

warders and prisoners

Census Return Ruthin County Gaol 1871

<i>Name</i>	<i>Relationship</i>	<i>State</i>	<i>Age</i>	<i>Occupation</i>	<i>Birthplace</i>
<i>James Walmsley</i>	<i>Head</i>	<i>Married</i>	<i>42</i>	<i>Governor, County Gaol</i>	<i>Mellor, Lancs.</i>
<i>Johnna M.J.</i>	<i>Wife</i>	<i>Married</i>	<i>47</i>	<i>'s wife</i>	<i>Germany</i>
<i>Josephine</i>	<i>Daughter</i>	<i>-</i>	<i>9</i>	<i>Scholar</i>	<i>Caernarvon</i>
<i>Wilhelmina</i>	<i>Daughter</i>	<i>-</i>	<i>7</i>	<i>Scholar</i>	<i>Caernarvon</i>
<i>Fredrick</i>	<i>Son</i>	<i>-</i>	<i>5</i>	<i>-</i>	<i>Ruthin</i>
<i>Irene</i>	<i>Daughter</i>	<i>-</i>	<i>1</i>	<i>-</i>	<i>Ruthin</i>
<i>Margaret E. Williams</i>	<i>Servant</i>	<i>Unmarried</i>	<i>16</i>	<i>General Servant</i>	<i>St Asaph</i>
<i>Robert Jones</i>	<i>Warder</i>	<i>Married</i>	<i>36</i>	<i>1 Warder</i>	<i>Llanfwrog</i>
<i>Edward Humphreys</i>	<i>Warder</i>	<i>Married</i>	<i>28</i>	<i>2 Warder</i>	<i>Ruthin</i>
<i>John Robinson</i>	<i>Convict</i>	<i>Unmarried</i>	<i>42</i>	<i>Farmer's Labourer</i>	<i>Liverpool</i>
<i>John Smith</i>	<i>Convict</i>	<i>Unmarried</i>	<i>29</i>	<i>Stoker in foundry (iron)</i>	<i>Bilston, Staffs</i>
<i>John Ellis</i>	<i>Convict</i>	<i>Unmarried</i>	<i>20</i>	<i>Mason's labourer</i>	<i>Llanrhaidr ym Mochnant</i>
<i>Evan Edwards</i>	<i>Convict</i>	<i>Married</i>	<i>30</i>	<i>Collier</i>	<i>Nantglyn</i>
<i>Fredrick House</i>	<i>Military prisoner</i>	<i>Unmarried</i>	<i>30</i>	<i>Tailor, to be discharged from army</i>	<i>Denham, Bucks</i>
<i>Patrick Holsham</i>	<i>Military prisoner</i>	<i>Unmarried</i>	<i>30</i>	<i>Clerk -do-</i>	<i>Ireland</i>
<i>Thomas Langford</i>	<i>Convict</i>	<i>Married</i>	<i>20</i>	<i>Quarryman</i>	<i>Llangollen</i>
<i>William Murphy</i>	<i>Convict</i>	<i>Unmarried</i>	<i>16</i>	<i>Seaman</i>	<i>Scotland</i>
<i>James Cook</i>	<i>Convict</i>	<i>Married</i>	<i>40</i>	<i>Stricker in iron foundry</i>	<i>Bristol</i>
<i>John Kempster</i>	<i>Convict</i>	<i>Unmarried</i>	<i>17</i>	<i>Domestic servant- groom</i>	<i>Wrexham</i>
<i>John Jones</i>	<i>Convict</i>	<i>Unmarried</i>	<i>18</i>	<i>Domestic servant- groom</i>	<i>Liverpool</i>
<i>Simon Lloyd</i>	<i>Convict</i>	<i>Unmarried</i>	<i>21</i>	<i>Mason's labourer</i>	<i>Denbigh</i>
<i>Robert McManus</i>	<i>Convict</i>	<i>Married</i>	<i>24</i>	<i>Miner</i>	<i>St. Asaph</i>
<i>Isaac Roberts</i>	<i>Convict</i>	<i>Married</i>	<i>26</i>	<i>Farm labourer</i>	<i>Denbigh</i>
<i>Isaac Jones</i>	<i>Convict</i>	<i>Married</i>	<i>28</i>	<i>Labourer repairs road</i>	<i>Denbigh</i>
<i>William Price</i>	<i>Convict</i>	<i>Married</i>	<i>37</i>	<i>Mole catcher</i>	<i>Llandyrnog</i>
<i>Robert Davies</i>	<i>Convict</i>	<i>Married</i>	<i>25</i>	<i>Farm labourer</i>	<i>Llanrhaidr D.C.</i>
<i>William Owen</i>	<i>Convict</i>	<i>Married</i>	<i>37</i>	<i>Fitter of machines</i>	<i>Ffestiniog</i>
<i>John Miles</i>	<i>Convict</i>	<i>Married</i>	<i>33</i>	<i>Tinman and glazier</i>	<i>Tregeron, Cards.</i>
<i>Edward Griffiths</i>	<i>Convict</i>	<i>Unmarried</i>	<i>21</i>	<i>Butcher and farmer</i>	<i>Bodfari</i>
<i>William Hughes</i>	<i>Convict</i>	<i>Bigamist</i>	<i>38</i>	<i>Groom, servant</i>	<i>Llanfair T.H.</i>
<i>William Parry</i>	<i>Convict</i>	<i>Married</i>	<i>42</i>	<i>Butler, servant</i>	<i>Llanrhaidr D.C.</i>
<i>William Roberts</i>	<i>Convict</i>	<i>Married</i>	<i>49</i>	<i>Painter (plain)</i>	<i>St. Asaph</i>
<i>Thomas Edwards</i>	<i>Convict</i>	<i>Married</i>	<i>35</i>	<i>Farm labourer</i>	<i>St. Asaph</i>
<i>William Jones</i>	<i>Convict</i>	<i>Married</i>	<i>24</i>	<i>Farm labourer</i>	<i>Denbigh</i>
<i>Elias Edwards</i>	<i>Convict</i>	<i>Married</i>	<i>30</i>	<i>Quarryman</i>	<i>Glynceiriog</i>
<i>Robert Hughes</i>	<i>Convict</i>	<i>Married</i>	<i>30</i>	<i>Carter</i>	<i>Llangernyw</i>
<i>George Shepherd</i>	<i>Convict</i>	<i>Unmarried</i>	<i>53</i>	<i>Shoemaker (lunatic)</i>	<i>Grenton, Somerset</i>
<i>Walter Roberts</i>	<i>Convict</i>	<i>Unmarried</i>	<i>52</i>	<i>Carpenter</i>	<i>Ruabon</i>
<i>Griffith Roberts</i>	<i>Convict</i>	<i>Unmarried</i>	<i>25</i>	<i>Bricksetter's labourer</i>	<i>Wrexham</i>
<i>John Davies</i>	<i>Convict</i>	<i>Unmarried</i>	<i>31</i>	<i>Labourer in quarry</i>	<i>Glynceiriog</i>
<i>George Spring</i>	<i>Convict</i>	<i>Married</i>	<i>22</i>	<i>Carpenter</i>	<i>Oswestry</i>

