



ACTIVITY: Swimming

CASE: **GSF 1876.02.06**

DATE: Sunday February 6, 1876

LOCATION: The incident took place at Emerald Hill Beach at Albert Park in Port Phillip Bay, Victoria, Australia.

NAME: Patrick Rooney

DESCRIPTION: He was an 18-year-old male and an "expert swimmer".

BACKGROUND

MOON PHASE: Full Moon, February 10, 1876.

ENVIRONMENT: A channel was present.

DEPTH OF WATER: Five feet

TIME: After 06h00

NARRATIVE: Rooney was bathing with friends but he was separated from them and swimming in deeper water when he was bitten by the shark. The shark followed him into the shallows. He was rescued by man on horseback, but died on the beach.

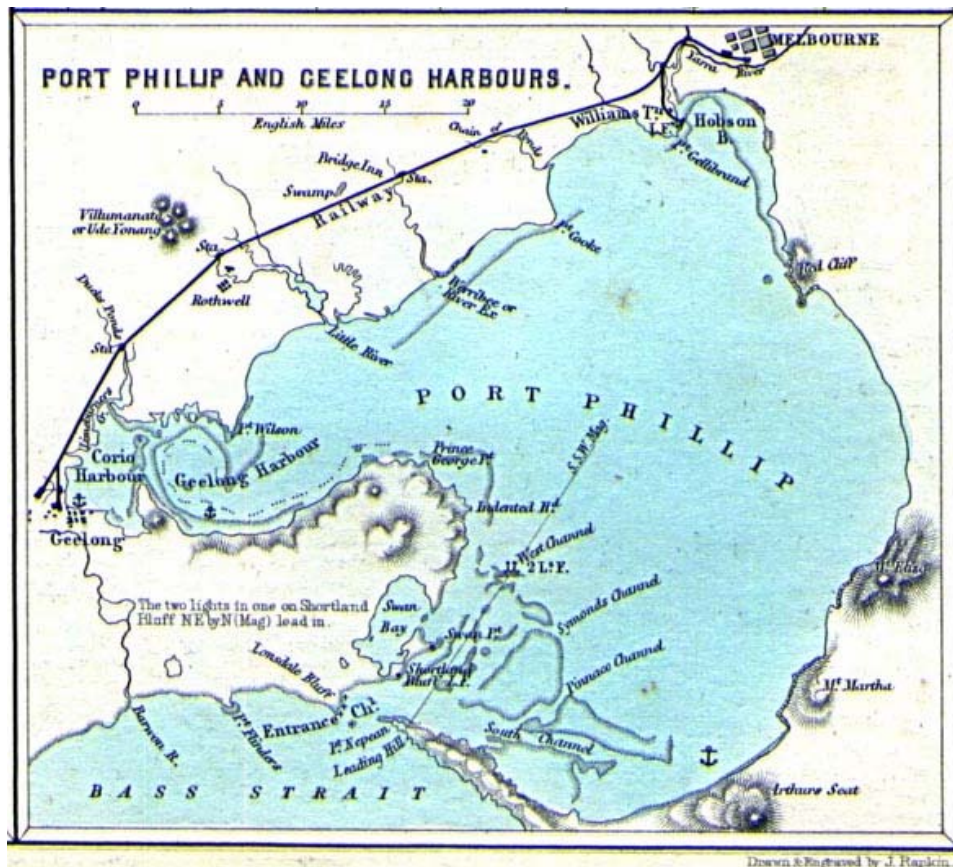
INJURY: Fatal. Tissue was removed from his left posterior thigh from hip to knee and the femoral artery was severed.

SPECIES INVOLVED: Unknown, but the shark was said to be 15 feet in length.

SOURCES: The Brisbane Courier, Tuesday February 8, 1876, page 2; Timaru Herald, February 21, 1876, page 3; Victor M. Coppleson (1933); Victor M. Coppleson (1958), page 110; Alan Sharpe, page 111. Gilbert P. Whitley, citing the Herald (Melbourne) December

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30, 1929 edition, writes: "A tombstone in Victoria records the death of a man who was taken by a shark on February 6, 1876."



SHARKS IN THE BAY.

TO THE EDITOR OF THE ARGUS.

Sir,—As a great number of people at this time of the year avail themselves of sea-bathing on the open beach at St. Kilda, allow me to caution them of the presence of large sharks, one having bitten a man last Sunday morning close to the sewerage pipes, Marine-parade; and another, fully 12ft. long, was seen on Thursday off the pier, and was hovering about till dusk. The boatmen endeavoured to catch him, but failed.—I am,
&c.,
PARADE.
St. Kilda, Feb. 4.

This letter, dated February 4, 1876, appeared in the Argus on Saturday February 5, 1876, page 7.

It indicates there was a previous incident shortly before Rooney was killed by a shark.

KILLED BY A SHARK.

