

P A R T T H R E E

C H A P T E R O N E

The Three Eyewitnesses

The legal history of the Frederick Fisher drama contained no allusions to the incidence of any 'ghost'. John Farley was not called as a witness at any inquiry concerning the fate of the young Londoner. The records of the enquiries at Campbell Town held no trace of any intrusion of the supernatural, so-called, into the otherwise prosaic traversal of the facts.

But wherever ~~the~~ Fisher's untimely death was discussed, a ghost joined in, insisting ~~upon~~ being noticed and being given its due share of significance. And since ghosts are not, and it seems never can be legal entities, even if they were facts, they have to be sought outside official history. It is to a non-legal realm that quest for the supposed ghost must be pursued.

During 1932, the Mitchell Library (Sydney) acquired from Miss Laura Harper of Waunganui, New Zealand, a document which had descended to her from her great grandfather, Rev. Richard Taylor. The latter had been successor to Rev. Robert Cartwright (assistant chaplain under Samuel Marsden) as incumbent of St. Luke's church, Liverpool, New South Wales on October 1st, 1836. During the period, 1836-8, Rev. Taylor gave service at Parramatta also, and is understood to have spent a short time at St. Peter's church, Campbell Town, during 1838 following the death of the Rev. Thomas Reddall.

Taylor became interested in a vigorously circulating story that a ghost of Frederick Fisher had been seen and its appearance had been linked with the later discovery of his having been murdered. When Rev. Taylor left New South Wales during ~~the~~ ¹⁸³⁸ to settle permanently in New Zealand, he carried with him an account of the Fisher story comprising both sides of each of two foolscap pages. The document remained in New Zealand for 94 years. Its writer had prepared the report in some hurry, addressing it to Mr. Taylor:

I have made the inclosed rough memorandum and should
 respectfully request the Rev. Mr. Taylor to see what

alteration he would wish as to [undecipherable word] before I copy it in a better hand.

The document he wrote out, since it was planned as a draft, was neither dated nor signed. The internal evidence however, shows its author to have been Thomas Leathwick Robinson, who was a witness at the trial of George Worrall and earlier was a witness both of the finding of Fisher's body and at the coroner's inquest.

Research establishes that Robinson was sentenced to fourteen years transportation to Van Dieman's Land, at Middlesex Gaol Delivery on September 11, 1822, and had reached Hobart on August 4, the following year. (SA) Official despatches of Governor Darling in 1826 show Robinson to have been a resident of Campbell Town, applying to have his family (wife and five children) then residing at Clerkenwell, London, brought to New South Wales at Government expense.

Robinson appears ^again in official despatches in 1829 as being among 958 convicts to whom Ticket of Leave had been granted. A list of government officials dated 1826 included Thomas Leathwick Robinson as master of a government primary school at Campbell Town. At the time of the NSW Census in 1828 he was aged 46. Governor Bourke's 1833 despatches show Robinson as receiving an annual salary of £50 as primary school master, with an allowance of £10 for his wife. (SA)

The New South Wales Almanac of 1837 records that Robinson still held his position as primary school master at Campbell Town. It is clear, therefore, that Robinson should have been well acquainted with some of the facts of the Fisher case which were not in themselves of a legal nature.

The crucial test of Robinson's epistle to Mr. Taylor lies in its disclosure that the writer had for official use prepared drawings of the spot where Fisher had been done to death.

Recovery during 1962 of a drawing made by 'T. L. Robinson' of 'The Groundplot of George Worrall's Premises, Campbell Town; with the adjoining Land, as far as appears to be connected with the Death of Frederick Fisher' (SA)¹ showing the corner of the fence

'where much blood was discovered and is now to be seen this 6th. day of November, 1826' places the authorship of the Taylor document beyond question.

In setting down his recollections of events which occurred roughly eleven years previously, Robinson places some of them out of sequence. The value of the document lies in the information it supplies that comes only from close acquaintance with the persons involved in the events; and thus is learned much that was not admissible as evidence in the courts, and which gives to the Fisher story its fame.

THOMAS LEATHWICK ROBINSON VERSION

(Note all peculiarities of spelling and most of the punctuation of the original, which the writer has examined, have been retained)

The murder of Fisher at Campbell Town happened in 1826. As I have no memorandum it will be difficult to fix exactly upon dates. But as I find in our Parochial register that the body of Frederick George James Fisher was buried on the 27th. Oct. 1826 -- taking this as a general criterion I can guess at the time of other circumstances must have taken place near enough for present purposes.

As it has been the opinion of everyone who are acquainted with the affair that Worall who committed the murder was tempted to do it rather than return Fisher's property to him, as the property came into his, Worall's possession under circumstances which gave him reason to think it would become his own, it will be advisable to show how Worall got Fisher's property into his hands, and to do this I must begin my story 18 or 20 months before the body was found.²

About the beginning of 1825 Fisher, per ship Atlas, a prisoner for life holding a ticket of leave -- (Some thought he had a pardon, and after his death an instru-

ment of that kind was found amongst his papers -- but on examining it, it was quite plain some other name had been arrased and his put in,³ the date also had been altered, nor could any entery be found in any of the public offices at that time, to show that such an indulgence has been granted to Fisher. I saw the document many times.) -- Fisher possessed about 13 acres of land west of Campbelltown road⁴ About half a mile to the back runs a creek which bounds Fisher's land. About half a mile to the south of Fisher's house lived George Worall a ticket of leave man. He rented a small farm of Mr. Bradburry and this bounded Fisher's land to the south. To the north (only a few yards of Fisher's house, Mr. Patrick kept sign of the Harrow,⁵ and still further north, Mr. Hammond at that time sold liquor in a small house now used as a kitchen at the back of the Pollice office.

