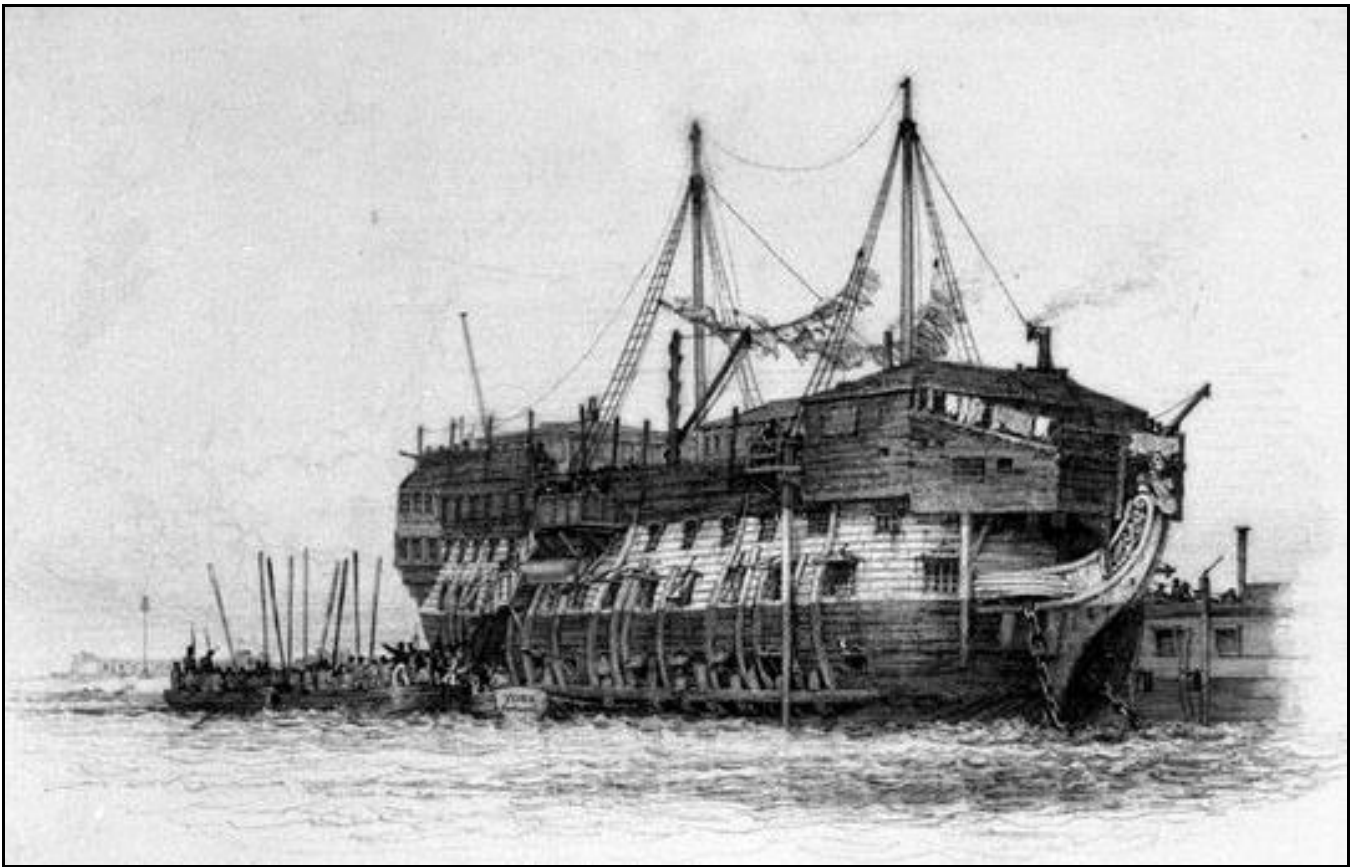


**A BURGLARY AT WILLIAM SHERWIN'S
HOSIERY WAREHOUSE, COLEORTON IN 1824
RESULTING IN A SENTENCE OF
TRANSPORTATION FOR ONE OF THE
PARTICIPANTS**



**THE YORK HULK PRISON SHIP IN PORTSMOUTH HARBOUR ca. 1829
SHOWS PRISONERS BEING TAKEN ON BOARD
BY EDWARD WILLIAM COOKE, 1811**

DRAFT - ONGOING PROJECT

BY SAMUEL T STEWART - APRIL 2024

PREFACE

Although a total of nine men were involved in the burglary at William Sherwin's hosiery warehouse in March 1824, the story focuses on a man by the name of William Walker who received a sentence of 14 years transportation for his part in the crime. The author would like to thank Gillian Waterfield (nee. Walker) for drawing the author's attention to this case and kindly supplying copies of some relevant research material.