A shocking occurrence, which resulted in the death of a young man, and which should act as a warning to those who for the sake of saving a few pence bathe from the open beach instead of availing themselves of the security afforded by the numerous fenced-in baths, happened early yesterday morning. It may be mentioned as a curious example of a neglected warning being immediately followed by the catastrophe indicated, that a letter published in Saturday's *Argus* drew the attention of bathers to the danger attending bathing in the open bay, from the fact that a shark some 12ft. long had been observed about St. Kilda beach. Yesterday morning a young man named Peter Rooney, aged 18 years, and living in a right-of-way off Lonsdale-street, went with Robert Balleny, a baker, in Bank-street, Emerald-hill, at about 6 o'clock, to bathe in the sea, between Sandridge and St. Kilda, and near the Emerald-hill baths. They swam from the town platform or free bathing-place to the baths, and got upon some of the piles to have a rest, after which they jumped into the water to swim back again. Balleny succeeded in reaching the platform, and just then heard a cry, "For God's sake, save me," and looking back saw a shark about 12ft. long seizing Rooney. One of Balleny's men, who was close by on the beach on horseback, rushed his horse into the water, caught the deceased by the hand and pulled him out. Rooney was then found to be quite dead, and bleeding profusely from a wound on the leg. The shark, after the man was taken from it, swam to the platform and round it, and then back to the place where it first seized Rooney, as if in search of its prey. After circling the spot several times, the shark sheered off into deep water and was not seen again. Rooney's body was

taken to the Melbourne Hospital, where life was pronounced extinct. Apparently the splashing made by the horse caused the shark to let go its hold. It was described as about 12ft. long, though it is doubtful if anything positive could be stated about it. It must, however, have been of huge size from the nature of the wound inflicted. Rooney's thigh was bitten through to the bone, and his leg below the knee was bitten in the same manner. It was the opinion of the doctors who saw the wound, that the shark took the young man's leg at the knee into its maw, as the limb was doubled up in the act of swimming, and thus caused two wounds, one above, and the other below the knee. If this were not the case, the shark must have made two bites. Each wound was a clean cut extending to the bone, which showed marks of the teeth, and the cuts were described as having a rough resemblance to surgical incisions made preparatory to amputation of the leg. The shark evidently after its one or two bites let go, before it had carried away any of the flesh, as all the flesh was there, although from the way in which it shrank from each incision, much of the bone was visible. All the arteries were severed, and death from bleeding would occur in a few minutes, without regard to the terrible shock to the nervous system. The body of the deceased was conveyed from the hospital to the parents' house, where an inquest will be held. This shocking occurrence will no doubt have the effect, for a time, of preventing reckless bathing in unprotected places, and doubtless some efforts will be made to capture the shark. It has often been said that there are no sharks in the bay large enough to take off a man's leg, this statement being based on the fact that many bodies of persons drowned in the bay are washed ashore without having been mutilated by sharks, but the melancholy affair above related is a sufficient answer to this argument.

The Argus (Melbourne, Victoria), Monday February 7, 1876, page 5

KILLED BY A SHARK.—A shocking occurrence, which resulted in the death of a young man, and which should act as a warning to those who, for the sake of saving a few pence, bathe from the open beach instead of availing themselves of the security afforded by the numerous fenced-in baths, is reported by the *Melbourne Argus* to have happened on the Emerald Hill Beach, on the 6th instant. A young man named Peter Rooney, aged 18 years, went with Robert Balleny to bathe in the sea, between Sandridge and St. Kilda, and near the Emerald-hill baths. They swam from the town platform or free bathing-place to the baths, and got upon some of the piles to have a rest, after which they jumped into the water to swim back again. Balleny succeeded in reaching the platform, and just then heard a cry, "For God's sake, save me," and looking back saw a shark about twelve feet long seizing Rooney. One of Balleny's men, who was close by on the beach on horseback, rushed his horse into the water, caught the deceased by the hand and pulled him out. Rooney was then found to be quite dead, and bleeding profusely from a wound on the leg. The shark, after the man was taken from it, swam to the platform and round it, and then back to the place where it first seized Rooney, as if in search of its prey. After circling the spot several times, the shark sheered off into deep water and was not seen again. Rooney's body was taken to the Melbourne hospital, where life was pronounced extinct. Apparently the splashing made by the horse caused the shark to let go its hold. It was described as about twelve feet long, though it is doubtful if anything positive could be stated about it. It must, however, have been of huge size from the nature of the wound inflicted. Rooney's thigh was bitten through to the bone, and his leg below the knee was bitten in the same manner. It was the opinion of the doctors who saw the wound, that the shark took the young man's leg at the knee into its maw, as the limb was doubled up in the act of swimming, and thus caused two wounds, one above and the other below the knee. If this were not the case the shark must have made two bites. Each wound was a clean cut extending to the bone, which showed marks of the teeth, and the cuts were described as having a rough resemblance to surgical incisions made preparatory to amputation of the leg. All the arteries were severed, and death from bleeding would occur in a few minutes, without regard to the terrible shock to the nervous system.

