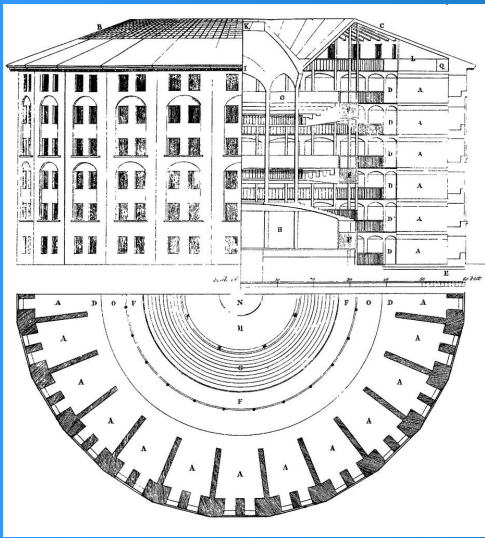


The Digital Panopticon

The Global Impact of London Punishments,
1780-1925

University of Liverpool
University of Sheffield
University of Tasmania

Bentham's Panopticon



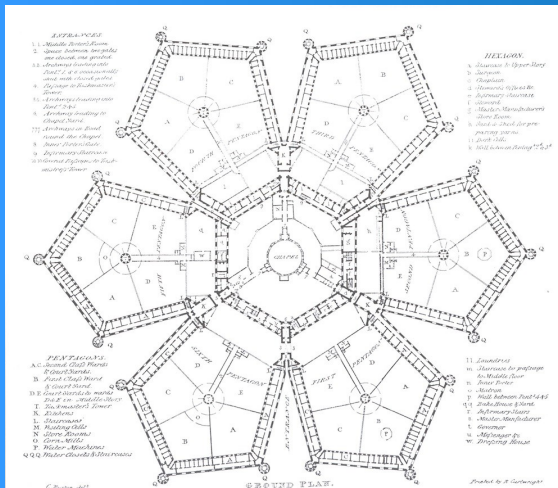
Plan of the Panopticon, 1791

Morals reformed -
health preserved -
industry invigorated
instruction diffused -
public burthens
lightened - Economy
seated, as it were,
upon a rock - the
gordian knot of the
Poor-Laws are not
cut, but untied - all
by a simple idea in
Architecture!

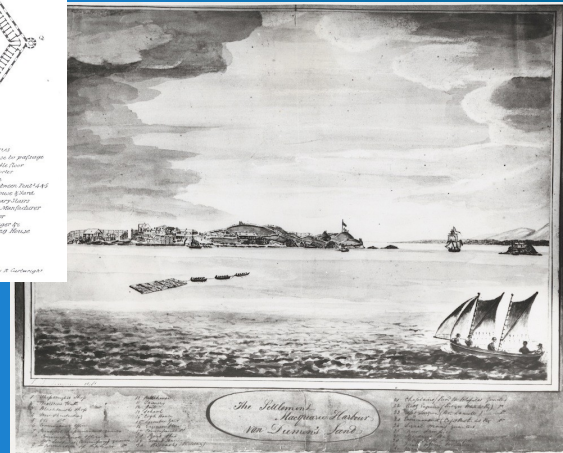
The Digital Panopticon's basic goal is to link together currently separate datasets and create new digital tools for comparison and visualisation, on a scale historians have never tried before. Our immediate aim is to investigate the relative impacts of different kinds of punishment in the 19th century, important questions for historians, criminologists and policy makers. Our wider goal is to create new, transferable methodologies for understanding and exploiting large, complex bodies of genealogical, biometric, and criminal justice data.

A bit of background: in the late 1780s, the utilitarian philosopher Jeremy Bentham published a proposal for a new kind of prison, his Panopticon. Its design would enable easy observation of all the inmates without them knowing whether they were being watched, and thus bring about behavioural change and new self-discipline: "a new mode of obtaining power of mind over mind".

