

William Davis, 437, *Pyrenees*

Researched by Marcia Watson

Real name is Davies, also known as Bill Davies in England.

Baptism	25 March 1815, St Mary's, Shrewsbury, Shropshire
Parents	James Davies and Hannah
Parent's marriage	
Siblings	Edward (1817)
Wife	Mary Witkiss/Whitkiss
Married	3 July 1837, St Mary's, Shrewsbury, by Banns
Children	James (1839), Elizabeth (1843-1843), Hannah (1843, died near birth), Hannah (1844)

When William was baptised, the family resided at Ditherington, and his father was a shoemaker.

On 3 July 1837, at St Mary's, Shrewsbury.:

William Davies, full age, bachelor, overlooker at old Mill, resides in Spring Gardens, father James Davies, a shoemaker

Mary Witkiss, full age, spinster, resides in Spring Gardens, father John Witkiss, a labourer.

Both made their marks. Witnesses John and Elizabeth Roberts.

William probably worked at the Shrewsbury Flaxmill Maltings (previously the Ditherington Flax Mill), a flax mill located in Ditherington, a suburb of Shrewsbury, England.

When the children of William and Mary were baptised, the family lived at Old Heath, off Ditherington Road or Ditherington. William was usually described as an overlooker at the factory.

1841 Census, Ditherington (St Mary's, Shrewsbury) ¹

William Davies, 20, overlooker; Mary Davies, 20; James Davies, 2.

William's parents, James and Hannah, both 65, lived nearby.

Fatal Affray between Navigators and Boatmen.

13 December 1847.

Three men, named William Harrison, Thomas Hopwood and Thomas Griffiths, were brought before the Mayor on the charge of assaulting Thomas Hinton. From information subsequently received, it was ascertained that William Davies, Reuben Clarke, and James Smith, who were in prison charged with sheep stealing, were also concerned; they were brought up on the same charge.

The incident took place on the night of Tuesday a week ago [7 December 1847], near the Factory bridge, and resulted in the death of a man.

Thomas Hinton was a boatman; he was removed on Wednesday, the day after the incident, to the Salop Infirmary and was treated, but gradually got worse until last Monday morning when he died. On Saturday, the Mayor attended the unfortunate man at the Infirmary, and took his deposition as follows:-

I was coming out of Matthews's house (the bridge Inn) to go to the boat about eleven o'clock; I met three men; they had a gallon jug of drink with them; they let me drunk; I was doing so; one of the men snatched the jug from my hand and knocked me down with his fist; the handle of the jug came off in my hand; when I was down I was beaten by one of the men with a stick; Matthews saw them beat me; they beat me over the head; Matthews got me into the house and when the policeman came they ran away; I gave them no provocation, and had no words with them; another man was with me named Thomas Hales; he goes in the boat belonging to Messrs Whitehouse with me; it is called the Magnet".

The first witness called was:

¹ The National Archives (TNA) UK, HO107/927/10

John Lewis. I am turned 16 years of age; I live at Coalwharf-square with my mother; on Tuesday night, about eleven o'clock I was coming out of Matthews's; I saw two men going over the Factory bridge, they were navvies, they had a large jug of drink; Thomas Hinton was in the road when three men came up; he said, "Mates, let us drink with you"; the two men turned back and gave him the jug, saying ' "Yes sure, you shall drink with us"; at that time a third man came up; he had a pipe in his mouth; he snatched the jug from Hinton's mouth; Hinton said, "If I shan't drink, you shan't"; then they both loosed the jug and it tumbled don and broke the handle off; then that man (pointing to the prisoner Harrison) whistled with his two fingers, then came up three or four chaps; William Davies was one of them; I did not know the others; that man (Harrison) ran and knocked Hinton down, then there came up another boat chap; then these three boat chaps, Thomas Hinton, Harry Gardner and a chap from Crowley's named Edward, "I don't know his other name, mastered the others with their fists, then the navvies ran away; they were away about five minutes when they came back, and fetched great big sticks; one man came up, pulled a great big stick from under his jacket and knocked Hinton down, then William Davies came up and beat him with a stick while he was down; then Harry Gardner and me ran; Harrison ran after us; as we were getting over a style he hit Gardner on the arm with a stick; then Gardner sent me for a policeman; I heard a girl shout "murder" from the direction in which Hinton was lying; I came up to the police office; when I came back they were all gone; I saw Hinton in Matthew's; his face was all over blood and he was throwing up blood; he could not speak; there were two cuts on his forehead; I saw none of the navvies after. Mary Thomas, who keeps the Pheasant beer house, Castle Foregate, deposed to Harrison and several other men being drinking in her house on the night in question, and that she gave Harrison a gallon of ale in a large brown jug.

