

Courts and Criminal Justice – Convict Records

Convicts as referred to in this guide are those people convicted of an offence in Britain, or in some cases another British colony, whose sentence was to be transported to New South Wales, Tasmania or Western Australia. Transportation officially ceased in New South Wales and Tasmania in 1853 and in Western Australia in 1868. Technically, during the transportation era, no convicts were transported to the Port Phillip District of New South Wales, however convicts did find their way to the District. This generally happened in one of three ways. A convict from Sydney could be assigned to a work gang in Port Phillip. A ticket of leave holder might enter Port Phillip from either New South Wales or Tasmania to work and was required to register, or the convict may have been an 'Exile' (see below).

[Register of Convicts \(Superintendent, Port Phillip District\) 1842 – 1854 VPRS 2149](#) Microfilm copy of [VPRS 110](#) also online. This single volume covers Melbourne, Bourke and Westernport.

Details recorded are:

- assigned servants
- nominal list of ticket of leave holders in Port Phillip District 1843-1848
- applications for ticket of leave commencing 1 Jan 1843
- applications for pardons 8 Feb 1845 – 26 May 1854
- certificates of freedom delivered 29 Jul 1848 – 27 Dec 1851
- fee received

[Letter Book- Letters Outward \(Melbourne Court of Petty Sessions\) 1843 – 1852 \(VPRS 2148\)](#)

[Microfilm copy of [VPRS 50](#)]

There is an alphabetical index to the hearings and cases referred to by the person's surname.

[Inward Registered Correspondence \(Police Magistrate, Port Phillip District\) 1836 – 1839 \(VPRS 4729\)](#)

[Microfilm copy of [VPRS 4](#)]

Correspondence in this series deals with convict matters during the earlier years of the Colony. To access information researchers should use [VPRS 6920 Inward Correspondence Register 1836 – 1839](#) [Microfilm copy of [VPRS 3](#)].

[Inward Registered Correspondence \(Superintendent, Port Phillip District\) 1839 – 1851 \(VPRS 19\)](#)

Correspondence in this series deals with convict matters in the colony during the period 1839-1851. For example see unit 96-file no.47/1796 "Return of convicts" with details of their arrival in various districts of Port Phillip. To access information in this series researchers should use [VPRS 2138 Index to Inward Correspondence 1839 - 1843](#) [Microfilm copy of [VPRS 17](#)] and [VPRS 2139 Registers of Inward Correspondence 1839 - 1851](#) [Microfilm copy of [VPRS 18](#)].

[Inward Registered and Unregistered Correspondence 1839 - 1896 \(VPRS 44\)](#)

Box 504 contains Robert Hoddle's return of Convicts employed by the Survey Branch c1844.

[Original Papers Tabled in the Legislative Council c1851 – ct \(VPRS 2599\)](#)

Boxes 500 and 502 contain documents relating to Influx of Criminals Prevention Bill and Select Committee Reports. These records have been transferred to the Public Record Office on the condition that requests for access will be referred to the Clerk of the Legislative Council/Assembly for determination in each case. Applications should be made to the above officers and written approval must be presented at the Victorian Archives Centre Reading Room before the records will be made available for public inspection.

[VPRS 108/P0 Register, Police Magistrate, Portland, 1840-1853](#) Available online.

A volume containing Police Salaries, Sheriffs Salaries, Register of Arms, Lists of Ticket of Leave Holders.

Records relating to 'Exiles'

Exiles or as they were also known Pentonvillians were people who had been convicted of an offence in Britain and were serving their sentence in an English prison, usually Pentonville, Parkhurst or Millbank. Those prisoners, depending on their crime, who were seen as being well behaved whilst serving the early part of their sentence were given an option of being sent to the Australian colonies, in this case Victoria, and on arrival being given a conditional pardon. The condition of the pardon being that the person remained in the colony for the duration of the unexpired part of their sentence. In effect they were exiled to Australia.

[Notification of Pardon of Exiles \(Superintendent, Port Phillip District\) 1844 – 1849 \(VPRS 89\)](#)

Lists prisoners under sentence of transportation giving name and date and place of conviction. Relates to "convicts" exiled to Victoria.

[Registers of Assisted Immigrants from UK 1839 – 1871 \(VPRS 7310\)](#) Microfiche copy of [VPRS 14](#).

This series records the arrival of ships carrying Exiles. The ships concerned are:

Vessel	Arrived	Port	No of Exiles
Royal George	16 Nov 1844	Melbourne	21
Sir George Seymour	Mar 1845	Geelong	176
Stratheden	27 Jan 1846	Melbourne	51
Maitland	10 Jan 1847	Melbourne	291
Thomas Arbuthnot	4 May 1847	Melbourne	289
Joseph Somes	24 Sep 1847	Geelong	248
Marion	27 Jan 1848	Melbourne	292
Anna Maria	23 Jun 1848	Geelong	156
Eden	21 Feb 1849	Geelong	199

[Index to Registers of Assisted Immigrants from UK 1839 – 1871](#) is available online.

Hulk Records

[Hulk Sacramento Inward Correspondence to Superintendent Port Phillip District 1857 – 1871 \(VPRS 681\)](#)

[Hulk President Outward Correspondence Register 1852 – 1858 \(VPRS 1416\)](#)

[Hulk Success Outward Letter Book 1853 – 1854 \(VPRS 5899\)](#)

Records relating to convicts in New South Wales

[Convict Indents 1788 – 1842 \(VPRS 4323\)](#)

Microfilm copy of records held in the State Records, New South Wales. Available on open access in the Victorian Archives Centre Reading Room. To access these records researchers can consult the microfiche Index to New South Wales Convict Indents 1788 – 1842, published by the Genealogical Society of Victoria. Sets of the fiche are available in the PROV Reading Rooms. They may also be found in some municipal libraries and genealogical and historical society libraries.

Published Sources

The following published sources provide useful background information the operation of the convict system and to the political climate in which that system operated. These books are not held at PROV.

AGL Shaw, 1966, *Convicts and the Colonies: a study of penal transportation from Great Britain and Ireland to Australia and other parts of the British Empire*, London, Faber.

Lloyd L Robson, 1965, *The Convict Settlers of Australia: an enquiry into the origin and character of the convicts transported to New South Wales and Van Diemen's Land, 1787-1852*. Melbourne University Press.

Marjorie Tipping, 1975, *The "Calcutta" Convicts*, Tasmanian Historical Research Association, Hobart. This publication documents aspects of the convict establishment at Sorrento 1803-1804.

Ian Wynd, 1986, *The Exile: Introduction and Shipping Lists*, edited & compiled by T.R. Hill and V.M. Lyons, Genealogical Society of Victoria, Melbourne.