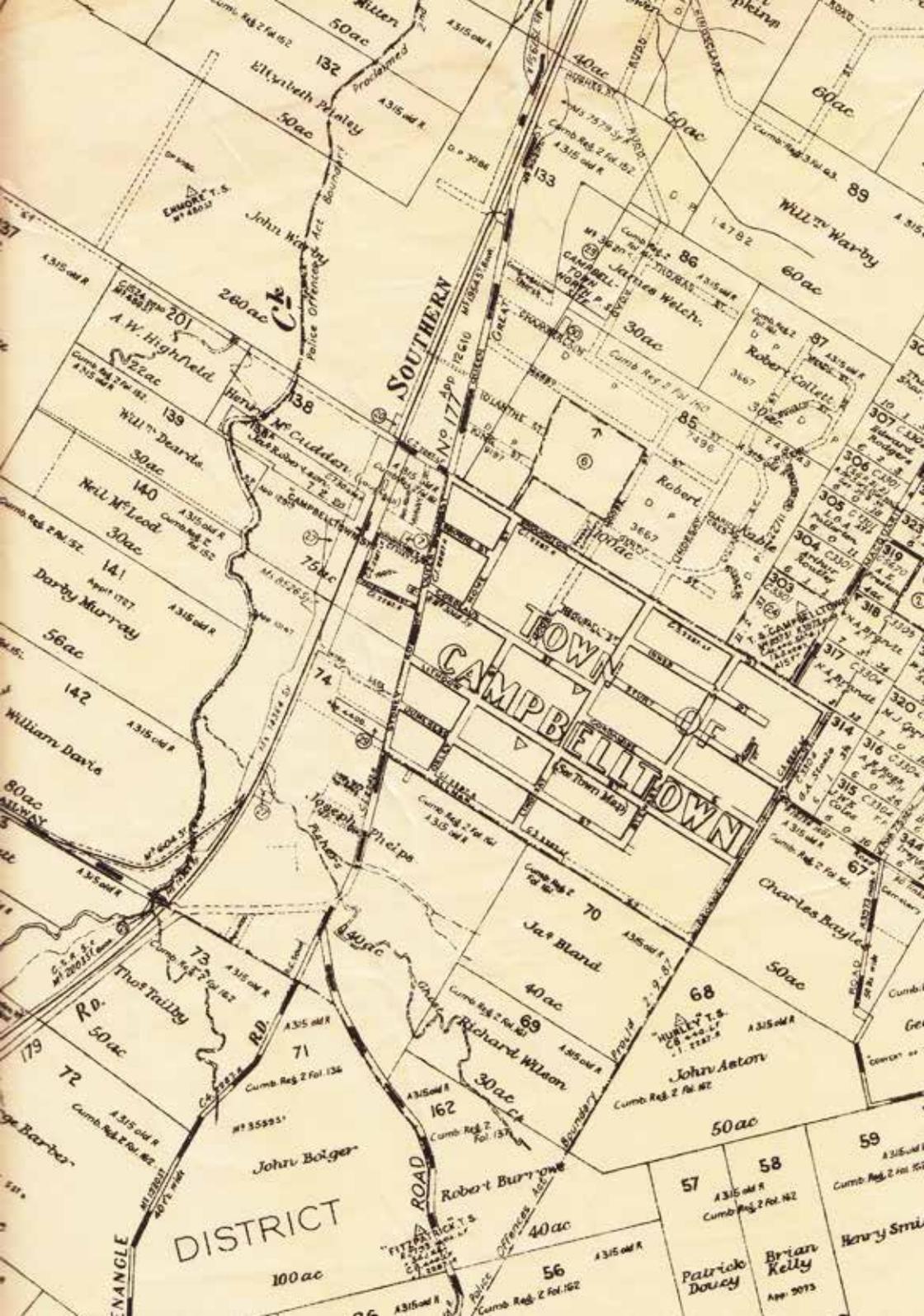


Frederick Fisher and the legend of Fisher's Ghost

Your guide to Campbelltown's most infamous resident





SOUTHERN ROAD

CAMPBELLTOWN

DISTRICT

EVANGLINE ROAD

50ac
132
Elizabeth Whaley
50ac
John Warby
260ac
A.W. Highfield
32ac
Willm Deardo
30ac
Neil McLead
30ac
141
Darby Murray
56ac
142
William Davis
80ac
73
Thos Talley
50ac
72
John Bolger
100ac
30ac
Richard Wilson
40ac
Robert Burrows
40ac
56
Patrick Doucy
Briar Kelly
Henry Smith
89
Willm Warby
60ac
86
James Welch
30ac
85
Robert
36ac
87
Robert Collett
30ac
88
Kable
30ac
89
Charles Bayles
50ac
70
Jas Bland
40ac
69
John Anton
50ac
57
58
59

Frederick Fisher and the legend of Fisher's Ghost

The legend of Fisher's Ghost is one of Australia's most well-known ghost stories. Since John Farley first told the story of his encounter with the spectre, tales of the ghost have inspired writers, artists, poets, songwriters and film producers, and captivated the imagination of generations.

Who was Frederick Fisher?

Frederick George James Fisher was born in London on 28 August 1792. He was the son of James and Ann Fisher, who were London bookbinders and booksellers of Cripplegate and Greenwich. Fred was of average height, had a fair complexion and brown hair. By his early 20s, he was a shopkeeper, and although unmarried, was believed to possibly be the father of two children.

Either innocently or deliberately, Fred obtained forged bank notes through his business for which he was arrested and tried at the Surrey Gaol Delivery on 26 July 1815. He was sentenced to 14 years transportation to Australia with 194 other convicts aboard the *Atlas*, which set sail from England on 16 January 1816, and landed in Australia eight months later, on 16 September 1816.

Fred Fisher could read and write and because literate men were rare in the colony, the crown solicitor recommended him to the colonial administrator, TJ Campbell, who attached Fred to his staff. Within two years, Fred was assigned as superintendent to the Waterloo Flour Company, which was owned and managed by ex-convicts and was the most influential and dynamic enterprise in colonial NSW.

In 1818, within two years of his arrival, Fred and two partners, George Duncan and John Walker, launched a public company to manufacture paper – the first men to attempt to do so in NSW. George had the