About the middle of the year 1825 Fisher opened one of his houses for a public house, got a license and sold liquor by the sign of the Horse and Groom.

Fisher in his buildings had employed a carpenter named Mr. Brooker (he is still amongst us). They disagreed about payment. Brooker summoned Fisher before the Bench of Magistrates (there was no courts of requests then).⁶ The Bench gave verdict for Brooker and Fisher was much vexed. Shortly after this Brooker called at the Horse and Groom not quite sober.⁷ He and Fisher came to high words and Fisher took out a small knife. Brooker ran, but fell. Fisher cut him slightly, left him and returned and cut him a second time. This came before the Bench and was thought a sad crime and Fisher was committed for trial. As the law then stood most people thought Fisher would be hanged or sent to a penal settlement for life. He now became alarmed for his property, for beside his land and houses he had horses or mares, a great many pigs

and a small stack of wheat.

Now Worall was thought an honest, industrious man, and as both he and Fisher was single and their land joined, Worall was thought the most proper person to take charge of Fisher's property untill the event of the trial was known, and Fisher formally made over to Worall all he possessed and went to Sydeny to prepare for his trial. At this time Worall was often heard to say all was his own as Fisher would never come back, and I believe every one thought so too. But on the trial, when cross-examined Brooker behaved so rude and passionate that altho Fisher was found guilty of the assault, the court made great allowance for Brooker's irritating temper. Fisher was sentenced to be imprisoned for six months and to pay a fine of 50 pounds.⁸

A short time before the six month expired Fisher petitioned the government to remitt the fine saying his property being in strangers hands was most likely destroyed and that in addition to his confinement he was a ruined man. The government wrote to the Bench of Magistrates at Campbelltown to inquire into this. They did so, and found Worall had been honest and all Fisher's property safe. The Bench returned an answer to that effect, and Fisher soon appeared amongst us.⁹

I do not know if he paid the 50 pounds but as he often told me his troubles and I do not remember his mentioning that, I am inclined to think he did not pay it.¹⁰ This may be considered as the first part of this sad story.

Fisher's confinement was in the beginning of General Darling's government and during his imprisonment great alterations were made in the indulgences given to ticket of Leave holders. They were not to keep public houses, nor have prisoners assigned to them as servants. This

made a great difference to Fisher, and he often complained of it in sorrowful terms.

On Fisher's return he did not resume the business of Horse and Groom but lived with Worall and went on with his buildings. It was observed he had altered much in appearance since he came from Sydney, for before, he was slovenly and mean in every thing, but now he often appeared abroad quite smart. He had a plumb-coloured jacket with a high collar and full breasted, laid aside his waistcoats and exhibited a very full bosom'd shirt and shiny braces with glittering buckels (it is necessary to mention this for in those clothes I often conversed with him and in them his body was found, so much decayed that if I had seen it naked I might not have known it. And I was twice sworn to the identity of the body, once before the coroner, and on the trial) yet at home he was still slovenly, and mean, he even slept at night upon the same table that he and Worall took their meals of in the day.⁺ Worall and he spent much of their time together, and appeared on the most friendly terms, when early in the winter (I think about May, 1826) Fisher suddenly disappeared -- Worall gave out he had left the country, and, as he had so often hinted to me and most others that he would do so if he could, no suspicion of any thing wrong was entertained for some time.

Worall claimed the property. He sold the pigs to a Mr. Talbut who does now, or very lately did keep the Black Swan on the Brickfield hill, Sydney.¹¹ I do not remember what became of the stack of wheat. Fisher was under some obligations to the firm of Cooper and Levy, Sydney, and Worall could not sell the other property nor hold it

⁺Robinson seems to hold this against Fisher; but obviously, as it was winter and the flagstone floor was cold, and there was a continuous log fire in the kitchen, he slept there.

securely himself without some arrangement with them. This he attempted to do many times but the papers he produced to justify his title, had just the reverse effect and only produced a suspicion that the absence of Fisher was not accounted for as it ought to be.¹² This being hinted to Worall, he was angry; and said he would put all such malice down. To do this he produced a small piece of paper (now Fisher was considered a good plan scholar wrote a good hand and clever at making out leases and agreements etc, but Worall could neither read nor write) and this paper which Worall produced to set all "right" was quite contemptable, badly wrote and spelt and Fisher's name was signed at top.¹³ Worall insisted it was Fisher's writing, but it was instantly declared a forgery and Worall was cautioned to mind what he was about.

While this was going on in Sydney, in Campbelltown wispers of dissatisfaction became loud. Many thought it strange that such an artful and covitious man as Fisher should leave the country without trying to make some money of his property. Worall was observed to be unsettled. If Fisher's case was name he grew hot and would say, dam Fisher -- why do you talk of him ain't he gone home. I wish I had never seen him -- would you wish to see me hang'd for him; and such like sentences.