RECOMMENDED COMPLIMENTARY READING ON THE AUTHOR'S WEBSITE :-

"The Coleorton Sherwins' 1739 - 1887"

AUTHOR'S WEBSITE ADDRESS :-

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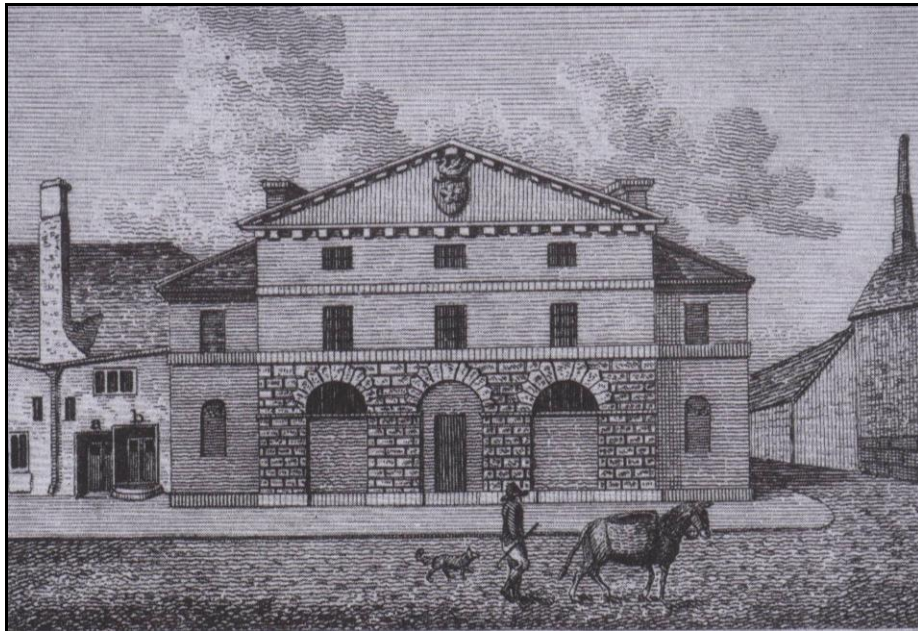
THE CRIME

The following newspaper article is the earliest factual record we have of the robbery committed by William Walker and his associates at William Sherwin's premises in Coleorton, which eventually resulted in them all being tried at Leicester Assizes on the 22nd of March.

Transcribed from the Leicester Chronicle – March 20th 1824

In the County Gaol

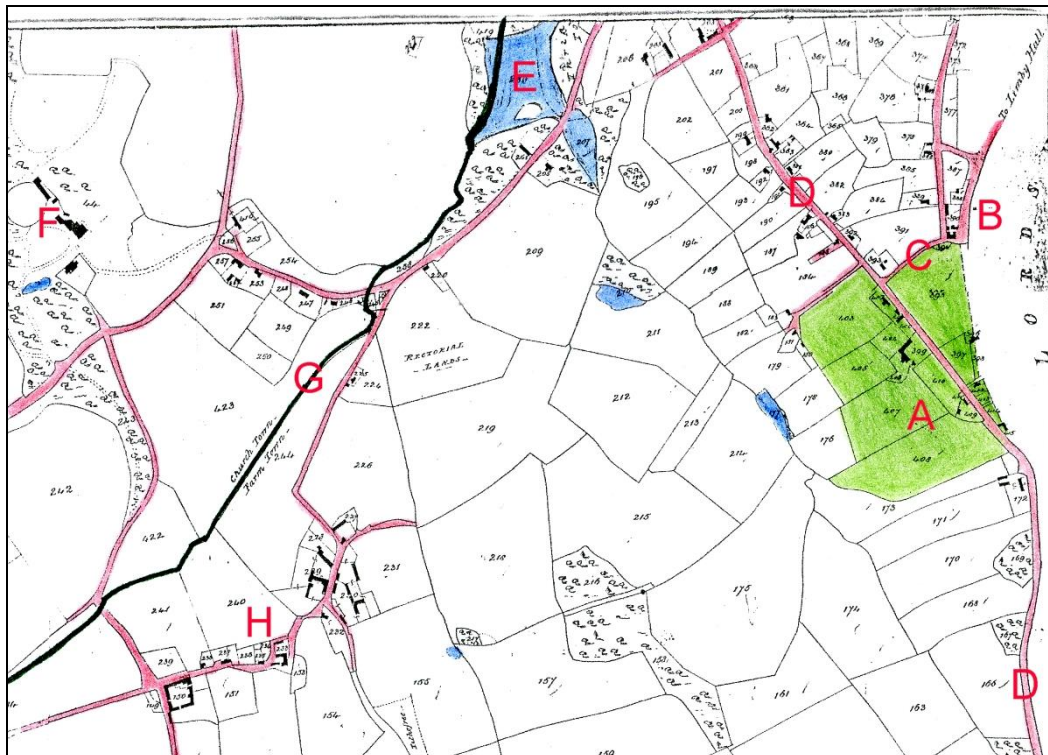
Thomas Griffin, William Braithwaite, John Burrows, William Wilkinson, Randall Copson, **William Walker**, Robert Browett and Thomas Wollerton, for burglarious entering the premises of **William Sherwin**, of Coleorton, and stealing a quantity of hosiery there from. ([Edward Finney's name is missing from this list](#))



