CONVICT SHIP MEDICAL JOURNALS

Medical Journals of convict ships are available under the Australian Joint Copying Project (AJCP) and on Ancestry.com. The AJCP reels are available in the State Library, Perth and all other Australian states.

Records available on ancestry.com:

**UK Royal Navy Medical Journals, 1817-1857**
(ADM 101, The National Archives, Kew, Surrey, England)

**About UK Royal Navy Medical Journals, 1817-1857**

This database contains indexed images of medical journals from 19th-century British ships, which include names of patients and other passengers and crew aboard.

The journals in this database were kept by ships’ medical officers, who were required to keep a record of patients, treatments, and outcomes during a voyage. This collection includes 671 volumes, each from a single ship and covering a particular time period. The majority are convict ships bound for Australia or Van Diemen’s Land.

The journal’s list names, ages, “quality” (the patient’s rank or status aboard), diseases, duration dates, and notes on symptoms and treatment. They often include daily sick lists extracted from the journal pages as well. Researchers should not forget their female ancestors. Some convict ships sailing to Australia were designated for female convicts; other women emigrated voluntarily.

These records are valuable for family history research on several fronts. First, they list names of sick (and others who may have come to the surgeon’s attention) among passengers, convicts, and crew. These may include passengers who did not recover and so never made it to their destination. They also offer fascinating details on contemporary treatments and medical practices, as well as stories of life aboard ship, from the perils (and prevalence) of grog-related accidents to a simple chronicle of the daily routine on a 19th-century sailing vessel.

**UK Surgeon Superintendents’ Journals of Convict Ships, 1858-1867**
(MT 32, The National Archives, Kew, Surrey, England)

**About UK Surgeon Superintendents’ Journals of Convict Ships, 1858-1867**

This database contains indexed images of medical journals kept by surgeons aboard convict ships sailing from England to Australia.

Each journal in this database records details from one voyage of a convict ship as it travelled between England and Australia. Many of the pages contain dated log entries. Information found in the entries varies by journal but can include details such as name, age, crime convicted of, length of sentence, point of embarkation, native country, education, death date, cause of death, sick lists, lists of ship’s stores, and day-to-day happenings aboard ship. You may also find lists of convicts, punishments, and prisoners who exhibited good conduct during the voyage. Crew members may also be included.

These records were created after the Royal Navy turned the transport of convicts over to merchant shipping, and along with names, the journals can provide a revealing glimpse of life aboard these ships, from escape attempts to daily rations and routine.

Information from Ancestry.com website.

WAGS members have free access to Ancestry.com at the WAGS Library.