

Case Study: Our Criminal Ancestors

Archives: Hull History Centre and East Riding Archives

HEIs: University of Hull, Leeds Beckett University

Dates: May 2017 to June 2018

Sources: Dr. Helen Johnston (Hull), Professor Heather Shore (Leeds Beckett), Victoria Dawson (Project Researcher)

Keywords: history, criminology, family history

This collaborative Arts and Humanities Research Council (AHRC) funded project emerged from the AHRC funded research network, 'Our Criminal Past' (2013-14). The project aimed to stimulate and facilitate creative public engagement with crime history through knowledge exchange, interactive workshops and website dissemination.

The objectives of the project were to:

- Establish and maintain an interactive and open access website which guides, assists and directs members of the public in tracing their criminal ancestors;
- Create and produce an accessible source guide on the use of criminal record;
- Identify the national and most important local criminal record collections held at the Hull History Centre and the East Riding Archives;
- Run three interactive public engagement workshops.

Three workshops took place at the Hull History Centre, focused on crime, policing, and punishment. Each workshop combined talks from expert speakers and document handling sessions. The participants were members of the public and developed their skills as family and community historians by gaining an introduction to and familiarity with criminal justice and related records.

The events were designed to focus on local records in order to encourage participants to explore rich local archival collections. The expert talks were designed to develop skills and proficiency in locating and interpreting records. Speakers included established academics and PhD students, who were able to gain experience in public engagement.

At a follow-up event the project website was launched along with a hardcopy source-guide, which was prepared in collaboration with the Hull History Centre and East Riding Archives. The source-guide provides historical context on crime, policing, and punishment along with information on the related documents that are held in the archives. It is available as a free hard-copy resource at the archives and as an electronic download on the website.

OUR CRIMINAL ANCESTORS



www.ourcriminalancestors.org

Image credit: East Riding Archives

The website (<https://ourcriminalancestors.org>) provides free expert advice for those interested in tracing their criminal ancestry. It also allows individuals to 'pin' details of their ancestry or crime history research on to the History Pin map. This 'crowd-sourced' method is an effective means of developing public participation in historical research and its dissemination.

Resources:

Project website: <https://ourcriminalancestors.org>

Project Source Guide: <https://ourcriminalancestors.org/source-guide-for-hull-and-east-riding-sources-for-researching-your-criminal-past/>

History Pin map: <https://ourcriminalancestors.org/join-in/>

Related research outputs:

Shore, H. and Johnston, H. (eds.), *Law, Crime and History*, Volume 5, Issue 1 (2015), Special Edition: Our Criminal Past – Caring for the Future (available online here: <http://www.lawcrimehistory.org/hjournal2015Vo5p1.html>).