



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	Willis	William	63	Carpenter	Imperfect		
Birth Year	1820						
	Surname	Given Name	Title	Address			
Committing Magistrate (1)	Archer	D.	Esq.	Kingsdown House, Swindon			
Committing Magistrate (2)							
Court	Salisbury						
Name of Victim (1)	Johnson	Alfred					
Date of Warrant	1883	12-Jul					
When Received into Custody	1883	12-Jul		Date of Trial	1908	01-Jun	
Offence as Charged in the Commitment	Stealing at Wanborough on the 2nd July 1883 four live fowls, the property of Alfred Johnson						
	Surname	Given Names	Title	Address			
Before Whom Tried	Caillard	Camille Felix Desire	Esq., Chairman of the Second Court	Wingfield House, Trowbridge			
Verdict of Jury	Guilty of Larceny; Confessed two previous convictions.						
Particulars of Previous Convictions Charged in the	Berks. Easter Sessions, 1882 obtaining goods by false pretences after previous conviction, 12 months.						

Indictment and Proved in Court		
Sentence or Order of the Court	Imprisonment with hard labour for twelve calendar months.	
Other crimes Committed	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. 1873, April 9th, Wantage, Berkshire, stealing a shawl &c., 2 months. 2. 1876, September 18th, stealing a sheet, 1 month. 3. 1879, July 1st, Berks Quarter Sessions, stealing a saw, 3 months. 4. 1880, December 7th, Fairford, Gloucestershire, stealing a pair of scissors, 14 days. 5. 1881, April 6th, Wilts Quarter Sessions, stealing boots, &c., 9 months. 6. 1882, Berks Easter Sessions, obtaining by false pretence, 12 months. <p>Six summary convictions of misdemeanour.</p>	