

London Metropolitan Archives

Information Leaflet Number 59

Prison Records



Introduction

Before 1878 most prisons were the responsibility of local government. However the Tower of London, the Fleet Prison, the Marshalsea in Southwark and the King's (or Queen's Bench) also in Southwark were controlled by the Crown and the central courts. Records of these prisons are held by The National Archives, Kew, Richmond, Surrey, TW9 4DU (Tel: 020 8876 3444)<http://apps.nationalarchives.gov.uk/Contact>. Prisons were used to keep those awaiting trial or execution of sentence in safe custody, to coerce debtors or the contumacious, and as a punishment in itself. Originally all these types of prisoners were confined in the same gaol, but later more specialised prisons were developed for different types of inmate.

The sheriff of each county by the 12th century was required to provide a gaol for his county. From the 16th century the justices of the peace were also involved in running the county gaol. Cities and boroughs had their own gaols. The Church also had prisons including Westminster Gatehouse owned by Westminster Abbey and the Bishop of Winchester's prison, known as the Clink in Southwark, where petty offenders, whores and their associates, and in the reign of Elizabeth I, recusants, were imprisoned. Some landowners had been granted the right to have their own prisons. These included the Lord of the Manors of Stepney and Hackney who owned Whitechapel Prison, which like many other small local prisons, by the mid-18th century was used to confine debtors. Tower Hamlets Gaol in Wellclose Square and St Catherine's Gaol had virtually ceased to be used by the late 18th century. Prisoners had to pay fees to their gaolers including a fee if they were discharged or acquitted.

In 1553 the former royal palace of Bridewell was granted to the City of London by Edward VI as a 'house of occupations' for the able bodied poor. Poor children were apprenticed and trained in various crafts. It also provided punishment and attempted reformation of petty criminals and rogues. Vagrants and prostitutes would be flogged on admission, and all prisoners would be made to work. Other towns established houses of correction or Bridewells. An Act of Parliament of 1576 allowed justices of the peace to set up houses of correction in each county 'for setting on work' and punishing the idle able-bodied poor and rogues. An Act of Parliament of 1609 ordered all counties to provide one or more houses of correction with more entirely punitive intent. By the end of the 17th century these had become very similar to or had merged with the county gaols.

By the late 18th century public concern at the state of the prisons was stirring Parliament and local justices into reform. Popham's Acts of 1774 increased the powers of the justices over county gaols and provided for the payment by the county of the fees of discharged or acquitted prisoners. John Howard's *The State of the Prisons* exposing the appalling conditions in most local prisons first appeared in 1777. Gilbert's House of Correction Act of 1782 permitted quarter sessions to nominate inspectors to visit and report on the houses of correction. Remand prisoners were to

be kept apart from convicted prisoners and women and men were to be separated. The keeper was to be paid rather than extracting fees from prisoners and chaplains were to be appointed as they already were for the county gaols. A reformed gaol was built at Horsham, Sussex, in 1775-1779 and a house of correction which was intended to reform as well as punish prisoners was built at Petworth, also in Sussex, in the 1780s. A penitentiary was opened in Gloucester in 1791. The Middlesex Justices built a new house of correction for Middlesex at Cold Bath Fields in Clerkenwell which opened in 1794 which was intended for prisoners sentenced to short periods of imprisonment.

During the 17th century the central government had become involved in the punishment of convicts through the use of transportation to the colonies as an alternative to the death sentence for those convicted of serious offences. In 1821 the government opened a national penitentiary at Millbank, where many prisoners were held before transportation. Pentonville opened in 1842 as a model prison. More public works prisons followed where those with longer sentences were to face penal servitude.

Local prisons holding remand prisoners and those sentenced to short terms of imprisonment remained under the control of local justices or municipal authorities, but the government became increasingly involved in overseeing their management. The 1823 Gaol Act required justices to make a systematic inspection of prisons and the send quarterly reports to the Home Secretary. Keepers of prisons, chaplains and surgeons were to keep journals. In 1835 Parliament passed 'an Act for effecting great Uniformity of Practice in the government of the Several Prisons in England and Wales and for appointing Inspectors of Prisons in Great Britain'. The 1877 Prison Act transferred all local prisons to central government control from 1 April 1878.

London Metropolitan Archives holds the records of the City of London Corporation and the City of London and Middlesex Sessions which include extensive records relating to the administration of prisons for the City of London and Middlesex before 1878. In addition we hold on deposit the records of Bridewell. Records of individual prisons are considered appropriate for transfer to approved places of deposit outside the National Archives. Records of three of Her Majesty's Prisons, Holloway, Wandsworth and Wormwood Scrubs, and those of HM Young Offender Institute and Remand Centre, Feltham, have been deposited in London Metropolitan Archives. For details of these records see below. A separate information leaflet No. 66 on the Records of Imprisoned Debtors is available.

City of London Prisons

The administration of prisons and compters in London was the responsibility of the two Sheriffs. They in turn reported to the Court of Aldermen who issued orders and decrees relating to prison management. Few records of the Sheriffs survive as they were retained by the individual Sheriffs when they left office, but extensive records of

the management of the prisons can be found in the letter books, the repertories, minutes, and other records of the Court of Aldermen, in particular in the minutes and papers of committees relating to prisons 1784-1797 (COL/CA/PCA) and the Gaol Committee 1794-1878 (COL/CA/GAC). The minutes and papers of the Court of Common Council and its Committees also include material relating to gaols and compters, especially those of the Newgate Gaol Committees 1755-1831 (COL/CC/NGC), the Prisons Committee 1842-1853 (COL/CC/PCC), and the Gaol Expenses and Finance Committee 1816-1834 (COL/CC/FNG). The records of the City of London Surveyor's Department include a large number of plans of prisons and compters especially Newgate, Holloway and Whitecross Street Prisons (COL/SVD/PL/08).