<i>John Wilson</i>	<i>Convict</i>	<i>Unmarried</i>	<i>34</i>	<i>" Labourer, navy (?)</i>	<i>Liverpool</i>
<i>William Richardson</i>	<i>Convict</i>	<i>Unmarried</i>	<i>19</i>	<i>Collier</i>	<i>Chichester</i>
<i>John Jones</i>	<i>Convict</i>	<i>Unmarried</i>	<i>19</i>	<i>Quarryman</i>	<i>Rossett</i>
<i>Edward Jones</i>	<i>Convict</i>	<i>Unmarried</i>	<i>45</i>	<i>Labourer in iron works</i>	<i>Radnor</i>
<i>Henry Montague</i>	<i>Convict</i>	<i>Married</i>	<i>33</i>	<i>Draper's assistant</i>	<i>Ireland</i>
<i>Edward Jackson</i>	<i>Convict</i>	<i>Unmarried</i>	<i>20</i>	<i>Mason's labourer</i>	<i>Wrexham</i>
<i>Thomas Jones</i>	<i>Convict</i>	<i>Unmarried</i>	<i>19</i>	<i>Plasterer</i>	<i>Denbigh</i>
<i>James Lloyd</i>	<i>Convict</i>	<i>Unmarried</i>	<i>28</i>	<i>Collier</i>	<i>Llangollen</i>
<i>William Jones</i>	<i>Convict</i>	<i>Unmarried</i>	<i>19</i>	<i>Farm labourer</i>	<i>Llanfair T.H.</i>
<i>John Vaughan</i>	<i>Convict</i>	<i>Married</i>	<i>52</i>	<i>Drives a cart (carrier)</i>	<i>Hope, Flints.</i>
<i>John Jones</i>	<i>Convict</i>	<i>Unmarried</i>	<i>27</i>	<i>Farm labourer</i>	<i>Denbigh</i>
<i>William Roberts</i>	<i>Convict</i>	<i>Married</i>	<i>25</i>	<i>Mason's labourer</i>	<i>Denbigh</i>
<i>James Cleory</i>	<i>Convict</i>	<i>Married</i>	<i>17</i>	<i>Confectioner</i>	<i>Ireland</i>
<i>Robert Williams</i>	<i>Convict</i>	<i>Unmarried</i>	<i>22</i>	<i>Mason's labourer</i>	<i>Denbigh</i>
<i>Thomas Jones</i>	<i>Convict</i>	<i>Unmarried</i>	<i>22</i>	<i>Farm labourer</i>	<i>Abergele</i>
<i>John Davies</i>	<i>Convict</i>	<i>Married</i>	<i>24</i>	<i>Farm labourer</i>	<i>Liverpool</i>
<i>Evan Thomas</i>	<i>Convict</i>	<i>Married</i>	<i>37</i>	<i>Horsebreaker</i>	<i>Llysfaen</i>
<i>John Brown</i>	<i>Convict</i>	<i>Married</i>	<i>58</i>	<i>Well sinker</i>	<i>Wolverhampton</i>
<i>Mary Davies</i>	<i>Matron</i>	<i>Widow</i>	<i>47</i>	<i>Matron county gaol</i>	<i>Llanfair T.H.</i>
<i>Dorothy Jones</i>	<i>Warder</i>	<i>Widow</i>	<i>33</i>	<i>Warder</i>	<i>Llanasa, Flints</i>
<i>Henry Davies</i>	<i>Visitor</i>	<i>Unmarried</i>	<i>20</i>	<i>Draper's Assistant</i>	<i>Rhyl</i>
<i>Mary Jones</i>	<i>Convict</i>	<i>Unmarried</i>	<i>25</i>	<i>Prostitute</i>	<i>Wrexham (deaf and dumb)</i>
<i>Jane Davies</i>	<i>Convict</i>	<i>Married</i>	<i>35</i>	<i>Prostitute</i>	<i>Llanfyllin (deaf)</i>
<i>Anne Williams</i>	<i>Convict</i>	<i>Unmarried</i>	<i>55</i>	<i>Washerwoman</i>	<i>Ruthin</i>
<i>Mary Pickering</i>	<i>Convict</i>	<i>Married</i>		<i>Farm labourer's wife</i>	<i>Bangor, Denbs.</i>

