

CHAPTER SEVEN

Call Not Tomorrow Thine . . .

In the course of his dealing activities Frederick Fisher had on a number of occasions made business with one Nathaniel Boon, a prosperous farmer of Campbell Town, who likewise was a keen businessman. Boon, aged about 35, had come to the colony as a convict for a term of seven years, aboard the ship Admiral Gambier, in 1811 when he was 19 years old.¹ He gained his freedom by servitude and in the years which had since elapsed had become settled on 66 acres, all cleared and cultivated, with a few cattle and horses. Boon was married and had a small family. By emancipist standards he was comfortably off.

Like Fisher, Nathaniel Boon was always ready to turn a profitable deal in any kind of merchandise. One of the transactions between the two dealers led to a dispute. Boon claimed that an agreement on which Frederick represented he was acting, was false. Worse, Boon held that Fisher had forged his, Boon's, name to it.

What the agreement provided is not now known, at least to the time of this writing; but it may be assumed it related to a transfer of commodities of commerce. Argument between the men proved to be fruitless and Fisher, indignantly denying the accusation of forging Boon's signature, took his claim under the agreement to court. There, Frederick took oath that the signature on the agreement was Boon's. The Bench of magistrates studied the signature and gave the opinion that it was not Boon's writing.²

That decision was not to say that Fisher had forged the signature, but the Bench's view provided Boon with an escape from any obligation under the agreement. It was quite bad enough for Frederick to be conscious that forgery had been the cause of his original downfall eleven years previously. The charge by Boon may have been preposterous, but the fact of Fisher's having been convicted of forgery in the past exposed him to suspicion. For all Frederick knew, the nature of his crime had somehow got abroad, and this was Boon's way of blackmailing him. He was puzzled and

and dismayed. At no time during his career in New South Wales had there been less need for Frederick to commit such a folly; no one knew better than he did how great a loss he could sustain for a trivial gain through forgery.³ It would indeed have been a sore temptation to Providence to resort to such a measure within so short a time of his standing in peril of his life over the Brooker assault. He was incredulous.

Next, it was bruited about Campbell Town that Boon intended to prosecute Frederick for forgery, although his sincerity could have been open to question by many who heard of it. It was known that Boon was ferreting around trying to obtain evidence upon which to base a prosecution, but what kind of evidence he imagined he could secure continues to be a mystery.⁴ No prosecution eventuated, but every day brought the possibility that some such blow would fall.

Was Boon trying to drive Frederick away -- panic him to desperation until fear of the weight of his first youthful folly in the records would make empty-handed flight preferable to prosecution? It was frightening that he should at such a moment be trapped by circumstances, harnessed to his property.

Frederick did not flee. With what calm he could assume, he pursued his usual undertakings, lending a hand to the workmen when necessary, performing tasks on the farm, and scheming interminably to wrest from living some reward and justification. There were always traps for men like him: he must accept them as part of existence.

George Worrall was a taciturn witness of Fisher's determination to dare Boon. He may have been indifferent to whatever happened with Frederick, notwithstanding that outwardly they were comrades. The mode of life which his neighbour's affairs had forced upon him may have wearied him. ^(Worrall's) ~~His~~ juvenile pride in being master of his domain had suffered by the influx of men of superior standing, mere bricklayers though they were. John Vaughan was his voice and his hand in all communications except direct speech, and although ~~Worrall~~ ^{Worrall} was nominally master of the house, in reality he was an anonymous

toiler, tending the wants of the men like some distracted hen beset by a brood. He was working without counting the hours, sowing, cultivating, tending the beasts. True, he had Samuel Hopkins and Jane Hopkins and his other assigned servant Edward Weston, all of them to help along in the multifarious concerns of the rough and crowded household.

Sometimes George Worrall was irked by lack of privacy in which to give rein to compensating fantasies, to shed his facade of meekness and face with naked fear the terrors of the times. He had firmly reserved to himself the one room of the three of the house, distinct from the skillings, which had no communication with the other rooms. It had to be bedroom, office, refuge at moments when particularly of late, contemplation of the future was tinged with dread. And even there, he was beset by the spectacle of Fisher's private box -- his treasury, whose contents brought to ^{Worrall's} ~~his~~ heart a suffocating envy. Then, until the weather turned cold, Fisher himself made his bed there.

