



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.

Samuel or William Andrews or Fontone or Jones - 1911

	Surname	Given Names	Age	Trade or Occupation	Degree of Instruction			
Accused	Andrews	Samuel	40	Chauffeur				
	Alias Fontone	Samuel						
	Alias Jones	William						
Date of Birth	1871							
	Surname	Given Name	Title	Address				
Committing Magistrate (1)	Giffard	H. R.	Esq.	Lockeridge House, Marlborough				
Committing Magistrate (2)	Maurice	J. B.	Esq., M.D	Lloran House, Marlborough				
Name of Victim (1)								
Name of Victim (2)								
Date of Warrant	1910	12-Nov						
When Received into Custody	1910	04-Nov	On Remand	Date of Trial	1911	03-Jan		
Offence as Charged in the Commitment	<p>Feloniously did steal take and carry away from the Parish Church, situate in the Parish of Sts. Peter and Paul, at Marlborough, the sum of two pence in money, of the moneys of the Rector and Churchwardens of the said Parish on the 2nd November 1910</p> <p>Feloniously did steal take and carry away from the Parish Church situate in the Parish of Chiseldon the sum of threepence in money, of the moneys of the Vicar and Churchwardens of the said Parish on 2nd November 1910</p> <p>Feloniously did steal take and carry away from the Parish Church, situate in the Parish of Ogbourne Saint George, twenty five farthing and a copper trade token, of the moneys, goods, and chattels of the Vicar and Churchwardens of the said Parish on the 2nd November 1910</p>							

	Surname	Given Names	Title					
Before Whom Tried	Colston	C. E. H. A.	Esq.					
Verdict of Jury	Not tried on First Charge Not tried on second Charge							
Particulars of Previous Convictions Charged in the Indictment and Proved in Court	First Charge – Indictment to remain on file Second Charge – Indictment to remain on file							
Sentence or Order of the Court	3rd Charge – 6 Calendar months (Hard Labour)							
Other crimes Committed	Bound over, Liverpool City Police Court 3rd December 1909 (Loitering) as Samuel Fontone 3 months Hard Labour Wakefield City Petty Sessions, 31st December 1909 (on enclosed premises) as William Jones							