Penal Perspectives



Millbank prison, 1828



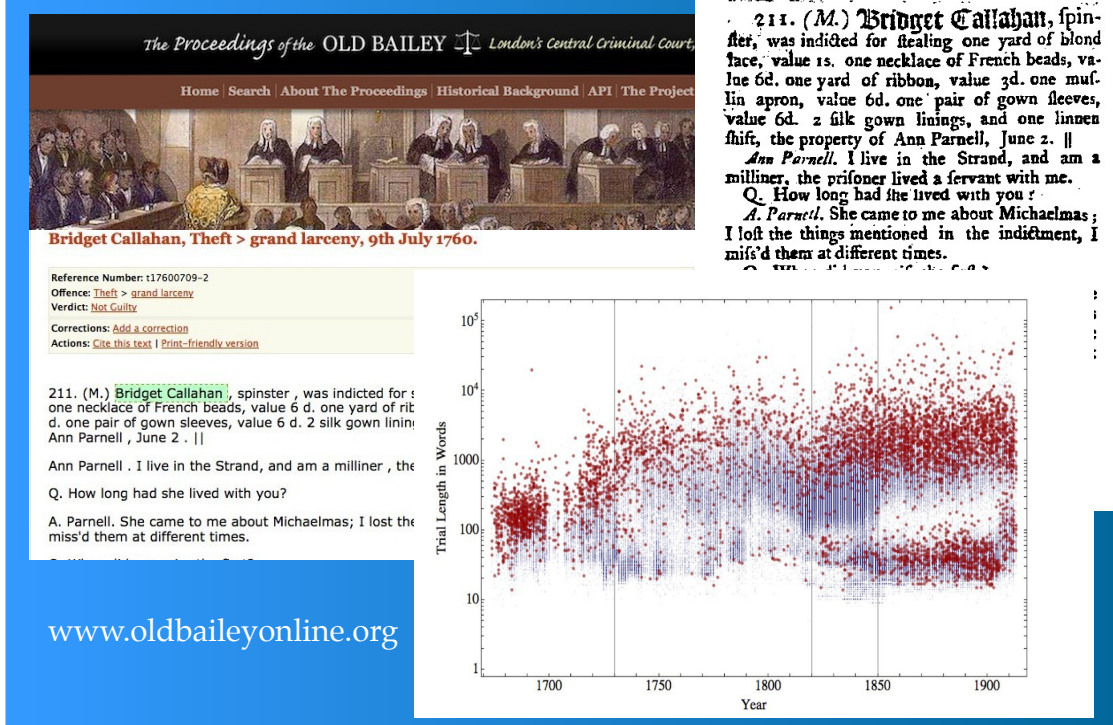
Tasmania convict colony, 1830

The comparative effects or benefits of different penal systems have been a matter of debate and controversy for a long time; our starting point, in a sense, is Bentham's own claim that confinement under surveillance would be a more effective method for preventing future offending than transportation to the colonies.

Bentham did not get what he wanted. His Panopticon was never built - Millbank was erected on its intended site - and transportation to Australia continued until the 1850s. So, for several decades, two sharply contrasting penal systems operated in parallel: transportation to Australia or confinement in English prisons.

What we are attempting is to map the lives of as many as possible of the tens of thousands of Londoners sentenced to these punishments at the Old Bailey, in order to evaluate the short and long term impacts of the competing penal systems on criminal desistance or re-offending, health outcomes, employment opportunities, and family life over the longer-term. Our goal is to connect them together in new ways, far more than has previously been possible, to tell compelling collective and individual stories.

Transforming Trials



In order to do this, we'll be building on, and bringing together, existing works of data creation and analysis by a number of different projects and institutions. Huge amounts of digital data now exist for the study of 19th-century Londoners and Australians, and without these existing digital transformations, going back more than a decade, the Digital Panopticon wouldn't be possible.

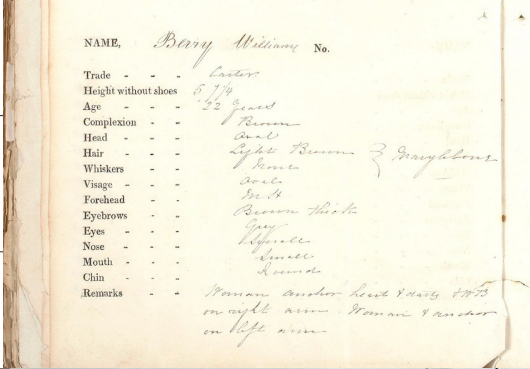
The project has two large, but very different, datasets at its core. One is the Old Bailey Online (along with the associated site London Lives), which many of you may already know. Since 2003, this project has transformed a massive and obscure series of 200,000 Old Bailey trial reports, published between the 1670s and 1913, into a digital history resource used by academic historians and their students, genealogists, linguists, and others, across the world, for both qualitative and quantitative research; most recently, we have begun to ask intriguing new questions of the data using textmining methods.