George Worrall had not asked much of life. Driven by need to commit the theft for which he was transported, his conduct at all times was seemly, as though he had an instinct for dignity. He could mask the fury of his despairs very well, for he had been inured by the cruelty of others. By great toil he had established his little kingdom -- insecure as it was by its being a rented one -- and had ever so briefly known the deep satisfaction of a man ruling his own house. He little cared how hard he might have to work to hold his limited independence, just so long as he stood beholden to no other with the power of the lash behind him. He had raised himself from the mire and want, which was the lot of so many native English folk. He would not ask to go further -- merely hope to remain thus: free to work and to dream.

But Worrall grew increasingly afraid that what seemed to him so small a thing to ask, even remembering the oppressions of English life, was to be conditional. The long arm of tradition was reaching out across the vast oceans to warp the life of the

~~of the~~ victims of feudal tyranny. If they aspired for redemption they could attain it only by the hardest, heartbreaking ways. Worrall did not think in those terms, but in a hazy, shrinking dread of authority, which quite unmanned him. The sentiment flowed as an undercurrent in the reflections of those he sometimes talked with, and his poor understanding through a starved intellect, invested these nuances with unendurable foreboding. He could only think that there was an enemy, being unable to rationalise how the ruler class of Great Britain in the most licentious age of its history, could fail to comprehend the ambiguity of turning out honest citizens. There was no scope for them. It was better to expand the categories of felony so they might be encouraged to sink, to rot and disappear at a great distance under the tireless inventive genius of cruelty.

Coming to the present, which he would rather have shouldered away, Worrall knew that Darling's policies would finally rob him of the paid help whose provisioning and payment of one holey dollar weekly made it possible to keep a grip on the Bradbury acres and the attendant illusions of lordship. In that day, only the burden of his own ceaseless labour would save him. Again and again, surged up the compensating fantasies. How dazzled he had been in his belief that the assault on Brooker by Frederick would have meant the Londoner's utter removal and his own accession to his effects. If he had supposed at first such ideas were peculiarly his own, he had been disabused by the support of the opinions of the townsfolk. He now felt they had mis-led him and now were silent in the face of his awful disappointment. He had no defences, and was becoming unnerved. Fisher had resources and would survive where money and cunning were the arsenal of success. For himself loomed the horror of a return to masters emboldened by Darling's rule to oppress and exploit their convict labour, begrudging even their rations in many cases. Had he not

quaked day by day in the employ of the sadistic Samuel Marsden who found an echo of virtue in the sound of the lash upon his victims' naked flesh? Who could ever know what forbearance and humility he had shown to be spared from such piety -- he who had an immense tolerance of pain?

Supposing now, Worrall brooded, drawing in from the fearsome fringes of his tortured mind, that Nathaniel Boon succeeded in putting Fisher to flight, how would the fugitive's property fare? Would not he, Worrall, secure in the esteem of the community and the local authorities, because of the excellence of his previous caretaking, be the natural choice to control the farm? The Cheshire man was too powerfully governed by desire and fear to stop his ruminating from degenerating into rewarding fantasy. The glow of an imagined overthrow of all threatened misfortunes suffused and presently banished his dejection.

One could only question why Frederick stood firm against the menace of Boon. Why was he so assured, challenging, defiant? Worrall felt himself swayed first one way and then another. At one instant he shuddered to think that Fisher might leave, but only after selling his horses which had come to mean so much to the management of both farms. No -- Frederick must not go; the horses must remain. Good old Betsey and Kitty, stout mares for the ploughing. And there was the promising future of the filly and the colt. It was unthinkable that now they should go. Yet, there had been hints ~~of their sale~~ that they were to be sold!

Now George Worrall began to read into the sale of pigs to Talbot of Cobbetty a presage of dire things; ~~he came~~ and as his reflections became intolerable, by some magic of the mind they were obliterated by a paramount desire: to hold, to keep, to survive, not only in the good esteem of the people around, but in a sense of fulfillment in himself.

