



Gaol Records

(also known as jail records or prison records)

Background

By the 17th century Gloucester Castle's main function was as the county gaol. Following bad reports of the gaol in 1777 ground-breaking local prison reformers worked to create a new, state-of-the-art building on the same site combining a gaol, penitentiary, and house of correction. This opened in 1791. Few records of the original gaol in the castle survive.

Originally the Gaol was supervised by the Gloucestershire Quarter Sessions. In 1878 responsibility passed to the Prison Commissioners until the Home Office took it over in 1963. It finally closed on 31 March 2013. Prisoners usually came from courts in Gloucester, Worcester, and Hereford and the prison became all male in 1915.

New Houses of Correction were established in Littledean, Northleach, Horsley and Lawfords Gate as part of the reform in the 1780s. First time and minor offenders and young people were often placed in these rather than the County Gaol.

Both Gloucester and Tewkesbury Borough Councils ran their own goals until the 1850s. The Tewkesbury Gaol on Bredon Road was built in 1816. It closed in 1854 and all prisoners were transferred to the County Gaol. Gloucester City Gaol in Southgate Street closed in 1858.

What records are there and what information will they contain?

Gaol Calendars (Q/SG) 1728-1961

The Gaol calendars are lists of prisoners (mostly awaiting trial) in all the different gaols and the houses of correction in the county. The calendars give the prisoner's name, the date they were committed and their offence. These records have been digitised and indexed by Ancestry up to and including 1913.

The County Gaol (Q/Gc)

There are several series of records which include information about individual prisoners. They have all been digitised and indexed by Ancestry.

Record Type	Dates	Catalogue reference
Registers of prisoners awaiting trial	1815-1879	Available on Ancestry
Prisoners' register	1879-1951	Available on Ancestry
Album of prisoners' photographs	1882-1935 (gaps)	Available on Ancestry
Registers of summary convictions	1853-1879	Available on Ancestry
Record of previous convictions	1880-1936	Available on Ancestry
Debtors' Register	1838-1879	Available on Ancestry
Penitentiary registers	1817-1844	Available on Ancestry

Other records for the County Gaol have survived but don't normally provide detailed information about every prisoner. They include: Governor's journals 1795-1976 (Q/Gc/3); chaplain's journals, 1806-72 (Q/Gc/31) and surgeon's journals 1791-1820 (Q/Gc/32). Some records relating to prison staff have survived (Q/Gc/21 and Q/CGc/22). Those less than 100 years old are closed.

Houses of Correction

A wide range of records for the Houses of Correction has survived. The most detailed information about individual prisoners is recorded in **the prison registers which have all been digitised by Ancestry**. You will need to visit Gloucestershire Archives to see the other records mentioned in the table.

Gaol	Documents	Reference
Littledean House of Correction 1791-1923	These include prison registers, visiting justices journals, minute books and order books, day books and journals, dietary books, property books, chaplain's journals, medical diaries and journals, matron's journals, schoolmasters' journals, day books, surgeon's book	Q/GLi
Horsley House of Correction 1792-1878	These include prison registers, visiting justices journals, minute books and order books, day books and journals, provisions accounts, diet books, property books, chaplain's journals and surgeon's journal	Q/Gh
Northleach House of Correction 1791-1844	These records include prison registers, visiting justices journals and order books, surgeon's book and apothecary's book	Q/GN

Borough Gaols

All the registers mentioned in the tables below have been digitised and indexed by Ancestry.

Gloucester (GBR/G3)

Documents	Dates	Reference
Registers of prisoners	1810-1855	Available on Ancestry
Prisoners' property book	1848-1858	Available on Ancestry
Prisoners awaiting trial at city quarter sessions	1840-1846 1914-1971 (gaps)	Available on Ancestry

Tewkesbury (TBR/A13)

Documents	Dates	Reference
Register of prisoners in new gaol	1815-1854	Available on Ancestry

How to access the records

You can view records which have been digitised by Ancestry for free from Gloucestershire Archives or any Gloucestershire library, or from home with an Ancestry subscription. You will need to visit Gloucestershire Archives to see the other records mentioned. Use the online catalogue on our website to find out more about them. Type the reference given above into the "quick search" box to bring up a list of items under that reference. Click on the finding ref number on the left hand side to view more information about each item, including its full catalogue reference. Some records less than 100 years old are closed. This will be noted on the online catalogue. If you have any questions about this please email us at archives@gloucestershire.gov.uk