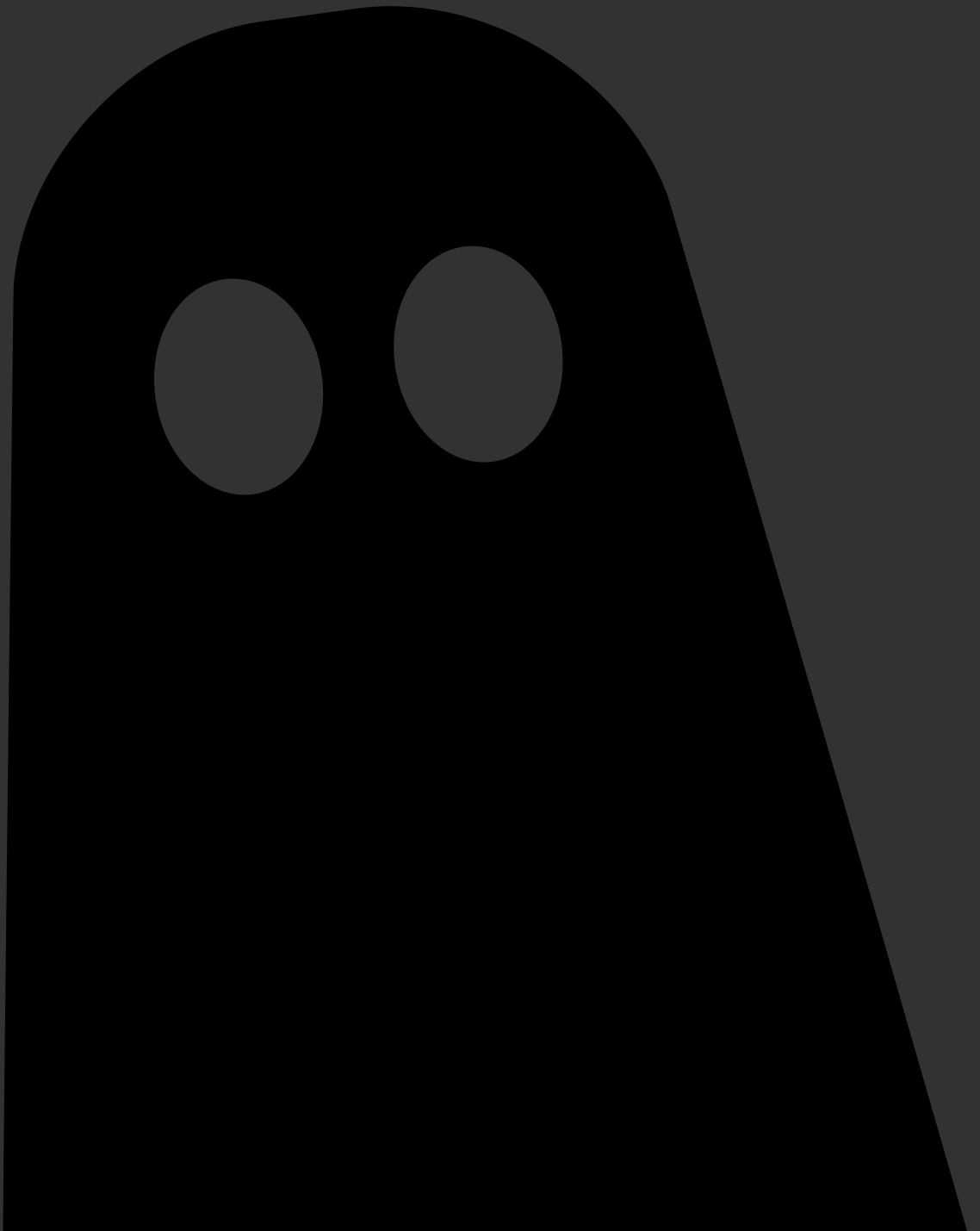