Miscellaneous records relating to prisons and compters - CLA/032

These records 1487-1878 include accounts and financial papers, statutes and bills relating to gaols and prisons, Acts of the Court of Common Council and the Court of Aldermen, various committee minutes and papers, including reports of the Gaol Committee, contracts, petitions, regulations, papers relating to the health of the prisoners, reports of the Commissioners of Prisons, and papers relating to prison charities. Prisons mentioned include the Houses of Correction at Westminster and Cold Bath Fields, the Debtors Prison, Whitecross Street, Newgate, Ludgate, King's Bench, Fleet, Marshalsea, Clerkenwell, Bridewell, Holloway, and Wandsworth as well as the Wood Street, Poultry, Giltspur Street and Southwark Compters.

Newgate Prison - CLA/035

Newgate was the county gaol for Middlesex as well as for the City of London. It was founded by King Henry II in 1188 and was originally part of the gatehouse at Newgate. In 1399 Henry IV granted custody of the gates of London, with their attached prisons, to the citizens of London. Newgate was enlarged in 1236, rebuilt in 1423 with money donated by the Mayor, Richard Whittington, burned down in 1666, and was rebuilt. A new prison designed by George Dance and built between 1770 and 1778 was burnt down in the Gordon Riots in 1780, but was again rebuilt 1780-1783. The place of public execution in London was then moved from Tyburn to an area outside Newgate. Public hangings ceased in 1868 and subsequent executions took place inside the prison. Newgate closed in 1902 and the buildings was demolished and the land used for an extension to the Central Criminal Court.

Records include:

- Minutes, rough minutes and papers of the Committee to enquire into the state of Newgate Gaol and how the same may be enlarged 1755-1766, and minutes, rough minutes, papers and journals of the Committee for rebuilding Newgate 1767-1831, including certificates of work done, financial accounts, bills, proposals and letters - COL/CC/NGC

- Visiting Justices minutes 1814-1877 (gaps) – CLA/035/02/050-052
- Returns as to state of prison and prisoners' health 1812-1819 – CLA/032/01/037
- Regulations 1860 – CLA/032/01/031
- Plans c.1750-1902 – COL/CCS/PL/02/051,095A-C, 325A-B, 553, COL/SVD/PL/08/0001-0086, 0352-0367, 0457-0542

Records of Prisoners

- Calendars or lists of prisoners 1796-1797, 1819, 1828 – CLA/035/01/001-003
- Calendars of Middlesex prisoners after trial (gaps) 1711-1774 – MJ/CP/P/005-584
- Calendars of prisoners (printed) 1820-1822, 1830-1853 – OB/C/P
- Receipt books for felons' goods 1857-1868 – CLA/035/02/006-017
- Schedules of felons' goods 1849-1870 – CLA/040/03/001-038
- Inquests into deaths of prisoners 1783-1839 (gaps) – CLA/041/PI/001-018

Other Records relating to Prisoners

Old Bailey Sessions records: prisoners were held at Newgate before being tried at the Old Bailey. LMA holds the records of the Sessions of Gaol Delivery of Newgate for the City of London and Middlesex held at the Old Bailey until 1834 when they were replaced by the Central Criminal Court whose records are held by The National Archives. We also have calendars of indictments – CLA/047/LJ/10, MJ/C/J, OB/C/J. Other calendars of prisoners held at Newgate can be found on the sessions rolls and amongst the sessions papers for the City of London and Middlesex. For more details see our information leaflets 39 'A Brief Guide to the Middlesex Sessions Records', 40 'Sessions Records for the City of London and Southwark' and 42 'My ancestor was a convict'.

Records of prisoners available on line

Printed journalistic accounts of trials of prisoners from Newgate were published as the Old Bailey Sessions Papers. These have been digitised and can be searched on the website of The Proceedings of the Old Bailey, 1674-1913 at www.oldbaileyonline.org. This website also includes the Ordinary (or chaplain) of Newgate's Accounts which are biographies of criminals executed at Tyburn 1676-1772.

Most of the surviving sessions papers for the City of London, Middlesex and Old Bailey Sessions 1690-1799 including calendars of prisoners for Newgate have been digitised as part of London Lives 1690 to 1800 and can be searched at www.londonlives.org.

The National Archives holds Newgate Calendars 1782-1853 (HO 77/1-61) and Criminal Registers for Middlesex and the City of London 1791-1849 (HO 26) and the rest of the country 1805-1892 (including Middlesex and the City after 1849) (HO 27). The Criminal Registers for 1791-1801 which contain alphabetically organised lists of prisoners held at Newgate are also available on the London Lives website. All the Criminal Registers can be searched on www.ancestry.co.uk.

Staff Records

- Return of duties, names and ages of officers 1847 – CLA/032/01/29A

Poultry Compter - CLA/030

In the City of London each Sheriff was responsible for a Compter, a city prison for debtors and other civil prisoners. The Poultry Compter was the oldest of the City compters. The prisoners here were mainly committed by the Lord Mayor. An Act of Parliament in 1785 empowered the City of London Corporation to pull down the Poultry and Wood Street Compters and to build a new compter in Giltspur Street and to move there prisoners from the old compters. Prisoners were moved from Poultry to Giltspur Street Compter in about 1791 where separate sections were known as the Poultry and Wood Street Compters which continued to have separate keepers until 1804. Poultry Compter was demolished in 1817.