The ebb and flow of Worrall's thoughts seemed to lead to no fixed and stable solution. Like an old refrain recurred the recollection of the situation when Fisher had been whisked away to gaol. How easily he had embraced the other man's realm. The

GROUNDPLAN, WORRALL'S FARMHOUSE (Detail from Thomas Leathwick
Robinson's scale drawing six days after discovery of Fisher's body.)

infatuation of those days had even quelled the need for dreaming. Masters do not need dreams. And how dear the dream had ~~been~~ showed in the reflex of almost unbearable disappointment at the reappearance of the Cockney, exuberant, scintillating with fashion, riding the crest of cocksureness which, on report, had plunged the tempestuous William Brooker into new depths of fury.

Well, the pain of loss had dimmed somewhat for George Worrall. He was scrimping along, like most little proprietors, in a mist of uncertainty of the future. Yes, it had dimmed, but not died, for surely the darkness of the regime nourished the most desperate of hopes. Ten months had passed since that false lightning had struck him.

How the time sped. Now the year had worn on to close on its low point. In some ways George Worrall preferred the winter months: he could do more even though there were fewer hours of light. Saturday again, and so much yet to be done before he might yield to the enfolding darkness and go beaten to the grateful warmth of the great log fire in the kitchen. Yes, he harped, so much to be done in the hard, peculiar cold of this strange clime after daylong sunshine. It would never do to leave any work undone for the morrow, because the sabbath was not for work. Fierce was the penalty for those who so far forgot themselves as to break the rule. It just meant more had to be done to tide the household over those inviolable hours. Water had to be brought up; firewood would be needed at hand to replenish the ever-burning hearth against the biting cold of this June 17th. In a few more days the world would turn towards renewal. When July had savagely blown out, the first tinge of Spring would insinuate itself into the days of August. Meanwhile, a fleeting dusk had drifted into night. Pottering about, Worrall was aware of all the comings and goings of the household, all bent upon avoidance of sacrilege to the morrow. Even Fred. had worked especially hard with those little hands of his, bringing in the still warm bricks which Charlie Beales had made and brought up in his dray so that Thomas Laurence and John Pickering the bricklayers

might be able to start work without delay on Monday. Fred. was not one to have workmen standing idle. Nathaniel Cole and Samuel Hopkins, their labourers, were themselves too expensive in these times to have idle. All, ^{Worrall} ~~he~~ knew, had set-to to haul in the the bricks. Pickering, Cole and Laurence, being free by servitude could please themselves about going to church the next day; but the rest went under compulsion to stand muster at St. Peter's so that the estimable Reverend Thomas Reddall could pump some notion of Christianity into them. He would teach them to Fear God and Love the King, or vice versa, as their very presence attested.

Worrall found himself faintly amused in his meandering thoughts by the notion that the inimitable Fred. in his fashionplate dress, fresh from a drive in his gig from visiting brother Henry at Windsor, should pitch into the brick stacking without a single regard for the incongruity of his garb for such a task. But that was Fisher -- a bundle of inconsistencies. In church, the smooth manners and suspicious breadth of style in the clothing now habitual with him, would make his contacts with the local squireocracy, so lightly and casually that it could be thought he was their equal. If one did not emerge from the church any holier (though one could be sure of getting cold feet from the flagstones) at least a poor convict could enjoy the music and the exhilarating colour -- the crimson velvet and green baize, the yellow lace and the cedar furniture, against which the drab of the common convicts mourned in protest.⁶

George Worrall felt relief as the darkness of the expiring day thickened and engulfed the land. He would find trifling tasks to do when supper had been eaten and the men were settling down expectantly for Fisher to dole out their earnings. He would take his time, as ever, as one unable to appreciate the burning desire for recompense which filled men of different make for the brute dullness of their lives.

Even as the workmen crowded the kitchen and smoked their harsh Campbell Town tobacco, chatting, joking, but always waiting on their master's pleasure, George Worrall, fossicking outside,

glimpsed the faint yellow glow of candlelight coming through the window of his own bedroom, where Frederick, after his exertions with the bricks, liked to clean himself, teeth, body, gentleman-like according to his habit.