I think it must have been about the beginning of September 1826 that a Warant was received by the Pollice at Campbelltown. This warant came from Sydney (I think) altho I have some slight remembrance of Parramatta being named in it. It charged G. Worall with the willful murder of Fisher. A letter also came from some of the [undecipherable word] office to the Bench, containing the copy of some evidence on which the warant was founded, directing the Magistrates to proceed to examin the case. Worall was apprehended and priyatly examin'd. I had the means of knowing he protested that Fisher had left the country.

On the second hearing it was recollected that four men had been living with Worall some time. Trifling things had been seen between them that led to the suspicion they might know something of the fact. They were therefore taken into custody (If I ever heard their names I have forgotten them, one of them was a Butcher, another a blackman, not of this country¹⁴ the third was an old man who after Worall was hangd was assigned to Mr. Scarr¹⁵ in whose service he attempted to cut his own throat and was for that sent into government service; I cannot bring to my mind any thing about the fourth man, but I know there was a fourth.) They were examined for their knowledge of Fisher, and all declared the last they saw of him, was many months ago. On the evening of the last day, he seemed very particular about his person as if going out.¹⁶ He was washing his teeth, and they though he was going to see his woman.

Charles Beels¹⁷ the son of a brick maker and half an Idiot, said he saw Mr. Fisher that evening and asked him for some money for his (Charles') father and then Mr. Fisher was dressing himself, but his trowsers was slit behind and his shirt hangd out -- (this must be borne in mind) --¹⁸

About the third or fourth hearing Worall said if he might be with the Bench alone he would tell God's truth.¹⁹ This was granted and the story he told was in substance this:

" about a fortnight before Fisher was murdered I (Worall) moved some dung from Mr. Bradburry's yard to the corner of my stackyard. On the evening Fisher was murdered I was easing myself between a cart and the stackyard fence and saw the men (meaning the four men mentioned above) carrying something from the road to the dunghill. I called to them what have you got. They said they had killed Bradburry's dog. I said that was very wrong; and hearing a thumping on the

dunghill I went towards it and saw them all beating Fisher's brains out. I said, Why you have killed Mr. Fisher and not a dog. They said they would serve me so if I said a word. So I kept the secret from fear and do not know where they have put the body." 20

As soon as Mr. Scarr the Clerk of the Bench had wrote this information down the four men were called in to face Worall and it was read to them. But from the questions the men asked Worall -- the manner he answered -- the dunghill being searched, no blood: in short a total absence of every visible suport added to Worall's attempts alone , to get the property, no one that I know believed it. 21 (it was read on the trial; but the Judge in summing up told the jury they must dismiss it from their minds as there was no evidence to suport it) 22 -- yet what ever doubt might be before, it was now evident Fisher had been murdered and that Worall knew something about it. The Bench came to a conclusion that it was quite enough to justify them to send Worall to a stronger place of confinement and he was forwarded to Liverpool gaol. This must have been in the early part of October 1826. 23

All now seemed at a stand and no visible means of proceeding any further in the case appeared. I will therefore make a pause here to divid my tale into three parts. And now my dear reader and hearers if there be any with a human heart, you must prepare it for a shock -- yet how can they feal as I feal, who never saw what I saw. 24

Every likely place had been searched to find the body in vain, and all that man could suggest had been done to bring the affair to light. And many began to despair. But I think an invisible eye had been watching. If He had, he now call'd in children to be his agents, and as if by chance to bring about those things that human

PORTION T.L.ROBINSON'S TEXT showing sketch of bloodstained
fence. (State Archives)

contrivance had fallen short of. It was common for boys in this Neighbourhood to go fishing in the creek spoken of. One afternoon about this time, the boys Rixons²⁵ and Burrows, with some others came into the town saying as they crossed the paddocks (Mr. Fisher's and Worall's paddock) there was such a deal of blood upon the fence in the corner it looked as if some body had been killed there. I followed them to the spot -- I was not among the first but I was soon there -- and a shocking sight it was.

A long fence from the road to the creek parted Fisher's land and Worall's farm. About half way, a crop fence on Fisher's side, came up to this fence at right angles. In the corner of these fences was the blood. The bottom rail was covered with dry blood and it had dried in blisters the shape and as big as eggs. I do not mean so globular -- but like what I have seen in paint exposed to the sun when it has been put on too thick. The upper rails had splashes as big as my hand -- they diminished in size as the distance from the middle of the bottom rail increased. On the ground just under the middle [of the] rail there was a round dent, about the size and depth of a tea saucer (I was ordered to take drawing of such places for the trial, and as I stood to do this, I often thought a man's head would make such a dent if it received a very hard blow) the blood upon the fence formed something like a ray upwards, having the dent under the rail as a common centre. (I once had three drawings of it, one went to Mr. More's [Acting Attorney General, W.H. Moore] office in Sydney. I do not know what became of the others.)²⁶ In the dent in the ground a small lock of human hair was found. It was short and small but soon known to be the colour of Fisher's hair. About 3 or 4 yards to the right towards Worall's house the fragment of a human tooth was picked up.

