

George Oliver – Scindian Convict # 65

George Oliver was 26-years-old when he was convicted of his part in robbing and assaulting a young woman named Mary Ellison at Nether Knutsford, Cheshire on 12 December 1847. Mary was walking on the road from Stockport to Mobberly at around 6pm when she was attacked by four men.

The *Ipswich Journal* and *Chester Chronicle* reported the crime as Highway Robbery:

“HIGHWAY ROBBERY. - On Sunday evening, about 6 o'clock, a young woman named Mary Ellison, of Stockport, was proceeding along the Mobberly-road from Knutsford on her way to a relative's at Knowles-green, when within 200 or 300 yards of Booth's Mill, four men came up to her from the side of the road, the first of whom seized her by the left wrist and the others by her cloak. One of them – the first that came up – demanded her money. She replied that she had none, and screamed aloud for assistance. The man then called on one of his comrades for a knife, that they might take her into the field and stab her. On hearing which, the object of the attack, being greatly in fear, called upon them to spare her life, and she would give them her money. She gave them two halfcrowns. The men, however, demanded more; and on her continuing screams, one of the ruffians struck her three violent blows on her side and chest. After struggling with them some minutes, she got away, and ran off as fast as she was able towards Mobberly, followed by two of them. She made for the first house by the road side, a beer shop, kept by a person named Johnson, on entering which she fell into an hysterical fit, and continued in that state about half an hour. As soon as she was enabled to give an account of what had happened, information was sent to the police officers of Knutsford and Mobberly. A man named George Oliver, and a man named Thomas Norbury were afterwards apprehended and fully committed for trial at the ensuing assizes at Chester. – Chester Chronicle.”

The Ipswich Journal (Ipswich, England), Friday, December 24, 1847; Issue 5668. *British Library Newspapers, Part I: 1800-1900.*

On 7 April 1848, the *Liverpool Mercury* reported the outcome of the trial:

“At Chester

Thomas Norbury, 25, George Oliver, 23, and Samuel Jackson, 22, charged with robbing and assaulting Mary Ellison, at Nether Knutsford, were convicted and sentenced to fifteen years' transportation.”

Oliver was held at Chester Castle until 25 April 1848 when he was transferred to Millbank Prison in London as was the case for all prisoners sentenced to transportation. He remained there until 12 December 1848 when he was moved up north to Wakefield House of Corrections in West Yorkshire. His final movement was to Portland Prison on 9 August 1849 to await collection and transportation by the convict ship the *Scindian* to Western Australia, arriving 1 June 1850. Samuel Jackson, his co-convicted was also transported aboard the *Scindian* as convict #16. Oliver's physical description was recorded around the time of his arrival as being:

height 5' 4 3/4", with dark brown hair, grey eyes, a thin face, with a fresh complexion, and being slight in appearance.

From the time of his arrival Oliver would have been working as a labourer for the Convict Establishment until he was issued with his ticket-of-leave on 14 June 1851. His records indicate that on 27 June 1851 he was given a pass to go to the Northam district for fourteen days, however on 29 June he reported that he was working for John Stanton of Perth as a carter until 16 August 1851. Stanton paid into the W.A. Bank on Oliver's account £16/8d towards his passage money (it was a requirement until 1857 that convicts pay back the cost of their transportation to the colony, this money in turn fed into a fund to encourage emigrants to the colony). Following Oliver's time with Stanton he was assigned to the Champion Bay district where he worked for himself cutting firewood alongside fellow convict #8 William Carter. From 3 August 1852 he worked as a labourer for the Geraldine Mining Company. George's co-convicted Samuel Jackson, Scindian convict #16, also ended up in the Champion Bay area.

Oliver was issued with his conditional pardon on 10 June 1854. No further verifiable information on George Oliver has been found after this date. The George Oliver living and farming in the Irwin District and at Mingenew, who married Rebecca Booth in 1889, is a different man.

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Sources:

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Fremantle Prison Convict Database;

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Millbank Prison Register, PCom2_28, p 14660, courtesy of Bevan Carter;

Portland Prison Register, PCom2_383, no. 747, courtesy of Bevan Carter;

State Library of Western Australia, British Library Newspapers Online:

The Ipswich Journal (Ipswich, England), Friday, December 24, 1847; Issue 5668. *British Library Newspapers, Part I: 1800-1900*;

Liverpool Mercury etc (Liverpool, England), Friday, April 7, 1848; Issue 1976. *British Library Newspapers, Part I: 1800-1900*;

State Records Office of Western Australia – Convict register Acc 1156 R17, R21A, V12; Cons 1386, Vol. 1, p 28;

Wakefield Prison Register, HO24_13, courtesy of Bevan Carter.

