

## Library of Birmingham Archives & Collections

### PRISON RECORDS

The early history of prisons in Birmingham is somewhat sketchy. In the thirteenth century the bailiffs of the manorial court were responsible for arresting felons, who were confined in a local lock-up. In 1733, a new building described as a 'dungeon' was built on the same site or nearby the previous prison, near Pinfold Street, and known as *the Bridewell House*. This dungeon housed both felons and debtors, although there was also a debtors prison in the High Street until 1849.

In 1807 a gaol attached to the new Public Office in Moor Street replaced the previous gaol. Despite enlargement in 1830, it was severely overcrowded and was used only as a temporary gaol for prisoners immediately before trial and immediately after conviction from 1837. Prisoners went to the county gaol at Warwick between committal and trial, and to serve their sentences. As this was inconvenient and expensive, a borough gaol was built, which opened in 1849. This is the Birmingham City Prison at Winson Green, which remains today. Warwick County Gaol records can be found in Warwickshire County Record Office.

Prison records are public records.

#### Prison Records in Birmingham City Archives:

There are no surviving records of inmates in Winson Green prison.

|                   |  |           |
|-------------------|--|-----------|
| <b>MS 1815</b>    | HMP Birmingham (Winson Green)                      | 1894-1983 |
| <b>QS/B/23</b>    | Gaol Sessions Minutes                              | 1859-1964 |
| <b>QS/B/24</b>    | Gaol General Orders                                | 1859-1853 |
| <b>PS/B 4/5/</b>  | HMP Birmingham Visiting Committee                  | 1878-1963 |
| <b>BCC/1/AD</b>   | Birmingham City Council Gaol & Buildings Committee | 1844-1851 |
| <b>BCC/1/AQ</b>   | Birmingham City Council Gaol Committee             | 1856-1857 |
| <b>BCC/1/AM/4</b> | Gaol Works Sub-Committee                           | 1871-1878 |
| <b>MS 681</b>     | Specification for building HMP Birmingham          | 1840s     |

## Prison Records in the National Archives:

|                   |                             |                |
|-------------------|-----------------------------|----------------|
| <b>PCOM 2/430</b> | Habitual Criminals Register | Aug– Nov 1871  |
| <b>PCOM 2/431</b> | Habitual Criminals Register | Jan – Mar 1874 |
| <b>PCOM 2/432</b> | Habitual Criminals Register | Mar– May 1874  |
| <b>PCOM 2/433</b> | Habitual Criminals Register | May – Jul 1874 |
| <b>PCOM 2/434</b> | Habitual Criminals Register | Jul – Sep 1875 |
| <b>PCOM 2/435</b> | Register of Convicts        | 1799-1809      |
| <b>PCOM 2/436</b> | Register of Convicts        | 1849-1850      |
| <b>PCOM 2/437</b> | Register of Convicts        | 1893           |

Note: ALL RECORDS ARE CLOSED FOR 30 YEARS  
Some records will be closed for 70 years – see Archives staff for details