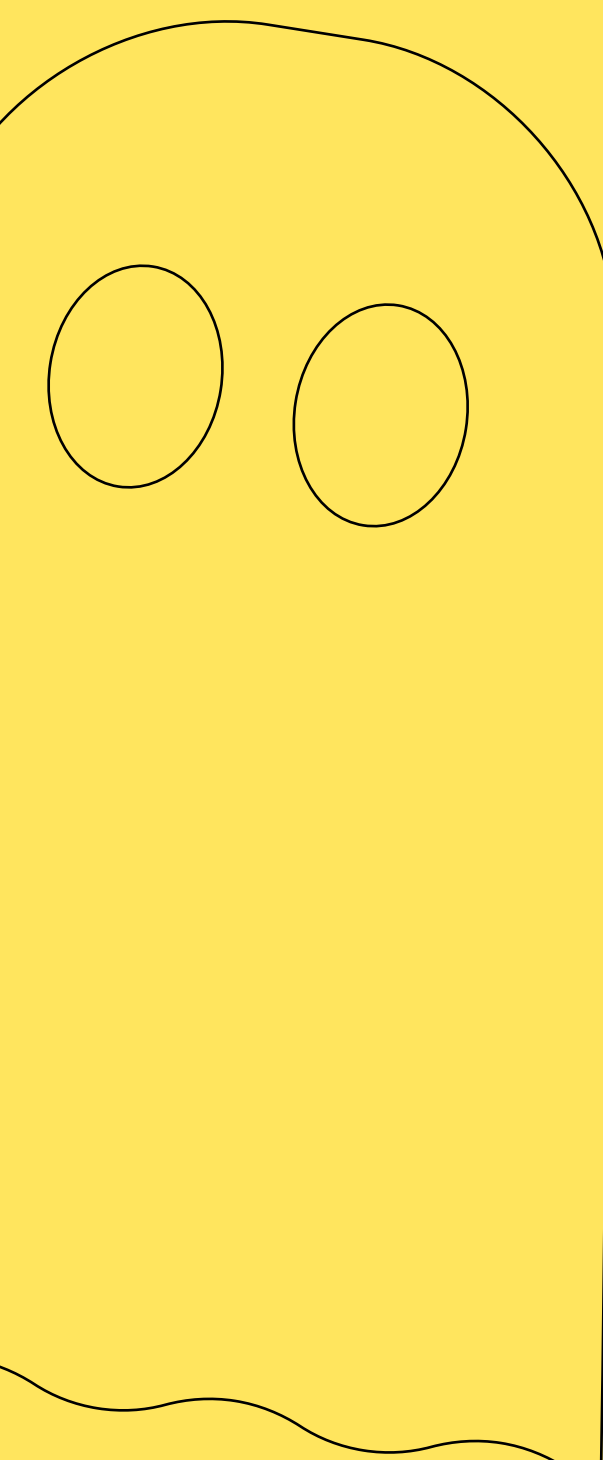