Census description of inhabitants and inmates in Ruthin Gaol on the night of 3 April 1871 (Denbighshire Record Office).

the prisoners

Henry Smith



(Woking)

*Henry Smith, age 25 years Register No. 1293
Committed at Wrexham for Larceny in a dwelling house.
Convicted at Ruthin Q. Sess. 4th July 1861 4 years P.S.
Discharged on Licence 20th October 1864.
Destination Wrexham, Denbighshire.
Did not report himself after 1st. Dec. 1864
Returned to the District in August 1865 and was convicted and
sent'd to 3 months H.L. For garden robbery.
Again was committed at Wrexham 19th Feb 1866 for Burglary,
was sent'd at Ruthin Assizes 20th March 1866 and sentenced to
eight years P.S.*

Memo's

<i>3rd Nov. 1854</i>	1 month	H.L.	Larceny
<i>23rd Feb 1855</i>	2 months	H.L.	D ^o & whipped
<i>16th Aug. 1855</i>	21 Days	H.L.	Larceny
<i>22nd Oct. 1855</i>	3 months	H.L.	D ^o & whipped
<i>11th Feb 1858</i>	1 months	H.L.	Larceny
<i>5th April 1858</i>	2 months	H.L.	Larceny
<i>11th Oct 1859</i>	1 months	H.L.	Larceny
<i>24th Jan 1860</i>	1 months	H.L.	Larceny
<i>1861 Q. Sess.</i>	7 Days	H.L. &	
<i>11th Aust 1865</i>	3 months	4 years	Larceny
		P.S.	
		H.L.	

Edward Jackson



Born: Wrexham, 1851.

Occupation: Mason's labourer.

Description: 5ft 2 in. tall, sandy hair, cuts on second and fourth fingers of each hand, scars on rt. arm and left hand.

Summary of criminal record:

1 July 1867: Convicted of stealing potatoes.

Sentenced: 12 strokes of birch rod.

23 Jan. 1871: Convicted of stealing two teapots.

Sentenced: 3 months imprisonment with hard labour at Ruthin Gaol.

17 July 1871: Convicted of assault.

Sentenced: 14 days imprisonment.

21 Aug. 1871: Convicted of assault on police.

Sentenced: 14 days imprisonment.

8 April 1872: Convicted of cutting down hazel trees at Gwersyllt, the property of Sir Watkin Williams Wynne, Baronet, on 20 Dec. 1871.

Sentenced: 1 month imprisonment with hard labour.

7 April 1873: Accused of fighting.

Discharged.

16 June 1873: Accused of stealing fowls.

Discharged (not sufficient evidence).

8 July 1873: Convicted of stealing a tweed coat, value £1 which had been put on a hedge to dry. **Sentenced:** 6 months imprisonment with hard labour.

March 1874: Convicted of stealing fowls.

Sentenced: 3 months imprisonment with hard labour.

ABSCONDED.

18 May 1874: Convicted at Manchester Quarter Sessions at Salford of Larceny.

Sentenced: 14 months imprisonment. Released: 17 August 1875 under 4 years police supervision.

16 March 1876: Convicted of stealing a cow on 28 October 1875 the property of Sir Roger William Henry Palmer of Cefn Park, Wrexham.

Sentenced: 7 years penal servitude and a further 5 years police supervision.

Henry Hayer



Chatham Prison

Register No. Of Henry Hayer 710 who was discharged on the 14th August 1873 from the above prison on leave of licence.

Committed on the 17th July 1869 at Wrexham for Shopbreaking and stealing -

Committed on the 2nd August 1869, Ruthin Assizes and sentenced to 5 years PS.

