



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	Avenell		Edward Francis	35	Relieving Officer	Reads and writes well		
Birth Year	1835							
	Surname		Given Name	Title	Address			
Committing Magistrate (1)	Power		J. E Esq.		Purton, Swindon			
Court	Devizes							
Date of Warrant	1869		03-Aug					
When Received into Custody	1869		29-Jul	Bailed on committal	Date of Trial	1869	01-Apr	
Offence as Charged in the Commitment	<p>Charge 1. Embezzling the sum of six pounds, ten shillings and eight pence, the property of the Highworth and Swindon Board of Guardians at Swindon on 1st July 1869</p> <p>Charge 2. Embezzling the sum of thirteen pounds, four shillings and sixpence, the property of the Highworth and Swindon board of Guardians at Swindon on 21st July 1869</p> <p>Charge 3. Embezzling the sum of twenty one pounds eighteen shillings and nine pence, the property of the Highworth and Swindon Board of Guardians at Swindon on 21st July 1869</p> <p>Charge 4. Embezzling the sum on one pound and eleven pence halfpenny, the property of the Highworth and Swindon Board of Guardians, Swindon, on the 21st July 1869</p> <p>Charge 5. Embezzling the sum of five pounds and upwards the property of the Guardians of the Swindon and Highworth Union at Swindon on the 25th October 1869</p> <p>Charge 6. Embezzling divers sums of money, the property of the Guardians of the Swindon and Highworth Unions, at Swindon on the 18th November 1868</p>							

	Surname	Given Names	Title				
Before Whom Tried	Hannen		Justice				
Verdict of Jury	Not guilty of Embezzlement on all counts						
Particulars of Previous Convictions Charged in the Indictment and Proved in Court							
Sentence or Order of the Court	Acquitted						
Other crimes Committed							