



ACTIVITY: Fell overboard
CASE: [GSAF 1855.03.28](#)
DATE: Wednesday March 28, 1855
LOCATION: Port Wakefield, South Australia.

NAME: Master Coleman
DESCRIPTION: He was the young son of Captain Coleman of the ship *Sobella*.

BACKGROUND
MOON PHASE: First Quarter, March 25, 1855
ENVIRONMENT: Port Wakefield, first government town to be established north of Adelaide, by 1855 it was shipping large quantities of copper from the mines.

NARRATIVE: The boy fell overboard and his body was carried away by a shark.

INJURY: Fatal, but death may have been due to drowning.

SOURCE: The Register (Adelaide), Tuesday April 20, 1926, page 8

SHARK TRAGEDY OF 1855.

Mr. Frank Treloar, Kooringa, writes:— In The Register of April 15, Mr. Saunders makes mention of a legend of a child falling overboard at Port Wakefield, and being carried away by a shark, but says he had never known of its being confirmed. The legend is only too true, and the facts are as follow:—The sailing ship *Sobella* was riding at anchor at Port Wakefield on March 28, 1855. Previously the ship had made several voyages to the colonies under Capt. Coleman. On that trip he had with him his wife and three children (one boy and two girls). About midday, while all hands were occupied elsewhere, the little boy fell overboard unnoticed by any one. Shortly afterwards, while a search was being made, in full view of all aboard, a large shark was seen to pass under the ship, and afterwards swim away with the poor little boy. The sight had such an effect on Capt. Coleman, that the sailors had difficulty in restraining him from jumping overboard. Later in the afternoon the captain, his wife, and two little girls were taken ashore, prostrate with grief. Arrangements were then made for their conveyance by bullock dray (the only means available in those days) to my parent's home, Springvale, Watervale, where they arrived on March 30, 1855, after a trying trip in hot, dusty weather. When their grief had subsided, and they had had a few days' rest, they went on to Adelaide by the Clare mail cart (spring), which ran weekly. In the meantime the ship was taken back to Port Adelaide by the first mate. At that time it was known a very large shark was about the gulf. In the end it became very daring, and on one occasion attacked a boat going out fishing. After this a reward was offered for its capture, which was accomplished later on, to the relief of everybody. It was known to old hands as "Port Wakefield Tommy."

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