FREDERICK FISHER

# THE LEGEND OF FISHER'S GHOST



# CREATING A LEGEND



*Since John Farley first shared his story of his spooky encounter in 1826, Fisher's Ghost has become a much loved local legend, recognised nationally and inspired writers, artists, poets, songwriters and film producers to share variations of the tale.*

# FRED IN THE FLESH

*Described as being average height, with a fair complexion and brown hair, unmarried it was rumoured he was possibly the father of 2 children.*

## Early days

Born 28 August 1792 in London Frederick George James Fisher was the son of bookbinders and booksellers, James and Ann Fisher, of Cripplegate and Greenwich.

By his early 20's he worked as a shopkeeper and while working he acquired forged bank notes, it's unknown whether accidental or deliberate, however he was arrested and tried at the Surrey Gaol Delivery on 26 July 1815 and sentenced to 14 years transportation to Australia.

# Commit the crime, do the time

Fred boarded the Atlas along with 194 convicts on 16 January 1816 and 8 months later they arrived in Australia 16 September.

Fortunately Fred had the rare skill to read and write, and joined the colonial administrator, John Thomas Campbell after recommendation from the crown solicitor.

Within 2 years he was assigned as superintendent to the Waterloo Flour Company owned and managed by ex-convicts, it was the most influential and dynamic enterprise in colonial NSW.

An entrepreneur, Fred and his business partners, George Duncan and John Walker, launched a public company to manufacture paper – the first men in NSW to attempt such an endeavour.

A perfect team, George had technical knowledge, John provided the raw materials and Fred was 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 established a waterwheel that operated the millstones on land rented from John Hutchinson. A difficult landlord, Fred appealed to Governor Macquarie to stop John from diverting water from his mill.

A month later, 4 Sydney magistrates combined forces with the shareholders in



A MAP OF GEORGE WORRALL'S PROPERTY IN CAMPBELLTOWN.



Fred's company and ordered John to allow Fred rent free use of the premises for 6 months as compensation.

Unfortunately, the paper making venture didn't prosper and Fred returned to work for John Thomas Campbell as managing clerk in the Provost-Marshal's office.

**Provost-Marshal was the chief sheriff of the court, responsible for prisoners before trial, executions, sale of goods for debts and bail applications.**

By 1822, Fred served nearly half his sentence and applied for a ticket of leave and permission to purchase property. Granted his ticket of leave he set off for Campbelltown.

A ticket of leave needed endorsement by the local magistrate and could only be applied for if the convict displayed good behaviour and served out a portion of their sentence.

Ticket of leave men were seen as the elite workforce.

Ticket of leave conditions include:  
 Remain in your specified area.  
 Report regularly to local authorities.  
 Attend divine worship every Sunday.

Those in possession of a ticket had to carry it at all times.

# A Campbelltown Local

With stone and brick buildings worth £800, Fred's land in Campbelltown was situated between the main road and Bow Bowing Creek and was part of Joseph Phelps' 140 acre grant issued in 1816.

December 1824, Fred tendered to supply wheat to the government at Liverpool, the only person from the Campbelltown area to do so.



***At 33 years of age Fred owned 4 farms.  
50 acres in Cabramatta  
30 acres in Appin  
53 acres on the Nepean River in Upper Minto  
32 acres in Campbelltown***

# Keep your friend close and your enemies closer

Fred's neighbour George Worrall was considered an honest and industrious man and a friend. Fred's farm had no house, so he, his employees and convict servants all lived with George.

George arrived in Australia in 1815 on the Marquis of Wellington with a life sentence. A shoemaker by trade like Fred, he was from London. George was granted a ticket of leave in February 1823, and rented a small farm in Campbelltown from William Bradbury.

George's house was about 16.5 metres long, with 3 large rooms and skillion verandahs. It was located on the western side of Queen Street, south from Allman Street, where the Campbelltown Town Hall Theatre currently stands.

In 1825, Fred undertook his first building venture – the Horse and Jockey Inn, built 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, after a few too many drinks William stormed into the Horse and Jockey Inn, demanding that Fred pay. The pair got into a fight and Fred pulled a knife on William. Luckily, William was not badly hurt, and Fred was arrested for assault.

Fred was worried that he would be sent to prison to serve a long sentence. Concerned about his land, houses, farms and animals, he gave George, his most trusted friend the power of attorney over his possessions and to manage his affairs while he was in prison.

*Fred's farm had no house, so he, his employees and convict servants lived with George.*



## Behind bars

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 6 months in prison.

Fred soon returned and continued to construct more buildings. In April 1826, he had a large, 3 storey brick building and had commenced work on another.



# The disappearance

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On the evening of 17 June 1826, Fred Fisher disappeared. George Worrall announced Fred had sailed back to England on the Lord St Vincent, due to a recent forgery charge made against him.

Several locals were suspicious of George's claims. Fred's original sentence which sent him to Australia didn't expire until 1829, only 3 years away. It was unlikely he would return to England and risk imprisonment. He was also known to be 'artful and covetous', and he wouldn't have left without trying to make some profit from his possessions.

