

1888 : Petrie Bight



ACTIVITY: Swimming

CASE: [GSAF 1880.11.25](#)

DATE: Thursday November 25, 1880

LOCATION: The attack took place at Petrie Bight, Brisbane River, Queensland, Australia.

NAME: Alexey Drury

DESCRIPTION: He was a 12-year-old male, a “first-rate swimmer and diver”.

BACKGROUND

MOON PHASE: Third Quarter, November 25, 1880

ENVIRONMENT: Petrie Bight was the commercial hub of Brisbane in the 1880's. It is a reach of the Brisbane River.

NARRATIVE: Alexey and his brother Victor were bathing with three other boys in the river. Alexey was close to the bank and the other boys had exited the water when he was seized by a shark. The boy screamed and struggled and, “as the shark appeared to be dragging him under, he turned and dived at [the shark], and in so doing got free.” Then the shark grabbed Alexey’s other leg. The boy continued hitting the shark. Victor jumped into the river to help his little brother, followed by the other boys, and they succeeded in dragging Alexey onto the river bank.

INJURY: Fatal. The boy’s feet were severely lacerated and were subsequently surgically amputated. He died on the morning of the 27th.

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SPECIES: Not identified. The shark was said to be eight feet in length.

SOURCES: The Bucks County Gazette, Thursday February 10, 1881
Janesville Daily Gazette, Wednesday April 13, 1881, citing the Queensland News Sunday Mail (Queensland), March 27, 1994, page 107
et al

DEATHS

DRURY.—On the 27th November, at The Retreat, Petrie's Bight, Brisbane, Alexey O'Connell, youngest son of Albert Victor and Mary Drury, aged 12 years and 5 months, from mutilations received from a shark whilst bathing.

The Brisbane Courier (Queensland, Australia), Monday November 29, 1880, page 2

Killed by a Shark.

VICTOR AND ALEXEY, sons of Mr. Albert V. Drury, clerk to the Executive Council, and nephews of Mr. Justice Pring, were bathing with three other lads in the river, close to their father's residence. Alexey Drury, a fine, manly little fellow of about twelve, and, although so young, a first-rate swimmer and diver, was close to the bank, his companions having landed, when he was suddenly seized by the foot by a shark, said to be eight feet long. The boy screamed and made a brave struggle, not losing his presence of mind for a moment, and as the shark appeared to be dragging him under, he turned and dived at the brute, and in doing so got free. The shark then made a second and more determined rush, seizing the poor lad by the other leg with a firmer hold, Alexey all the time keeping hitting at the monster. Victor Drury, a year or two older than Alexey, on hearing the screams gallantly jumped into the water to his little brother's assistance, followed by the other lads, and after desperate struggles they succeeded in dragging the brave little fellow on to the bank. In the meantime a second shark had appeared, but happily did not join in the attack. On assistance being obtained Alexey's feet were found to be so fearfully lacerated that both had to be amputated. For some time the symptoms seemed favorable to the child's life being saved, notwithstanding the great loss of blood and shock to the system, but, unhappily, mortification set in, and the lad was released from his terrible sufferings, clinging to his poor parents to the last. The sad occurrence has cast a severe gloom over the whole city, and a large concourse of friends and sympathizers followed the lad to his last resting-place.

—*Queensland News.*

—Far away from Queensland comes an exciting tale of boys battling with a shark. Five lads were bathing in a river on November 25th. Alexey Drury, about twelve years of age, and, although so young, a first-rate swimmer and diver, was close to the bank, his companions having landed, when he was seized by the foot by a shark said to be eight feet long. The boy screamed, and made a brave struggle, not losing his presence of mind for a moment, and as the shark appeared to be dragging him under, he turned and dived at it, and in doing so, got free. The shark then made a second and more determined rush, seizing the lad by the other leg with a firmer hold, Alexey all the time hitting at the monster. Victor Drury, a year or two older than Alexey, hearing the screams, jumped into the water to his brother's assistance, followed by the other lads, and after desperate struggles they succeeded in dragging Alexey on to the bank. In the meantime a second shark had appeared, but happily did not join in the attack. Alexey's feet were found to be so fearfully lacerated that both had to be amputated. For some time the symptoms seemed favorable to the boy's life being saved, notwithstanding the great loss of blood and shock to the system, but he died on the morning of the 27th.

The Bucks County Gazette, Thursday February 10, 1881