Records include:

- Returns as to state of prison and prisoners' health 1815 – CLA/032/01/037
- Plans 1767-1798 – COL/CCS/PL/02/098A-B, COL/SVD/PL/08/1348

Records of Prisoners

- Prisoners' lists 1714-1715, 1724, 1740, 1747 – CLA/030/02/002-006
- Charge books 1782-1796, 1800-1815 – CLA/030/01/001-017
- Commitment books 1792-1796, 1800-1815 – CLA/030/01/018-022
- Inquests into deaths of prisoners 1783-1815 – CLA/041/PI/01/001-002,009,011-013

Wood Street Compter - CLA/028

Wood Street Compter replaced a mediaeval compter in Bread Street in 1555. It was rebuilt in 1670 with room for 70 inmates. It was divided into three sections for the rich, the comfortable and the poor. An Act of Parliament in 1785 empowered the City of London Corporation to pull down the Poultry and Wood Street Compters and to build a new compter in Giltspur Street and to move there prisoners from the old compters. The prisoners were moved from Wood Street to Giltspur Street in 1791 part

of which was known as Wood Street Compter. The old premises were demolished in January 1792.

Records include:

- Plans 1780-1791 – COL/CCS/PL/01/202/66, COL/CCS/PL/02/057,140, COL/SVD/PL/08/087-094

Records of Prisoners

- Prisoners' lists 1741-1791 (gaps) – CLA/028/01/001-027
- Names of prisoners sent from Wood Street Compter to Ludgate and Newgate 1770-1829 - CLA/028/02/001-003
- List of prisoners for debt in Wood Street Compter on 5 May 1788 with subsequent committals to Nov. 1803 - CLA/028/01/041
- Inquests into deaths of prisoners 1783-1803 – CLA/041/PI/01/001-002,011-013

Giltspur Street Compter - CLA/029

Giltspur Street Compter stood opposite St Sepulchre's Church and was designed by George Dance the Younger to replace the Poultry and Wood Street Compters. Prisoners were moved from the old compters to Giltspur Street in about 1791 where separate sections were known as the Poultry and Wood Street Compters which continued to have separate keepers until 1804. Giltspur Street Compter was demolished in 1855.

Records include:

- Committee for rebuilding the Poultry and Wood Street Compters which was later appointed to put in execution the Act of Parliament for pulling down the old compters and for rebuilding Giltspur Street Compter: minutes and papers 1783-1789 - CLA/032/02/004-006
- Accounts of fund for building new Compter 1786-1794 – CLA/029/02/004
- Returns as to state of prison and prisoners' health 1808-1819 – CLA/032/01/037
- Plans 1794-1848 – COL/CCS/PL/02/521, COL/SVD/PL/08/0108-0115

Records of Prisoners

- Prisoners' lists 1791-1815 – CLA/028/01/027-040, CLA/033/01/007
- Charge books 1807-1811 – CLA/030/01/014-105
- Commitments records 1803-1823 – CLA/029/01/008-009, CLA/030/01/023
- Inquests into deaths of prisoners 1783-1829 – CLA/041/PI/01/001-002,005,011-013

Staff Records

- Return of duties, names and ages of officers 1847 – CLA/032/01/29A

Southwark Compter (also known as Borough Compter) - CLA/031

The City of London was granted jurisdiction over the Borough of Southwark by royal charters from 1327. A further charter in 1550 made the inhabitants subject to city law and extended the jurisdiction of the City courts. The Mayor, Recorder and Aldermen who had served the office of mayoralty were appointed justices of the peace for Southwark and held sessions there and also needed their own prison. The records of the Southwark Sessions 1654-1929 (CLA/046) are held by LMA. The City used part of the former church of St Margaret, Southwark, as a courthouse and compter until it was destroyed in a fire in 1676. The compter was rebuilt and enlarged. In 1717 a new prison was built in Tooley Street. It was burnt down in the Gordon Riots in 1780, but was rebuilt on the same site in 1795.

The establishment of a regular magistracy in 1814 led to a large increase in the number of prisoners, including debtors. In 1840 the City decided to use the Southwark Compter for female prisoners and female inmates were transferred there from Giltspur Street Compter. Southwark Compter closed in 1852 and was demolished in 1855.

Records include:

- Visiting records 1814-1836 – CLA/031/02/015-016
- Journal of the Borough Compter 1817-1823 – CLA/031/02/019
- Keeper's letter book 1817-1820 – CLA/031/02/020
- Returns as to state of prison and prisoners' health 1815 – CLA/032/01/037
- Account books 1814-1839 – CLA/031/02/021-027
- Plans 1686-1848 – COL/CCS/PL/01/049A, 067, COL/CCS/PL/02/058A-B,335, COL/SVD/PL/08/0098-0107

Records of Prisoners

- Lists of prisoners committed for trial at the Southwark Sessions giving name, age and description of prisoner, including physical characteristics, place of residence, place of birth, occupation, particulars of offence and committed, when tried, verdict, sentence, date of discharge, removal etc. 1814-1842 – CLA/031/01/009
- Other lists of prisoners 1814-1842 – CLA/031/01/010-013, CLA/031/03/004
- Charge books (with index) 1814-1842 – CLA/031/01/003-008
- Committals for debt 1811-1830 – CLA/031/01/001-002

- Weekly return of the names of prisoners distinguishing debtors, misdemeanours etc., prisoners
- committed to Sessions, prisoners upon orders with particulars, as appropriate of debt, offence, sentence etc. 1815-1818 - CLA/031/02/017
- Inquests into deaths of prisoners 1783-1838 – CLA/041/PI/01/001-002,005,011-013

Staff Records

- Return of duties, names and ages of officers 1846 – CLA/032/01/29B

Bridewell Hospital - CLC/275

Bridewell Hospital was founded in 1553 as a 'house of occupations' for the able bodied poor. From the late 16th century, Bridewell and Bethlem Hospitals were jointly governed by a President, Treasurer and a Court of Governors. Gradually, Bridewell became associated with prisoners and punishment rather than with the idle poor and reform. Although poor children were apprenticed and learnt a trade there, the numbers of prisoners were far greater. The governors were much concerned with the corrupting effect on Bridewell's apprentices of close proximity to prisoners and at the end of the 18th century a move began to separate the houses of correction (prison) and occupations (apprentices) which culminated in the establishment of a new House of Occupations in Southwark in 1830. This was renamed King Edward's Schools in 1860 and in 1867 the boys' school moved to Witley in Surrey. For details of the records see information leaflet 30 'Pupil records of King Edward's Schools, Witley'. From 1853 no more female prisoners were accepted and in 1855 the few remaining male prisoners were transferred to Holloway Prison. Bridewell closed as a prison in 1855 when most of the building was knocked down and new streets and houses took its place. Two cells were maintained in the Bridewell Royal Hospital administration offices for refractory City apprentices whom the City Chamberlain could commit to Bridewell. These were last used in 1916.