*Three weeks later, George sold Fred's horse and personal belongings, claiming Fred had sold them to him before he left.*

George offered Fred's horse to James Coddington, who knew Fred's handwriting, James was convinced the papers that George had shown him were forgeries.

Fred's brother Henry, also a convict, was unaware of Fred's plan to sail back to England. After investigation it revealed there was no record of the ship, Lord St Vincent being docked in Sydney.

# Justice for Fred

On 17 September 1826, George Worrall was arrested on suspicion of Fred's murder. George claimed his innocence and accused 4 men of murdering Fred. All 4 men were then arrested and held in a Liverpool gaol, however no action could be taken as there was no witnesses who could prove a murder had been committed.

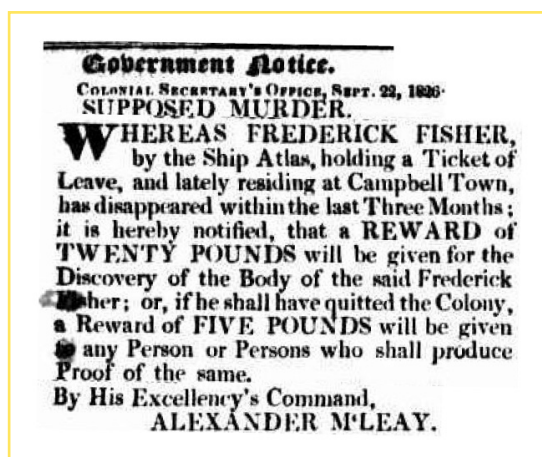
The news of Fred's disappearance started to capture media attention, on 23 September 1826, 3 months after Fred's disappearance, The Sydney Gazette and the New South Wales Advertiser published an advertisement proposing a reward for information leading to the recovery of Fred's body. The announcement 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.*



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



F. Fisher

I beg leave to prefer to sell to Government for a Barrack for the use of the Troops to be stationed at Campbell-town 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, also a stone foundation which would answer for a gaol height 11 ft width 18 ft length 50 ft with fire places and two partition walls each 2 ft thick, and flooring Joists 8 inches by 3, laid ready to commence next story that would answer for a Court house over the Gaol. The foundation is sufficient to carry a building of 3 storeys in height. The price of the two buildings with half an acre of land is £500.- steel? 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. If 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, Orpington or further 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.

Frederick Fisher

Perpetual 25 April 1824

## ***Fisher's Ghost***

# THE MAKINGS OF A LEGEND

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 on 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.

In a state of shock, John ran to a local hotel, The Harrow, claiming he had seen the ghost of Fred Fisher. The exact location of the sighting of Fisher's ghost is believed to be the

***On closer investigation, a lock of hair and a tooth were also found.***

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.

Others believe it appeared where Fisher's Ghost Creek is located today, at the corner of Queen Street and Camden Road.





A SKETCH OF FISHER'S GHOST, DRAWN BY NORMAN LINDSAY.

After relaying the extraordinary encounter with the Police Superintendent and the local magistrate, Reverend Thomas Reddall, investigations into Fred's disappearance intensified.

On 25 October 1826, 2 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.

*They followed the puddles along the creek and discovered Fred's body in a shallow grave, just where the ghost had pointed.*

A local officer, Constable Luland, searched the area but found nothing, he recruited the expertise of an Aboriginal tracker named Namut (Gilbert) from Liverpool. Namut announced when testing the water from puddles in the area, "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, deathlike sickly white'. The face was not recognisable, however a plum coloured jacket, a full bloused shirt and buckles on the braces were easily recognised as Fred's.

He was later 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 3 days later, on 5 February 1827.

## *George confessed he had murdered Fred by mistake, thinking he was horse in the wheat crop.*

On the scaffold, George confessed he had murdered Fred by mistake, thinking he was a horse in the wheat crop, however, this confession was never believed by the locals. It's alleged that George thought Fred's property belonged to him after he had been appointed Fred's agent, this provoked George to murder Fred following his release from prison, 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 ghostly figure stayed with him for life. Recounting the experience details remained consistent and unchanged, which fuelled people's fascination for the story. The legend of Fisher's Ghost attracted global attention and has become synonymous with Campbelltown.

