

Please note we are closed to the public during the first full week of every calendar month to enable staff to catalogue collections. A full list of these collection weeks is available on request and also on our website.

The reduction in our core funding means we can no longer produce documents between 12.00 and 14.15 although the searchroom will remain open during this time.

There is no need to book an appointment, but entry is by CARN ticket so please bring proof of name, address and signature (e.g. driving licence or a combination of other documents) if you do not already have a ticket. There is a small car park with a dropping off zone and disabled spaces. Please telephone us if you would like to reserve a space or discuss your needs in any detail.

Last orders: Documents/Photocopies 30 minutes before closing.

Transportation to Australia and Tasmania

Transportation to Australia began in 1787 with the sailing of the "First Fleet" of convicts and their arrival at Botany Bay in January 1788. The practice continued in New South Wales until 1840, in Van Dieman's Land (Tasmania) until 1853 and in Western Australia until 1868. Most of the convicts were tried at the Assizes,

The Court of the Assize

The Assizes dealt with all cases where the defendant was liable to be sentenced to death (nearly always commuted to transportation for life. They were held twice yearly in each county, usually in the county town. The Judges were sent out from Westminster on circuits, and returned with the records of trials to Westminster. The records which survive are now in The National Archives in Kew. Unfortunately many records of trials on the Midland Circuit, which comprised the counties of Northampton, Rutland, Lincoln, Nottingham, Derby, Leicester and Warwick, were destroyed by a clerk in the 19th century and do not exist earlier than 1860. Enquiries concerning the Midland circuit and any of the other circuits after 1860 should therefore be addressed to The National Archives in Kew. Their website address is www.nationalarchives.org.uk.

Quarter Sessions

The Quarter Sessions courts were presided over by the Justices of the Peace for the county, and tried non-capital crimes (that is, crimes that were not punishable by the death penalty). They were also held four times a year, at the Epiphany (around January), Easter (March/April), Midsummer (June/July), and Michaelmas sessions (September/October) and could also impose sentences of transportation for 7, 14 or 21 years, and did so at Warwick between 1801 and 1857. The records of these trials, including indictments, the evidence of witnesses, and calendars of prisoners (amongst other records) are held in the County Record Office in series QS.

Calendar of Prisoners

Calendars of prisoners are lists of those held in the county prisons (at Warwick, Birmingham and Coventry) for trial at the Courts of Assize and at the Quarter Sessions courts held in Warwick between 1800 and 1900. As the county included (for this purpose) Birmingham and (from 1842) Coventry, there are many cases relating to these two places (which were much larger than any other towns in Warwickshire).

A database of the Calendars of Prisoners from both the Assize and Quarter Session Courts has been set up and is available electronically at <http://heritage.warwickshire.gov.uk/warwickshire-county-record-office/county-record-office-resources-and-catalogues/county-record-office-calendar-of-prisoners-database/>

Newspapers

Cases from the Assizes and the Quarter Sessions were reported in local newspapers. The Warwick Advertiser started in 1806, and most trials after that date are mentioned, though often very briefly. This office holds a complete set of the Warwick Advertiser and the years 1806-1990 are available on microfilm in the local studies area.

Prior to 1806, selected cases at the different Assizes may be reported in a Birmingham newspaper, Aris's Gazette. A set is available at the Library of Birmingham, Centenary Square, Broad Street, Birmingham, B1 2ND. Tel: 0121 242 4242.

For further research please see The National Archives research guides detailing the various available records and online resources.

Research can be undertaken by our Professional Research Service. Please visit our website for details at <http://heritage.warwickshire.gov.uk/warwickshire-county-record-office/>