Records include:

- Court of Governors minutes (microfilms) 1559-1919 – CLC/275/MS/33011/001-031
- Prison Committee minutes 1775-1802 – CLC/275/MS33131/001-002
- Prison Sub-Committee minutes 1792-1854 – CLC/275/MS33132/001-012

Records of Prisoners

Before 1775 the only records of prisoners which survive are admission and discharge orders 1691-1695 (CLC/275/MS33137/001). References to Bridewell as a prison and to individual prisoners can be found in found in the Court of Governors' minutes (CLC/275/MS/33011). The minutes are indexed with names of prisoners for the

following years: 1559-62 (by Christian name); 1574-6 (index badly damaged); 1576-9; 1604-10; 1626-58; 1674-77/8 and 1689-95. The 18th century minute books have been digitised as part of London Lives 1690 to 1800 and can be searched at www.londonlives.org.

- Prisoners' admission or discharge orders 1691-1695, 1773, 1846-1868 – CLC/275/MS33137/001-002
- Prisoners' committal books 1809-1916 – CLC/275/MS33138/001-009
- Weekly returns of prisoners in custody giving name, age, offence and length of sentence 1817-1830 – CLC/275/MS33140/001-014
- Prisoners' character books giving name, age, date, crime and sentence with remarks on prisoner's background and demeanour 1841-1916 – CLC/275/MS33141/001-004
- Names of City apprentices sent to Bridewell 1837-1916 – COL/CHD/AP/04/05/001
- Inquests into deaths of prisoners 1783-1838 – CLA/041/PI/01/001-002, 009, 011-013

Ludgate Prison - CLA/033

Ludgate Prison was established in 1378 in the gatehouse of the Ludgate. By the 18th century it had moved to the former Bridewell of the London Workhouse in Bishopsgate Street. It was used to imprison debtors who were Freemen of the City of London and for clergymen, proctors and attorneys who were held for minor offences. Prisoners were moved from Ludgate Prison to Giltspur Street Compter in 1795. It was closed in the 19th century.

Records include:

- Keeper's book 1637-1671 – CLA/033/01/005
- Works' accounts 1672-1690 (gaps) – CLA/033/01/018
- Returns as to state of prison and prisoners' health 1808-1815 – CLA/032/01/037
- Plans 1753-1831 – COL/CCS/PL/02/208A, COL/SVD/PL/08/0109-0111

Records of Prisoners

- Prisoners' lists 1725, 1760, 1800, 1807-1815 – CLA/033/01/007, 009, 014
- Lists of prisoners discharged 1808-1815 – CLA/033/01/10
- Inquests into deaths of prisoners 1789-1814 – CLA/041/PI/01/005,011-013

The Debtors Prison or Whitecross Street Prison - CLA/034

The Debtors' Prison was built between 1813-1815 by the City of London in Whitecross Street as a debtors' prison for the exclusive reception of persons in the custody of the Sheriffs on civil process for London and Middlesex who would otherwise have gone to Newgate, the two compters or Ludgate. It held 400 prisoners. In 1870 all prisoners were transferred to the new Holloway Prison. A separate information leaflet No. 66 on the Records of Imprisoned Debtors is being prepared.

Records include:

- Rules and regulations: CLA/034/01/017-024, CLA/032/01/031
- Returns as to state of prison and prisoners' health 1815 – CLA/032/01/037
- Plans 1812-1871 – COL/SVD/PL/08/0119-0136

Records of Prisoners

- Names of prisoners in custody of Sheriffs in Debtors' Prison Sept 1817 – CLA/034/01/008
- Inquests into deaths of prisoners 1815-1839 – CLA/041/PI/01/010,019

Staff Records

- Return of duties, names and ages of officers 1847 – CLA/032/01/29A

Holloway Prison - CLA/003

Holloway Prison was built by the City of London Corporation as the City of London House of Correction for men and women opening in 1852. The prison was taken over by the government in 1878. For details of the records held by LMA see under 'Central Government Prisons' below.

Middlesex Prisons

Newgate owned by the City of London was the county gaol for Middlesex. However in 1615 the Middlesex Justices built their own house of correction or bridewell. References to the management of prisons can be found in the Middlesex Sessions Books 1639-1716 (MJ/SB/B), the General Orders of Court 1716-1878 (MJ/OC) and the Sessions Papers. The General Orders of Court and the Sessions Papers for the 18th century can be searched online on at www.londonlives.org. From 1773 the Middlesex Justices regularly appointed committees of justices to report and advise on the county prisons. From 1795 a committee of visiting justices was appointed which met regularly at the prisons to deal with the appointment of officers, salaries, rules and regulations, repairs, diet, etc., and inspected the welfare and discipline of prisoners. After 1837 there were separate visiting committees for each prison. Records of prison

administration 1722-1886 MA/G/GEN/0001-1306 include prison committee minute books 1773-1812 and 1877-1878 (MA/G/GEN/0001-0004), reports 1781 (MA/G/GEN/0007-0018), plans 1847-1886 (MA/G/GEN/0822-1075), papers relating to a dispute with the City of London over payment of fees for discharge 1774-1791 (MA/G/GEN/1126-1185) and rules for prisons and prison officers 1819-1868 (MA/G/GEN/1186-1295). The Middlesex Sessions records also include reports on prisons 1835-1878 (MA/RS/01/235-760, MA/RS/02/066-090) and deeds and contracts relating to county prisons mainly dating from the 19th century (MA/D/G/001-006).

