0 START
1 START OF MUSIC
2 " " FIDDLE
3 CHANGE OF MUSIC

The Morning Scene. A PIECE OF RIBBON

20 sec. lead in: then start

START. THEME MUSIC...ONE MINUTE

It was rosy satin, a pretty piece of colour in a dark grey period of British history when Australia was hardly more than a nasty gleam in the eyes of criminal court judges.

It lay in a roll on a back-hall table of the fashionable house, and it caught the eye of Martha, the cook, as she passed through in the early morning on her way to the kitchen. Somehow suddenly it was in her apron pocket; a touch of kleptomania--nothing to take too seriously. (If the Mistress notices it has gone and starts a hue and cry it can turn up again as suddenly--but why should she miss a little roll of ribbon from all the finery she has?) And indeed apparently the Mistress didn't miss it, for nothing was said for days, and Martha eventually slipped it away into the little secret box where she hoarded the few ornaments of her life. And then one day she wanted something to make a little gift to show her gratitude to Margaret, the good-natured, helpful new housemaid: Margaret, the conscientious, innocent, earnest girl, lately arrived from the country.

The cook presented it to Margaret and Margaret was delighted. She used some of it to trim her Sunday bonnet. But on her way to church the very next day Margaret met her Mistress, who recognised the rose satin ribbon and demanded to know where the girl had found it. Margaret explained. They confronted the cook. The cook denied any knowledge of the ribbon. Margaret was charged with theft, arrested, committed for trial, found guilty. Margaret, friendless in London, was sentenced (pause) to death. For six weeks she lay in the condemned cell expecting, hour by hour, to be led out to the gallows.

Hers was not, however, a universally popular sentence. A few people--reformers, humanitarians, trouble-makers (you know the type)--pleaded and worked on her behalf and finally had the sentence commuted to transportation for life. So Margaret took the hideous voyage to Australia.

35 36 MUSIC 37

'RULE BRITANNIA' OPENING—TO OCEAN SOUND—TO SEAGULLS—30 SECS. TOTAL

In Sydney she was given over to the custody of James Norton Esq., Solicitor. She worked as a housemaid in his residence in Elizabeth Street, just round the corner from St. James' Church. Among Mr. Norton's clients was Mr. John Farley, a quiet and respectable business-man from Campbelltown, forty miles inland. He was a farmer, carrier, a Government contractor for grain---and looking for a wife. Kind Mr. Norton wanted to help Margaret. A meeting of the two was arranged. A marriage was arranged; and Margaret, Mrs. John Farley, took the Cow Pasture Road out into the farmlands of Campbelltown.

She met the neighbours, most of them ex-convicts like herself, though often looking the part more convincingly. A motley community, mainly male, mainly on Ticket-of-Leave. There was George Worrell, an uncommonly ~~looking~~ homely customer; Nathaniel Boon, looking as trustworthy as an eel; Frederick Fisher, the most successful of all the local ex-convicts, rumored to have stacked away some £20,000 from his ~~xxxxx~~ clever dealings since emancipation.

Frederick George James Fisher was in fact too successful. Others wanted to share his luck. On the evening of June the 17th, 1826, he left the convivial bar-room of a Campbelltown Hotel in the company of some roisterous friends and was never seen again--(pause)alive.

John and Margaret Farley used to discuss his disappearance in the following weeks. Worrell, the unsavory one, was spreading rumours. Frederick

Fisher had been lodging temporarily in a cottage on Worrell's land at the time of his disappearance, and Worrell was now attempting to establishing a claim over Fisher's property. He whispered that Fisher had forged Nathaniel Boon's name on an agreement, that he had fled the country to avoid prosecution and was "on the water" to England.

John and Margaret Farley, like most other neighbours, were inclined to believe the story -- until, one evening nearly four months after Fisher's disappearance, John was returning home on the road past Fisher's farm. There was a culvert near the south-eastern corner of the property. The dusty white earth road widened at this spot, and the post-and-rail fence ran parallel with the track some 20 feet back. Now John Farley, normally an imperturbable fellow, froze at what he saw on the fence.

Sitting on the sliprails was the figure of Frederick Fisher, or rather the image of Frederick Fisher, in his old fustian coat with the brass buttons and corduroy waistcoat and trousers and a red silk bandanna handkerchief tied around his neck. He was sitting silent and still, gazing at, and apparently indicating--with an arm part-resting on a fencepost, a spot in the marshy paddock a hundred yards or so inside the fence.

John fled for home. At first he intended to tell no-one of his vision. But he could not conceal his shock from Margaret. He told her of the apparition, and she urged him to report it.