The hearing went over three days. Several witnesses mentioned William Davies as being one of the men who beat Hinton with a stick. Griffiths, one of those charged, was dismissed due to lack of evidence.

At the end of the evidence, after a short consultation, the Mayor informed William Harrison, William Davies and Thomas Hopwood that they stood committed for trial at the Assizes on the charge of the manslaughter of Thomas Hinton, on Tuesday night the 7 December; and Reuben Clarke and James Smith as accessories of Harrison, Davies and Hopwood. His worship then intimated that bail would be taken for any of them. Hopwood and Harrison were admitted to bail.

Statements were taken from all the accused.

The statement of William Davies. I went up the road about eleven o'clock, and when near the Spring Gardens, I heard "Murder" shouted. When I went up opposite the Bridge Inn, I saw a ruck of men fighting, but I cannot say how many. I asked what the matter was, but I had no sooner said the word than I received a blow, and fell against My Boycott's palings. I said, "What is this for, or what have I done to be served this way". The man made answer and said, "You are one of the lot: I said, "No, Tom; I am not" I knew the man. It was Hinton himself. He came at me the second time, and I fell, and never resisted. I lay there till it was over. While I lay there, I got kicked on the leg by someone from the party, but I couldn't say who it was. When I got up, the first person I saw was Eliza Taylor. She told me she had been struck in the eye. I asked her by who, and she said it was Griffiths or Hopwood, she could not say which. Whether it was a stick or a flat fist she did not know, but thought it was a stick. I then left her and came home. I am as innocent as ever an angel which left the kingdom of God of the charge.²

Thomas Hinton, after an Inquest was held, was buried on 17 December 1847, aged 27.

Sheep stealing at Harlescott [about 1.5km from Ditherington]

3 January 1848.

William Davies, Reuben Clark and James Smith were indicted for killing, with intent to steal, one ewe sheep, the property of W.K.Wheeler, at Harlescott, on 10 December 1847 [Friday].

Mr Phillimore prosecuted and Mr Kenealy defended the prisoners.

² Shrewsbury Chronicle, 17 December 1847, p2; Eddowes's Shrewsbury Journal, 22 December 1847, p4

Mr Phillimore said with regard to two of the prisoners, Clark and Smith, the evidence against them was that of being in company with the third prisoner, Davies, when they were all found partaking of mutton, whether those two prisoners had a guilty knowledge of the felony it would be for the jury to decide when they heard the evidence.

Mr Wheeler, a farmer living at Harlescott, said he found the entrails of the sheep in his field he gave information to the police and traced footmarks from the field to the turnpike road.

Francis Whittaker, policeman, came on then to Davies's house, in Shrewsbury, and found the three prisoners eating boiled mutton. He told Davies he came to search his house on suspicion of sheep stealing, and on searching, he found a leg of mutton, cut and ..aggled in cold water; the water was bloody; the leg was not cut off by a butcher. Davies's wife said she brought the leg of mutton on Saturday night from Hanley, the butcher. The other policeman then found some sheep in an earthen jar; two pieces of mutton in a pot of broth; Davies said these pieces of mutton belonged to Clark and Smith, and they said they brought them from a country butcher. Two sheep's kidneys were found in a cupboard. Prisoners were taken into custody. Davies's boots were taken to the prosecutor and compared to the footmarks in the field; they corresponded exactly. and those footmarks were traced within two hundred yards of Davies's house. They found a sheep's foot in the field, which, on being compared to the leg of mutton found at Davies's house, corresponded exactly.

A butcher was called, and the sheep's skin was shown to him, which he said was not taken off by a butcher.

Mrs Hanley, wife of a butcher, said she sold a leg of mutton and a sheep's head to Davies's wife on Saturday before the prisoners were taken. On speaking before the Borough Magistrates as to the leg and head, she said they were not the same as she sold to Davies's wife. On being cross-examined, she said she could not recollect if the leg she sold was boiled, but she believed it was.

The publican of the Pheasants at Castle Foregate, said the three prisoners were in his house drinking on the evening. Between five and six o'clock, Clark and Davies went out; Smith remained until closing time.

Mr Kenealy addressed the jury. He urged that the only one of the prisoner against whom the shadow of a charge rested was the prisoner Davies; as to the other two there could not be the slightest charge sustained against them; and as to the prisoner Davies the charge against him was entirely circumstantial, and was sustained only by footmarks which are alleged to correspond with the pair of boots which he had on when he was taken.

The jury, after a short consultation, returned a verdict of guilty against Davies and not guilty against Clark and Smith. Davies was sentenced to 10 years transportation.³

The Criminal Register shows at the Salop County Sessions, 3 January 1848:

William Davies, 31, imp, feloniously killing a sheep with intent to steal, 10 years

Later, at the Lent Assizes, on 18 March 1848.