Dark complexion, Brown hair, Hazel eyes - Five feet 4 inches high long visage - Scar on upper lip under left nostril.

Destination Penybryn, Ruabon Road, Wrexham.

John Edwards



*Ruthin Quarter Sessions January 1887. Larceny of a watch. 3 Cal[ender] Months H.L. (hard labour) Evesham 15.6.'86
Larceny 14 days.*

James Carr



*James Carr, alias Barton, Bertie &c. Ruthin Quarter Session
January 1888.
Hotel Robbery Five [years] Penal Servitude and five years
Supervision.*

*2.10.1879 Liverpool - Larceny 6 Months
1880 Liverpool - Larceny 6 Months
1882 Birmingham - Larceny 6 Months
1880 Hanley - Larceny 6 Months
1884 Sheffield - Larceny 2 Years
Wanted at Wakefield, Wigan, Morpeth &c.*

William Ryan



*Nov 9/74 Committed for trial at 2nd Sess. Denbighshire &
sentenced to 7 years P.S. After previous ~ convictions ~ viz. At
Beaumaris in 1866 for felony, Also in Merionethshire in 1868
& 1872 and now under police supervision for 3 years.*

George Blake



*This man was convicted at Ruthin Jan 5th 1882 for picking
pockets at Denbigh.*

David Frances



*Woking Prison.
David Frances Ref. No. 2464. Liberated 13th Aug. 1874.
Cond 16th Nov. 1863 Wrexham. Cond 1st Aug. - 1864 Ruthin
for robbery with violence.
Sentenced 12 [months] Penal Servitude.
38 yrs - Complexion fair, Hair brown, Eyes grey. Height 5ft 2
inches.
Marks - lost 2 first fingers in right hand.
Destination, Birkenhead, but Reported himself to Wrexham,
15th Sept. 1874, & stated he was living at Barnfields. Taken on
25th August 1875 to Denbigh Asylum.*

James Thompson



Convicted at Ruthin Q. Session.

Apl. 10 th 1896 for Housebreaking at Rhosddu. Sentenced 6. Cal. months H.L.

8 Previous convictions at Liverpool in the name of Robert Williams

John Green



Convicted at Ruthin Q. Session.

Apl. 10 th / 96 for housebreaking at Rhosddu. Sentenced 6 months H.L.

20 convictions at Liverpool in the name of John Whittle.

Jane Roberts



Born: ? Bwlchgwyn, 1840.

Description: 5ft. Inches tall, fresh complexion, brown hair, hazel eyes, cut mark on right side of chin and a small mole, slight scar on back of first knuckle of right hand. Indifferent behaviour.

Summary of criminal record:

30 August 1861: Convicted at Hope Petty Sessions of stealing a petticoat at Mold, value 1s.6d.

Sentenced: 2 months imprisonment with hard labour at Flint Gaol.

3 July 1862: Convicted at Ruthin Quarter Sessions of stealing a pinafore at Llanfair D.C.

Sentenced: 4 months imprisonment with hard labour at Ruthin Gaol.

2 June 1863: Convicted at Ruthin Quarter Sessions of stealing a cotton bedgown at Penycae, Llandegla. Wrexham Advertiser says that her "countenance [appearance] was against her".

Sentence: 3 years penal servitude at Brixton Prison.

Alice / Mary Wilson



*Durham 22nd Oct 1872 Felony 2 months.
1st July 1873 Felony 9 months.
Northallerton 7th April 1874 Felony 12 months.
Wakefield August 1876 False Pretences 9 months.
2 March 1877 Rogue and Vagabond
~ endeavouring to obtain Charitable Contributions by means
of False Pretences 3 months.
Bradford Nov 1877 Obtaining by False Pretences. 7 years P.S.
And 5 years Police Supr.
Ruthin January 1885 Obtaining by False Pretences. 7 years
P.S. And 5 years Police Supr.
Also wanted at Leeds, West Bromwich, Accrington, Ellesmere
& Birmingham for similar offences*

County Prison Cardigan 24th Jany. 1872

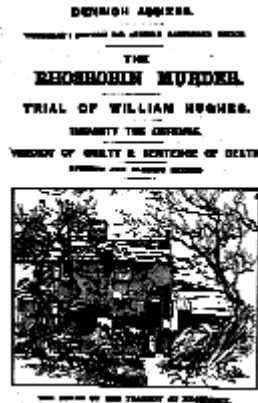
Dear Sir, Enclosed I send you Photo' of Mary Wilson, alias Knight, whose description is the last on Page 4 of the Pol[ice] Gazette of the 19th instant. She was released from here on the 17th inst. after 15 Calendar months H. L. (hard labour) for shop breaking.. her husband: Samuel Wilson is in Montgomery prison for Trial for Burglary, and another man she says is her husband, John Knight, is now undergoing P.S. (penal servitude) - She speaks of Ruthin & Wrexham as her home, & because she is such a thorough bad lot I send you the enclosed [photograph] in the fullbelief she will be in trouble again ere long. She has been formerly convicted and sentenced to 9 Cal[endar] mo[nths] H.L. here for Felony, On both occasions, was at times one of the most Refractory Prisoners it has been my lot to [meet].