The rest of the household had completed their day's work, though Jane Hopkins rustled around with kitchen chores which were not now pressing. But himself -- was there ever an end? Was there even a meaning to it all? Moving about in the chilly air, his way lit by a vague glow from the sky where stars gave an uncertain light, Worrall went by habit accomplishing chores which were perhaps meaningless to others, but which aggregated into a necessary whole for the conduct of the establishment. It would be only a short time when any omission from the routine would scream accusation. He had a sense of waiting for he knew not what, lingering pointlessly. Momentarily - though almost as usual -- he would feel a surge of self-pity which transmuted into rage and panic, as one overwhelmed by a vast and uncomprehending wave breaking upon a shore where he had been tempted to swim. The remorseless power engulfed him, and as he recognised the crisis he did not wish the signs of terror to be read in his face.

Voices floated out of the house into the darkness and distance. George Worrall waited abstractedly. Had the voices really gone? Was the sky quite empty, the sprouting wheat crisp, cold and senseless; no watching eye except that of tomorrow's God to see and keep the sight in his own eternity?

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From the night of June 17th. Frederick Fisher was no longer to be seen in Campbell Town. During the next few days, curiosity as to his non-appearance deepened among the workmen who had expected to be paid. They believed Fisher's absenting himself

was simply to defer settlement of his obligation to them. This manoeuvre they accepted as one of his peculiarities -- a hesitation to relinquish his hold upon cash. They were not afraid of going unpaid, for he had a good reputation for honouring debts; it was simply that Frederick liked to get accustomed to the idea of disbursing funds. There were those who uncharitably considered from this that he was mean, miserly, but did not take into account the factors which made him penurious. He denied himself, but did not fail to pay his debts. Accordingly, this repute heartened Pickering, Cole, Hopkins and Laurence to continue their brickwork.

Fisher's absence in these circumstances could not go for long unexplained to the men, and within a few days, Worrall confided to them that Frederick had fled the colony owing to Nathaniel Boon's threat of prosecution for forgery. Inevitably, Fisher's neighbours and friends in the vicinity began to inquire regarding his absence as weeks passed; but meanwhile the workmen respected the information confided to them by Worrall.

Nevertheless, when Worrall offered to sell some horses belonging to the absent man, and a number of cedar planks, doubts arose as to the propriety of it. These doubts were quickly transmitted to Daniel Cooper as friend and trade creditor of Fisher.

James Norton, of Sydney, whose clients included Daniel Cooper and John Farley the prosperous farmer who lived three miles from Campbell Town, along the Appin Road and was well acquainted with Frederick Fisher, had heard an intriguing story concerning Farley.⁷ Cooper's uneasiness about information received from his agent, James Coddington, at Bunbury Curran, relating to Worrall's disposing of some of Fisher's goods, was communicated to Norton. In turn, Norton approached his friend, Saxe Bannister, Attorney General, on September 11th, to whom he wrote that he had been requested to make known a circumstance concerning Frederick Fisher who had disappeared four months earlier. Norton stated that a report circulated in Campbell Town by George Worrall claimed Fisher had left the colony and had appointed Worrall his agent. He added --

. . . That such a report has little probable foundation in truth will be believed from the circumstances of Fisher. He was within a few months of the expiration of his sentence of transportation; had a brother in the Colony (also a prisoner of the Crown) who has no knowledge of the manner or occasion of his disappearing; left a considerable property, unencumbered except to a very small amount, and had no charge hanging over his head.

After relating what he knew of Worrall's dealings with Fisher's property, Norton continued ,

. . . Now under all these circumstances it seems probable either that Worrall knew of the death of Fisher by some accident and endeavoured by concealing the fact to obtain his property, or that he himself was concerned in the disappearance and perhaps murder of Fisher. The former is perhaps the least probable, for to a mind not exceedingly base, the concealment of any fact occasioning the death of a party would be attended with an apprehension, that the after partial discovery of the circumstances might involve him in a suspicion of murder, and indeed so great and almost uncontrollable [is] the natural disposition possessed by everyone of bringing to light any circumstances connected with the mysterious death of a party that few causes perhaps operate so powerfully against this feeling as to induce silence, except that of being implicated oneself. (SA)

James Norton suggested that an official investigation might be made. Five days later, Bannister informed the solicitor that the Colonial Secretary, Alexander M'Leay, with Governor Darling's approval, suggested the Attorney General should draft a newspaper advertisement offering a reward for information concerning the fate and/or whereabouts of Fisher. On the same day, the Attorney General issued from Sydney Police Office a warrant for the arrest of George

Worrall, whom Chief Constable Robert Burke, of Campbell Town, took into custody on September 16th. and escorted to Sydney for questioning.