Records of Prisoners

Calendars of prisoners can be found in the Middlesex and Westminster Sessions rolls (MJ/SR) and amongst the Middlesex and Westminster Sessions papers (MJ/SP, WJ/SP). For more details see our information leaflets 39 'A Brief Guide to the Middlesex Sessions Records' and 42 'My ancestor was a convict'. Most of the surviving sessions papers for the Middlesex, Westminster and Old Bailey Sessions 1690-1799 including calendars of prisoners have been digitised as part of London Lives 1690 to 1800 and can be searched at www.londonlives.org.

The National Archives holds Criminal Registers for Middlesex and the City of London 1791-1849 (HO 26) and the rest of the country 1805-1892 (including Middlesex and the City after 1849) (HO 27). The Criminal Registers for 1791-1801 are also available on the London Lives website. All the Criminal Registers can be searched on www.ancestry.co.uk.

The National Archives also holds After Trial Calendars of prisoners for Middlesex 1868-1882 (HO 140).

Clerkenwell House of Correction (also known as (Clerkenwell Bridewell)

In 1615 the Middlesex Justices of the Peace bought land in Clerkenwell to the north of Clerkenwell Green to build a new county prison. The house of correction known as the New Prison or Clerkenwell Bridewell was built on part of the site to take overspill from the City of London prisons. In 1663-4 a workhouse was built on the north side of the prison as a workhouse for a union or 'corporation' of Middlesex parishes, but this was defunct by 1675. After the Bridewell burnt down in 1679, the prison was moved into part of the workhouse. The rest of the workhouse had become the Quaker Workhouse by 1700. By the 1790s the workhouse had closed and the dilapidated Bridewell had been superseded by the new House of Correction at Cold Bath Fields.

Records of Prisoners

- Calendars of prisoners (gaps) 1700-1787 – MJ/CC/R/001-081, 147-150

- Calendars of prisoners (gaps) 1756-1783 – MJ/CC/B/075-082
- Calendars of prisoners after trial (gaps) 1711-1794 – MJ/CC/P/004-590

New Prison or House of Detention, Clerkenwell (later Clerkenwell Prison)

MA/G/CLE

By 1685 another prison had been built in Clerkenwell to the south of the existing Bridewell and the workhouse. This was also known as the New Prison, but was a house of detention for prisoners awaiting trial at the Middlesex Sessions who could no longer be accommodated at Newgate. It was enlarged and rebuilt in 1774-1775.

Between 1816 and 1818 it was rebuilt and much enlarged by taking in the sites of the former workhouse and Bridewell as well as neighbouring houses and gardens. It was again rebuilt in the mid 1840s to meet modern standards of prison design with separate cells for secluding prisoners. Male and female prisoners waiting trial for petty offences were remanded here. In 1867 Fenians used a barrel of gunpowder to blow a hole in the prison wall in Corporation Row killing six civilians. The prison closed in 1886 and Hugh Myddelton School was built on the site using part of the foundations of the prison and preserving some of the basement cells and other rooms of the prison.

Records include:

- Committee of Visiting Justices minutes 1837-1878 – MA/G/CLE/0001-0023, 0028
- Reports to Middlesex Sessions 1847-1878 – MA/RS/01/411-549
- Working papers 1859-1876 – MA/G/CLE/0034-0177, 0204-6200
- Letter books 1873-1877 – MA/G/CLE/0029-0031
- Keeper's cash books 1790-1798 – MA/G/CLE/0032-0033
- Rebuilding plans 1846-1870 – MA/DCP/G/028-035

Records of Prisoners

- Calendars of prisoners (gaps) 1730-1821 – MJ/CC/R/074-150
- Calendars of prisoners (gaps) 1739, 1755-1795 – MJ/CC/B/001-074
- Calendars of prisoners 1747-1748, 1778-1780 – MJ/CC/V/001-002
- Calendars of prisoners after trial (gaps) 1690, 1711-1774 – MJ/CP/P/001-582
- Calendars of prisoners after trial 1836, 1843-1845, 1848-1853 – MJ/CP/A/001-069

Register of prisoners for trial including index of convicted prisoners received from the House of Correction, Cold Bath Fields. Includes name; age; offence; by whom committed; when received; date of committal to Middlesex Sessions; date of discharge; how disposed of 1876-1877 - CLA/003/MC/01/001

Index of male prisoners: A-Z including name and alias; age; height; weight; features; particular marks; general appearance; surgeon's remarks; instruction; occupation; religion 1876-1877 - CLA/003/CP/01/001

Staff Records

- List of Prison Officers giving age, position, date of appointment, wages and remarks 1847-1862 – MA/G/CLE/0024
- Officers' Time and Pass Books 1861-1863 – MA/G/CLE/0025-0027

Middlesex House of Correction, Cold Bath Fields - MA/G/CBF

The Middlesex House of Correction was built between 1788 and 1794 at Cold Bath Fields, Clerkenwell between Grays Inn Road and Bagnigge Wells Road. In 1850 the Middlesex Justices decided that Cold Bath Fields should be used only for convicted male prisoners aged 17 or over. Convicted female prisoners and males under 17 were to be sent to the Westminster House of Correction. The prison closed in 1885-6 and in 1887 the site was acquired by the Post Office to become Mount Pleasant Sorting Office.