technical knowledge, John would provide the raw materials and Fred would be the manager and salesman. To raise capital for machinery, they sold shares to 15 merchants, including Campbelltown residents Robert Jenkins, Richard Brooks and Thomas Rose. By June 1818, they were established with a waterwheel operating the millstones on John Hutchinson's land.

Fred found John Hutchinson to be a difficult landlord and appealed to Governor Macquarie to stop him from diverting water from his mill. In July 1818, four Sydney magistrates, all shareholders in Fred's company, ordered John to give Fred rent free use of the premises for six months as compensation. The paper making venture did not prosper and Fred returned to work for JT Campbell as managing clerk in the Provost-Marshall's office. The Provost-Marshall was the chief sheriff of the court, responsible for prisoners before trial, executions, sale of goods for debts and bail applications.

By 1822, Fred had served nearly half his sentence and applied for a Ticket of Leave and permission to purchase property. A Ticket of Leave was a reward for good behavior and could only be applied for after a certain length of a convict's sentence had been served.

Ticket of Leave men were seen as the elite workforce. The convict was required to be sober, honest and industrious and the petition had to be endorsed by the local magistrate. There were exceptions made for those with influential friends in Britain or who had performed amazing acts of heroism. The ticket allowed the convict to work for themselves on condition that they remained in a specified area, reported regularly to local authorities and if at all possible, attended divine worship every Sunday. Those in possession of a ticket had to carry it at all times.

Fred received his Ticket of Leave and headed for Campbelltown, where he soon prospered. In December 1824, he tendered to supply wheat to the government at Liverpool, the only person from the Campbelltown area to do so. By 1825, at 33 years of age, he owned four farms. The land in Campbelltown lay between the main road and Bow Bowing Creek and was part of Joseph Phelps' 140 acre grant issued in 1816. He also owned 50 acres in Cabramatta, 30 acres in Appin, 53 acres on the

Nepean River in Upper Minto, and 32 acres in Campbelltown with stone and brick buildings worth £800.