On Wednesday, September 20th, Worrall appeared before Captain Francis Rossi (Superintendent of Police) and Edward Wollstonecraft,⁸ sitting as magistrates, and was charged with the murder of Frederick Fisher. The proceedings were brief.⁹ Chief Constable Burke testified that he had apprehended Worrall on the previous Saturday and on the following day searched defendant's premises and recovered the following property, which Worrall admitted belonged to Fisher:

- 1 black silk waistcoat
- 2 coats -- one black, one brown
- Some old stockings
- 3 decanters
- 1 salt cellar
- 2 razor strops
- 2 brass candlesticks
- 1 round table
- 3 slabs of cedar
- 24 panes of glass
- $\frac{3}{4}$ cask of 3" nails
- $\frac{1}{4}$ do. do. do.
- 10 cedar planks
- 2 brands -- one 'F' and one 'FF'
- 4 casks
- $3\frac{1}{4}$ kegs of flooring brads
- 1 cart
- 1 gig harness
- 1 crosscut saw
- 1 handsaw
- 1 copper teakettle
- 2 chairs
- 1 bushel measure and 1 half-bushel measure
- 1 pickaxe

1 pistol
2 Deeds¹⁰
Loose papers.

(SA)¹¹

Worrall was remanded to the Campbell Town court where on September 23rd, Rev. Thomas Reddall sat as magistrate at the first of a series of eight inquiries into the fate of Fisher.

James Coddington, overseer of Daniel Cooper's property, Eagle Farm, near Campbell Town, told the Bench he had met Worrall at Thomas Hammond's public house, Campbell Town [on July 8th], a few days after witness last saw Fisher. Worrall had then offered to sell him a horse colt which had belonged to Fisher, who, Worrall said, had left the colony. Worrall asked that Coddington should not tell Cooper or any other persons about Fisher's departure; but would tell Cooper himself during the following week. Worrall had shown witness a receipt purporting to have come from Frederick Fisher, for purchase of some horses, including the colt offered for sale by Worrall. Witness, however, had informed Cooper of what had transpired.

Thomas Hammond, publican, stated that a receipt supposed to have been made out by Fisher to Worrall for the purchase of some horses was not in Fisher's handwriting. He believed it had been written by John Vaughan, Worrall's servant. The writing resembled that on orders sent to witness, written by Vaughan and signed with Worrall's name [on Worrall's behalf]. Hammond swore that on Tuesday, September 12th, Worrall had shown him the receipt, but he recognised it as a forgery, threw it down in disgust and accused Worrall of imposing upon him. At this, Worrall became pale, put the receipt in his pocket and left the hotel without further remark.

John Vaughan, [aged 38] Ticket-of-Leave convict, told the Bench he had been employed by Worrall since about February 21st, 1826, to keep his books. It was his custom to write orders for liquor on Worrall's behalf and to sign Worrall's name to them because Worrall could not write. Frederick Fisher, he recollected, disappeared on

a Saturday night. Worrall was a^t home and came into the kitchen after Fisher went out.

Vaughan was then shown a receipt which was written thus: +

Jun the 9, 1826

Reseved from George Warrall Fiffity pounds for the young
mar Beetsey^(a) and 35 for the old Mar Kittiey^(b) and
35 for the young feley^(c) and 14 for the young hors
foold.^(d)

£ s d
134. 0. 0

F. FISHER

(SA)¹²

Vaughan denied he had written the receipt, and he and Worrall were remanded. (SA)¹³

During the proceedings, Chief Constable Burke obtain^{ed} from Vaughan a specimen of his writing of the name, George Worrall. (SA)¹⁴

Rev. Thomas Reddall again presided when the second inquiry at Campbell Town was held on September 25th. The examination of Thomas Hammond was resumed, and he was asked if he did not suspect anything improper in Fisher's disappearing.

Hammond: No. I thought Worrall a harmless, honest, in-offensive man, and as it was supposed Fisher had left the colony, I felt inclined to encourage Worrall's candour with a view to advise him lest by any incautious act he might expose himself to a prosecution at the suit of Fisher's creditors.

Worrall, added Hammond, had said Fisher was afraid Nathaniel

+ (a) Young mare Betsey; (b) old mare Kitty; (c) young filly;
(d) young horse foal.