## A source of inspiration

The legend of Fisher's Ghost has inspired many, some notable mentioned include:

- RM Martin, History of the British Colonies referred to Gilbert, the tracker (1836).
- Charles Dickens' Household Words (1855)
- French magazine L'Ami de la Maison (1856)
- Marcus Clarke, For the Term of His Natural Life (1875)
- The Australian Town and Country Journal sent a correspondent to Campbelltown to interview old residents about the ghost (1880).
- WH Rusden, History of Australia (1883),
- WH Suttor, Australasian Stories Retold (1887).
- James Norton told his reminiscences to the Daily Telegraph (1892)
- Hassall's account appeared in Daily Telegraph (1902).
- BR Wise KC, attorney general and Minister of Justice for NSW, defended the ghost story before a sceptical English audience at Oxford (1902).
- Andrew Lang the following year read Justice Forbes' original case notes to write his Truth about Fisher's Ghost (1903).
- Raymond Longford silent film, Fisher's Ghost. Written by Longford and Lottie Lyell it's now considered a lost film. (1924).
- Douglas Stewart, poet and play wright, wrote a historical comedy, Fisher's Ghost (1960).

**Fisher's Ghost  
1924 had a run  
time of 55 minutes  
with a budget of  
£1000. It starred  
Fred Twitcham as  
Frederick Fisher,  
and Robert Purdie  
as George Worrall.**



THE POSTER FOR THE 1924 SILENT FILM - 'FISHER'S GHOST'.

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."*



# THE FESTIVAL OF FISHER'S GHOST

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

Traced back to April 1956, 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 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.

The festival has become an integral part of the community and highly anticipated annually. The program has evolved over the years in response to the interests of the local community.

## Campbelltown Commemorative Festival



18th, 19th, 20th, 21st OCTOBER, 1956

FROM quiet homes and first beginning,  
OUT to the undiscovered ends;  
THERE'S nothing worth the wear of winning,  
BUT laughter and the love of friends.