Records of Prisoners

- Calendars of prisoners (gaps) 1803-1821 – MJ/CC/R/084-146
- Calendars of prisoners 1825, 1849-1854 – MJ/CC/V/003-004
- Calendars of prisoners after trial 1855-1889 – MJ/CP/B/001-038
- Register of births 1796-1838, baptisms, and deaths 1795-1829 in the House of Correction - MA/G/CBF/417 (for index to deaths see catalogue in Information Area)

Westminster Gatehouse

This was maintained by the Dean and Chapter of Westminster Abbey. The Gatehouse Prison was built in Broad Sanctuary in 1370 by the Cellarer of Westminster Abbey. It had two gaols - one for clerics, and one for lay offenders. The Abbey Janitor was appointed warder of the prison. Sir Walter Raleigh was imprisoned here in October 1618 on the eve of his execution. Prisoners were held in Westminster Gatehouse before trial at the Westminster Sessions of the Peace and the Old Bailey. It was demolished in 1776 - 1777.

Records of Prisoners

Sessions rolls for the Westminster Sessions of the peace survive from 1620 onwards. Many of these include calendars or lists of the prisoners in the Westminster Gatehouse. Detailed catalogues of the earliest Westminster Sessions rolls for 1620-1622 (WJ/SR/NS/01-05) can be viewed on our [online catalogue](#). Typed catalogues of the sessions rolls for 1622-1640 (WJ/SR/NS/06-56) give the names of the prisoners included in most of the calendars of prisoners in the Westminster Gatehouse, but these have not been indexed and cannot be searched electronically.

- Calendars of prisoners (gaps) 1720-1768 – WJ/CC/B/001-093
- Calendars of prisoners (gaps) 1727-1765 – WJ/CC/R/051-099
- Calendars of prisoners after trial (gaps) 1693-1765 – WJ/CP/P/001-102

Other records

- Keeper's accounts for food and lodging of prisoners 1599-1600 – JB/006-007

Westminster House of Correction, Tothill Fields (also known as Westminster Bridewell) WA/G

A bridewell or house of correction for Westminster was built in 1618 in Tothill Fields to the west of Artillery Row and was enlarged in 1655. A new prison was built between 1826 and 1834 on a site near Vauxhall Bridge Road with its front in Francis Street. The old prison was demolished in 1836. The new prison contained a gaol for male remand prisoners and debtors, a house of correction for convicted male prisoners, and a prison for women. In 1850 the Middlesex Justices decided that in future the Westminster House of Correction should be restricted to convicted female prisoners and males aged under 17 years. All convicted male prisoners aged 17 and over should be sent to the Middlesex House of Correction, Cold Bath Fields, and all remand prisoners should be admitted to the House of Detention, Clerkenwell. The prison was transferred to the Prison Commissioners in 1878 and demolished in the 1880s. Westminster Cathedral was built on the foundations of the prison.

Records of Prisoners

- Calendars of prisoners (gaps) 1701/2-1832 – WJ/CC/B/094-257
- Calendars of prisoners (gaps) 1716-1769 – WJ/CC/R/001-050
- Calendars of prisoners after trial (gaps) 1732-1758 – WJ/CP/P/019-097
- Calendars of prisoners 1838-1847 – WJ/CP/A/001-064
- Nominal register of prisoners (female) 1866-1872 – MJ/SP/XX/728

Central Government Prisons

From 1615 transportation to the American colonies was increasingly used as a punishment for those convicted of serious offences as an alternative to the death penalty. This was brought to an end in 1776 by the rebellion of the colonies. The government then had to find alternative methods of punishment. Old ships, known as hulks, were converted into the prisons, the Hulks at Woolwich remaining in use until the mid 19th century. The 1779 Penitentiary Act provided for the building of two penitentiaries, one for males and one for females, where "solitary Imprisonment, accompanied by well regulated labour, and religious Instruction" "might be the means, under Providence, not only of deterring others from the Commission of the like Crimes, but also of reforming the Individuals, and inuring them to Habits of Industry". London Metropolitan Archives (LMA) holds some papers (ACC/3648) of the three supervisors appointed to arrange for the purchase of a site and the erection of the penitentiaries. Despite their efforts, no prison was ever built. In 1784 the Government obtained a new Transportation Act and in 1787 the First Fleet of convicts sailed for Australia.

In 1812 the government did start building a penitentiary at Millbank in Westminster which admitted its first prisoners in 1816 and was completed in 1822 with accommodation for 1000 prisoners who were kept in separate cells. Further prisons were established and maintained by the government including a juvenile penitentiary at Parkhurst in 1838 and in 1842 the Pentonville Model Prison opened in Islington. In 1853 the government bought the former Surrey House of Correction at Brixton and converted it into a prison for female convicts. By the 1840s an alternative was needed to transportation to Van Dieman's Land and in 1848 Portland Prison opened, the first of the prisons where convicts were to be engaged in public works. Transportation was finally abolished in 1868.

Records held by The National Archives

Records of Millbank, Parkhurst, Pentonville, Brixton and Portland Prisons as well as many other prisons are held by The National Archives at Kew. Further information can be found in the In-depth research guide 'Criminals in the 18th, 19th and 20th centuries' on The National Archives website at www.nationalarchives.gov.uk. The National Archives also holds Criminal Registers for Middlesex and the City of London 1791-1849 (HO 26) and the rest of the country 1805-1892 (including Middlesex and the City after 1849) (HO 27). They show all persons charged with indictable offences, giving the date and result of the trial, sentence in the case of conviction, and dates of execution for those convicted on capital charges.