F. Fisher

I beg leave to propose to sell to Government for
a Barrack for the use of the Troops to be stationed at
Campbelltown a new brick building of description
36^{ft} length 16^{ft} width, containing three floors
above the ground story, 2 of which are already floored.
~~and~~ ^{also} a stone foundation which would answer for a gate
height 11^{ft} width 18^{ft} length 50^{ft} with five pillars and
two partition walls each 2^{ft} thick, and flooring 8 inches
8 inches by 3, laid ready to commence next story that would
answer for a Court, in use over the Gate. The foundation
is sufficient to carry a building of 3 store in height.
The price of the two buildings with half an acre of land
is £500.- ^{start?} for any number of acres that may
be wanted in addition the payment required is double
the quantity of the Township land on the opposite side
of the road (Government land) as an equivalent for
fencing and putting the land in some state of Government
purchase the whole 28 Acres of land, as fenced in the
price is two thousand five hundred Acres of land either
at the five Islands, Weymouthshire or farther distant,
the land is all cleared, & fenced in in two paddicks, and
has the best fresh water in one of the Paddicks that can
be procured anywhere round the neighbourhood, the
whole of the land was under cultivation last year.

Fredrick Fisher

Fred Fisher's wheat tender letter to the government, written in 1824.

A friend, a fight and a prison sentence

Fred's neighbour was William George Worrall. George had arrived in Australia in 1815 on the *Marquis of Wellington* with a life sentence. He was a shoemaker by trade and like Fisher, was from London. George was granted a Ticket of Leave in February 1823, and rented a small farm in Campbelltown from William Bradbury. George was considered an honest and industrious man and was Fred's friend.

Fred's farm had no house on it to live in, so he, his employees and convict servants all lived with George. George's house was about 16.5 metres long, with three large rooms and skillion verandahs. It was located on the western side of Queen Street, south from Allman Street, and was where the Campbelltown Town Hall Theatre currently stands.

In 1825, Fred undertook his first building venture – the Horse and Jockey Inn, which was built for him by a local carpenter named William Brooker. William disputed payment over the project and took his claim to the magistrates who found in his favour. One night, William had had a few drinks and stormed into the Horse and Jockey Inn, demanding that Fred pay him the money that was owed. They got into a fight and Fred pulled a knife on William. Luckily, William was not badly hurt, but Fred was arrested for assault.

Fred was worried that he would be sent to prison to serve a long sentence, and was concerned about his land, houses, farms and animals. Fred saw George Worrall as the most appropriate person to act as his agent, so he gave George a power of attorney over his possessions and to manage his affairs while he was in prison. While Fred was under arrest, George was heard boasting about the land he now controlled, and reportedly said "It's all mine now...all that was Fred's...he give it to me 'afore he went to prison".

Fred stood trial for the assault, however, the court considered that the attack had been provoked and as a result, he received a £50 fine and a light sentence of six months in prison.

Fred soon returned and started to undertake more building ventures. In April 1826, he had a large, three storey brick building and had commenced work on another building.

Fred's disappearance

On the evening of 17 June 1826, Fred Fisher disappeared and George Worrall announced he had sailed for England, as he was concerned about a forgery charge recently made against him. Three weeks later, George sold Fred's horse and personal belongings, claiming Fred had sold them to him before he set sail.

Several local townspeople became suspicious of George's claims. He had offered Fred's horse to James Coddington, who knew Fred's handwriting and was convinced the papers that George had shown him were forgeries. Fred's original sentence which sent him to Australia did not expire until 1829, only three years away, so it was unlikely that he would return to England and risk imprisonment as a convict at large. The local townspeople knew Fred to be 'artful and covetous', and he would not have left without trying to make some profit from his possessions. Fred's brother, Henry, who was also a convict, had no knowledge of any plans for Fred to sail to England. After some investigation, it was also found that there was no record of the ship that George claimed Fred sailed to England on – the *Lord St Vincent*, being docked at Sydney.