The Sydney Morning Herald, Saturday February 12, 1876, page 9

KILLED BY A SHARK.—The Melbourne *Argus* of Feb, 9 reports:—An inquest was held yesterday by Dr Youl at the Black Eagle Hotel, Lonsdale-street, on the body of Peter Rooney, aged 18 years, a stonemason, the son of Patrick Rooney, carpenter, Leichardt-street, off Lonsdale-street East. Robert Johnson, plumber, Collingwood, stated that on Sunday morning he went to bathe at Emerald hill with the deceased, in the open sea. The deceased swam out a considerable distance, came in, and was swimming out again, but when in about 5ft of water, he called out "For God's sake, save me." Some person, rode out on horseback and brought in the deceased, who was bleeding from severe wounds on the leg, and who died at once. George Pritchard, printer, Emerald hill, stated that on Sunday morning, at about half-past six, he was swimming a horse in the sea at Emerald hill, when he heard the deceased (Rooney) splashing, and saw the fins of a fish near him. Witness called out "Shark," and rode out to the deceased. When witness got near him, the deceased dropped his head and closed his eyes, but immediately seemed to come to a little, and held out his hand, which witness seized. Witness then saw the shark, which made a bound at the deceased and missed him. The shark then went on the other side of the horse, but witness managed to get the deceased out before he was bitten again. The shark in its endeavors to get at the deceased struck the horse. The deceased, was not dead when got out, but died soon afterwards. The sea was stained with his blood. Dr Youl said he hoped this case would serve as a warning to people against bathing in the open sea, seeing that the cautions which had appeared in the newspapers had not had any effect. He also remarked on the fact that a warning letter appeared in the *Argus* the day before this young man was killed. The jury found that the deceased died from loss of blood from being bitten by a shark.

KILLED BY A SHARK.

A young man named Peter Rooney eighteen years of age, a marble mason by trade, and residing with his mother in Little Leichhardt street, off Lonsdale street, while bathing yesterday morning near Emerald Hill, was seized by a huge shark, and torn in so frightful a manner that death soon afterwards ensued. Indeed, but for the courage of a man named Mannix, the young man would have been actually devoured in the presence of his companions, who were quite unable to render him the least assistance. About six o'clock in the morning Rooney and his mate, a lad named Johnson, with several others, proceeded to the jetty on the Emerald Hill beach, and not far from the baths, for the purpose of bathing. The deceased was an expert swimmer, and swam from the jetty to the baths, and remained seated on one of the piles for a short time. The water in the immediate vicinity is shallow, but at some little distance the shore dips suddenly. Young Rooney, not aware of the risk he ran, jumped from the spot where he was resting himself, and struck out for the deep water, while Johnson kept in shore and made for the jetty. The latter had just reached the landing when he heard a terrible shriek and a cry for help. On looking round he saw his unfortunate friend struggling in the water and frantically endeavoring to escape from the jaws of a shark, said to be about 15ft in length. The monster had caught the unfortunate lad by the back

of the thigh of the left leg, and was dragging him further out into the Bay. The poor fellow cried most piteously for help, and Mannix, who is a cabdriver, and who was on horseback, with great pluck at once plunged into the water, and rode in the direction of the boy, who was gradually being borne away. Just as he was sinking, Mannix, with a powerful effort, seized him by the hand and drew him towards the horse, the noise of which in the water caused the shark for a moment to relax its hold. Mannix thereupon drew the lad well out of the water, but before he could place him out of the reach of the monster's jaws the shark rushed forward, and with one snap, carried away the greater part of the calf of the same leg that had been previously bitten. Mannix, with his burden, turned the horse's head to the shore, but was pursued by the shark, which went between him and the shore, as if to cut him off. The noise of the horse and the cries of the people collected on the shore seemed to frighten the creature, and he gradually sheered off into deep water. Rooney never spoke from the moment he was rescued. The flesh was completely torn away from the left thigh, and the bone exposed from the hip to the knee joint, and as the main artery was severed the poor fellow soon bled to death. On the beach being reached he was placed on the sand, his head resting on his mate's knee. He was unconscious, and in a few minutes ceased to breathe, death being caused by shock to the system and loss of blood.—
'Age,' February 7.

Tuapeka Times, February 23, 1876, Page 6, citing the Age, February 7, 1876

KILLED BY A SHARK.

(From the "Melbourne Argus," Feb. 9.)

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North Otago Times, February 18, 1876, page 2

Melbourne.

[AUSTRALIAN ASSOCIATED PRESS.]

February 7.

A fire occurred in Swanston-street, on Sunday last, by which a large number of shops were destroyed. A verandah, crowded with people, gave way, and several persons were so badly injured that they had to be taken to the hospital.

Patrick Rooney, shoemaker, while bathing at Emerald Hill Beach, was attacked and killed by a shark which followed him into shallow water and tore the flesh from him before he could be rescued.

East Melbourne won the Cricket Challenge Cup from the city by twenty-seven runs.

Elizabeth Mayall, ten years old, and daughter of a photographer, fell through a skylight 13 feet high on Monday last, and was killed on the spot.

Both the Government and the Opposition have prepared for a protracted sitting to-morrow, and it is stated that the conflict is likely to continue throughout the week.

"A tombstone in Victoria records the death of a man who was taken by a shark on February 6, 1876" ... *Melbourne Herald*, December 30, 1929