The 1877 Prison Act transferred all local prisons to central government control from 1 April 1878. However the following prison records have been deposited in London Metropolitan Archives. With regard to records relating to prisoners, the main series are the nominal registers giving details of the name, age, trade, education, and religion

of the prisoner, the date of committal, details of the offence and sentence and the date of discharge. Please note that modern material is not generally available for consultation as records containing personal information are subject to access restrictions under the UK Data Protection Act, 1998. Information regarding access to individual items can be found on the catalogue.

Holloway Prison - CLA/003

Holloway Prison was built by the Corporation of London as the City of London House of Correction for men and women and opened in 1852. The prison was taken over by the government in 1878. It became female only in 1903 and was well known for the imprisonment of suffragettes and for internments during the Second World War. In addition to records relating to the building and maintenance of the prison before 1878 amongst the archives of the City of London Corporation, more recent records of the prison have been deposited in London Metropolitan Archives.

Records include:

- Prisons Committee for the new Compter and Prison at Holloway formed in 1846 to consider
- the need for a new prison and to oversee its construction: minutes and papers 1842-1853 -COL/CC/PCC
- Court of Aldermen Gaol Committee: minutes, papers and reports 1842-1878 – COL/CA/GAC
- Governor's journals 1948-1975 – CLA/003/AD/01/001-010
- Board of Visitors minutes 1946-1949 – CLA/003/AD/03/001
- Matron's journals 1933-1954 – CLA/003/ME/01/001-003
- Plans 1846 c.1870 – COL/SVD/PL/08/0550-0675

Records of Prisoners

- Record of convictions c.1910-1914 – CLA/003/PR/01/001
- Convict nominal registers (with several missing volumes) 1917-1964 – CLA/003/PR/02/001-039
- Discharge diaries 1975-1984 – CLA/003/PR/03/001-010
- Inquests into deaths of prisoners were held by the City of London Coroner- CLA/041

Holloway Borstal

- Nominal register 1966-1983 – CLA/003/HB/01/001

Staff Records

- Registers of officers 1900-1979 – CLA/003/ST/01/001-003

Wandsworth Prison - ACC/3444

Wandsworth Prison was built in 1849 as a Surrey House of Correction to replace Brixton Prison and was intended for those serving short sentences. It was designed by D R Hill of Birmingham to hold 1000 prisoners, and the first male prisoners were admitted in 1851 and the first female prisoners in 1852. In 1878, when prisons were nationalised, it became a short-term prison and in 1878, it took over from Horsemonger Lane as the hanging prison for South London. It came to be used for recidivists and, after the First World War, part was taken over as the Boys' Prison for London, under a separate governor and regime from the main block. Boys were assessed here and, if appropriate, allocated to Borstals. In 1929, this function was transferred to Wormwood Scrubs. More recently, the prison has been used to hold convicted persons awaiting sentence and as the centre for allocating long-term prisoners to other prisons outside the London area.

Records include:

- New Prison Committee minutes and letter books 1847-1852 – ACC/3444/AD/01/001-002
- Final report of Committee of Justices appointed to superintend erection of House of Correction 1852 – CLA/032/04/021
- Dietaries of Surrey House of Correction at Wandsworth – CLA/032/04/017
- Visiting Committee minutes 1896-1921 – ACC/3444/AD/02/001-002
- Minutes and reports 1972-1983 – ACC/3444/03-06
- Governor's journals 1936-1960 – ACC/3444/AD/07/001-003
- Governor's letter books 1896-1964 – ACC/3444/AD/08/001-004
- Chief Officer I's diaries 1971-1981 – ACC/3444/AD/09/001-011
- Incident reports 1972-1982 – ACC/3444/AD/10/001-016
- Prison Officers' Association minutes of meetings and correspondence with governor 1972-1982 – ACC/3444/AD/13/001-002
- Medical Officer's journals 1934-1947 – ACC/3444/ME/01/001-002
- Surrey and South London Discharged Prisoners Aid Society: Letter books 1893-1905, 1921-1938 – ACC/3444/SS/01/001-004

Records of Prisoners

- Nominal registers of admissions 1879-1956 – ACC/3444/PR/01/001-237
- Indexes to prisoners' names 1940-1956 – ACC/3444/PR/02/001-022
- Registers of executions 1892-1961 – ACC/3444/PR/03/001-003
- Files on condemned prisoners 1933-1954 - ACC/3444/PR/04/001-029
- Record of daily discharges 1958-1961 – ACC/3444/PR/07/001-003
- Lists of receptions and discharges 1973-1975 – ACC/3444/PR/08/001-002
- Occurrence books 1981-1983 – ACC/3444/PR/09-011
- Medical reception register 1936 – ACC/3444/ME/03/001
- Corrective Training Allocation Centre: nominal registers of prisoners 1951-1954 – ACC/3444/CT/01/001
- Preventive Allocation Centre: dossiers on individuals 1938-1964 – ACC/3444/PD/01/0001-1289

HM Borstal Institution, Wandsworth

- Board of Visitors minutes and report 1946-1952 – ACC/3444/B/01/001-003
- Nominal register 1947-1951 – ACC/3444/B/02/001

For registers of Boys' Prison see HM Young Offender Institute and Remand Centre, Feltham (LMA/4465).

Staff Records

- Registers of officers 1878-1957 – ACC/3444/ST/05/001-003
- Attendance registers 1952-1956 – ACC/3444/ST/01/001-005

Photographs

- Glass negatives of prisoner officers and prisoners 1920-1939 – ACC/3444/PH/01/001-019

Records of Prisoners in Wandsworth at The National Archives

The Habitual Criminal Act 1869 established the photographing of prisoners and compiling registers of prisoners' photographs. The subsequent Prevention of Crimes Act 1871 stipulated that the photograph albums should include all criminals sentenced to one month or more.

The National Archives at Kew holds two volumes containing photographs and details relating to prisoners in Wandsworth Prison from 1872 to 1873 (PCOM 2/290-291).

