



## *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	
<b>Accused</b>	Bailey	John	53	Labourer	Neither read or write	
<b>Birth Year</b>	1816					
	Surname	Given Name	Title	Address		
<b>Committing Magistrate</b>	Miles	C. W.	Esq.	Burton Hill, Malmesbury		
<b>Court</b>	Devizes					
<b>Date of Warrant</b>	1868	21 Dec				
<b>When Received into Custody</b>					<b>Date of Trial</b>	1869 31-Mar
<b>Offence as Charged in the Commitment</b>	Knowingly personate and falsely assume to vote at an election for the parliamentary Borough of Malmesbury, in the name of a certain other person, named John Bailey, of Gloucester Street in the parish of Westport, in the borough of Malmesbury on the 17th November 1868					
	Surname	Given Names	Title			
<b>Before Whom Tried</b>	Byles		Justice			
<b>Verdict of Jury</b>	Guilty of personating a voter					
<b>Particulars of Previous Convictions Charged in the Indictment and Proved in Court</b>	Nil					
<b>Sentence or Order of the Court</b>	His own recognizance in £20 to appear for judgment when called on					
<b>Other Crimes Committed</b>	Nil					