Prisoners' stories

story of william hughes

On 17 February 1903 William Hughes, 42, was hanged at Ruthin Gaol and his body buried in the grounds.

Background



"Hughes was a native of Denbigh, who had enlisted in the army [Cheshire Regiment] when 18, and had served in foreign parts, including some years in India. Upon his return in 1890 he worked as a collier in Wrexham neighbourhood, and married the deceased woman [Jane Hannah Williams] who was his first cousin, in 1892. There were three or four children by the marriage."

(Denbighshire Free Press, 21 February 1903.)

In 1901, after the death of one of their children, Hughes separated from his wife. Mrs Hughes applied to the Wrexham Board of Guardians for money to maintain their sons. Prosecuted for "family desertion" Hughes was sentenced on 7 August 1902 to three months imprisonment at Shrewsbury gaol. To provide for her family Mrs Hughes became housekeeper to Tom Maddocks, a collier at Rhoosdu Colliery, and a widowed father of three

The Crime

Hughes was released on 6 November 1902. He "obtained a double-barrel gun, together with two cartridges" and early on 10 November went to Maddocks house:

"There he called for his wife, and upon her appearance he discharged both barrels into her body. The gun had been fired at such close range that the clothing of the woman caught fire, and her body was charred."

(Denbighshire Free Press, 21 February 1903.)

Hughes gave himself up and was tried at the Denbigh Assizes, Ruthin, in January 1903. It was said that his family had a history of mental illness and "a plea of insanity was set up" by the defence. Although Dr Cox, "chief expert of diseases of the mind" at the North Wales Hospital Denbigh, declared Hughes insane, the jury took only ten minutes to find him guilty of murder:

"...the condemned man appeared apparently totally devoid of any feelings whatever of the terrible charge overhanging him, and when sentenced to death he coolly and collectedly thanked Sir Justice Bruce, the judge, and said nothing why the sentence should not be passed over him."

(Denbighshire Free Press, 21 February 1903.)

Following the trial many petitions were organised and sent to the Home Secretary, but the sentence was upheld:

"I am directed to inform you that having carefully considered all the circumstances of

the case of William Hughes, now lying under sentence of death in Ruthin prison and having caused special medical inquiry to be made as to prisoner's mental condition the Secretary of State has been unable to find sufficient grounds to justify him in advising His Majesty to interfere with the due course of the law."

(Communication between the Home Secretary and the High Sheriff of Denbighshire (Denbighshire Free Press, 21 February, 1903.)

County Of Denbigh Rules...

For the Treatment of Prisoners condemned to Death...

In all cases when Sentence of Death has been passed, and Convicts are left for Execution, the Keeper, or Matron, shall immediately on their return to the Gaol from Trial, cause them to be thoroughly searched, and shall remove from them any Articles which may be considered either dangerous or inexpedient for them, to retain in their possession.

The Cell or Room to which the Convict is reconducted after being Sentenced to Death, shall invariably on all such occasions be previously examined by the Keeper of the Gaol, who is to satisfy himself of its fitness and safety, and insert the result of his examination in his Journal.

In all cases when Sentence of Death has been passed, and the Condemned Prisoner is left for Execution, such Prisoner shall be placed under the constant charge and superintendence of an Officer of the Prison, both by day and night.

The foregoing Rules and Regulations have been perused in open Court of General Quarter Sessions, held at Denbigh, in and for the County of Denbigh, on Tuesday the 19th Day of October, in the Year of our Lord, One Thousand Eight Hundred and Forty-Seven, and approved.

***By the Court,
JOSEPH PEERS
Clerk of the Peace.***

"H.M.Prison, Ruthin [13 February 1903]

My dear Mother, - I sincerely hope that you are getting better. Although in great trouble, I am compelled to tell you that I have had no reprieve. I received definite news this morning to this effect. Well, dear mother, the chief and most important thing I have to depend upon is the Lord and his mercy. I will do all in my power to be at peace with my great Judge. I hope to have the pleasure of meeting you in a better world than the present one... I am extremely sorry that I have caused you so much pain and unnecessary trouble. I hope you will pardon me, mother for all I have done. The Lord have mercy upon me, and may He also be a source of strength and joy to you in your old age. With my best and sincerest love to all, - I remain, your son, WILLIAM HUGHES".

"H.M. Prison, Ruthin Feb. 14th, 1903.

Dear Brother, - Just a short word to inform you that I shall not be reprieved. This information was conveyed to me yesterday morning. All that now remains for me is to endeavour to prepare myself for the terrible ordeal that awaits me. I sincerely hope that God will be merciful to me. I wish to thank you for all coming here to see me and for your kindness. If we do not meet again in this world, I sincerely hope that we shall do so on the other side. It is not my desire to write a long letter to you, and I therefore conclude with the most loving remembrances to you all. God bless you all. Yours truly, your brother, William...