On 17 September 1826, George Worrall was arrested on suspicion of Fred's murder. George claimed he had not murdered Fred, but that four other men had in fact committed the crime. All four men were then arrested. All of the men were confined in Liverpool gaol, however no action could be taken as there was no body to prove a murder had been committed.

On 23 September 1826, three months after Fred's disappearance, *The Sydney Gazette* and the *New South Wales Advertiser* published an advertisement announcing a reward for information leading to

the recovery of Fred's body. The announcement appeared under the heading 'Colonial Secretary's Office, Sept 22, 1826. Supposed Murder', and read:

"Whereas Frederick Fisher, by the Ship Atlas, holding a Ticket of Leave, and lately residing at Campbell Town, has disappeared within the last Three Months; it is hereby notified, that a Reward of Twenty Pounds will be given for the Discovery of the Body of the said Frederick Fisher; or, if he shall have quitted the Colony, a Reward of Five Pounds will be given to any Person or Persons who shall produce Proof of the same."

Government Notice.
COLONIAL SECRETARY'S OFFICE, SEPT. 22, 1826.
SUPPOSED MURDER.
WHEREAS FREDERICK FISHER,
by the Ship Atlas, holding a Ticket of
Leave, and lately residing at Campbell Town,
has disappeared within the last Three Months;
it is hereby notified, that a **REWARD** of
TWENTY POUNDS will be given for the
Discovery of the Body of the said Frederick
Fisher; or, if he shall have quitted the Colony,
a Reward of **FIVE POUNDS** will be given
to any Person or Persons who shall produce
Proof of the same.
By His Excellency's Command,
ALEXANDER M'LEAY.

One month later, a well-known and respected local farmer, John Farley, came forward with an extraordinary story.

The legend of Fisher's Ghost

Four months after the disappearance of Fred Fisher, a local farmer named John Farley was returning home from Patrick's Inn, late one night in October 1826. On his way home, he passed a corner of the paddock that belonged to Fred, which adjoined George Worrall's farm.

As he passed, he saw the figure of a man sitting on the fence of a bridge. As he got closer, he recognised the figure as Fred Fisher. As he approached, John became horror-struck and realised that he was looking at a ghost. He claimed that the ghost was bathed in an eerie light and had blood dripping from a wound in his head. Releasing a loud moan, the ghost beckoned to him, raised his arm and pointed to a creek back towards George Worrall's farm before fading away.

After the encounter, John ran to a local hotel, 'The Harrow', in a state of shock, claiming he had seen the ghost of Fred Fisher.

The exact location of the sighting of Fisher's ghost is believed to be the intersection of what are now Queen and Dumaresq Streets in Campbelltown, where a natural water way flowed and where the remains of a corduroy bridge have been discovered. Some believe it appeared where Fisher's Ghost Creek is located today, at the corner of Queen Street and Camden Road.

After relaying the extraordinary story of his encounter with Fisher's Ghost to the Police Superintendent and then the local magistrate, Reverend Thomas Reddall, investigations into Fred's disappearance intensified. On 25 October 1826, two young boys, Rixon and Burrows, were returning home across Fred's farm and noticed bloodstains on a fence. On closer investigation, a lock of hair and a tooth were also found.

A local officer, Constable Luland, searched the area but found nothing, so it was decided to call in an Aboriginal tracker from Liverpool. On testing the water from puddles in the area, the tracker, named Namut, announced "white fellow's fat there!". They followed the puddles along

the creek and discovered Fred's body in a shallow grave, just where the ghost had pointed.

The body was partially decomposed, and was 'a saddened, death-like sickly white'. The face was not recognisable, however the clothes, consisting of a plum coloured jacket, a full bloused shirt and buckles on the braces were easily recognised as Fred's. He was buried locally in St Peter's graveyard, however no headstone was ever erected.