About this time a strange circumstance happened. A wealthy and respectable landholder in this Neighbourhood had been

spending the day at Mr. Patrick's.²⁷ It was late when he left to go home. I was not there. Some said he was not very tipsy, some said he was. It is quite evident he had that day drank more than usual, and it is indisputable he must have been what I have heard called frjch [fresh?] -- (and anyone who knows Farmer Farley as well as I do will not be surprised to hear that he was so.) His way home was past Worall's house.²⁸ He had a companion with him, and ther^eabout they queral'd very much. I do not know how they parted, but he [Farley] came back to Mr. Patrick's in a great fright saying he had seen Fisher's ghost. Every attempt to pacify him was in vain. He insisted it was a ghost. It sat upon the rail at the bridge, looked like dried leather. It beconed to him and pointed backwards.

He soon recovered from his fright, but to this day will have that it was a ghost.²⁹

Many opinions was the consequence of this affair. Many thought it must be a ghost, yet some thought it strange that an injured spirit should appear only to a half tipsy man, and that at a time his temper was in a state of great excitement and perhaps the leatherlike figure might be some sun-burnt labouring man who sat there injoying the folly of two sincere friends calling each other ugley names.

Be this as it may, the ghost was not the means of discovering the body, for that was not found untill at the suggestion of old Mr. Warby the Blacks were sent for.³⁰ Gilbert, well-known black with some others arrived from Liverpool at the request of several neighbours. They were shown the blood and directing their course up a hollow in Worral's paddock -- this hollow was not so deep but it had been ploughed and wheat was then growing in it in general with the rest of the paddock, yet in damp weather

the water lay in puddles. It was so at this time, and Gilbert directed his course from puddle to puddle smelling and tasting the water, each time saying, White fellow fat there -- white fellow this way, and exactly 12 chains (on my measuring it) from the blood the body was found.³¹

I did not get there untill it was uncovered. It was 12 to 14 inches underground. It lay on the left side, a little inclining to the back. The head and feet were bare. The toes were gone to the bone -- the head and face was shockingly disfigured. The right hand lay upon the lower part of the right breast. The outside of the hand was perfect, but on my removing it to get a sight of the brace buckels, the palm was gone and the flesh stuck to my fingers and came of the bone.

It was not leather-like. The place it had lain in was damp, and its appearance was a sodden deathlike sickly white, but it had on the plumb coloured Jacket with the high collar and full breasted shirt, the smart braces and smarter buckels, but they did not glitter now as I saw them in his life, and more, for on my getting him turned a little over on his belly, there was the slit in his trowsers, and the shirt tail a little out.

Two days after this, Mr. Horsley the coroner sat and I was ordered to examine the body, but now it was out of the hole the clothes was off. The surgeon [] I think Mr. Hill of Liverpool [] had taken the flesh off the head to examine it. At the bottom of the back of the head between the ears there was a gash in the skull that a man might have put his hand into -- another on the crown, and a blow as if with a blunt instrument had carried away the bottom of the jaw. And since he had been out of the hole those who had the care of the body had let the dogs eat the putrid flesh of the legs. In this state I could not say I knew the body, so the coroner took my evidence as

+ The next day, Oct. 26th.

to the body I saw in the hole on the 25th, and to form a chain call'd in some persons who got it out, to [✓]sware them the body the jury saw that day, was the one I saw on the 25th.

On the trial the judge Forbes took my evidence in the same way.³² A Mr. Boon [✓]swore to the body before the coroner and he was summoned for the Crown on the trial but was not called by the Crown. After Mr. Roe [✓][Rowe] call'd him for the defence to [✓]proove that he had threatened Fisher with a prosecution for [✓]perjury [✓][forgery] and that he might have fled or destroyed himself for fear but on cross examination he said he knew the body found to be the body of Fisher and if he had killed himself for fear of him, he could not have buried himself. So the only witness called for the defence went rather to support the prosecution.³³

The trial did not take place for some months after the body was found -- the first time we was called to Sydney something happened that the trial was [✓]put off.³⁴ The trial took the whole day. The jury did not leave the box more than 10 or 15 minutes. In passing sentence of death the judge told Worall he perfectly concurred in the [✓]verdict. There was not he said the least doubt of his guilt nor the smallest hope of his life being spared and advised him to make his peace with God.

The four men named above was in handcuffs all day near the court strongly guarded but as I heard no more of them, I think they were discharged.³⁵

Worall was executed in Sydney so I know nothing of that, but I remember a short time after he was hanged, there appeared in the newspaper a sort of confession made (I think) to the Rev'd Mr. Cowper. It was to ~~this~~ effect: Worall said he was [✓]walking in the paddock with Fisher to look at some horses; that he ³⁶Worall took up a rail that [✓]

lay there to strike one of the horses and finding he had killed him he buried him out of fear. But on comparing this with the wounds in Fisher's head, and all other circumstances connected with the case, I never heard any one say they thought it might be true. (ML)

H E N R Y H A Y D E N ' S V E R S I O N

A second part-eyewitness account has survived in the story published in the Bombala Times on May 24th, 1884. It was written at that time by Henry Hayden, an aged resident of the nearby district of Delegate, NSW. The town of Bombala, not far from the border of the State of Victoria, being then of minor importance, it is not surprising the Hayden account of the Fisher affair attracted little notice outside the district.