Os gwelir fi, bechadur

*Rhyw ddydd ar ben fy nhaith
Rhyfeddol fydd y canu
A newydd fydd yr iaith*

*Yn seinio "Buddugoliaeth"
Am iachawdwiaeth lawn,
Heb ofni colli'r frwydr
Y boreu na phrynawn."*

(Denbighshire Free Press, 21 February, 1903.)

The Condemned Cell

"The prisoner occupies as his condemned cell, two cells which had been knocked into one, and in which were a bed, table, and a stool. The cell was about fifteen yards or so from the scaffold so that he had only but a short distance to walk. In the wall of the prison a hole had been knocked through, which led on to the second storey of the gallows, so that the condemned man would walk direct onto the trap door and have no steps to ascend."

(Denbighshire Free Press, 21 February, 1903.)

The Executioners

"Great curiosity was evinced both in Denbigh and in Ruthin to see the hangman Billington... From appearances no one would think for a moment the two quiet looking, pale faced persons attired in dark cloth suits, with bowler hats, were the men who would be chief actors in the launching of a human being into eternity... They bore absolutely no luggage - that had previously been forwarded to the prison to await them... Upon arrival at the jail Billington had hardly put his hand to the bell when the ever attentive warder inside opened the door and admitted them... Once inside the two men remained there, attending to every detail associated with the execution of the wretched man Hughes... Billington announced everything to be in perfect order before he retired early. Billington and his brother slept close to the condemned cell in which their prisoner was sleeping his last earthly sleep..."

(Denbighshire Free Press, 21 February, 1903.)

The Execution

The execution of William Hughes, on 17 February, 1903, was witnessed by six people including the High Sheriff. It was reported the last thing Hughes did before he left his cell was look at a photograph of his family.

"At 8 o'clock on Tuesday morning last, William Hughes, of Denbigh, was executed on the gallows within Ruthin Gaol for the murder of his wife at Rhosrobin, near Wrexham."

(Denbighshire Free Press, 21 February, 1903.)

coch bach y bala

"RUTHIN COUNTY GAOL... RULES FOR PRISONERS.

**Every prisoner guilty of any of the following offences will subject himself to punishment:-
...Attempting to escape, or assisting others to do so, or knowing of any contemplated attempts
for escape and not reporting the same directly."**

(Ruthin County Gaol Rules for Prisoners, circa 1850.)

John Jones, known as Coch Bach y Bala ("the little redhead from Bala"), was a kleptomaniac and poacher. Having served "time" in every prison in North Wales, and many in England, he is thought to have spent more of his life in prison than out. Nicknamed "the Welsh Houdini" he had a reputation for escaping:

**SENSATIONAL ESCAPE FROM RUTHIN PRISON...
NOTED CRIMINAL'S LEAP FOR LIBERTY...
HOLE CUT IN CELL WALL...
IMPROVISED ROPE MADE FROM BED CLOTHES.**

"John Jones, alias "Little Turpin," and known throughout Wales as 'Coch Bach y Bala', effected his escape from Ruthin Prison on Tuesday morning, in a sensational manner, and at the time of writing is still at large. He gained his liberty as the result of indomitable pluck, great astuteness, and wonderful agility... 'Coch Bach' is regarded by some as a hero; his performance is certainly a daring piece of work. The escape took place between four and five o'clock in the morning, before the majority of the warders entered upon their duties... The daring manner of his escape, and the quickness with which he left behind him the precincts of the prison baffled the gaol authorities and the police."

(North Wales Times, 4 October 1913.)

After five days on the run, weak from living rough on the Nantclwyd Estate, Jones was shot. He died later that day from gunshot wounds and shock and was buried in Llanelidan churchyard.

Such was the interest in Coch Bach y Bala that postcards of his funeral and the spot where he was shot were sold to the public.



Postcard of Coch Bach y Bala's funeral.



Name: John Jones.

Born: Probably near Bala, county of Merioneth, circa 1853.

Occupation: Bricklayer, joiner, labourer, seaman, stoker, labourer.

Died: Gunshot wound to leg, aged 60, on 6th October 1913.

Character: History of criminal behaviour from early age; stole eggs; stole worthless objects of no use to him; even boasted he had stolen things when he hadn't; tendency to hide stolen property in hedges or walls and to return later to collect them.

Good worker. Jobs between periods of imprisonment include stoker on ships to Holland and South America. Behaviour in prison good, usually released early on licence. Above average intelligence - conducted own defence on several occasions. Tendency to enjoy publicity and notoriety. Extremely anti-police.

Summary of criminal record:

1871: First term of imprisonment (previously corporal punishment). Poaching:

Sentenced: 1 month's imprisonment.

1872: Convicted of stealing items including a knife and empty purse at Llandderfel.

Sentenced: 4 months' imprisonment.

July 1873: Convicted of stealing cash on 12 Feb. and 12 June totalling under 13s[hillings].

Sentenced: 6 years' imprisonment.

Dec. 1878: Convicted, with five others for riot at Bala (police stoned).

