

EARLY CONVICT BUTTS NOW ONLINE REVEAL 'LICENSE TO PLAY' FOR WELL PERFORMING PRISONERS – Ancestry.com.au

Access to world's largest online collection of convict and criminal records FREE to search January 20th-30th, 2011

Ancestry.com.au, Australia's number one family history website[i], today launched for the first time online more than 42,000 Australian convict NSW Tickets of Leave Butts, 1824-1867.

This collection adds to Ancestry.com.au's existing collection of more than 2.3 million convict records which will be available FREE to the public for 11 days beginning January 20 in honour of Australia Day.

With more than four million[ii] Australians having descended from convicts, approximately one in five can claim convict history and will likely have an ancestor included in the collection.

The NSW Tickets of Leave database includes Registers of Tickets of Leave, 1824-1827, which offers prisoner details in ledger format, and Ticket of Leave Butts, 1827-1867.

The Butts were essentially copies of the 'Tickets' given to each convict and details the following information: prisoner's number, name, ship arrived on, master of ship, year of arrival, native place, trade or calling, offence, place of trial, date of trial, sentence, year of birth, complexion, height, colour of hair, colour of eyes, general remarks, the district prisoner is allocated to, the Bench who recommended him and the date of issue of ticket.

The ticket of leave system was introduced in 1801 by Governor King to reduce the financial burden of convicts and as a reward for good behaviour. Convict recipients were granted limited freedom to live and travel within defined areas, to work for their own benefit and to acquire property.

They were considered a class above the other 'full term' convicts and often rose to positions of power and influence within the colony prior to the expiry of their sentence.

James Tucker, an alleged author originally from Bristol, arrived in Sydney on the ship Midas in 1827 after being sentenced to life for writing a threatening letter to his cousin.

Over the next 30 years, Tucker was granted five tickets of leave, four of which were revoked for various reasons including drunkenness, forgery and court absence. He had one reinstated in recognition of his efforts to put out a fire at the Royal Hotel. After receiving his last ticket of leave in 1853, James disappeared from the convict system.

Ancestry.com.au's extensive convict collection also includes records from the England and Wales Criminal Registers, the Convict Transportation Registers, Convict Muster Rolls, Convict Applications to Marry, Convict Death Registers, and a variety of other record sets documenting the trial, journey, working life, release and death of the majority of convicts transported.

Convict records offer a unique peek into the window of early Australian history, providing researchers not only with invaluable information to paint a portrait of their ancestor, but also with clues to their ancestors' place of birth and country of origin, allowing them to investigate earlier family history.

Notable Australians who can proudly claim convict history include:

Maggie Beer, Celebrity Chef and 2010 Senior Australian of the Year: Her 3xgreat-grandmother was a convict thief and her 3xgreat-grandfather a bigamist who was convicted after three simultaneous marriages. They met after both were transported to Australia. Tony Windsor, MP, Independent Federal Minister for New England: His 2xgreat-grandfather was transported to NSW on the ship Midas in 1827 (the same boat as the aforementioned James Tucker) after stealing wet bedding from a clothes line and eventually died in Darlinghurst Gaol after being convicted of horse stealing. Rod Marsh, Cricketer: His great-grandfather (by adoption) was transported to Australia after being charged with manslaughter following a late night brawl which resulted in a man being shot. Ancestry.com.au Content Director Brad Argent comments: "Australia Day is all about national pride and so is a great time to stop and think about the unique way in which our country was founded and by whom.

"For those wanting to explore their early Australian heritage, like it or not, chances are that convict records will not only be the right place to start, but will also reveal colourful stories which will actually make you proud to be Australian."

To find out more about your family's heritage, please visit: www.ancestry.com.au

ENDS FOR FURTHER INFORMATION / INTERVIEWS:

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ABOUT ANCESTRY.COM.AU Australia's leading family history website, Ancestry.com.au contains more than 930 million records in its Australian and UK collections, including the Australia Birth, Marriage and Death Index, Australian Convict Transportation Registers, Australian Free

Settlers, Australian Electoral Rolls, New South Wales SANDS Directories, as well as the most complete online collection of England, Wales and Scotland Censuses and the England and Wales Birth, Marriage and Death Indexes.

Ancestry.com.au was launched in May 2006 and belongs to the global network of Ancestry websites (wholly owned by Ancestry.com Operations Inc.), which contains six billion records. To date more than 20 million family trees have been created and 2 billion profiles and 45 million photographs and stories uploaded. (Figures current as of 28 October 2010)

The Ancestry global network of family history websites: www.ancestry.com in the US, www.ancestry.co.uk in the UK, www.ancestry.ca in Canada, www.ancestry.com.au in Australia, www.ancestry.de in Germany, www.ancestry.it in Italy, www.ancestry.fr in France, www.ancestry.se in Sweden and www.jiapu.com in China.

[i] comScore, 2009, based on genealogy related websites selected from the Family and Parenting sub-category under the Community category

[ii] The Australian Constitution Referendum Study, 1999

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