Leicester's Old town Gaol ([County Gaol?](#)). demolished in 1837 following the building of Welford Road Jail in 1828

WILLIAM SHERWIN THE ELDER 1768 - 1854

William Sherwin, the elder (1768 - 1854) was a wealthy business man and land / property owner in Leicestershire and was held in high esteem in Coleorton. He was a successful hosier, Woolcomber, Framework knitter and Banker. The publication on the author's website entitled "The Coleorton Sherwins' 1739 - 1887" provides a detailed history of the Sherwins'. William Sherwin, the elder, was a respected benefactor to the village of Coleorton. He was the only person to actually own land on the over 2,000 acre Coleorton Beaumont estate besides the rector. His land and properties where the burglarious act described herein took place are shown coloured green and marked **A** on this extract from the 1842 tithe map of Coleorton below.



Key -

- A** – Area of land owned (not rented from the Beaumont's) by William Sherwin - plot numbers 394 to 415. This included his residence, facing the upper Moor Road (formerly an extension of the Hinckley to Melbourne turnpike)
- B** – Area now known as "The Rowlands"
- C** – Moor Lane (was part of Workhouse Lane)
- D** – Road now know as "The Moor" or "Upper Moor"
- E** – Coleorton Fish Pond
- F** – Coleorton Hall and grounds
- G** – Church Town / Farm Town boundary line
- H** – Farm Town

THE TRIAL AT LEICESTER ASSIZES ON 22nd MARCH 1824

Transcribed from the Leicester Journal - Friday 26th March 1824

The ASSIZES commenced here on Monday last. The Hon. Sir John Hullock, Knight, one of the barons of the Court of Exchequer, arrived soon after eleven o'clock, escorted by Charles Godfrey Blundy, Esq. High Sheriff, with a more numerous attendance of gentlemen in Carriages and on Horseback, than has been witnessed for some years past. The equipage of the High Sheriff, had a peculiar degree of solemnity and grandeur in its appearance. His Lordship immediately proceeded to open his commission. On Tuesday morning his Lordship attended Devine Services at St. Martin's Church ; where an able and appropriate Discourse was delivered by the Rev. J. Clementson, from the 2nd chapter of the 1st Epistle of St. Peter, and 13th verse.

The following Gentlemen composed the Grand jury :-

Lord Robert Manners, **FOREMAN**
Sir John Henry Palmer, Bart
Edward Hawkins Cheney, Esq. C.B.
Charles James Packe, Esq.
Clement Winstanley, Esq.
George Pochin, Esq.
John Finch - Simpson, Esq.
Edward Farnham, Esq.
Richard Norman, Esq.
George Moore, Esq.
Edwyn Andrew Barnaby, Esq.
John Pares, Esq.
Charles William Packe, Esq.
Matthew Babington, Esq.
John Dick Barnaby, Esq.
Edward Basil Farnham, Esq.
Thomas Sansome, Esq.
William Fisher Hulse, Esq.
George Hussey Packe, Esq.
Alexander Dixie, Esq.
William Heyrick, Esq.
Peter Augustus LaFargue Esq.