Sentenced: 6 months' imprisonment.

11 July 1879: Convicted at Denbighshire Quarter Sessions of being a rogue and vagabond' after being discovered in a garden at Gresford with intent to commit a felony'.

Sentenced: 10 months' imprisonment at Chester gaol.

22 Oct. 1879: Arrested for stealing 15 watches on 14 October 1879 at Bala and Llanfor.

Committed for trial at Merionethshire Quarter Sessions.

Sent to Ruthin Gaol to await trial.

30 Nov. 1879: **ESCAPED** from gaol by walking out of main door whilst staff were at supper.

Opened cell door and 3 others. £5 reward offered. Apprehended 3 January. 1880 in bed in Swan Inn, Mochdre, near Colwyn Bay.

Jan. 1880: Convicted at Dolgellau Quarter Sessions of stealing 15 watches and additional burglary of £44.10s, and other items at Llanfor on 7 December 1879.

Sentenced: 14 years' imprisonment (probably at Pentonville or Dartmoor prisons).

27 July 1891: Convicted at Chelmsford (Essex) Assizes to two cases of burglary on 11 June 1891. Tried to escape when arrested. Pled guilty.
Sentenced: 7 years' imprisonment (either at Portland or Dartmoor). Released on licence.

April 1900: Convicted at Beaumaris Assizes of burglary of £10 from Waterman's Arms, Amlwch. Claimed he was 'framed' by police.
Sentenced: 5 years' imprisonment (with additional 2 years 193 days remaining of previous sentence). When awaiting transfer to Dartmoor attempted **ESCAPE** from Caernarfon Gaol by breaking his loom to barricade door and tunnelling through floor.

June 1906: Convicted at Caernarfon Assizes of burglary and ferocious attack on 71 year old woman at Abererch (original charge attempted murder) and stealing £10. At committal proceedings magistrates court sat until 3a.m. due to length of defendant's address at court. **Sentenced:** 7 years' imprisonment at Dartmoor prison. Released: January 1913.

June 1913: Convicted at Dolgellau Quarter Sessions of breaking and entering Jordans' solicitors offices, Bala. Whilst awaiting trial **ESCAPED** from Bala police cells in county buildings. Apprehended in barn 3 miles away.
Sentenced: 3 year's imprisonment.

30 Sept. 1913: Whilst in Ruthin Gaol awaiting transfer to Stafford to serve sentence **ESCAPED** by tunnelling through cell wall, and by rope made from bedding over roof of chapel and kitchen and over wall.

6 Oct. 1913: Shot by Reginald Jones-Bateman, aged 19, near Nantclwyd Isaf. Died of shock and haemorrhage due to gun shot wound to leg. Jones-Bateman later accused of manslaughter but charges dropped.

9 Oct. 1913: Buried in Llanelidan churchyard.

wil's poem

Poor Wil's in Ruthin Gaol,
Dejected and depressed,
His net and gun are lying
Redundant in a chest;
Pheasant now can wander
The Squire's lush estate,
And rabbits freely scamper
In feilds from morn til late.

Poor Wil's in Ruthin Gaol,

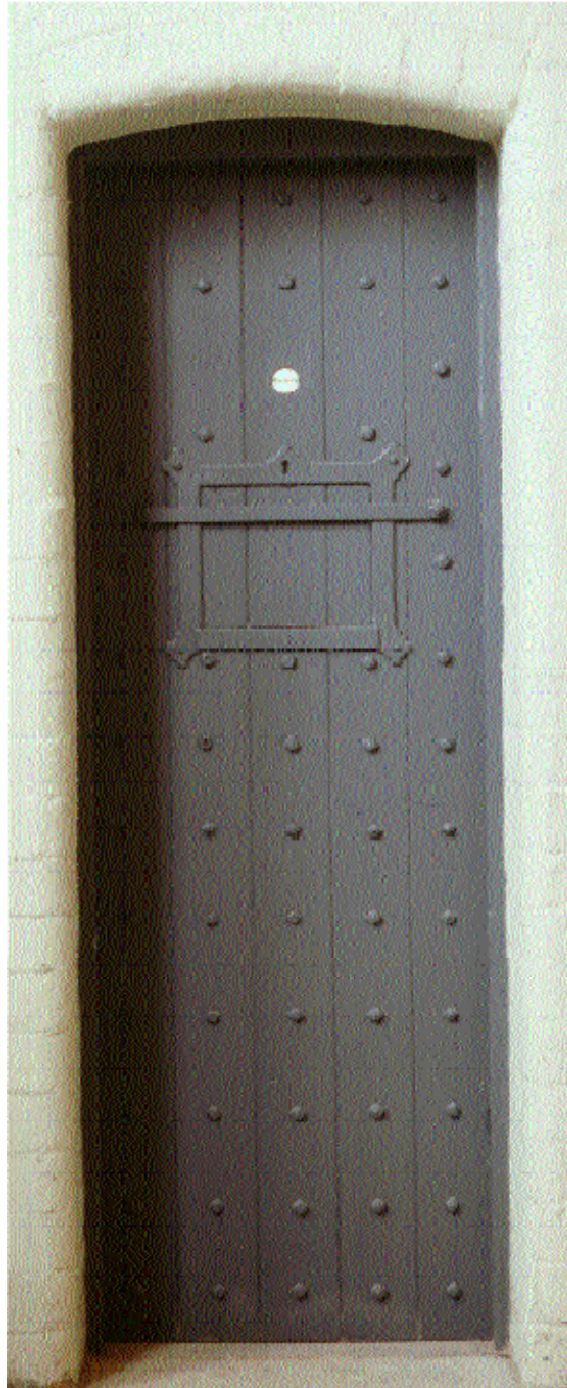
His wife nor children care.
The only one exception
Is Flash the whippet there,
Who's like a faithful pilgrim
In search of peace and grace,
Whose God is at a distance
And cannot see his face.

