three calendar months in the County Prison							

Other crimes Committed	Nil
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