

ACTIVITY: Swimming

CASE: GSAF 1895.02.27

DATE: Wednesday February 27, 1895

LOCATION: The accident took place on the foreshore of Leichhardt Park, Leichhardt Bay in Sydney Harbour, New South Wales, Australia.

NAME: James Edward Clifton Donald

DESCRIPTION: He was a 14-year old male, a very small boy according to a letter to the editor.

BACKGROUND

MOON PHASE: New Moon, February 25, 1895

DEPTH OF WATER: Six feet

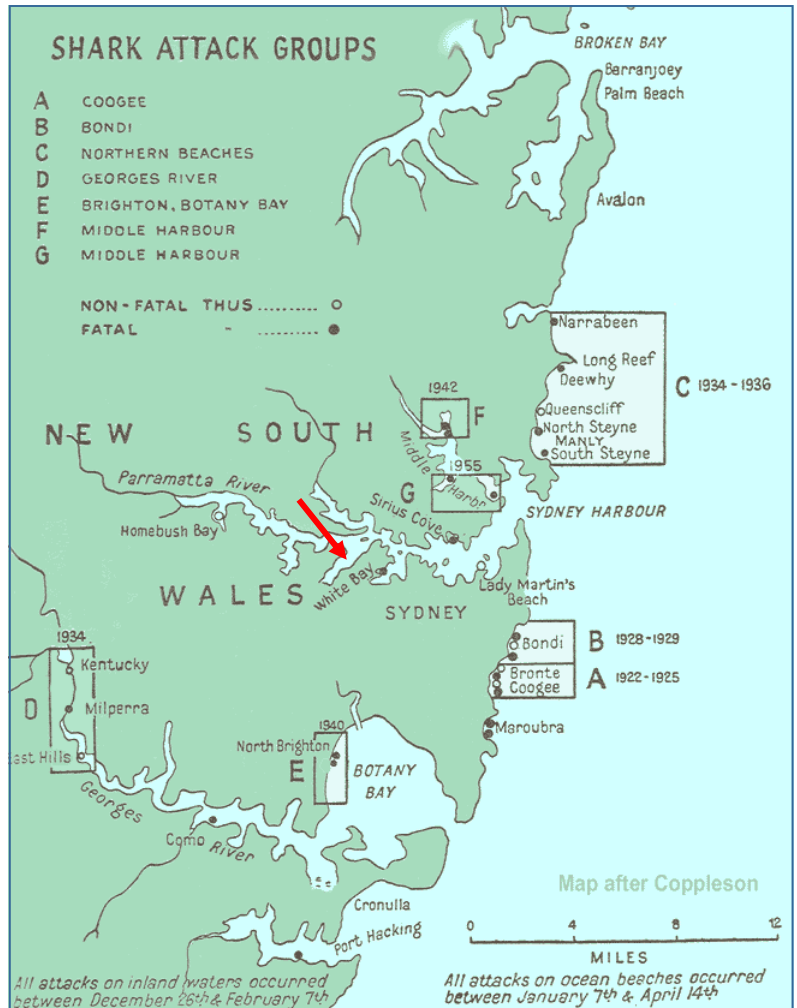
TIME: 15h00

NARRATIVE: "The lad, as was his usual custom, went to bathe in the bay, and . . . was attacked by a shark. Mr. P. Rowe, caretaker of the Leichhardt Rowing Shed, heard the boy's cries for help and went to his assistance. The shark still had hold of the boy's left leg but, after several attempts, was able to free the boy and took him to the rowing sheds where his wounds were temporarily dressed. Mr. William White, a boatbuilder from Leichhardt Bay, convey the boy to Prince Alfred Hospital in Camperdown, NSW, where he was admitted by Dr. Sawkins. Upon admission, the boy was in haemorrhagic shock and died at 18h00.

INJURY: Fatal. Dr. Sawkins found "there were three severe wounds on the left leg, the calf of the left leg had been torn away from the bone, there was a lacerated wound on the thigh . . . and there were marks of the shark's teeth on the heel of the left leg.

SPECIES INVOLVED: The shark was reported to be 14 to 15 feet in length. The location of the accident suggests a bull shark might have been involved.