George Worrall went to trial for Fred's murder in a criminal court, on 2 February 1827. The jury took 15 minutes to find him guilty, and he was sentenced to death and executed three days later, on 5 February 1827.

On the scaffold, George confessed he had murdered Fred by mistake, thinking him a horse in the wheat crop, however, this confession was never believed by the locals. It is thought that George had assumed when he had been appointed Fred's agent, that all of Fred's property belonged to him. On Fred's release from prison, George murdered him to fully obtain his property.



On 6 February 1827, *The Sydney Gazette* and the *New South Wales Advertiser* reported on the execution:

“George Worrell, who was convicted on Friday last of the murder of Frederick Fisher, yesterday suffered the dreadful sentence of the law. Till about 5 o’clock on the morning of his execution, he persisted in asserting his innocence, when he was at length induced to acknowledge to a gentleman, who had sat up with him during the night, that he, alone had perpetrated the murder, but positively affirmed that it was not his intention at the time to do so.”

John Farley’s encounter with the ghost of Fred Fisher stayed with him for the rest of his life, and he never waived in recounting his experience. The legend of Fisher’s Ghost is now world famous, and synonymous with Campbelltown.

A source of inspiration

The legend of Fisher’s Ghost has been an inspiration for many. It proved endlessly fascinating for publishers. RM Martin referred to Gilbert, the tracker, in his *History of the British Colonies* (1836). Charles Dickens’ ‘Household Words’ (1855) included a version of the ghost story by John Lang, as did the French magazine *L’Ami de la Maison* the following year. Marcus Clarke, author of *For the Term of His Natural Life*, referred to it in 1875. The Australian Town and Country Journal sent a correspondent to Campbelltown in 1880 to interview old residents about the ghost. WH Rusden included it in his *History of Australia* in 1883, as did WH Suttor in *Australasian Stories Retold* (1887). James Norton told his reminiscences to the *Daily Telegraph* in 1892 and Hassall’s account appeared in 1902. In that year, BR Wise KC, attorney general and Minister of Justice for NSW, defended the ghost story before a sceptical English audience at Oxford. Andrew Lang the following year read Justice Forbes’ original case notes to write his *Truth about Fisher’s Ghost* (1903). Generations later, in 1960, Douglas Stewart, poet and play wright, wrote an historical comedy, *Fisher’s Ghost*.

The legend of Fisher's Ghost inspired the creation of a silent film in 1924, titled 'Fisher's Ghost'. The film was directed by Raymond Longford, and written by himself and Lottie Lyell. It is considered a lost film, meaning there are no copies known to exist. It was released on 4 October 1924, had a running time of 55 minutes and had a budget of £1000. The film starred Fred Twitcham as Frederick Fisher, and Robert Purdie as George Worrall. It is attributed to being one of the earliest and most influential Australian horror films, paving the way for the resurgence of the genre in the 1970s.

Below is a poem written about Fisher's Ghost, by an unknown author.



“Frederick George James Fisher
A convict he had been
Arrived on the Atlas transport
In the year 1816

Freedom soon was his
And Campbelltown showed much charm
That this was where he settled
On his thirty acre farm

Disaster struck June 17
The year 1826
Fred Fisher had disappeared
So a twenty pound reward was fixed

Then a ghost was seen pointing
To the banks along the creek
Blood was found on the bridge
From where the ghost did speak

On the last day of October
Fred's body had been found
Black natives solved the mystery
Buried three feet underground

George Worrall was arrested
Convicted by the Supreme Court
His life on earth was terminated
Justice had been brought.”

A sketch of Fisher's Ghost, drawn by Norman Lindsay.



**Hoyt's
De-Luxe
Theatre
SYDNEY**

thought so much of this sensational Australian-made picture that they booked it as their A Grade Feature, and will advertise it on an unprecedented scale.

This amazing story of something that really happened, filmed by way of a change, and taken on the spot where it actually occurred.

**Do You
Believe in
Ghosts?**

**'FISHER'S
GHOST'**

Produced by Raymond Longford, who personally is convinced it is the supreme photoplay achievement of his eminently successful picture producing career.

