



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.

	Surname	Given Names	Age	Trade or Occupation	Degree of Instruction			
Accused	Arthur	Frederick William	16	Painter	Read and write imperfectly			
Birth Year	1889							
	Surname	Given Name	Title	Address				
Committing Magistrate (1)	Stancomb	J.. F.	Esq.	Shaw House, Melksham				
Committing Magistrate (2)								
Name of Victim (1)	Arthur	Charles Perkins	Of Melksham					
Name of Victim (2)								
Date of Warrant	1905	12-Sep						
When Received into Custody	1905	05-Sep	on remand			Date of Trial	1905	17-Oct
Offence as Charged in the Commitment	Feloniously and burglariously did break and enter the dwelling house of Charles Perkins Arthur, and did feloniously and burglariously steal, take and carry away seven tame birds, one pair of boots, three brushes, two knives, one bradawl, two files, one hammer, one screw driver, one bird cage, and one pipe, the goods of Charles Perkins Arthur, at Melksham, on the 3rd September 1905							
	Surname	Given Names	Title					
Before Whom Tried	Fitzmaurice	Edmond	M. P., Lord					
Verdict of Jury	Confessed Burglary							
Particulars of Previous Convictions Charged in the								

Indictment and Proved in Court	
Sentence or Order of the Court	Three months (Hard Labour)
Other crimes Committed	