Boon would prosecute him for forgery, as Mr. Reddall had made some enquiry for him, and that had frightened Fisher away. His own suspicion was aroused by something mysterious in Worrall's manner when the subject of how he came into possession of Fisher's property came up; 'but his repeated neighbourly favours biased me from interrogating him.'

Hammond then told the Bench that during the previous August, he had accompanied Worrall to Sydney where they were to put up at the Emu Inn. At the instigation of Daniel Cooper, witness told Worrall Fisher's friends believed he had been murdered. Worrall had treated this observation 'with levity', but soon afterwards left the inn and did not return until the next morning, when he said he had been to Parramatta.

Witness said he had remained on intimate terms with Worrall until he was shown the receipt he believed was a forgery.

Edward Weston, aged 40, assigned servant to Worrall, gave evidence that he had lived with Worrall for two years up to March 17th. He believed the first business Fisher had with Worrall was when Fisher went to gaol for assaulting William Brooker, and then continued until Fisher's disappearance. The missing man had given witness to understand that he placed great confidence in Worrall's agency. He had never heard any dispute arise between them, and always thought their transactions were mutually satisfactory. He was not aware of any private transactions between them, nor had he heard any conversation pass between them regarding any purchase whatever by Worrall from Fisher. Nor had he heard any bargaining by Worrall with Fisher for the latter's horses; although between four and six weeks after Fisher disappeared he had heard Worrall say he had bought the horses from Fisher and that he, Weston, might work them on the farm.

About a fortnight still later, witness continued, Worrall had re-branded the horses with his own initials. He also sold one horse to a man named Wood. Some of Fisher's peas had been sold to

a Mr. Hassell and some were fed to the pigs.

Weston also stated that during Fisher's absence, Worrall had sown part of Fisher's land with peas which witness had harrowed in. Some of Fisher's clothing was being worn by the bricklayers living at Worrall's house. He agreed that he thought the workmen at Worrall's had been living more extravagantly as to food and grog than their means allowed. He did not think Fisher had left on a Saturday night, as he recalled that he himself had worked on the following day. Worrall went to Sydney for the first time after Fisher left, 3 days or a week afterwards. (SA)¹⁵

The third inquiry at Campbell Town took place the day after the second one, viz. September 26. Rev. Reddall was accompanied on the Bench by Richard Brooks, JP. They called on the workmen to whom Weston had referred in the previous evidence.

Thomas Laurence, [aged 31] stated he had come from Sydney on May 1st. to do bricklaying for Fisher and had lived in Worrall's house until a few days ago. Worrall had supplied him with rations by arrangement with Fisher. A fortnight after Fisher disappeared Worrall had sold witness a coat for £1 and a waistcoat for eight shillings, and a pair of boots he knew were Fisher's for eight shillings. After Fisher went away witness had continued working with others for Fisher who, he was certain, left Worrall's house on a Saturday, after 9 o'clock and was still wearing the clothes he had been working in 'drawing in the bricks'. He had not seen Fisher cleaning or dressing himself as though in preparation for a journey, during the three-quarters of an hour before he left. When witness entered the house, Fisher was cleaning his teeth as was his custom in a room adjoining that in which were witness, John Pickering, John Vaughan, James Smith, Nathaniel Cole, Samuel Hopkins and George Worrall.

'When Fisher left he did not say goodnight or anything else,' added Laurence; 'but left in a most clandestine manner.' Witness did not know where Fisher was. The following day was Sunday and it

was said jokingly among the men that Fisher had gone to see his sweetheart -- that was all.¹⁶ Worrall did not remark on the matter particularly that day or subsequently; but deponent and his partner [John Pickering] supposed Fisher had gone away so as to defer the settlement of his debts to them.

Laurence told the magistrates he recollected having heard Fisher say a few days before he left that he would sell his horses, but he had not heard him agree to sell them to George Worrall.

The next witness was Pickering who corroborated the testimony given by his fellow bricklayer.

Samuel Hopkins [aged 29] followed, and stated he had been engaged by Fisher the previous June to dig a drain. He had finished the work a few days before Fisher left and was paid by him 'part in money'. During his engagement Worrall had provided him with rations, and on the completion of Fisher's job he had agreed to thresh for Worrall for a few days, for which he was paid in goods. He then went to work for Mr. Hassell and later returned to Worrall's where he bought some goods and was still staying there when Fisher left about 9 p.m. on a Saturday, the 16th. or 17th. of June.