BETTER THAN "SENTIMENTAL BLOKE."



Released by
**LONGFORD-
LYELL
PRODUCTIONS,**
BATHURST ST.,
SYDNEY

On an equity basis to all showmen, which means we don't demand a high price, but will stake our existence on the picture's exceptional merit.

The poster for the 1924 silent film - 'Fisher's Ghost'.

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www.fishersghost.com.au

The Campbelltown City Festival of Fisher's Ghost

The Campbelltown City Festival of Fisher's Ghost is one of the longest running community events in Australia.

The origins of the festival of Fisher's Ghost can be traced back to April 1956, when Mayor Jack Farnsworth called for a public meeting to plan an annual celebration, aimed at raising funds for new facilities in the municipality. Several early names were suggested, such as the Rose Festival. As fate would have it, that same year, Fisher's Ghost hit headlines nationwide when, without any planning, an incredible 1500 people braved the cold and gathered at Fisher's Ghost Bridge at midnight in hope of seeing the reappearance of the ghost who had been seen 130 years earlier. The first festival officially named in the ghost's honour was held in 1960.

This unique festival, inspired by the famous legend of the ghost of Frederick Fisher, is steeped in history and includes an extensive

program of events to appeal to the wider community. The festival aims to enrich the social and cultural fabric of the Campbelltown community and present an opportunity to unite and share creative energy, spirit and pride.

The festival delivers a range of enjoyable, free, family focused, safe and accessible events that promote community participation, highlight the significance of the festival and are relevant to today's community.

The program has evolved over the years in response to the interests of the local community. The most popular events on the program include the Street Parade, Street Fair, Carnival, Fisher's Gig, the prestigious Fisher's Ghost Art Award, the Annual Fisher's Ghost Fun Run, Fisher's Kids and a diverse range of associated events.

Fisher's Ghost isn't just associated with this major festival. The spectre is believed by some to have had a direct impact on other events around Campbelltown. In 1970, the promoter of Campbelltown's famous Picnic Races named the main event 'The Fisher's Ghost Cup'. The event experienced a fierce rainstorm and was completely washed out. The following year the name reverted back to 'The Campbelltown City Cup', and the sun reportedly shone brightly and the crowds were delighted.

Following that, in 1972, it was decided to once again name the event after the ghost, and an old railing from Fisher's Ghost Bridge was planted as the finishing post. The following four races were washed out due to more fierce storms, and it was decided that the post, now believed to be haunted by Fred, should be removed. Diedre, the race promoter, took the post back to her house, and within six months, received an excess water bill for half a million gallons of water from leaking pipes.

