



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.

## George Ash

	Surname	Given Names	Age	Trade or Occupation	Degree of Instruction
<b>Accused</b>	Ash	George	62	Painter	
<b>Date of Birth</b>	1809				
<b>Court</b>	Devizes				
	Surname	Given Name	Title	Address	
<b>Committing Magistrate (1)</b>	Parsons	W. J.	Esq.	Wootton Bassett	
<b>Name of Victim (1)</b>	Watts	Sidney			
<b>Date of Warrant</b>	1870	24-Oct			
<b>When Received into Custody</b>	1870	25-Oct	<b>Date of Trial</b>		
<b>Offence as Charged in the Commitment</b>	Receiving seven coats, two waistcoats, one pair of trowsers (sic) three hats, one tablecloth, one box of cigars, four pounds of tobacco, two pounds of tea, and eleven pounds of sugar, the property of Sidney Watts, at Wootton Bassett, on the 24th September 1870				
	Surname	Given Names	Title	Address	
<b>Before Whom Tried</b>	Merewether	Henry Alworth	Esq.	Bowden Hill Chippenham	
<b>Verdict of Jury</b>	Pleaded guilty of larceny. Confessed previous conviction				
<b>Particulars of Previous Convictions Charged in the Indictment and Proved in Court</b>					
<b>Sentence or Order of the Court</b>	Imprisonment with hard labour for two years in the Prison at Devizes, and to be subject to the supervision of the Police for seven Years				
<b>Other crimes Committed</b>	Surrey Sessions 1861, stealing 4 bottles of sauce, three months				