

Transportation of Criminals (Convicts)

Background

The transportation of criminals (often referred to as convicts) to British Colonies around the world started in 1615. Originally convicts were sent to America, mainly to Virginia, or the West Indies to work on the plantations. After American independence in 1776, an alternative destination became necessary. In 1788, the British government founded New South Wales, Australia, as a convict colony. Tasmania (then called Van Diemen's Land) was used from 1803, and Western Australia was used from 1850. In total around 153,000 people were sent to Australia. But convicts were also sent to other British colonies to work on public or military building projects. The system of transportation ended in 1868.

What records are there, and what information will they contain?

Bonds for Transportation to America 1727-1772 (Q/CB/1)

The bonds give the name of the convict, together with their offence and sentence. They have been digitised and indexed by Ancestry. You can view records which have been digitised by Ancestry for free from Gloucestershire Archives, Gloucestershire Family History Society, any Gloucestershire library, or from home with an Ancestry subscription www.ancestry.co.uk.

The bonds have also been indexed and listed in detail in our online catalogue by a Gloucestershire Archives volunteer. You can see the information via the online catalogue on our website. Search using the finding reference Q/CB/1 in the search box. Or you can refine your search by using the "advanced search" option and entering a name into the keyword search box. Make sure you see the full information by clicking on the finding reference number on the left-hand side for each entry of interest.

Transportees from Gloucestershire to Australia 1783-1842

The book '*Transportees from Gloucestershire to Australia 1783-1842*' by Irene Wyatt lists criminals who were sentenced to transportation during these years. It gives:

- Name, age and address
- Occupation
- Sentence
- Date and court of trial
- Date of transportation and name of ship
- Place transported to
- Sources of Information

The list is arranged by the surname of the convict. There is also an index by place, occupation and ship. You can use this book at Gloucestershire Archives (GAL/C5;B231/47904GS), or you can borrow a copy from Gloucestershire libraries.

Gaol Calendars

These will tell you more about the crime and the criminal. For more information, see *Research Guide: Gaol Records*.

Court Records

Gloucestershire Archives holds records of the Gloucestershire Quarter Sessions court and the Petty Sessions courts. These may contain more information but can be difficult to use. For more information on court records, see *Research Guide: Court records*. Please note that records of the Assize courts are held at the National Archives, not Gloucestershire Archives.

Newspapers

Trials and crimes were often reported in detail in the local press. Gloucestershire Archives holds copies of some local newspapers; the earliest is the Gloucester Journal which begins in 1721. Some local newspapers have been digitised and can be viewed online. For a brief introduction to newspapers as a source, see *Research Guide: Newspapers*. For fuller details of local (and national) newspapers, including the date that the various publications started, see our more detailed Newspaper Guide (available on our website and in print at the Archives).

How to Find the Records

To view a list of records in these collections please use our online catalogue, available at: [Gloucestershire Heritage Hub Catalogue](#). Type the reference given above into the search box as your search term.

For more guidance on using our online catalogue please see the Help page and FAQs. Or you can watch our YouTube tutorial.