Replying to questions, Hopkins said he did not know how Fisher left, or if the tracks of a gig had been seen turning in at the gate the following morning. Nor did he know of anyone saying they had seen such tracks.

Nathaniel Cole [aged 43], labourer employed by Fisher, told the Bench he was at Worrall's house when Fisher left about 9-30 p.m. on a Saturday during the previous June. He had not seen Fisher leave, as for some time before he left, Fisher was in the adjoining room which had an outward door but no direct communication with the room he and the rest of the men were in.

Cole was remanded.

(SA)¹⁷

Public interest in the disappearance of Frederick Fisher was

more than ever stimulated by the appearance in the Sydney Gazette on September 27, of an advertisement in which the government offered a reward of £20 for information concerning the supposed murder of Frederick Fisher, holding a Ticket-of-Leave, or £5 to anyone giving information of his whereabouts if he was alive.

Messrs. Reddall and Brooks again occupied the Bench at Campbell Town on September 30th. for the fourth inquiry into the affair. Worrall and Vaughan were brought in for further questioning. In addition, William Presnall, brother-in-law of George Worrall, had been brought on warrant from Richmond, on suspicion of complicity in the disappearance of Fisher.

The proceedings occupied only a short time, during which Worrall admitted under questioning by the magistrates that he held no written authority to give or sell Fisher's clothes to the workmen. Fisher did not leave him as agent, he said, but only left the property in his care at the time he was committed to gaol [Brooker affair, June 25, 1825]. A blue coat, which he had told Chief Constable Robert Burke was his own when an inventory of Fisher's property found at Worrall's was made [Sunday, September 17th.], he now admitted belonged to Fisher.

At the conclusion of the hearing, Presnall was discharged, there being nothing in the opinion of the Bench to implicate him in the matter before the court.¹⁸ (SA)¹⁹

For several weeks, Frederick Fisher's brother, Henry, alarmed by the evanishment of so well-known a figure and by the growing speculation that he was probably dead, had himself scoured Campbell Town for some trace of his body if there was one to be found.

On October 2nd, possibly due to the influence of James Norton who with Daniel Cooper was so suspicious of Worrall, thought it advisable to frustrate that individual's purposes as soon as possible. Formally --'as eldest brother and next of kin'-- Henry applied to the Supreme Court, through Norton, 'for administration to be granted of the estate and effects of deceased . . . who carried on business as a dealer in general merchandise, that he suddenly disappeared

in or about the month of May last and is supposed to have left a considerable property without any representative.'

At Liverpool, on October 1st, 2nd and 3rd, Charles Throsby, JP, examined Lewis Solomon and Thomas Talbot concerning their relations with Fisher and particularly regarding a note of hand Talbot had made in favour of Fisher, part of the payment of which had been obtained by George Worrall after Fisher's disappearance. This inquiry was a relatively painstaking affair, seeking to follow the course of events involving the arrangements for the payment. (SA)²⁰

A quartet of magistrates -- Rev. T. Reddall, William Howe, Charles Throsby and Dr. Patrick Hill (Surgeon on Establishment at Liverpool), took the Bench for the fifth inquiry at Campbell Town, on October 6th, and once more the hearing was short. Worrall was questioned and claimed Fisher had given him the clothes he had distributed among the men, for that purpose. Pressed to state when Fisher had left, he replied it was nine weeks previously. Fisher had left the colony aboard the Lady St. Vincent.⁺ (SA)²¹

Nineteen days elapsed before the next official record was to be entered. On October 25th occurred the most dramatic incident in the whole affair, of which only the most meagre and in certain important respects, deficient, account was given. On that date, Rev. Reddall took the Bench to receive from Constable ~~John~~ George Luland, of the District of Airds, report that the same

. . . maketh oath and saith that he in company with John Rourk /Rourke/, constable and two black natives went this morning in search of the Body of the late Frederick Fisher at Campbell Town and that he this Deponent with the party above named, after about two hours careful search did find the Body of Fk. Fisher buried in a Field of Ground belonging to Mr. Wm. Bradbury adjoining the public road through Campbell Town.

