



Prison Hulk York anchored at Gosport

## The Story Of James Brodie

James Brodie was yesterday committed to our old Bridewell, charged with stealing a silver watch, a gold chain, two seals, and a key, the property of Mr. Neate, of the Elm Tree, Devizes. The circumstance which led to the apprehension and committal of the prisoner is rather singular. The watch has been missing since the first week in January. On Tuesday last, a Jew went into the shop of Mr. Smith, at the post-office, in this town, to purchase a sheet of paper, when a handsome Masonic seal, hanging from his pocket, attracted Mr. Smith's attention. This seal, he conceived, bore an exact resemblance to the one Mr. Neate had lost, and which he had previously seen. Mr. Smith watched the Jew into a public house, and then made Mr. Neate acquainted with his suspicion. Mr. Neate very shortly waited upon the Jew, and laid claim to the chain and seals. The Jew said that they had been purchased about a fortnight ago, together with a watch, since resold, by his master (who resides in Bath,) of a person who stated that he lived in Devizes. From the description the Jew gave of the man, and from the knowledge that his ostler had been in Bath about that time, Mr. Neate suspected him to be the thief. The Jew accompanied Mr. Neate to his house. The ostler was called, and the very moment the Jew saw him, he recognised him to be the man, from whom his master purchased the watch, &c. The ostler, at first equivocated, but afterwards acknowledged that he had sold the watch, but that he had found it in the privy. It is rather against the ostler, that his master should at the time have made known to him his loss, and told him to make search for the watch.

### **Devizes and Wiltshire Gazette, Thursday 17 April 1828**

At Devizes sessions, James Brodie, under-ostler at the Elm Tree, was convicted of stealing a watch, the property of his master, Mr. John Neate, and sentenced to seven years' transportation. (Particulars of this robbery were given in last week's journal).

### **Salisbury and Winchester Journal, Monday 28 April 1828**

On Thursday the following convicts were removed from Fisherton to go on board the York hulk, Gosport, viz. ... & James Brodie, for stealing a watch, the property of his master, convicted at the last Devizes sessions.

**Salisbury and Winchester Journal, Monday 26 May 1828**

**The National Archives at Kew, hold the following record: HO 17/35/100**

Prisoner name: James Brodie.  
Prisoner age: 30 years.  
Prisoner occupation: [Servant].  
Court and date of trial: Devizes Borough Sessions, [Wiltshire], April 1828.  
Crime: Stealing a watch [and seals] from the house of John Neate (his master).  
Initial sentence: Seven years transportation.  
Gaoler's report: 'Indifferent'.  
Annotated: 'Nil Jun 7 1828'.  
Petitioner(s): Caroline Brodie (wife). James Brodie (the convict) [unsigned] and John Neate, Moses Glass, Jacob Clark and William Martin (all former employers).  
Grounds for clemency: His wife is only 19 years old; she is pregnant; she married him only three months previously; she is wholly destitute; she also prays to be allowed to go abroad with him if he cannot be permitted to stay in England.  
Additional Information: Held on the hulks at Gosport [Hampshire].  
Date: 1828 Jun – 1828 July  
This appears to have been unsuccessful.

**Record from National Archives, at Kew: HO 17/17/70, dated 31 March 1833:**

Recommendation for the mitigation of sentence for selected prisoners on board the convict hulk Hardy at Tipner in Portsmouth, Hampshire. ....

Prisoner details: James Brodie, aged 24, convicted at Devizes, Wiltshire on 18 April 1828 for stealing a watch and appendages. Sentenced to seven years transportation. [Entry crossed through].  
Recommendation submitted by R Armstrong (Overseer), undersigned by J Inman (Chaplain) and John Henry Capper (superintendent).

Grounds for clemency: Being three percent of the convicts on board and having served more than one half of their sentences with orderly and good conduct they have been selected as the best behaved men on the hulk deserving of the Royal Mercy.

Annotated: Free pardon prepared 7 May 1833 [for those convicts remaining on the list].  
(Additional Information: Details are given of infringements of the hulk rules by the convicts and their punishments.)

This appears to have been successful, as the 1841 census (**HO107/1189/2, Folio: 59 Page: 17**) shows: James Brodie, age 40, labourer, living at Sheep Street, Devizes St. Mary, with his wife Caroline, aged 30, and children, James Brodie, aged 6, Jane Brodie, aged 4, and Moses Brodie aged 7 months. Also in the household is Simon Pierce aged 65.