

William Henry Best of Cheltenham

References collated by Richard Barton

William Henry Best was baptised at Cheltenham Parish Church on 13th March 1864. He was entered in the register as the son of Samuel and Annie Elizabeth Best of 4 Victoria Street, St Paul's. His dad was a French polisher. By the time of the 1881 census the Bests had moved to 23 Dunalley Parade and William Henry had left school and was working as an Apprentice Sculptor.

Ten years later W. Henry Best was living with his wife, Elizabeth, and two children at 414 High Street. He was listed as a Carver and I am sure 'Walls' has been added to the entry.

In 1901 we find the Bests at 23 All Saints Terrace with their children Annie and William. Once again he is described as a Sculptor. The 1911 census return offers more details about the Bests who were by now at 4 Cleethorpe Villas, Lyefield Road, Charlton Kings. William Henry Best was forty-seven=years-old and he was described as 'Sculptor in all its branches, Worker'. He was born in Cheltenham and had been married for 24 ½ years. His wife, Elizabeth was fifty-six, and a native of Monmouth. Their children, William and Annie, were not at home with them but we find a younger daughter listed, Agusta, aged twenty-three.

Elizabeth seems to have died before her husband as in 1924 Best married Isabella Farrell. By this time Best had moved to 8 St James Place where he and Isabella were still living in 1932. The register of electors suggests that Best had premises in Whaddon Lane. On 10th April 1933 William Henry Best, of St Mary's Painswick Road, died in Cheltenham General Hospital.

From 'A Guide to the Church of St Gregory the Great, Downside Abbey, near Bath 1926 Edition'

Page 52:

'All the carving throughout the main structure is the work of Mr A.B. Wall, of Cheltenham, and it forms a magnificent proof of his skill and that of Mr Best, who has spent many months over it at different periods, under the direction of the architect.'

Advertisement:

'W.H. Best, Ecclesiastical Sculptor, Park Studio & Works, Andover Road, Cheltenham.

Altars, Reredos, Altar Rails, Pulpits, Fonts, Screens, Calvarys, Effigies, Groups, Statues, Memorials, And all styles of foliated art executed in marble, alabaster, stone and wood.

Also any variety of work cleaned and restored

Estimates free on application

References from all parts of the country

For examples of my work, please refer to the Effigies in this Abbey, also the Carvings, most of which were executed by me, or under my personal supervision in accordance with requirements of the Authorities and various Architects.'