

Baptism	12 September 1824, St Mary the Virgin, Bocking, Essex
Parents	James Hodges married Jane Gentry ¹
Parent's marriage	7 July 1818 at Bocking, Essex.
Siblings	Sophia (1821), James (1824), William (1827), Thomas (1829), George (1832)
Wife	
Married	
Children	

On the 1841 Census, the family lived in Bradford Street, Bocking:
James Hodges, 55, ag lab: Jane, 50; James, 15, a carpenter ap [apprentice], Thomas, 12; George, 9.
By 1851, his father was a pauper, so the family was in poor circumstances.

At Braintree, on Saturday last [21 October 1848], James Hodges and Charles Dyer, the latter lately returned from transportation, were brought before S.W. Saville Esq, charged with stealing some pieces of lead piping from the premises of the Six Bells public house, Bocking, the property of John Gosling Esq. They were both committed to take their trial.²

A month later, the Essex Adjourned Session was held on 28 November 1848:
Charles Dyer ³ and James Hodges, labourers, were indicted for stealing 19 lbs. of lead from John Gosling, at Braintree.—Dyer Not guilty; Hodges Guilty - Two months hard labour. The Criminal Register notes James was 25 and could read and write imperfectly.⁴

James had been out of gaol just over a month when he appeared in the Crown Court at Chelmsford, on 3 April 1849:
James Hodges pleaded guilty to the charge of stealing a carpenter's plough from Uriah Ramsey at Witham, having been convicted of a felony; he was further charged with stealing a saw from Wm. Speakman, at Terling, was found guilty and sentenced to seven years transportation.⁵ On 28 April he was removed from Springfield Gaol and sent to Millbank Prison in London.⁶ James Hodges, 23, single, read and write imperfectly, a carpenter, Church of England, and on 30 May 1849, was convalescent class.⁷

James petitioned for a mitigation of sentence while in Millbank Prison.
The Petition was received 6 February 1850 from Reg. 17245, James Hodges, age 23.
Convicted on 3 April 1849 at Chelmsford Sessions of Larceny on two indictments and a previous conviction, sentenced to Seven Years, was received at Millbank Prison on 28 April 1849 from Springfield Gaol.

¹ Essex Records Office, D/P 268/1/8

² Essex Standard, 27 October 1848, p2

³ Charles Dyer, 20 was convicted of stealing a jacket 16 May 1843 and sentenced to 7 years, he had been convicted before. His mother Sophia Dyer lived in Braintree. Charged was pardoned 14 May 1847.

⁴ TNA UK, HO 27/84/p311; Chelmsford Chronicle, 01 December 1848, p2

⁵ Chelmsford Chronicle, 06 April 1849, p3

⁶ Chelmsford Chronicle, 04 May 1849, p4

⁷ TNA UK, PCOM2/30

To the Right Honorable Sir George Grey, Baronet, Her Majesty's Principal Secretary of State for the Home Department.

The Petition of James Hodges a prisoner in Shorncliffe Station humbly sheweth,

That your Petitioner, who has unfortunately incurred the sentence of the Law as above stated, and deeply sensible of the degradory position to which he has reduced himself; humbly begs to lay his case before your honorable notice, in the hope that some extenuating circumstances may be deduced from the same, so as to induce you to recommend your humble Petitioner to the merciful consideration of Her Majesty.

Your humble Petitioner is the son of poor but honest parents, and is a native of Bocking in Essex, in which place he served his term of apprenticeship to the trade of a Carpenter. He has always laboured to procure an honest livelihood by his own hardworking exertions, but has often come short of a proper maintenance owing to the extreme scarcity of employment oftentimes, an event which entails want upon the working man, and too often, drives him to overt crime.