NOTE: A letter to the editor about this incident, which written some 11 years later, says, "He was in the company of others when his cap blew into deep water, out of the 'white water' range to which Sydney swimmers are careful to keep, and it was in floundering after it that he met with his accident." However, the contemporary press report mentions nothing about a hat. The author of the letter may have confused this case with GSAF 1904.05.01.R which took place in Queensland.



SOURCES: Ian Donald; Sydney Morning Herald, February 28, 1895; letter dated August 20, 1906 to the Editor of The Times (London); Alex MacCormick, page 179.

A very small boy in the company of others was badly bitten by a shark in Sydney Harbour in the winter (Australian) of 1895, but the case was exceptional. The lad's cap had blown out into deeper water, out of the "white water" range to which Sydney swimmers are careful to keep, and it was in floundering after it that he met with his accident, which was said to have resulted in death the same night from hemorrhage.

Alex MacCormick, page 179

NOTE:: .G.P. Whitley (1951), page 192, cites *Fide Mrs. Little, in lit.*, 1941, incorrectly gives the date of this accident as Ca. 1896

Dear Sir

Regarding your attack log, I can add some information to 1 entry.
Row 335 in GSAF5.xls

| | | | | | | | | | | | |
|--------------|----------------|-----------|-----------------|---------------|---|-----|---|-------|--|--|-----------------------|
| 1895.00.00.d | Winter of 1895 | AUSTRALIA | New South Wales | Sydney Harbor | Chasing hat that had blown into the water | boy | M | FATAL | | | A. MacCormick, p. 179 |
|--------------|----------------|-----------|-----------------|---------------|---|-----|---|-------|--|--|-----------------------|

The boy's name was James Edward Clifton Donald
 DOB: 25 Jan 1881 Church Street, Camperdown, NSW, Australia
 Died: 27 Feb 1895 Prince Alfred Hospital, Camperdown, NSW, Australia
 which is in Australia's Summer not winter. He was my grandfather's brother

Regards
 Ian Donald
 158 Investigator Ave
 Cooloola Cove
 QLD 4580

PHONE# (07)5486 2761
 EMAIL ian@ozdesigns.net
 WEB SITE <http://www.ozdesigns.net>

ATTACKED BY A SHARK.

DEATH OF THE VICTIM.

An extraordinary shark incident, resulting in the death of a youth named James Donald, 14 years of age, lately residing at No. 36 Renwick-street, Leichhardt, occurred on the foreshore of the Leichhardt Park, Leichhardt Bay, at about 3 o'clock yesterday afternoon. The lad, as was his usual custom, went to bathe in the bay, and when in only 6ft. of water he was attacked by a shark measuring between 14 and 15 feet. The monster made two or three grabs at the unfortunate youth, and tore away portion of the left thigh and the calf of the left leg. The cries of the victim attracted the attention of Mr. P. Rowe, caretaker of the Leichhardt Rowing Shed, who at once went to the lad's assistance. Notwithstanding his perilous position, the caretaker jumped into the water, and caught hold of the lad, whose left leg was tightly clenched in the teeth of the monster. After several attempts Rowe succeeded in releasing the lad, and took him, in a terribly mutilated state, to the rowing sheds, where his wounds were temporarily dressed. The victim was conveyed by Mr. William White, a boatbuilder, of Leichhardt Bay, to the Prince Alfred Hospital, where he was admitted by Dr. Sawkins. Upon examination, it was found that there were three severe wounds on the left leg, the calf of the left leg had been torn away from the bone, there was a lacerated wound on the thigh where he had also been snapped by the monster, and there were marks of the shark's teeth on the heel of the left leg. Upon admission the lad was in a very weak state from loss of blood, and was suffering severely from shock. The unfortunate lad, who never rallied, died at 6 o'clock.

AGRICULTURAL SHOWS.

*Image provided by Marilyn Handley,
Granddaughter of brother of James Edward Clifton Donald.
Clipping from the Sydney Morning Herald, Thursday February 28, 1895, page 5*

Jas. Donalds, aged 14, was swimming in Sydney Harbour, when he was seized by a shark. He was rescued after losing the whole of the flesh from the thigh and the calf of his leg. He was removed to the hospital, where he died.

