

William Best, 154, Hashemy

Researched by Marcia Watson

Baptism	~1822, Ireland
Parents	
Parent's marriage	
Siblings	John
Wife	
Married	
Children	

Brothers, William and John Best, joined the Scotland police force in 1846.¹

Name William Best
Place Edinburgh, Midlothian
Notes: Joined 4.11.1846; Warrant no.730

Name John Best
Place Edinburgh, Midlothian
Number: Joined - 14.1.1846; Warrant no. 573.

By October 1848, William Best was no longer a policeman. The Caledonian Mercury reported: About a fortnight ago, as Mr John Muir, bookbinder, was taking a walk on the Queen's Drive towards Duddingstone, he was accosted by an Irishman named William Best, who presented a pistol at his head and demanded delivery of his money. Mr Muir, having refused compliance, the fellow threatened to search his person, but Mr Muir, having raised his stick to deal him a blow, Best stepped aside and desired him to proceed. When Mr Muir had turned about, Best discharged the pistol and made off, leaving Mr Muir unscathed. Nothing more was heard or seen of the fellow till Monday, when Mr Muir recognised him on the North Bridge, and immediately had him apprehended. A pistol heavily loaded, and some powder and balls, were found in his pockets, which he says he carried for amusement. He has been remitted for examination. We learn that doubts are entertained of his perfect saneness.²

At the High Court of Justiciary, Edinburgh in January 1849:

William Best was found guilty of theft by housebreaking and assault with intent to rob on the night of 22 August or the following morning. He broke into the premises of Mr Milne, baker, Clerk Street, Edinburgh and stole a quantity of biscuits, two sheets, towels, and other articles. On the night of the 27 August or the following morning, on a public road near Morningside, he attacked and assaulted Thomas (*sic*) Carland, labourer, and Francis Kerr. He brandished a pistol, scaring them both before rifling the pockets of Thomas. Then on the 28 August, on Queen's Drive near Sampson's Ribs, he made a similar attack on William Muir, bookbinder of Edinburgh, and demanded his money and watch. In the course of this trial, the Lord Justice Clerk paid a well-merited compliment to Mr Muir, bookbinder, (one the persons attacked by Best) and to whom his Lordship said the public were deeply indebted for the courage he had displayed on the occasion, and also for the apprehension of the daring offender. 14 years transportation.³

Summary of records at the National Archives Scotland, 1849

Reference AD14/49/71
Title Precognition against William Best for the crime of theft by housebreaking and assault at Edinburgh and Peebles, various locations

¹ Ruthven-Murray, P, editor. The Edinburgh Police Register 1815-1859, Edinburgh, 1991.

² Caledonian Mercury, 19 October 1848, p3

³ Caledonian Mercury, 04 January 1849, p4; Edinburgh News and Literary Chronicle, 6 January 1849, p6

Accused	William Best, brother of John Best, Policeman, aged 26, unemployed, formerly a policeman, Address: West Crosscauseway, Edinburgh, with brother, born in Ireland
Victims	John Muir, Dalrymple Place, Edinburgh Peter Milne, Clerk Street, Edinburgh Frances Kerr, Carlops, Linton, Peebles William Carland, Scott's Close, Cowgate, Edinburgh
Related record	JC26/1849/376 High Court of Justiciary processes Trial papers relating to William Best for the crime of theft by housebreaking and assault at Edinburgh and Peebles, various locations. Tried at High Court, Edinburgh
Accused	William Best, brother of John Best, Policeman, Verdict: Guilty, Sentence: Transportation - 14 years

William Best, 26, single, was received at Millbank Prison on 20 February 1849 from Edinburgh. His occupation was a Policeman. He was removed to Portland Prison on 31 October 1849.⁴ William, 28, boarded the *Hashemy* on the 19 July 1850 for the voyage to Western Australia.⁵

On arrival at Western Australia in 1850, his description was:

154. William Best, 20, 5'6", brown hair, blue eyes, thin face, fair complexion, one mole on left side and a small scar left corner of mouth, single and a gardener.⁶ His reading was very fair, could write and knew a little maths.⁷ He was about 28.

Casual Sick, Fremantle Prison.

On 16 November 1850, William presented with diarrhoea. He was treated with castor oil.⁸

William received his Ticket of leave on 13 January 1852. He worked for Thomas Smith, stone mason⁹

East Perth Cemeteries: William Best, died on 6 April 1852, aged 33, of consumption. He was buried on 8 April 1852. William had been in the Colonial Hospital and their records note he died 7 April.

According to one register, William applied for a Conditional Pardon in October 1853, it was due on 10 October 1854, and his sentence expired on 3 January 1863.¹⁰

Possibly brother John Best.

1851 census

John Best, 32, born Ireland, servant, living at 8 Roxburgh St, Edinburgh

Elizabeth, 30, born in Ireland

William, 2, born Edinburgh

He is possibly the John Best who married Elizabeth Kinnear, daughter of Mitchell Kinnear, on 31 October 1848, St Cuthbert's, Edinburgh.

OR

He possibly married Elizabeth Kinnear, daughter of John Kinnear, married on 21 November 1847 in Edinburgh.

⁴ HO24/4

⁵ HO8/105, p14

⁶ SROWA Acc 128/40-3

⁷ SROWA Acc 1156 R21A

⁸ SROWA Acc 1156 CS1

⁹ Rica Erickson's notes on Family Search.

¹⁰ SROWA Acc 1156 R21B