



ACTIVITY: Sea disaster

CASE: [GSAF 1893.04.04](#)

DATE: Tuesday April 4, 1893

LOCATION: The incident took place at Chimney Point, George's Bay, Tasmania, Australia.

NAME: Joseph A. Meredith

BACKGROUND

MOON PHASE: Full Moon, April 1, 1893

DISTANCE FROM SHORE: 100 yards

TIME: 16h30

NARRATIVE: Joseph Meredith was swimming ashore from a boat which had capsized when he disappeared reported The Mercury (Hobart, Tasmania) on Wednesday April 5, 1893, page 2

Victor M. Copleson (1958), page 105, noted that the police troopers who investigated his death reported: "Joseph Meredith, who was in the boat, had a heavy overcoat on and attempted to swim ashore, but was drowned on the 4th instant. Police and volunteers searched for the body without success."

Copleson continues: "Meredith's niece, Mrs. Little, claimed that two survivors who were clinging to the bottom of the boat said, when interviewed, that they saw a shark's fin

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following her uncle, and when he was about 100 yards from shore, he threw up his arms and called out. Then the water became red with blood.”

“One of those survivors, however, refuted the claim. He said it was a very rough day and a yacht race was being held. One of the flags marking the course broke adrift from its moorings. He took his boat to the spot and anchored it there as a marker. After the race ended, the boat was struck by a hard squall and capsized. The occupants, including Meredith, were thrown into the water. Meredith attempted to swim ashore fully clothed. “He became exhausted and disappeared. There was no question of a shark attack and the statement that the water was stained with blood is a mere myth,” said the survivor.”

CASE INVESTIGATOR ASSESSMENT: See following excerpt from *White Pointer South* which explains why this incident should never have been reported as a shark attack:

‘THE SHARK AS SCAPEGOAT – Tasmania’s shark population was generally viewed with a degree of suspicion by the late 1800s and as a consequence, the scapegoating of sharks became more commonplace. In some cases sharks were implicated in the tragic outcomes of boating accidents, notwithstanding a complete absence of proof of their involvement.

On April the 4th, 1893, George’s Bay on Tasmania’s east coast was the scene of one such tragedy in which three men were pitched into the sea when a sudden squall capsized their fourteen foot boat. Two of the men, Messrs Meredith and Singline, were drowned. The third man, George Hinsby, survived. Soon after the accident, a rumour began circulating to the effect that Meredith had been attacked and killed by a shark as he attempted to swim ashore for assistance (*T. C. Roughley, Australian Museum, in correspondence to the Sydney Morning Herald newspaper, 1934*).

Despite the fact that the police report into the drownings made no mention of a shark, the rumour persisted and for forty years it was generally accepted as the truth. Not until 1934 was the record set straight by George Hinsby, the sole survivor of the accident. In a newspaper interview published that year, Hinsby recalled that he and Singline had stayed clinging to the upturned boat while Meredith struck out for the shore fully clothed. Exhaustion soon overtook the unfortunate Meredith and he slipped beneath the waves, never to be seen again. George Hinsby unequivocally stated during the interview that ‘ ... there was no suggestion of a shark attacking Meredith’. He went on to say he regarded the shark attack story as a myth and that he was positive in his convictions regarding the matter (*George Hinsby, interviewed in The Mercury newspaper, May 16, 1934*).’

Cross-reference this file with GSAF 1905.03.25-Taylor. The assertions and outcomes are very similar in both cases. Based on the available evidence, neither constitute shark attacks in my view.

CASE INVESTIGATOR: Chris Black, Global Shark Accident File.