

Q: What is a Descendants Certificate?

A: Fremantle Prison issues Descendants Certificates to recognise descendants of convicts, enrolled pensioner guards and warders who arrived at the Swan River Colony between 1850 and 1887.

These certificates recognise the contribution that the system of convict transportation made to the early development of the colony and its rich legacy in Western Australia's cultural and built heritage.

Those who believe they are eligible for a certificate are invited to submit an application. If considered eligible the applicant will receive a personalised certificate.

If your application is successful, please note you will not be eligible to apply for another certificate in the future.

Q: How do I know if I am eligible?

A: If you are directly descended from a Western Australian convict, enrolled pensioner guard or warder who arrived at the Swan River Colony on board a convict ship then you are eligible to apply.

Q: How do I apply for a Descendants Certificate?

A: If you believe you are eligible for a certificate, please complete the available pedigree chart. This is essentially a family tree. If you have your own comprehensive family tree you are welcome to submit this as your application providing it contains all the necessary information.

Please be sure to include all known birth and death dates in the direct line between yourself and your related convict, pensioner guard or warder. If dates are not known please include as much information as you have on hand.

It would also assist us if you could submit any copies you may have of birth, death and marriage certificates to prove this. ***(Please do not submit original documentation)***.

If you do not have any copies of birth, death and marriage certificates, simply complete the chart as best you can and send it in. If our Genealogist requires further information she will contact you directly in due course.

If you would like to receive the pedigree chart by post please contact Fremantle Prison's Functions Officer by email functions@fremantleprison.com.au or telephone (08) 9336 9205 and a pack will be posted out to you. If you receive a voice mail message when calling please feel free to leave a message stating you would like a pack to be posted to you and be sure to leave your postal address on the message.

Please note, the information pack may take 5 working days to reach you. If you have provided your postal address via voice mail you will not receive a telephone call back due to the number of enquiries generally received.

Q: If I don't have any birth, death and marriage certificates can I still apply?

A: Yes, as mentioned above you can still apply for a certificate without these documents. They are useful for proving your claims but our Genealogist can often verify your claims without them. We do ask you to include as much information about the birth and death dates as possible. If our Genealogist is unsure of anything she will contact you directly.

Q: How do I submit my application?

A: Please post your completed application to:

Descendants Certificates 2017

Fremantle Prison
1 The Terrace
Fremantle WA 6160

Email applications are also accepted. Please PDF documents and email them directly to functions@fremantleprison.com.au Please do not hand deliver applications to the Prison as they cannot be assessed on the spot and the Functions Officer is not always available.

Q: When are applications due?

A: All applications must be submitted by Friday 10 March 2017 in order to be processed.

The Genealogist requires a substantial amount of time to verify all applications, especially where limited information is provided.

Q: When will I know if I am eligible?

A: Fremantle Prison will email you (if an email address has been provided with your application) or post you a letter to confirm your application has been received. Your application will then be sent to our Genealogist for verification.

You will receive no further correspondence from Fremantle Prison until mid to late April 2017. In April you will receive further information via post or email, including eligibility information and confirmation of certificate details.

Q: Can my mother/father/sister/brother/daughter/son/niece/nephew also apply?

A: Due to limited numbers only one applicant per immediate family line will be eligible for a certificate each year.

If you submit an application then no one else on that side of your family can apply for the same convict/pensioner guard/warder within the same year.

Please do not apply if someone in your immediate family already has or your application will be rejected.

Q: I know someone who is descended from the same convict/pensioner guard/warder as me. Can I still apply?

A: As many people do research into their own family history they might meet other descendants along the way. Every year we get people descended from the same person apply and sometimes people don't even realise they have a connection. Providing someone in your immediate family does not also apply your application will still be accepted.

Q: I am descended from a Parkhurst Boy. Can I apply?

A: Unfortunately Parkhurst Boys do not meet the criteria established for Fremantle Prison's Descendants Certificates.

The penal system in WA and the commencement of the Convict Establishment, now known as Fremantle Prison, did not commence until 1850. Prior to 1850, when Parkhurst Boys arrived, WA was not a penal colony and therefore the "boys" were under a system of master and not part of the convict establishment. Parkhurst boy's records for those sent before WA was a penal colony have been available for research for many years and not considered in the same context as transportees.

If they re-offended and came under the penal system with an allocated convict number then you will be eligible.

Q: Where can I get more information about the convict I am descended from?

A: Fremantle Prison has an online [Convict Database](#) that contains information on all convicts that arrived in the Swan River Colony. The database features convict names, convict numbers, ship and arrival dates and more. More information may also be available from the [State Records Office](#), who hold the records from this period.

Q: Who handles applications?

A: Fremantle Prison's Functions and Events team handle applications, including sending information forms to successful applicants, and designing and printing of the certificates.

The applications, while compiled by Fremantle Prison, are forwarded to a Genealogist for verification. The Genealogist has been involved with verifying applications since the inception of the process (*formerly Descendants Day*). She verifies all applications in her own time.