William Harrison, labourer, 28, Thomas Hopwood, 28 and William Davies, labourer, 31, were charged with killing and slaying, on 7 December 1847, at the parish of St Mary, in the borough of Shrewsbury, one Thomas Hinton. No Bill.

Reuben Clarke, 27, brickburner, and James Smith, 26, labourer, charged with then and there being accessories after the fact. No Bill.⁴

By the time William was transferred to the *York* hulk in the March quarter of 1849, his surname had become Davis.

The Prison Registers show that William Davis, 31, was convicted of sheep stealing on 3 January 1848 at Salop Sessions, and sentenced to 10 years. He had one conviction for a misdemeanour. William had light brown hair, hazel eyes, sallow, oval face, stout, hairy on breast and arms, scar on the back

³ Shrewsbury Chronicle, 07 January 1848, p3

⁴ Eddowes's Shrewsbury Journal - Wednesday 22 March 1848, p2

of the head, left arm and back of right hand, marks of bleeding on left arm, scars back left hand and thumb sandy whiskers, right arm injured, inoculation mark both arms, 5'7¼", could read and write imperfectly and a labourer.

His wife Mary 52, James 16, Hannah 4, lived at Spring Gardens, Shrewsbury. William boarded the *Pyrenees* on 10 March 1851 for the voyage to Western Australia.⁵

On arrival at Fremantle, Western Australia, William was assigned number 437, issued with a Ticket of Leave and a physical description was recorded.

437. William Davis, 36, 5'7½", light hair, hazel eyes, fair visage, fair complexion, no marks, shoemaker, married with two children. His description looks pretty inadequate considering what was recorded on the hulk.⁶

The Superintendent's Journal shows that:

4 July 1851. The following prisoners, 45 men from the York hulk at Gosport and 12 men from the Stirling Castle, will be received from the ship *Pyrenees* and located in Division No. 3, including 437. William Davis.

7 July 1851. The following men holding passes will be detached from the Establishment and proceed to Mount Eliza Station on 10 July by boat. Wm Davis 437 was the boatswain for Mess No 4. Each boat held up to 8 men.⁷

Ticket-of-Leave-Men at Mount Eliza Station: 437 William Davis, Strong Shoemaker.
The men were available for hire.⁸

Perth District, Ticket of Leave Register.⁹

William Davis, 437, 36 years old from *Pyrenees*.

Hired by Stephen Hyde, Perth, Publican, and began work on 16 July 1851.

[Hyde was given a publican's licence for the "Vine Tavern" in Murray Street in May 1851]

19 August 1851: left Hyde's service

11 October 1851: working for John Richards, another Ticket of leave holder. [Convict 453 per *Pyrenees*, bootmaker, Murray Street, Perth]

1 December 1851: produced written agreement with J. Jones, Guildford, as shoemaker and house servant and states wages to be £2.10.0 per month.

Trade or calling - strong shoemaker

Wages £1.10 per month.

Remarks. 11 August 1851 received from S. Hyde 8/6 on account of passage money

Original sentence expired January 1859. This appears to be a typo, as his 10-year sentence would have expired in January 1858.

These appearances at Guildford Court may be William.

31 May 31 1852. William Davis, ticket-of-leave holder, was brought up, charged with being in a public house at half-past 10 on Saturday night, fined 7s and cautioned.¹⁰

1 September 1853. John Johnson, Police Constable, was charged by William Davis, t.l. holder, with having struck him on the head with a stick, and thereby done him serious damage without sufficient cause. The Bench, after hearing the case, gave their decision that blame attached to both sides and having cautioned the constable against too liberal use of his staff, dismissed the case.¹¹

⁵ TNA, HO8/107; PCOM2/136

⁶ SROWA, Acc 128/32

⁷ SROWA, Superintendent's Orders, So1-So3, p51, p53

⁸ The Perth Gazette and Independent Journal of Politics and News, 18 July 1851, p2

⁹ Perth TOL Register Cons 1386/1 1851 - Aug 1854, p53

¹⁰ Inquirer, 9 June 1852, p3

¹¹ Inquire, 5 October 1853, p3

11 December 1854— William Davis, t.l., drunk; fined 10s.¹²

On the York census, taken on 31 December 1859:

Henry Burton, 55, labourer, arrived per *Scindian* as a corporal in the 54th Regiment, born in Devon, and had $\frac{3}{4}$ acre of land. Living with him was his wife, Harriott, 54, who also arrived on the *Scindian*, and a lodger:

William Davies, 44, married, CoFE, shoemaker, can read and write, free, arrived per *Pyrenees*, born in Shropshire and married in Shrewsbury.¹³

This is the last confirmed sighting of William.

¹² Inquirer, 4 January 1854, p2

¹³ SROWA, York census