In the footsteps of Fred

map and self-guided heritage walk

Fisher's Ghost Creek

**LOCATION WHERE
FRED'S BODY WAS
FOUND**

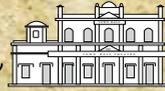


Old Post Office



Hurley Street

Town Hall Theatre



Dredge's Cottage



Koshigaya Park



Fieldhouse Store



Bursill's

Coaching House



Emily Cottage



Farrier's Arms



Quondong



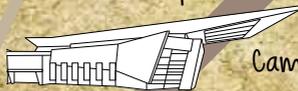
Sculpture Garden



Japanese Garden



Campbelltown Arts Centre

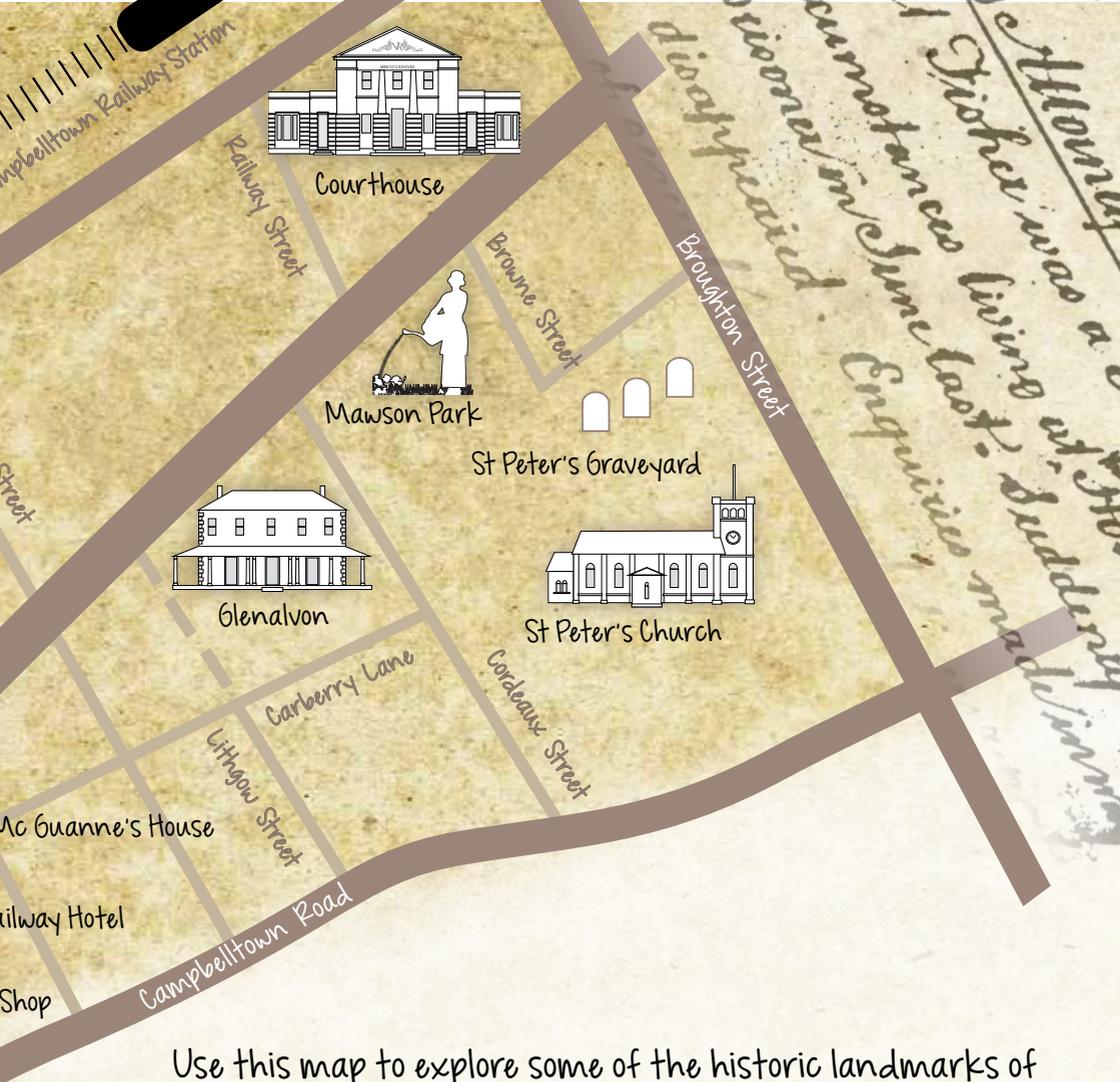


Narellan Road

Camden Road

Queen Street

Dunmore St



Use this map to explore some of the historic landmarks of Campbelltown and walk in the footsteps of Fred!

- Old Post Office - the site of Fred's farm
- Town Hall Theatre - the site of George Worrell's farmhouse
- Dredges Cottage and Fieldhouse Store - the site of George Worrell's farm
- Campbelltown Sculpture Garden - the location of Fisher's Ghost Creek
- X - the location where Fred's body was found
- St Peter's Anglican Church and graveyard - the site where Fred was buried
- Coaching House, Bursill's Shop, Railway Hotel, McGuanne's House - the heritage precinct



Campbelltown Visitor Information Centre
15 Old Menangle Rd, Campbelltown NSW 2560
Ph. 02 4645 4921 Ph. 1800 655 991
macarthur.com.au
fishersghost.com.au