Some men are born to see ghosts; but not John Farley. He was the other sort: sober, conscientious, a respected special constable and solid citizen. And now he was terrified, and his obvious sincerity impressed the magistrate.

Next day troopers turned out with a black tracker. They started at the slip-rails where John had seen the ghost. Here were signs of blood.

They followed in the direction the figure had been pointing, and in a swampy place, three feet under the surface, its clothes almost rotted away, its face beaten out of recognition, they found the body of Frederick Fisher.

SILENCE FOR 5 secs - then bring in

THEME MUSIC: 10 secs.

That is the story of Fisher's Ghost: one of the world's famous ghost stories, and one of the few documented ones in Australia's history, told and retold a hundred times with the apparition appearing in a dozen guises, sometimes pointing to his temporary grave, sometimes walking and leading those he haunted.

The first Australian-born novelist, John George Lang, who was ten years old when Fisher died, retold the story in 'Botany Bay'. It was a cloudy night, as he reconstucted it, and there were three men passing in an old cart. "Look there! What is that?" cried the driver. "It is a man--but how odd." The three dismounted and approached to the spectre's side. They could see the slip-rails thruugh its well-dressed body. They addressed it: "How came you by that gash in your forehead? Are you dead or alive?" But Fisher's ghost, as always, remained silent, pointing. "There has been foul play," said one of the men, astutely. "And by Heaven it shall be brought to light."

In fact it was brought to light quickly. Suspicion turned to Fisher's circle of mates, and soon narrowed to George Worrell.

During the inquest John and Margaret Farley began to piece the story together. Worrell and Nathaniel Boon had conspired to murder Fisher for his money. Worrell, illiterate, was to perform the act. Boon's part was to spread the story that Fisher had defrauded him by forgery and had fled on being discovered. Worrell was to make sure that Fisher's remains were unrecognisable even if found. Boon was to produce a document with his own signature purporting to be a forgery by Fisher.

And everything went according to plan---until the appearance of Fisher's ghost.

Now Worrell was charged with murder, removed to Sydney and tried in the Supreme Court. Nathaniel Boon was the only witness for the defence.. He told his hollow story about dealings with Fisher, his righteous outrage when he discovered Fisher's forgery, and how Fisher had fled for "Home" rather than face his accuser. But Boon was not very bright, nor a born actor. Under cross-examination he confessed he had no evidence of Fisher's leaving the country except what the accused had told him. Finally he was reduced to confusion by the prosecutor. He admitted that the body he had seen at the inquest was Fisher's. The case was over. Worrell was convicted of murder, and sentenced to death.

CROWD NOISE (taint): 5 secs.

Until the moment of Worrell's sentence, Margaret Farley had been convinced of his guilt and had watched the course of justice without qualm. But an unexpected change overcame Worrell's demeanour from that moment on. He is described by Lang as becoming calm and submissive, relieved--it seemed--to have the strain over. From the day he murdered Fisher, Lang suggested, Worrell had been haunted by the ghost on the rail and life had become a burden.

CROWD NOISE : INCREASE THROUGH NEXT PARAGRAPH

Margaret, and some other tender-hearted observers who once had been close to the gallows themselves, turned suddenly to sympathy. The cries of "Hang him!" changed to rumbles of discontent. There were rumours that the witnesses were all perjured, complaints that the jury was a parcel of fools and the Governor a hard-hearted man for refusing a reprieve. But for Worrell already the fight was over. In gaol he made a full confession.

CROWD NOISE STOP. SILENCE FOR 3 secs.

Just before eight o'clock on a hot, bright morning, early-Colonial justice came to George Worrell. After struggling for half a minute and hanging for an hour, his remains were lowered to an open coffin and taken to the last resting place of all criminals: Slaughterhouse Point, to a grave filled-in with quick-lime.

SILENCE: 5 secs. then THEME MUSIC swelling in quickly: 3 secs

As for John and Margaret Farley, things went well for them. John bought town properties and his resources grew with the Colony. He engaged in hotel businesses and on his death left his dear wife the management of a thriving enterprise. Margaret lived on into the richer, quieter second-half of the nineteenth century, a prosperous Colonial lady with a particular penchant for expensive ribbons.

Till the day she died she was convinced that Fisher returned from the grave to avenge his murder. Certainly John Farley that night had not been hoaxing, drunk, or delirious. But whether the silent figure which directed the course of justice was a ghost: a visitor from a vengeful corner of the hereafter... or a trick of the twilight... or a wisp of mist rising from the swamp... or a freak of thought transference from a guilty conscience...or mesmerism... or moon-shadows--remains another unsolved mystery of mind and matter, as the moving scene... 165 moves on.

THEME MUSIC swell up to full volume & run out to full 15 mins.

BUMP at end.

END