

U3A AUSTRALIAN HISTORY.

FISHER'S GHOST.

Frederick George Fisher was born in London in August 1792 as the son of James and Anne Fisher, Bookbinders of Greenwich. Records describe him of being of average height with a fair complexion and brown hair.

Frederick Fisher was arrested for the possession of forged banknotes in 1815 and was tried at the Surrey Gaol , found Guilty and sentenced to 14 years and was transported to NSW. He arrived in Sydney Town as one of 187 Convicts on *the Atlas*.

He was sent to Liverpool and as he could read and write he was soon made Clerk of the Colonial Administrator. This would give him valuable experience on how the new Colony was being run.

He was made Superintendent of the Waterloo Flour Company which was one of the most dynamic enterprises in NSW and gave him valuable business contacts and above all it gave him a very good income.

In 1822, Fisher had served half of his sentence and had applied for a Ticket of Leave. He had saved £300 and wanted to invest in a small property. This was granted, he moved to Campbelltown and by 1825 he owned several properties in the area.

He also owned four farms in Cabramatta, 30 acres at Appin and 53 acres at Minto. He had also erected several Public Houses, a Court House and a Jail.

Frederick Fisher was a well respected man in the Campbelltown area but he never lived in any of his properties and preferred to live in a rented house with his friend George Worrell who was a Bootmaker by trade and was a Convict who had been sentenced to Life.

One evening in 1825, Fisher was relaxing in a local inn when he was approached by an intoxicated man, William Booker who demanded that Fisher pay him an outstanding debt. A scuffle took place and Fisher stabbed Booker in the stomach.

Fisher was arrested and was placed in prison.

Fisher was worried about his many properties so he appointed his friend George Worrall as his agent whilst he was in jail. He believed that Worrall was an honourable man and a good friend.

At Fisher's trial, Booker came to the Court drunk and abused the Magistrate who found that Fisher was not guilty and that Booker had caused the fight.

A few weeks later, Fisher disappeared. He was last seen mending a fence on one of his properties.

Worrell was questioned and said that Fisher had sailed for England and that he had purchased all of Fisher's properties for £300.

Local people, who knew Fisher, were immediately suspicious as they knew that Fisher would never have sold his properties for such a small amount of money.

Worrall now tried to sell Fisher's horses to James Coddington who believed that the ownership documents produced were forgeries. He reported Fisher's disappearance to the authorities.

It was at this time that a local farmer, John Farley, was returning to his home after an evening at Patrick's Hotel when he claimed to have seen *the ghost of Fisher* sitting on a fence and pointing towards a field near *Bow Bowing Creek*.

This was ignored as John was known to be a good drinker.

Soon, several other local citizens, who were stone-cold sober at the time, reported that they had seen *the ghost of Fisher* sitting at the same place and pointing towards the same field.

In October 1826 the Police offered a reward for anyone who could give information as to the disappearance of Fisher. They discovered bloodstains on the fence that the ghost had been seen sitting on and nearby they found a lock of hair that was similar to Fisher's.

The Police decided to search the nearby fields which were very wet and boggy. They now employed two local Blacktrackers to help.

These Blacktrackers tasted the water in the many puddles and finally said; *White Fella here.*

The police began to dig and soon came upon the body of Frederick Fisher. The remains were taken to Campbelltown and the Coroner performed an autopsy the verdict was- *Murder..*

Fisher was buried at St. Peter's Cemetery.

Worrall was arrested and denied any knowledge of Fisher's death.

Every gruesome detail of the murder and Worrall's trial was written by the Sydney Press .It became the biggest criminal trial in the Colony's history. Only Worrall benefited from Fisher's death and the case against him was substantial. The jury was only out for 15 minutes and they returned a verdict of- *Guilty.*

Worrall was sentenced to Death and on the day of his hanging he confessed to Reverend Cooper that he had indeed, murdered Fisher.

Fisher had died without a will and his properties would be fought over in the Courts for many years until there was very little left.

The sensational details of *Fisher's Ghost* spread quickly throughout Australia and indeed. Throughout the World.

Today there are Plaques and Statues in Campbelltown on places where *the Ghost* has been seen and there is a *Fisher's Ghost Festival* held each year.

There are still sightings, on a dark and wet night, of a ghostly figure sitting on a fence near *Fisher's Creek in Campbelltown.*

(*John Imrie, 23rd Sept; 2020*)