+ Elsewhere called Lord St. Vincent and Earl St. Vincent; the latter ~~is~~ apparently correct.

Deponent further states that the body lay about two feet under the surface of the earth with his clothes on.

Deponent further saith that he left the Body in the place he found it under the care of John Rourke, Constable, of Campbell Town. (SA)²²

NOTES

1. NSW Census, November, 1928 -- copy of the original in Public Records Office, London. (ML)
2. The question whether or not Boon himself had signed in a disguised handwriting does not seem to have been considered.
3. The present ~~writer~~ does not accept Boon's charge that forgery was committed in this instance by Fisher. More likely is that, sympathising with William Brooker he hoped to embarrass Frederick in connection with the £50 recognisances: if possible to goad him into some act which would exasperate the authorities.
4. The little known of Boon does not inspire confidence in him. His approach to Reddall was probably a mischievous attempt to uncover the reason for Fisher's transportation, knowing as he did how strongly a prior conviction for a similar crime would alienate a court.
5. The status of Jane Hopkins in Worrall's household is unclear. She could have been sister, wife or mother of Samuel Hopkins, filling the duties of a casual servant. Her age is not given.
6. Rev. Reddall's accounts of expenditure on furnishing St. Peter's Church, etc. to August, 1825. Colonial Secretary's inward letters. (SA)
7. The time element here is of crucial importance and should be related to James Norton (the younger) account, 1892. Part Two, Ch. 2. The matter is taken up more fully.
8. Edward Wollstonecraft (1783 - 1832), nephew of Mary Woolstonecraft, the famous 'bohemian' of England, whose daughter married the poet, Percy Bysshe Shelley. Wollstonecraft was essentially a business man and was in partnership with his brother-in-law, Alexander Berry. In 1822 he was senior director of the infant Bank of New South Wales. He died aged 49 in 1832; interred Sydney Burial Ground, but his remains were transferred to his sister's tomb, St. Thomas' cemetery, North Sydney when the Sydney Burial Ground became the site of the Town Hall.

9. One of the Mutch documents. The "Mutch" documents came into the Mitchell Library from the estate of T.D.Mutch, one of the Trustees of the library. They later were transferred to the State Archives where they properly belonged.

All the Campbell Town hearings were poorly recorded, giving the mere gist of matters and only rarely including a direct statement by a witness. These were copied for the purposes of the Supreme Court trial of George Worrall, and their survival was ensured through their passing into the court archives. The original depositions of all the investigations at Campbell Town appear to have been lost, and the copies, if indeed they are true copies, form the only outline of the testimony by which any 'whole' view of the Fisher affair may be obtained.

The depositions are paraphrased and abbreviated herein, except where extracts answer the purpose better. The Sydney Police Office hearing covered by this note consisted of only a few lines and a list.

10. A later hand queries the whereabouts of the Deeds -- an important detail in view of the ultimate fate of Fisher's estate.
11. 'Mutch' document. It does not follow that Worrall had feloniously seized the goods listed. Fisher would certainly have stored them at Worrall's house for the use of himself and the workmen. The building materials would have been at Worrall's for safe-keeping owing to their considerable value. Fisher at that time had no other repository.
12. 'Mutch' document.
- 13, 14, 15. 'Mutch' documents.
16. Nothing is known of Fisher's supposed association with a woman in the locality.
17. 'Mutch' document.
18. The depositions show nothing of the questioning of Presnall. Aged about 35 at the time, he had been transported for 14

years and arrived per Indefatigable during 1815. He became a farmer at Richmond. -- vide NSW Census, 1828. Died aged ~~and~~ in church, Richmond ✓
is interred at St.

19/21. 'Mutch' documents.

22. 'Mutch' document. This bald statement has to suffice for the moment. There is no allusion to the body's having been identified by well-known townspeople while it still lay in situ. The feat of the aboriginal tracker which first sparked the world currency of the Fisher legend receives no detailed mention. Above all, the Luland report gives no hint of the circumstances through which Luland came to be directed to undertake this particular search. But there is much, much more concealed by cryptic officialese. First the possibilities of the courts have to be exhausted. There we shall meet people of great significance in the Fisher story -- people whom we have not yet met and who are still unknown to the current legend.