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SOUVENIR PROGRAMME : 2/-

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# CAMPBELLTOWN

## HAUNTING A CITY

### **IN TRUE AFTER LIFE FASHION, FISHER'S GHOST HAS BEEN CONSIDERED THE CAUSE OF THE CITY'S EVENTS NOT GOING TO PLAN.**

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

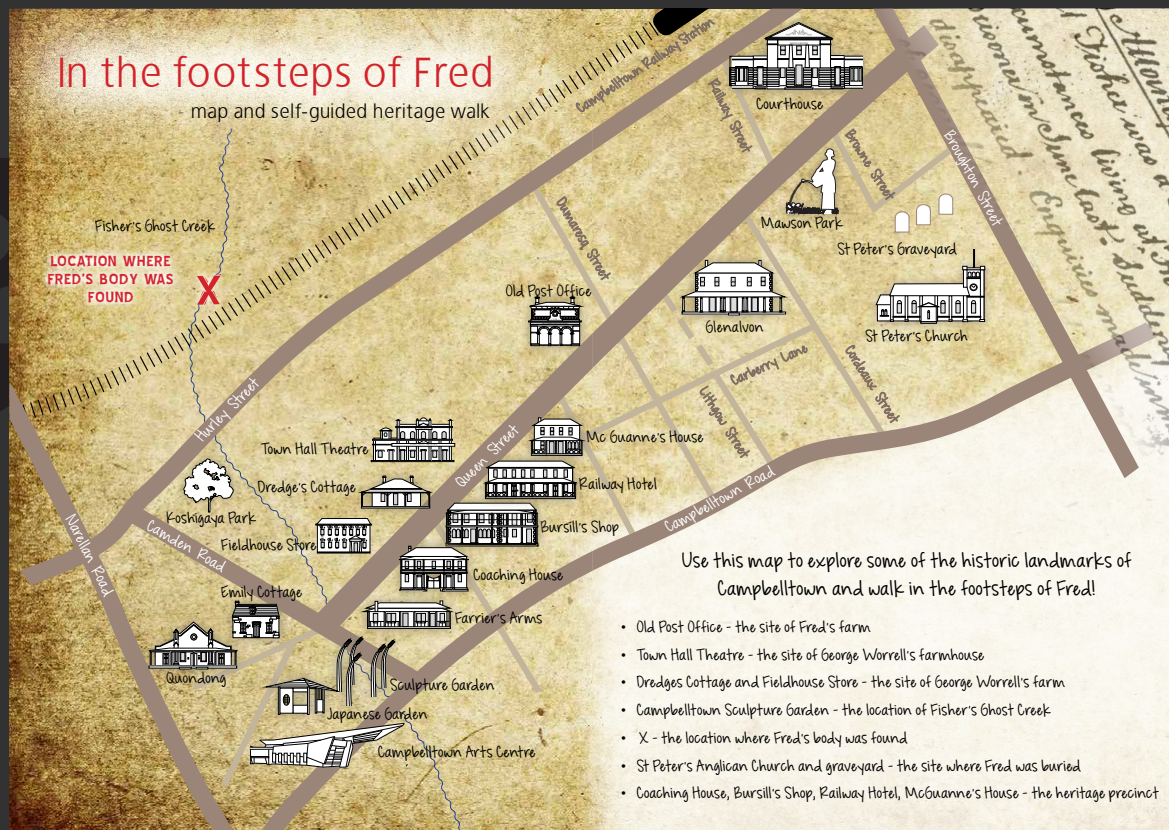
crowds were delighted.

Two years on an old railing from Fisher's Ghost Bridge was planted as the finishing post and once again they decided to name the event after the ghost. The following 4 races were washed out due to more fierce storms.

They determined the post was haunted by Fred and needed to be removed. The race promoter took the post back to her house and within 6 months, received an excess water bill for half a million gallons of water from leaking pipes.

# Are you afraid of ghosts?

**Trace the footsteps of Fred with our self-guided heritage walking trail. You might be lucky enough to catch a glimpse of Fisher's Ghost, or unlucky enough to be haunted from beyond the grave.**





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# ***SOLVE THE FISHER'S LEGENDARY CROSSWORD***

## **ACROSS**

1. Where is Fred buried?
2. Fred's Farm in Campbelltown was located along the main road and Bow Bowling \_\_\_\_\_
3. In 1822 Fred applied for a ticket of \_\_\_\_\_
4. After seeing Fred's Ghost, John Farley ran to which hotel?
5. What colour was Fred's jacket?

## **DOWN**

7. What ship was Fred sent to Australia on?
8. Who was Fred's brother?
9. Who was Fred's neighbour?
10. What was the name of the Aboriginal tracker who discovered Fred's body?

7

**Hint:**

Read Fredrick Fisher's legend to find the answers.

8

1

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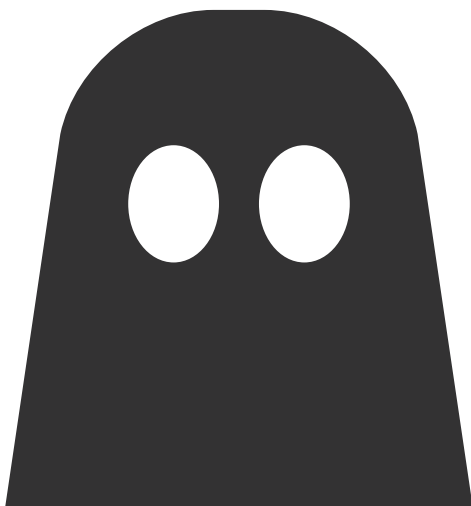
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3

10

4

5



*Find the answers on page 21.*

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## Crossword answers:

**ACROSS**

1. St Peter's
2. Creek
3. Leave
4. The Harrow
5. Plum

**DOWN**

7. Atlas
8. Henry
9. George
10. Namut





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