Henry Hayden, born in the colony, was seventeen years old when the NSW Census of 1828 was taken, and was employed by George Simpson, of Airds.³⁷ If as a fifteen-year-old Henry was already working in the neighborhood of Campbell Town, he with other boys would soon hear of any startling occurrences in the township, to reach which they had to pass by the farms of Worrall and Fisher.

The Fisher episode evidently made a deep impression on him, and his contribution which concerns itself particularly with the question of the apparition, contains information of great importance not found elsewhere.

. . . In common with every neighbour in that locality [wrote Hayden] we hadn't the smallest doubt but what had been seen was an incorporeal manifestation. Men of the broadest sense and education enquired into the

circumstances of the case and invariably concluded it was a visitor from spirit land and I am not aware of a single doubt on the matter at the time. However, when those who were eyewitnesses to the affair were either dead or scattered . . . sceptics began to investigate the matter and it is no surprise that they satisfied themselves, as they pre-conceived, that there was no ghost.

Looking back over 58 years, Henry Hayden understandably errs in dates and names; but none of his mistakes is so serious as to be irreconcilable with the known facts. He recalls that the happenings took place in 1823, and he calls Worrall, 'Warren'. He correctly speaks of John Patrick as the nearest neighbour to Fisher's farm northwards, but falls into the same error as T.L. Robinson in placing Patrick's ownership of The Harrow inn out of its time, as also did others. (The name Worrall is substituted throughout)

Frederick Fisher himself he remembers was considered by the People of Campbell Town as 'well-to-do, respectable and praiseworthy in all his dealings'. Worrall he recalls as a handyman who did jobs wherever he could get them -- which was true -- but does not mention Worrall's renting a farm adjoining Fisher's, but rather as his being an employee of Frederick. The latter boyish impression probably arose from the fact of Worrall's being present a great deal on Fisher's property for a considerable time before the murder took place.

On the day of the crime, Hayden states, Fisher had returned from a visit to his brother 'at Windsor',³⁸ and after supper was told by Worrall that a rail was broken in one of the fences and that they should go and repair it.³⁹ In doing so, the two men had to pass through an intervening fence

. . . over which Worrall climb^d, but Fisher stooped under, and whilst in that act, Worrall gave him a blow on the head with the edge of the axe he was carrying. The blow, it afterwards appeared, left some of the victim's hair on the fence, and Worrall, in making another blow at his skull

missed that part and put a frightful gash in his shoulder.⁴⁰ Then he Worrall sunk the axe several times in the head. He dragged the body to a creek near at hand, and buried it in soft mud at the head of a water hole.

The neighbours soon missed the presence of Fisher at the at the farm, and . . . Worrall informed them that he went home to the old country and that he ordered him to sell the place and other property and forward the proceeds after him to England . . . His Fisher's brother was particularly astonished at his going home without letting him know.⁴¹

Hayden goes on that Worrall had a good reputation and no one suspected anything untoward had occurred, even though enquiry showed no one bearing the name Fisher had been listed as a passenger on the ship by which he was alleged to have departed. It was considered natural in view of the reasons advanced for his departure that Fisher should leave under an assumed name. Hayden continues:

It is probable the whole of the murdered man's property would have been sold and the escape of the murderer consummated, but for the intervention of the following:

One night, a respectable farmer of the name of Farley paid a visit to John Patrick and left late. When walking past Fisher's farm at a place about a quarter of a mile distant from Patrick's place, he saw Fisher, whom he knew well, sitting on the railing of the bridge over the creek. He was so terrified that he returned to Patrick's able only to gasp out the words, 'Oh, Patrick!' before he fainted.

Patrick and another person brought in Farley who, when he recovered his senses said: 'Oh, Patrick, I have seen Fisher horribly mutilated sitting on the bridge railing.'

This circumstance surprised the neighbours who, together with the authorities, interviewed him upon the matter, of which he was so very positive. He gave a minute account of the appearance of what he took to be an apparition,

Instant

even to the sort of buttons in his clothes. The gashes in his skull, and particularly that in his shoulder, he described as being horrible to look at.

About the same time that Farley encountered this dreadful sight, a schoolgoing boy, of the name of John Rixon, who was in the habit of leaving his fishing lines in this creek⁴² dreamt two nights in succession that he saw Fisher killed by a man with an axe at a particular spot near a fence, and at breakfast he told his grown-up brothers about his dreams, but his brothers laughed at him, saying he was getting as superstitious as any Irishman to take heed of dreams. But the boy was so impressed that, on his way to school,⁴³ he had a look at the place where he saw the murder committed in his dreams.

To his astonishment and that of everyone else, there remained on the spot the marks of some struggle and what appeared to be large traces of blood, together with human hair, upon the fence. Of this, in common with many others, I was an eyewitness.

I should have stated that before these revelations took place the authorities, getting suspicious about the fate of Fisher had a reward of £10 offered for any information that might indicate his whereabouts, and this boy John Rixon⁷ was awarded £2.10. 0 of that reward . . .⁴⁴

Suspicion was now strong against Worrall and he was arrested, together with two other bad characters who frequented the town.⁴⁵ But these two men were subsequently released and Worrall was kept a close prisoner.