The following prisoners took their trials, and were severally sentenced as under :-

IN THE COUNTY GAOL

ROBERT BROWETT, EDWARD FINNEY, and THOMAS WOOLLERTON, were severally charged with having burglariously entered the premises of William Sherwin, of Coleorton, and with stealing therefrom a quantity of hosiery, &cc.

Thomas Woollerton was admitted "King's Evidence". He deposed that the prisoners met at the Waggon and Horses public house, in Leicester, and afterwards committed the robbery. They started on Tuesday night, 9th September, for Coleorton, and on reaching the premises of the Prosecutor, took a ladder out of a stack yard and placed it against the top window of the warehouse, when Finney took out a pane of glass and entered ; after searching the warehouse, he threw out about 20 dozen of stockings and sundry papers. They afterwards took and hid them in Bainbrigg's barn, and returned to Leicester.

Woollerton and Browett started on the Thursday evening following, taking along with them a horse which they fetched out of a close on the Welford Road (*Leicester*), and brought the goods to Leicester.

GUILTY ; DEATH RECORDED - 'death recorded,' was a 19th-century English legal term. "Death recorded" means that a convict was pardoned for his crimes rather than given the death sentence.

WILLIAM WALKER, of the Barkby Lane, with having feloniously received the said goods belonging to **WILLIAM SHERWIN**, knowing them to be stolen 7 (*actually 14*) years transportation. The offence was actually recorded as Felony.

THOMAS GRIFFIN, W. BRAITHWAITE, JOHN BARROWS, and WILLIAM WILKINSON, and RANDALL COPSON, for burglariously entering the premises of William Sherwin - Discharged by Proclamation. - "*Discharged by Proclamation*" meant that **the prisoner was released without trial or verdict** (although they could be recalled later to face the charges again). This was typically because no evidence was presented against the accused, or no witnesses were able to testify against the accused.

NOTE

At the time of William Walker's sentence for felony, many people were being hanged for crimes such as this and of Leicestershire's thirty-two gallows victims between 1800 and 1837, only nine had committed murder, a ratio reflected in the statute book. William could perhaps have felt himself fortunate not to have gone to the gallows.

WILLIAM WALKER'S SENTENCE

The first question one has to ask is why William Walker was the only one of the people on trial to receive a sentence. The others were either 'pardoned' or 'discharged by Proclamation'

The author takes the view, rightly or wrongly, that William Walker whose address was given as Barkby Lane, Leicester at the time the crime was committed, was the person who actually organised the crime and received the stolen goods, but possibly didn't participate in it himself. Why would 8 or 9 men travel all the way from Leicester to Coleorton, some 18 miles distant, without prior knowledge of exactly where the warehouse was and what it contained. Had William Walker worked in William Sherwin's hosiery business and therefore knew what was contained in the said warehouse?

Below are some notes from the trial regarding Finney, Browett and William Walker. In each case it appears to record them all as truly guilty, however, for Finney and Browett - 'Freedom recorded' is appended but for William Walker - '14 years'

Appended to Finney is a note stating Burglary of William Sherwin of his goods £7 - 6s. ???

*Part record of
after trial
to Prison House etc*

*Richd. all fed
Cope -* } *Steady goods to - £12. - 12 of Sherwin
in the case*

Thursday

*Clarke
10th*

Monday day sworn as under Court yesterday

truly guilty. Judgment recorded
* *Edward Finney - Burglary of Wm Sherwin of his
his goods to the value of £7. - 6*

truly guilty. Judgment recorded
* *Robert Browett*

truly guilty - 14 yrs.
Wm Walker - Felony part of goods burgled

PUBLIC RECORD OFFICE

Reference: - 15325

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
113.							

THE TRANSPORTATION OF WILLIAM WALKER FOR 14 YEARS

Although the preceding newspaper report of the trial records William Walker as being sentence to 7 years transportation, it was actually 14 years which is recorded in several other official documents including in the entry for William Walker in the "Return of Convicts Under Sentence to Transportation on Board the York Hulk at Portsmouth by Command of his Majesty's Principal Secretary of State for the Home Department from July 1st - 30th September 1824 inclusive". His age was given as 56 and the offence Felony at Leicester on 22nd March 1824. His bodily State is given as "Healthy" and his Behaviour "Good".

14 years is also recorded on The York Hulk Prison Ship manifest in April 1824, a copy of which follows on the next page.