In last night's quiet woodland
The moon was under sail.
A saw eyes bright and beady
The flash of fluffy tail.
I thought I heard some voices

Like rivers in that dell,

All thanking their Creator
That Wil's locked in a cell.

by I D Hooson (freely translated)



criminals and their crimes

Britain's population increased rapidly in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries. Attracted by the prospect of jobs, workers from the countryside flocked to the developing towns.

Overcrowding and poor sanitation led to poverty and disease and many resorted to petty crime:

"If the poor cannot procure employment, and are not supported, they must commit crimes or starve."

One of the most frequent crimes dealt with by the courts of Quarter Sessions was theft. Often, items stolen were of little value - clothing, household utensils, or food.

<u>Defendant</u>	<u>Offence</u>	<u>Result</u>
<i>George Williams</i>	<i>Larceny of a shirt</i>	<i>Imprisonment, 7 days hard labour.</i>
<i>James Kelly</i>	<i>Larceny of a shirt</i>	<i>Imprisonment 1 month hard labour, 1 week solitary confinement.</i>
<i>George Williams</i>	<i>Larceny of shoes, lasts and leather</i>	<i>4 years penal servitude.</i>
<i>James Kelly</i>	<i>Larceny of shoes, lasts and leather</i>	<i>Acquitted.</i>
<i>Robert Stephens</i>	<i>Larceny of iron</i>	<i>2 months hard labour.</i>
<i>Williams Stephens</i>	<i>Larceny of iron</i>	<i>1 months hard labour.</i>
<i>Richard Evans</i>	<i>Unlawfully in a building at night</i>	<i>1 month hard labour.</i>
<i>Mary Whalley</i>	<i>Breaking into a house and stealing clothes</i>	<i>2 months hard labour 2 weeks solitary confinement</i>
<i>David Jones</i>	<i>Larceny of two half sovereigns</i>	<i>Imprisonment 14 days and £5 fine.</i>
<i>John Hughes</i>	<i>Assault</i>	

Denbighshire Quarter Sessions convictions book, 1849 (Denbighshire Record Office).

Children, perhaps orphaned or abandoned, also turned to crime. The 1851 census for Ruthin Gaol names seven prisoners aged 20 and under.

<u>Name</u>	<u>Age</u>	<u>Occupation</u>	<u>Name</u>	<u>Age</u>	<u>Occupation</u>
<i>Edward Jones</i>	<i>35</i>	<i>Labourer</i>	<i>George Howes</i>	<i>38</i>	<i>Publican</i>
<i>John Cartwright</i>	<i>18</i>	<i>Tramp</i>	<i>George Howman</i>	<i>20</i>	<i>Tramp</i>
<i>Robert Hiskith</i>	<i>21</i>	<i>Labourer</i>	<i>William Jones</i>	<i>21</i>	<i>Shoemaker</i>
<i>James Jones</i>	<i>29</i>	<i>Shoemaker</i>	<i>John Williams</i>	<i>27</i>	<i>Shoemaker</i>
<i>Edward Williams</i>	<i>40</i>	<i>Labourer</i>	<i>George Mathews</i>	<i>19</i>	<i>Joiner</i>
<i>William Jones</i>	<i>30</i>	<i>Labourer</i>	<i>Mary Conway</i>	<i>21</i>	<i>Servant</i>
<i>Thomas Carter</i>	<i>17</i>	<i>Mariner</i>	<i>Patrick Nicholson</i>	<i>17</i>	<i>Hawker</i>
<i>Robert Davies</i>	<i>71</i>	<i>Stonemason</i>	<i>Michael Henry</i>	<i>14</i>	<i>Errand boy</i>
<i>William Evereth</i>	<i>30</i>	<i>Labourer</i>	<i>Elizabeth Meddin</i>	<i>35</i>	<i>Laundress</i>
<i>James Collins</i>	<i>18</i>	<i>Hawker</i>	<i>William Cunnah</i>	<i>51</i>	<i>Proprietor of Houses</i>
<i>Thomas Reeves</i>	<i>50</i>	<i>Groom</i>	<i>Margaret Parkes</i>	<i>27</i>	<i>Publican</i>