As soon as Worrall was arrested, a constable of the name of John Rourke was sent to look after the effects on the farm, but on the first night everything about the place was tumbled roughly about by some unseen agency and he was so much terrified that he ran away to his chief, assuring him

that he would not stop there for a night if they made him governor for it. Consequently, another constable was sent, who left in the same manner, nor could he be persuaded to return a second night on the farm.⁴⁶

The authorities then ordered Jem, the convict flogger to go and mind the place, or otherwise he would be returned to the Government gang.⁴⁷ Poor Jem, knowing that if sent to what was then known as the iron gang his life would be taken by the gangers, there being such a hatred to floggers by the prisoners, and of the two evils he chose that on the farm.

I well remember sometimes after the passing of these events and when Jem used to work with the field hands, that he would startle us by reciting what he had seen and heard in Fisher's Worrall's house, he having also seen the apparition of Fisher exactly as described by Farley. He used to say that the strain upon his nerves was so severe in that ordeal, that soon he would become a lunatic or maniac.

But as soon as the body was exhumed, followed immediately by Worrall's confession of murder,⁺ the utmost quiet prevailed.

The search for the body⁴⁸ was vigorously prosecuted by the authorities and neighbours in every place about which a body might be concealed, but with no success until a Liverpool aborigine of the name of Gilbert was got to display his native gift of tracking.

Henry Hayden describes Gilbert's skill, which he personally watched, concluding that the spot to which Gilbert brought the party

+Hayden is running ahead of events here, perhaps confused over the false 'confession' implicating the workmen.

was dug and the body of Fisher revealed, showing marks of violence corresponding with 'the description so often given by Farley of that of the apparition seen by him on the bridge. Of this also I was an eyewitness.'⁴⁹ He continues:

. . . On Worrall being informed . . . he at once made a clean breast of it, confessing as to the manner,⁺⁺ as I before stated, in which the atrocious deed was committed by him, and finally ^{he} expiated the crime on the gallows, if in this I recollect right, at Liverpool.

My recollection of the particulars I have given is as fresh in my mind as if only the circumstances happened yesterday, and I would like further to state that no one who was cognisant of the whole facts, ever doubted for a moment but the revelations were the work of Providence, to bring to the ken of men, for retributive justice, a foul murder, which otherwise might escape punishment due to it in this world.

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Hayden confuses the description of the imaginary murder in the false 'confession' and actual murder.

THE GHOST IMPERSONATOR

It would be unfair to the section of the public which cherishes such an aversion to the lore of ghosts that it welcomes any yarn which appears to discredit them, to omit a story that may have been responsible for some of the ^{more recent} obdurate opinions that Fisher's ghost had no basis in reality.

The Sun-Herald (Sydney) on July 3, 1955, published an interview with one Wally Baker, aged 75, a shopkeeper of Toukley, New South Wales, who believed himself to be the only man living who knew the 'true' story of Fisher's ghost, and who (like so many others who are uneasy with ghosts) desired to end the mystery for ever.

Baker stated he had been reminded of the matter by his reading of people keeping vigil for the ghost at a bridge in Campbell Town, a few weeks previous to the interview, and recalled a story he had heard at the little settlement of Jamberoo on the south coast, when he was aged 23, fifty-two years before!

He had been barbering a man who in turn had heard the story from his grandfather who, it was claimed, had been 'a close friend of the man who "played ghost" at Campbell Town'. That should be sufficiently remote and nebulous to excite the envy of any amateur ghost.

According to Wally Baker, the story by his customer's grandfather was to the effect that on the 'day' on which Worrall murdered Frederick Fisher, there had been a witness to the crime. This man, a Ticket-of-Leave convict happened to see what happened 'through the bush', but because he was afraid of being implicated refrained from informing the authorities. However, the occurrence preyed on his mind until he conceived the idea of pretending to be a ghost in order to attract attention to the matter.⁺ He made two cloaks, one of them white, the other black, and took up a position 'at the slip-rail fence where the murder had happened', at night time when some

⁺ Reminiscent of efforts to make out Farley the murderer trying to ease his conscience with the ghost story. ~~████████████████████~~

lone traveller would be likely to come along. At the approach of such a one, the impersonator would 'groan weirdly' and point towards the 'swamp', then would glide away rather than walk. When he reached a safe distance he would pull the black cloak over his white one to create the impression of disappearing in the way 'a spook' would be expected to do.

. . . He appeared more than once, always on eerie, frosty moonlight nights. Folk were superstitious in those days and easily frightened of anything that moved in the moonlight. He scared lots of people, horses, too. Always he followed the same routine . . .

Townsfolk organised a party to shoot the ghost one night. They crouched for hours in the freezing grass, but the ghost never appeared: he was a member of the shooting party, y'see.

He added fuel quietly to the rumours. If the ghost pointed towards the swamp, there must be a reason [he would hint], and other folk agreed.

Late one night . . . 'Joe' Farley staggered breathless and white-faced into the Black Sheep Shanty at Campbell Town and claimed he had seen Fred. Fisher's ghost sitting on a slip-rail by the creek, covered in blood, croaking like a frog, and pointing to a swamp . . .

The story Mr. Baker retailed, stated that Fisher had been in partnership with Worrall, and they had started a farm together at Campbell Town. As a result of the faked haunting, the police troopers became curious and finally dug in the swamp. 'The ruse had worked -- the ghost was never seen again. Fisher's body was found under three feet of mud. He had been murdered with an axe.'