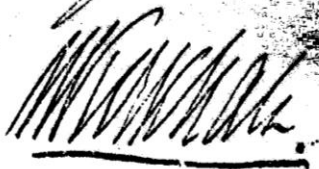
William was taken to the York Hulk prison ship at Portsmouth (Gosport) on the 13th April 1824 following his sentencing at Leicester, confirmed on the following H.O. ships manifest. William was not actually transported overseas, and he spent all of his time actually on board the York Hulk as she been taken out of service as a transportation ship prior to William Walker going on board. Williams life on board would have been unimaginable and possibly worse than if he had actually been transported overseas.

WILLIAM WALKER AWARDED A PARDON

After serving 10 years of his 14 year sentence on the York Hulk Convict Prison Ship, shown on the front cover, William was granted "His Majesty's Free Pardon" on the 19th day of July 1834 in consequence of his good behaviour and general good conduct, this followed two recommendations made the previous year which were crossed through meaning they were rejected at the time. Apparently, recommendations were made quarterly, usually for three per hundred of the best behaved convicts on board.

The pardon was written on board ship on the 19th July 1834; 10 years and three months after he boarded her. **The conviction date of March 1834 at Leicester should of course read 1824.**

*I do hereby Certify, that William Walker who was
Convicted at Leicester in March 1834 and
Sentenced to Transportation for ~~fourteen~~ Years, hath,
in consequence of ~~his good behaviour~~ of having served ten years
^{and upon an} received His Majesty's Free Pardon.
Given under my Hand on board the Convict Hulk
York this 19th Day of July 1834*



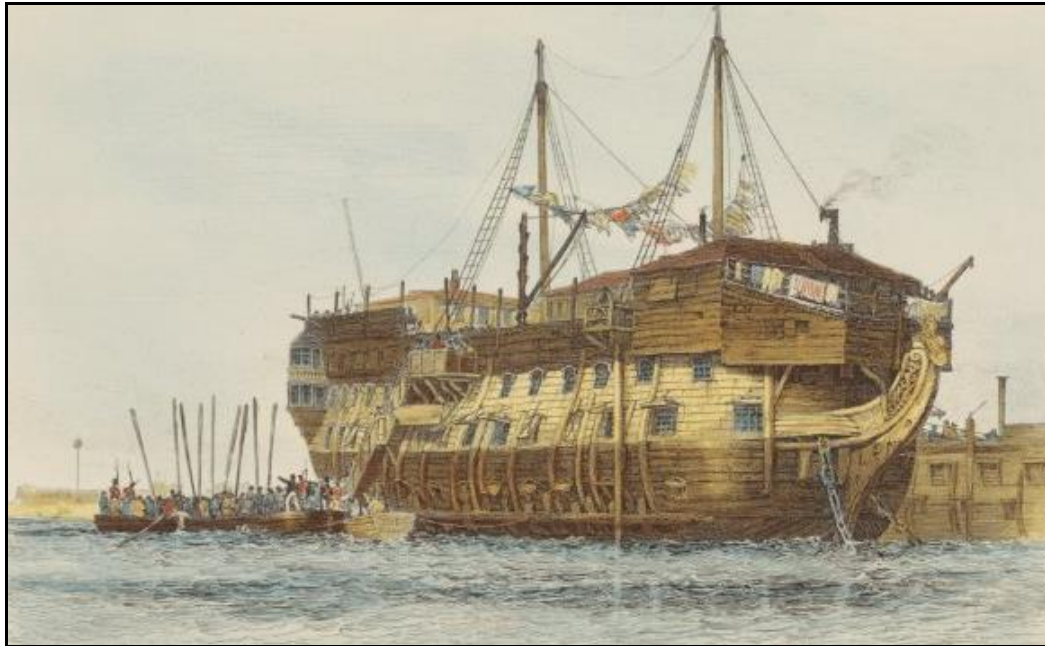
Continued over page

It is hereby further certified that the
within named William Walker hath
acknowledged the receipt of ^{the} undermentioned
sum of money

For Ordinance of Contage &

The Party to whom this Document
is Delivered is most particularly cautioned
and enjoined to preserve it entire by
every means in his power

ABOUT THE YORK HULK (CONVICT PRISON SHIP)



**Prison Ship York in Portsmouth Harbour, c.1829 with convicts going aboard
By Edward William Cooke, 1811 - 1829**

The York Hulk floats on the Gosport side of Portsmouth Harbour inside the seaward defences of what is now Fort Blockhouse with another cut down Hulk thought to be a quarantine ship (the Leviathan ?) moored alongside in this image from c.1829. The York had been permanently moored there since 1819 when she entered Portsmouth Harbour and was stripped of her masts and was converted into a prison ship. The York was originally a 74-gun third rate, built on contract at the Nelson Dock, Rotherhithe, by Samuel and David Brent. She was laid down in 1805 and launched in 1807. She served in the Napoleonic wars, but is perhaps best known as a prison ship. She could hold up to 500 convicts including those passing through for transportation overseas on other ships.

