

## Francis Best 73

Francis Best was baptised at Warndon, Worcester on 19 June 1814, parents Francis and Mary Best. He is still living at Warndon in 1841 with his 70 year old father and wife Eliza and three children. Both Francis and father are carpenters. Francis married Eliza Perks in 1842 in Worcester and seemingly had no more children.

In 1846 he was "charged with breaking into a house at Warndon, and stealing a hat, a waistcoat, and some money, the property of James Tansell, on the 24<sup>th</sup> of July last." Application was made for the trial to be postponed "in consequence of one of the most material witnesses being at present unable to attend from illness. On inquiry it was found that the prisoner had been committed on the 5<sup>th</sup> of August last, and his Lordship therefore directed that he enter into his own recognizance to the amount of 40 l. to appear at the next Assizes." [Worcester Journal 19 March 1846]

A year later the press reports of him again being tried for stealing "various pieces of money and articles of wearing apparel, and a lump of cheese" After a number of witnesses testified the article refers to his previous arrest:

"As he did not appear at the specified time, a warrant was issued for his apprehension, but he remained undiscovered till taken for the robbery at Broughton Hackett." And the article concludes with: "The learned judge then passed sentence; in doing which he dwelt on the enormity of the crime of breaking open the dwelling of a labouring man during his absence and while at his employ. The prosecutors in each case appeared to be credible and industrious persons, and belonging to the same class as the prisoner. A previous conviction for felony had brought no reformation; therefore he would now be removed him from the country, sentencing him to 15 years' transportation." [Worcestershire Chronicle 17 March 1847]

In 1851 Eliza and youngest son James is still in Warndon living with Francis, her father-in-law, pauper and carpenter, now aged 86.

On 8 April 1847 he is transferred from Worcester Gaol to Millbank where it is recorded, in addition to age 33, married with 3 children and a carpenter it is recorded that he "attempted to escape from Worcester prison 1846." [PCom2/27] On the Portland register he is described as single, but scribbled underneath in very small print: "is married and has 3 children" [PCom2/383]

In Fremantle Francis Best received his ticket-of-leave on 5 December 1850 when he was employed by M. W. (Marshall Waller) Clifton at Wellington on £27/month as a carpenter. Around this time the Convict Establishment registers provide his physical description as being: height 5' 5", brown hair, light blue eyes, long, thin visage, fresh complexion, slight appearance. Another Register records him receiving his Conditional Pardon on 24 August 1857 and his Certificate of Freedom on 26 October 1863. The district he was in when he received these is not recorded.

There is a record of a Frank Best marrying a widow, Eliza Lewis, in Bridgetown on 18 May 1878 which could possibly be him. The only recorded death in Western Australia for a Francis Best was in 1892 for a man aged 71 years.

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Sources:

Australian Joint Copying Project, reel 448, CO18/58/264;

Ancestry.com, 1841 and 1851 England Census;

Births, Deaths, Marriages, Western Australia;

Erickson, R., and O'Mara, G., Convicts in Western Australia, 1850-1887. Dictionary of Western Australians Vol. IX, p 39;

Fremantle Prison Convict Database;

Millbank Prison Register, PCom2/27, courtesy Bevan Carter;

State Library, 19thC British Newspapers:

Worcester Journal, 19 March 1846, p 4;

Worcestershire Chronicle, 17 March 1847;

Portland Prison Register, PCom2/383, courtesy Bevan Carter;

State Records Office of WA: Cons 1156 R17, R21A, R21B, S1-S3