These are available to search and download on The National Archives website at <http://www.nationalarchives.gov.uk/documentsonline/prison.asp>.

The National Archives holds other Wandsworth Prison registers containing one-line entries for each prisoner, for the years 1858 to 1879 (PC/COM 2/230-289).

Wormwood Scrubs - LMA/4417

Wormwood Scrubs Prison was designed in 1870s by Major-General Edmund Du Cane, chairman of the Directors of Convict Prisons, as a national long-term penitentiary, built on a site in East Acton with convict labour. By the time the prison was completed, its entire purpose had, however, changed, and it became a local prison for short-term petty offenders. From 1904, the prison also became part of the Borstal system for young offenders, and in 1929 it was made an allocation centre from which newly-sentenced trainees were assessed before being sent to a suitable Borstal. In addition Wormwood Scrubs came to specialise in holding first time offenders, or 'star' prisoners as they were known. During the Second World War, part of the prison was evacuated for the use of MI5 and the War Department, and by the end of the war, a section of the hospital wing was being used as condemned quarters for prisoners from Wandsworth and Pentonville prisons.

Wormwood Scrubs has more recently become a prison in which life-sentence prisoners are assessed in the early years of their terms. Today Wormwood Scrubs provides lower security accommodation for remand and short-term prisoners

Records of Prisoners

- Nominal registers of prisoners 1917-1961 – LMA/4417/01/016-034
- Indexes 1952-1967 – LMA/4417/01/044-049
- Youth registers 1942-1961 – LMA/4417/01/001-015
- Indexes to youth registers 1951-1959 – LMA/4417/01/039-043

Wormwood Scrubs Borstal

- Training registers 1945-1960 – LMA/4417/01/035-038
- Indexes 1959-1962 – LMA/4417/01/050/051

Staff Records

- Memoirs of a warder at HMP Wormwood Scrubs 1890-1936 - ACC/3588/001

Records of Prisoners in Wormwood Scrubs at The National Archives

The National Archives holds separate confinement registers 1882-1890 (PCOM 2/154-158) and a register and index of prisoners' working parties 1874-1890 (PCOM 2/152-153).

HM Young Offender Institute and Remand Centre, Feltham - LMA/4465

The origins of HM Young Offender Institute, Feltham, can be traced back to 1854 when the erection of a reformatory school was first proposed by the Justices of the County of Middlesex. After the passing of the Industrial Schools Act of 1857, magistrates were empowered to sentence children aged between 7 and 14 to industrial schools. The Middlesex Industrial School, Feltham was built within the parish of Bedfont and opened on 1 January 1859. The school passed into the control of the London County Council in April 1889 and eventually closed in August 1909.

The premises then came under the control of the Prison Commissioners. Feltham Borstal Institution opened on 7 October 1910 when 23 boys were transferred from Borstal Institution at Borstal, Kent. Boys from the age of 16 to 21 who were taken into custody were either sent to Borstal training for 3 years, or to Boys' prison, where sentences were for a lesser period. Those who demonstrated criminal tendencies and were in need of reform were sent to Borstal training. Training included instruction in trades, education, physical fitness and work. Good conduct could secure an early release on licence.

In September 1939, Feltham absorbed prisoners from the Boys' Prison at Wormwood Scrubs. This included boys awaiting trial, boy prisoners and those awaiting allocation to Borstal. In 1942, the remand centre moved back to Wormwood Scrubs but the Borstal Reception Centre and the Boys' Prison remained at Feltham. In early 1945, the reception centre also went back to Wormwood Scrubs. By April 1946, the Boys' Prison at Feltham ceased to exist and Feltham reverted to being solely a Borstal.

In the early 1970s it was recognised that the buildings were inadequate and designs for a new institute were made incorporating a new remand centre to replace nearby Ashford. The new Feltham was opened in August 1983, although the merger was delayed. HM Young Offender Institution and Remand Centre Feltham was formed by the amalgamation of Ashford Remand Centre and Feltham Borstal in 1991.

Records include:

- Governor's journals 1910-1951 – LMA/4465/A/01/001-004
- History of Feltham Industrial School – LMA/4465/01/001

Records of Inmates

- Nominal registers 1922; 1927-1969 – LMA/4465/B/01/001-008
- Indexes to registers 1932-1969 – LMA/4465/B/02/001-011
- Nominal registers for Boys' Prison at Wandsworth 1924-1939, then at Feltham 1939-1946 – LMA/4465/B/03/001-035

- Indexes to registers for Boys' Prison 1936-1946 – LMA/4465/B/04/001-009
- Register of petitions to Parliament from inmates 1923-1975 – LMA/4465/B/05/001
- Medical reception register Aug-Dec 1939 - LMA/4465/D/02/001
- Death register 1860-1966 including transcriptions of gravestones 1876-1929 – LMA/4465/D/03/001

Staff Records

- Registers of officers 1919?-1976? – LMA/4465/C/01/001-004
- Seniority list 1937-1960 – LMA/4465/C/02/001

Reading List

The following which are all available in LMA's reference library have been used in writing this leaflet:

Howard, John, *The State of the Prisons in England and Wales* (3rd edition, 1784) 21.31 HOW

Mayhew, Henry, and Binney, John, *The Criminal Prisons of London and Scenes of Prison Life* (1862, reprinted 1968) 21.31 MAY

McConville, Sean, *A history of English prison administration Volume I 1750-1877* (1981) 21.31 MAC

May, Trevor, *Victorian and Edwardian Prisons* (2010) 21.31 MAY

Sheehan, Wayne Joseph, 'The London Prison System 1666-1795' (unpublished thesis 1975) 21.31 SHE

Temple, Philip ed. *Survey of London volume XLVI South and East Clerkenwell* (2008) 74.21 (CLE)

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