The following extract was taken from the "James Gannell Chronicles" which can be viewed on the internet. He was an inmate who was imprisoned for more than eight months on board the York Hulk awaiting transportation to Australia - Van Diemen's land by another ship:-

"The site of the Hulks at Portsmouth had the look of slum tenements with lines of bedding strung out to air, between the stumps of the masts, and the gun ports barred with iron lattices.....they were like floating piranesi ruins, cramped and wet inside, dark and vile smelling". Each convict was stripped of his clothing and all personal possessions. In exchange he received coarse convict garb and a 14-pound iron riveted to his right ankle - "A practical discouragement to swimmers". After a felon was shackled in irons, he was ready to go and work in the Government dockyards from dawn till dusk....."

There follows a list of prisoners on board the York Convict hulk at Portsmouth who were recommended for mercy between 1821 and 1828. Document Ref HO 17/54/64 :-

Prisoner details: Thomas Swift, aged 17, convicted at Lewes [Sussex] on 18 August 1821 for felony. Sentenced to transportation for life but annotated 'mitigated to 14 years on 13 Apr 1828'.

Prisoner details: William Chouls, aged 31, convicted at New Sarum [Wiltshire] on 4 August 1821 for felony. Sentenced to transportation for life but annotated 'mitigated to 14 years on 23 April 1828'.

Prisoner details: James Cooke, aged 40, convicted at Northampton [Northamptonshire] on 31 July 1821 for felony. Sentenced to transportation for life but annotated 'mitigated to 14 years 19 May 1829'.

Prisoner details: Edward Mantle, aged 23, convicted at Worcester [Worcestershire] on 9 March 1822 for horse stealing. Sentenced to transportation for life but annotated 'mitigated to 14 years 23 Apr 1828'.

Prisoner details: Joshua Tranter, aged 62, convicted at Winchester [Hampshire] for 'Forged Notes'. Sentenced to 14 years transportation. Annotated: second sentence. [Name crossed through].

Prisoner details: William Stevenson, aged 19, convicted at Newgate [London] on 15 September 1825 for stealing two tablecloths. Sentenced to seven years transportation.

Prisoner details: Richard Clayton, aged 43, convicted at Newgate [London] on 15 September 1825 for stealing '21 stuff bodies and furs'. Sentenced to seven years transportation.

Prisoner details: George Mitchell, aged 21, convicted at Newgate [London] on 15 September 1825 for stealing [one] silver milk ewer. Sentenced to seven years transportation.

Prisoner details: James Veal, aged 19, convicted at Newgate [London] on 15 September 1825 for stealing [one] tablecloth. Sentenced to seven years transportation.

Prisoner details: Richard Johns, aged 33, convicted at Bodmin 10 January 1826 for stealing a £1 note. Sentenced to seven years i. [Name crossed through].

Prisoner details: Charles Byles, aged 48, convicted at Winchester [Hampshire] on 27 February 1826 for grand larceny. Sentenced to seven years transportation. [Name crossed through].

Prisoner details: James Radford, aged 27, convicted at Bridgwater [Somerset] on 8 August 1825 for stealing a purse containing gold and silver. Sentenced to seven years transportation.

Prisoner details: William Goodrich, aged 21, convicted at Bury St Edmunds [Suffolk] on 17 March 1824 for stealing pigs. Sentenced to seven years transportation. [Name crossed through].

Prisoner details: George Pywell, aged 21, convicted at Northampton [Northamptonshire] on 28 February 1824 for stealing wheat. Sentenced to seven years transportation. [Name crossed through].

Prisoner details: Stephen Hore, aged 29, convicted at Warwick [Warwickshire] on 29 March 1825 for Felony. Sentenced to seven years transportation.

List completed by T Bailey, Chief Mate.

Grounds for clemency (recommendation): Being three out of every hundred who have served more than one half of their respective sentences and who are selected as the best behaved men on the hulk for recommendation as deserving of the Royal Mercy.

Annotated: Pardon prepared November 1829.