Yet the 'Ticket-of-Leave' man feared for his life if he were ever found out, and as long as he lived he bound to secrecy the

grandfather of the man who told Mr. Baker the story; to which the latter added illuminatingly: 'There are no such things as ghosts. I don't believe in them!'

The appearance of Baker's yarn brought forth a letter from Miss Sheila Bagot Stack in the Sun-Herald on July 24, 1955. The lady stated that a version of the Fisher's ghost affair had been handed down from her great uncle, Rev. (later Canon) William Stack, rector of 'St. Mary's' church [St. Peter's], Campbell Town [1846-55]. Stack's story related that [at some unstated date during his incumbency] he was called to the bedside of a dying man who had claimed he had seen Fisher killed and had himself played the part of the ghost in order to have the body discovered. The man added that he had kept silence through the years from fear of being accused of murder.

The impersonation story cries out to be tested. The following blatant errors are found: The murder is alleged to have been witnessed from the cover of bushland during daytime. It has been shown that in fact it took place at night in the middle of about sixty-acres of entirely cleared wheat and grazing land, an unlikely spot for anyone to be lurking in the hope of seeing something happen -- in the dark!

As Worrall later removed the body from where he first placed it - possibly many hours later, the supposed witness would not have known it was buried in the so-called 'swamp' except by keeping a continuous vigil on a very cold - perhaps even freezing - night and entirely in ignorance of what was likely to happen.

The device of using black and white cloaks would not deceive a reasonably intelligent child, as, if the whole object of the stratagem was to raise in the townspeople's minds the question of Fisher's fate, its only hope of success would depend wholly upon the supposed spectre being recognised as Fisher. Did the impersonator overlook so trifling a detail?.

Next, by taking a position 'at the slip rail fence where the murder happened' as is claimed, the impersonator damns his story

irretrievably, for the road along which the 'lone travellers' were to pass was approximately 164 yards from the actual murder spot. Obviously, a difficult haunt for an amateur who did not even know precisely where Fisher was killed.

As to the number of persons the fake ghost was claimed to have scared -- not to count the horses -- only one person, John (not 'Joe') Farley ever claimed to have seen a ghost of Fisher, or any ghost for that matter at the relevant time. And nowhere nor at any time on record was the apparition seen by Farley given to vocalizing, groaning or 'croaking like a frog'.

Another inconvenient challenge to the narrative arises from its claim that a party of citizens organised to shoot the ghost. The first inference is that no one was convinced they were dealing with a ghost. However, history seems to have no record of this exciting development - surely inexcusable at a time when the district residents were eager for entertainment and vastly curious about their missing neighbour. The truth may be that some of the townsfolk became heartily tired of the tomfoolery of some-one ~~over-~~ over-excited by the already current story of John Farley's experience, and who was inefficient in the planning of his stage effects.

Intent upon the sound effects rather than attentive to the visual effects, the impersonator overlooked an important detail: Farley's apparition was 'covered in blood', an effect John would have had to invent had he been duped by the ghost impersonator who had inconsiderately omitted that horrid detail from his make-up, even had it been perceptible for what it was supposed to be in the cold moonlight. Genuine apparitions simply do not act that way.

It is not surprising ^{that one} claiming to have staged so peculiar a performance should also re-christen The Harrow inn 'the Black Sheep Shanty' and also in his yarn should manage to bury Fisher's body almost two feet deeper than anyone else, not excepting the police and odd historians. In addition, he placed in Worrall's mouth a statement nothing in history shows him to have made as to the nature of the murder weapon or the immediate circumstances under which

it came to be used.

The usual resort of the fringe lunatic practical joker is the bond of secrecy he imposes ~~on~~ on anyone he can induce to listen to his idiocies. It is patent that the 'impersonator's' fear could not have been that of being implicated in the murder of Fisher, since Worral had confessed himself to have been the sole criminal just before he was hanged. What the 'impersonator' feared - if indeed he ever impersonated anything -- was exposure of the nuisance who did not deceive, but strained the tempers of Campbell Town folk in the aftermath of June 17th, 1826.

The opinion may be ventured that Rev. William Stack heard a death-bed confession when a secret joke ^{may have} ~~has~~ long since degenerated into something akin to delusional insanity.

N O T E S

1. 'Mutch' document.
2. Robinson conveys the notion that Worrall retained Fisher's property from the time of the Brooker assault, but it is not correct.
3. Robinson the only source of this information. 'Life sentence' incorrect. Robinson was possibly confused about the Petition for Conditional Pardon which Fisher altered.
4. Thirty acres or thereabouts.
5. Patrick may have been original proprietor of the Harrow; but Charles Rennett acquired it during Fisher's lifetime and still owned it when Worrall was condemned. Possibly Patrick's name clung to the establishment, and he may have been a constant frequenter of it.
6. Courts of Requests instituted in 1826.
7. Robinson does not mention Charles Rennett's involvement.
8. Incorrect; Fisher was immediately released.
9. No documentation found concerning initiation by Fisher of an inquiry at Campbell Town as to the management of his property; It was probably true, as Robinson was closely connected with court officials and 'had means of knowing'; *but such enquiry would have taken place while Fisher was in gaol awaiting the Quarter Sessions.*
10. Robinson manages to hint a degree of dislike for Fisher.
11. Correct.
12. Cooper insisted that no written authority was ever produced by Worrall.
13. Robinson is referring to the forged receipt concerning the horses, which he otherwise does not mention. The writer has seen this receipt. It is absurdly unlike anything Fisher could have written.
14. Identity of the coloured man not traced.