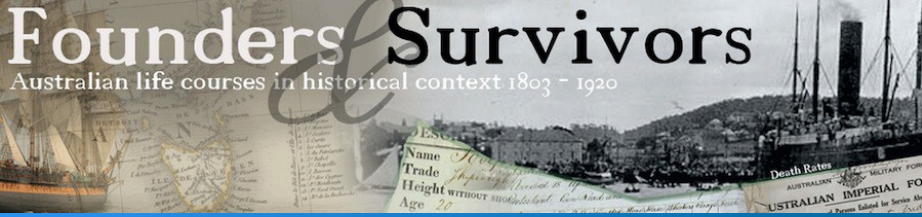
William Berry/Bury

This life history is a combination of many you can access them by clicking on the seems to be duplicated, it is because the differently in each of the sources.

1817 Birth	Calculated Age	1817 (Estimated from age 22yo at 1840-06-30 [See arrivalDate of dlm18103006] as at 1840-06-30) dlm18103006
	Place Of Birth	Marylebone dlm18103006
	estimatedBirthYear	1817 dlm18103006
1839-03-04 Conviction	Sentence	Life dlm18103006 c31a31030952
	Place Of Sentencing	Central Ct Court dlm18103006 c31a31030952
	Tried Date	4/Mar/1839 dlm18103006 c31a31030952
1840-02-25 Sailed	Sailed Days	126
	Sailed From	Spihead
	sailedRoute	Cape
	Ship Master	Jas. Muddle
1840-06-30 Arriv	Popula	
1840-06-30 VDL	Arriva	

Tasmanian Connections





Founders & Survivors
Australian life courses in historical context 1803 - 1920

foundersandsurvivors.org

Founders and Survivors is based at the University of Tasmania and describes itself as "a partnership between historians, genealogists, demographers and population health researchers". The focus is on the 73,000 convicts who were sent to Tasmania, tracing their life histories and outcomes through record linkage: comparisons of height, weight, lifespan and causes of death, family formation and family sizes. The records they have digitised and the data created are much more structured than Old Bailey Online's trial reports; one of our challenges is how to integrate two such different datasets.

We don't stop there. We plan to include as many relevant digitised criminal records as we can get hold of, and digitise some more. But we also want to include for linking large bodies of structured civil data - Censuses, Birth marriages and deaths records - and digitised newspapers. Building on previous partnerships and creating new ones - the BL, TNA, Gale, findmypast, Tamanian Archives, Trove, and more.

Ethics and Digital History



The Panopticon is a privileged place for experiments on men, and for analysing with complete certainty the transformations that may be obtained from them. The Panopticon may even provide an apparatus for supervising its own mechanisms... The Panopticon functions as a kind of laboratory of power.

Michel Foucault

Bentham may not have got his Panopticon, but in the record-keeping of 19th-century penal institutions in both Britain and Australia, we can see a new kind of surveillance culture which the Panopticon symbolise, an unprecedented desire to record the bodily details, personal histories and behaviour of the involuntary occupants and migrants, from the colour of eyes and hair, height, build; to levels of literacy, occupation, religion: The impulse to count, classify, document, and bring order to the unruly mob.

And now we want to link up those sources, and then connect further intimate information from other records; and post them on the Internet for anyone to see, link, pass judgement.

Previously, only historians of the very recent past have really concerned themselves with data privacy law and its ethical obligations. But maybe we'll need to re-evaluate our practice when we're making such large amounts of material, on often sensitive subjects, so easily accessible. The Panopticon has always been about knowledge and power; ours is no different. That is a key part of the conversations we'll be having over the next four years.