Your Petitioner is well known to the Magistrates (under one of whom his parents have been Tenants for several years) and other respectable persons living in his native place, and up to the period of his confinement, was well respected by them as an industrious man.

a few days prior to the commission of the offence herein stated, Your Petitioner had purchased some tools used in his trade, and as some alterations were requisite to be made in them before they were fit for immediate use, your Petitioner brought them to a fellow workman to put in order for him, at the same time, lending him some money and treating him with some liquor. Your Petitioner was promised that they should be ready for use in a few days and so the matter rested for the time.

At the period appointed for the preparing of the aforesaid tools, your Petitioner called for them, but was told they were not finished. In short, various excuses were made from time to time for their non appearance, nor could your Petitioner obtain them from him, finished or unfinished.

Justly incensed at this, your Petitioner told him at last, that if he did not return the said tools or an equivalent for them in cash, that your Petitioner would seize something of his as a compensation for their loss. On the day immediately in question, your Petitioner took a carpenter's plough from his shopmate's bench whilst he was gone to dinner; when he returned the above article was missed and information of the same given to a policeman desiring him to seek it out if possible. It was soon after traced to your Petitioner as being purloined, and he was forthwith taken in Custody, solely on the charge of having stolen his shopmate's plough.

After examination, your Petitioner was committed to take his trial at the ensuing Sessions. In due time your Petitioner was brought for trial, and on the question of the plough being settled, a charge of having stolen a saw was alleged against him, which completely filled him with astonishment, for up to that moment, not a solitary intimation had been given concerning this to your Petitioner, nor did he possess the slightest knowledge of the same.

However, as no one was present to plead your petitioners cause, his simple denial of the latter was to no avail, and he was held guilty of the same and sentenced to transportation for seven years.

Your humble Petitioner had pleaded guilty to the indictment touching the plough, but denied in toto the charge of stealing a saw.

This then, is a simple statement of the facts in his case, as to the theft of the plough, it was not taken as a direct theft, but as a compensation for having been wronged by the owner of the same, of his, your Petitioner's property previously.

It was under the influence of strongly excited feeling that the act was committed by your Petitioner, and not in cool, deliberate premeditation. This, while it does not form an excuse

altogether for the offence committed, your Petitioner would humbly urge in extenuation of the same.

Should you recommend this humble Petition to Her Majesty's gracious clemency, Your Petitioner as in duty bound, will ever pray &c &c. James Hodges.⁸

Result: George Grey -Nil

James was transferred to Shorncliffe Prison in the December quarter of 1849. He had the same prison number as Millbank, and it appears some prisoners were transferred, perhaps because Millbank was at capacity. The surgeon's report was bad, but his behaviour was very good. On 8 April 1850, he was transferred to the *Justitia* hulk at Woolwich. While on the hulk, his behaviour was very good, and he was healthy.⁹

James boarded the *Marion* on 22 October 1851 for the voyage to Western Australia. On arrival, he was described as:

1163. James Hodges, 27, 5'9", with dark brown hair, brown eyes, oval face, fair complexion, stout, with a scar on his neck and a mole on left arm above the elbow, single and a carpenter.¹⁰ The day after arrival, James received his Ticket of Leave on 31 January 1852. He was employed by:

11 February 1852, Larcombe and Osborn of Perth, Ticket of Leave men from the *Scindian* and carpenters.

6 March 1852, John Place

9 November 1852, A. Gallop of Freshwater Bay.¹¹

There were unclaimed letters for James Hodges on 11 December 1852 and 27 January 1855. Unfortunately, there is no further way of identifying the sender or, if indeed, convict James Hodges was the receiver of the letters.

He received a Conditional Pardon in January 1854.¹²

James died on 29 April 1855 in Perth, aged 30. He was buried in East Perth Cemetery on 30 April 1855.¹³

⁸ TNA UK, HO18/270

⁹ TNA UK, HO8/104; HO24/4

¹⁰ SROWA, Acc 128/40-43

¹¹ Rica Erickson files on FamilySearch

¹² Government Gazette, 14 February 1854.

¹³ St George's Cathedral Perth (Anglican) Burial Registers 1854 – 1916 (FHWA website); Buried at East Perth Cemetery website