15. Edward Weston, Prisoner of the Crown, was only 40 years old.
16. Elsewhere it is indicated that this was customary for Fisher.
17. Charles Beales, according to NSW Census, 1828, farmer and brick-maker at Airds. Free by servitude. Arrived per ship Pitt and was 46 when Fisher died. His sons were Charles, then aged 21, James (10) and Richard (5).
18. No one seems to have noticed young Charles Beales' visit to Fisher while he was dressing in the isolated room. Suggests that the men returning from the Harrow may have supposed Fisher was *still* present in that room merely because a candle was burning there.
19. Robinson astray as to which hearing.
20. Comparison of this passage with the deposition suggests Robinson still had ~~access~~ to original notes - probably Scarr's.
21. Significant clue to Robinson's being probable witness to this important stage of the proceedings. Scarr's 'true copies' of depositions make no mention of an adjournment, but it must have occurred.
22. Correct.
23. Late October.
24. Robinson's placing of the discovery of the body so close after Worrall's lying declaration possibly due to Worrall's having been charged as early as September 16th.
25. According to one source the Rixons and Burrows belonged to the same family.
26. The only survivor is in the State Archives, having been recovered from the 'Mutch' papers. It is very likely the one used at Worrall's trial in Sydney.
27. Farley apparently continued to call The Harrow 'Patrick's' and may have continued to associate with him there after Rennett bought it.
28. Correct.
29. Farley was still alive in the locality when Robinson wrote the notes.

30. Robinson is reluctant to admit the ghost element.
31. The 'hollow' is the genesis of what in time became recognised as a creek with the progress of erosion.
32. The Gurner notes largely ignore this.
33. Do.
34. Robinson ~~may have succeeded~~ in reaching Sydney.
35. Vaughan does not seem to have escaped prosecution on the charge of forging the receipt. According to the NSW Census, 1828 one John Vaughan was serving a sentence of three years at Moreton Bay, where many incorrigibles were sent. Transportees from Great Britain were not sent for such short terms.
36. Doubtful; the reason Worrall and Fisher went to the centre of the farm not established.
37. Biographical details supplied by Mrs. Catherine M. Hayden, widow of a grandson of Henry Hayden, are to the effect that Henry Hayden in his adult years settled as a grazier at Delegate, NSW, where he developed a fine property, Hayden Park. The district's first police post was established there. Hayden believed to have married twice. He had two sons -- Charles (died childless) and James who had thirteen children. Henry Hayden lived to a great age and at his death was interred at Delegate cemetery.
38. Hayden the sole source of this information. Henry Fisher received little official notice, and this mention suggests Hayden's closeness to affairs.
39. No doubt a theoretical explanation canvassed in the locality as reasonable, since no labour being permitted on Sunday, all urgent tasks would have to be completed on Saturday.
40. Hayden's emphasis on the shoulder injury and the harping by Constable Burke that the body was not injured in its being exhumed suggests ^a ~~the~~ question arose by some feature not covered by Surgeon Hill's report.

41. No ship of the name given by Worrall had touched Port Jackson at the relevant time.
42. Bow Bowing Creek, rear boundary of Fisher and Worrall farms.
43. Robinson mentions 'afternoon' as the time of the boys' arrival in the town with the news of the bloodstained fence. Hayden, however would be correct with 'on his Rixon's way to school.' Robinson may have heard the news later than others, for he admits he was not the first to arrive at the scene. If the discovery had been made in the afternoon there would not have been time to have sent to Liverpool, fourteen miles distant, for the aboriginal trackers, and for them to have carried out their feat of detection culminating in the body being found while it was still light enough for anyone to recognise that it was Fisher's body. The coroner had then to be summoned and arrived the following morning when the body had by then been exhumed after having been left in situ during the night, for Surgeon Patrick Hill to perform the autopsy.
44. Hayden the only source of this information. Although he is incorrect about the amount of reward offered, he was the only witness to give the full, correct name of the discoverer of the bloodstains. Official record of the payment of reward to the boy Rixon, ^{has not been traced;} but Hayden surely must be accepted as reliable in this, not only because as a minor ^{Rixon} was allowed only a proportion of the reward, but because in the juvenile world he would be the more impressed by the occurrence. Governor Darling, in fact, ordered that Rixon should receive a grant of land when he was of age. This grant was made in 1831 and was located near Dapto, when John Rixon would be 21 years old.
45. Supports the assumption that until the body was discovered Worrall was at liberty.
46. Hayden the sole authority for report of telekinetic phenomena at Worrall's house, never previously disclosed in any version. He correctly names the constable.
47. Again, Henry Hayden alone supplies this information. 'Jem' of

course, was a nickname. Search for his identity of such a basis would be futile. However, convict scourgers were stationed in the district where the government worked many gangs.

48. Hayden is backtracking, certainly referring to the period between the first offer of the reward and the discovery of the bloodstained fence. See later.
49. This at least points to the precedence of Farley's vision to the finding of the body. The chest wound becomes intriguing as to the overall veridicality.