



## *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.

### **William Ashley Stole from James Fry**

	Surname	Given Names	Age	Trade or Occupation	Degree of Instruction	
<b>Accused</b>	Ashley	William	52	Labourer	Read	
<b>Birth Year</b>	1817					
	Surname	Given Name	Title	Address		
<b>Committing Magistrate (1)</b>	Butcher	H.	Esq.	Devizes		
<b>Committing Magistrate (2)</b>	Heard	T. J.	Esq.	Devizes		
<b>Name of Victim (1)</b>	Fry	James				
<b>Name of Victim (2)</b>						
<b>Date of Warrant</b>	1869	06-Oct				
<b>When Received into Custody</b>	1869	02-Oct on remand		<b>Date of Trial</b>	1869	23-Oct
<b>Offence as Charged in the Commitment</b>	Stealing 6 loaves of bread, the property of James Fry the 28th September at Devizes					
	Surname	Given Names	Title			
<b>Before Whom Tried</b>	Merewether	H..A.	Esq.,; Recorder			
<b>Verdict of Jury</b>	Guilty of Larceny after two previous convictions					
<b>Particulars of Previous Convictions Charged in the Indictment and Proved in Court</b>						
<b>Sentence or</b>	Imprisonment with hard labour in the Prison at Devizes, for Three Calendar Months					

<b>Order of the Court</b>	
<b>Other Crimes committed and convicted for</b>	14 March 1868, Petty Sessions Devizes, Stealing Prong 14 days. Petty Sessions Devizes, stealing Fir Pole, 1 month