The West Australian, Friday March 1, 1895, page 3

A SWIMMER IN DANGER.

DRAGGED AWAY FROM S SHARK.

SYDNEY, WEDNESDAY.

While Jas. Donald, aged 14 years, was swimming in Sydney harbour, near Leichhardt Club's rowing shed to-day, he was seized at the left thigh by a big shark. His shrieks attracted the caretaker, who caught hold of him and dragged him out, but not before he had been severely injured.

Launceston Examiner (Tasmania), Thursday February 28, 1895, page 6

JAMES CLIFTON DONALD (D125) {F:J Donald & M:I Taylor}

James met a very violent death from a shark attack while swimming in Leichhardt Bay after school on the 27th February 1895. At the time he was living with his parents, John and Isabella, at 36 Renwick Street, Leichhardt.

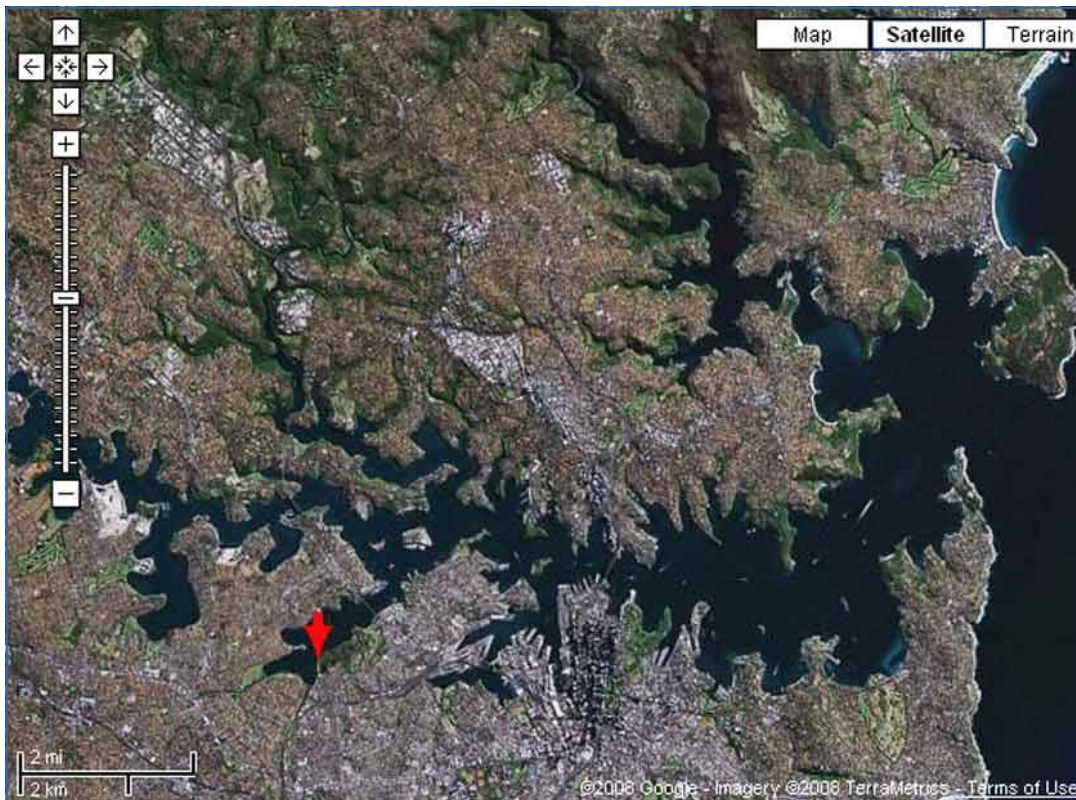
Sydney Morning Herald 28th February 1895

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|--------------|--------|-----------|---------------------------------------|
| <u>James</u> | Born | 1881 | Leichhardt, NSW |
| | Died | 27-2-1895 | Prince Alfred Hosp, Camperdown, NSW |
| | Buried | 1-3-1895 | Pres Sect. 5A 3025, Rookwood Cemetery |

Image provided by Greg Donald, Grandson of brother of James Edward Clifton Donald



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