

**ACTIVITY:** Bathing

**CASE:** GSAF 1895.12.09

**DATE:** Monday December 9, 1895

**LOCATION:** Iron Cove, West Balmain, Sydney, New South Wales, Australia.

**NAME:** Thomas John Terrill

**DESCRIPTION:** He was a 14-year-old male.

**BACKGROUND**

**MOON PHASE:** Third Quarter, December 9, 1895

**DISTANCE FROM SHORE:** 7 to 20 yards.

**NARRATIVE:** See press clippings

**INJURY:** Fatal

**SOURCES:** The Brisbane Courier, Monday December 9, 1895, page 5; Star, December 21, 1895, Page 6; Bay Of Plenty Times, March 9, 1896, page 2.

**KILLED BY A SHARK.**

A shocking fatality occurred at West Balmain this afternoon. A lad named Thomas John Terrill, aged 14 years, and another boy named Ward, were bathing in Iron Cove, at the foot of Byrnes street, when Terrill, who was about twenty yards off from the shore shrieked out as if in intense agony. Then he exclaimed, "I'm bitten by a shark." Ward called to him to swim to the shore, but he replied, "No, I cannot. Oh, I'm bitten." Ward, in dread that he too might be attacked swam to the beach, and two other lads at once rowed out in a boat to Terrill's assistance. He was then floating in the water. When dragged into the boat he was quite dead, his stomach having been practically torn away from his body by a shark. The marks of the teeth of the monster were plainly visible. The whole of Iron Cove is known to be infested with sharks, but bathing has been carried on for years at the spot where the attack was made, although it is only four years since a lad named Evans was completely disembowled there in the presence of his mother and a number of his companions.

A Sydney telegram in a Melbourne paper says:—A sad bathing fatality occurred recently at Rozelle Bay, which separates the marine suburbs of Balmain and Drummoyne. Two boys, aged each about fourteen, were enjoying a noontide dip, when one was seized by a shark and killed. Rozelle Bay has always had an evil reputation as one of the haunts of the wolves of the sea. Only a few weeks ago a boy bathing from the Leichardt rowing shed, at the head of this inlet, was bitten and died from shock. Two other deaths from sharks in the same locality have been chronicled, and the place is so dangerous that no sensible person will swim a dog there. The two boys bathing yesterday were named Charles Ward and Thomas Terrill. They were swimming about, when Terrill screamed out "I'm bitten." At the same time Ward saw a great shark attacking his companion. He called out to Terrill to swim ashore, and he himself made his way to land. Two boys in a boat, hearing the outcry, came to the spot and pulled Terrill out of the water. He then appeared quite dead. His abdomen had been torn open, a great mass having been bitten away. When the poor boy was brought to the shore an examination proved that life was quite extinct.

### Boy Killed by a Shark

AN inquest was held at Balmain into the circumstances surrounding the death of Thomas John Terrill, who fell victim to a shark whilst bathing. The lad was about 14 years of age, and went to the spot in the company of a boy named Charles Ward. The swimmers had not been in the water for any length of time when Terrill screamed, "Oh, I'm bitten by a shark," and waved his arms in wild despair. Ward cried out to him to swim ashore and Terrill replied "I cannot, I am bitten." Ward swam to the shore, and with two other boys pushed off in a boat and rescued the mutilated body of young Terrill. Later in the day a shark, about 15ft long, was seen near the spot. Ward saw the shark seize Terrill when the latter was only 20 feet from the shore.

The lad's father said he had repeatedly forbidden his son to swim in the open water.

Dr. G.E. Rennie, Government Pathologist, said that upon examining the body he found that the whole of the lower portion of the abdomen and the upper portion of both thighs had been torn away. In his opinion death must have been almost immediate, and was caused by shock to the system and hemorrhage from the injuries described.

Charles Ward, a lad of 15, gave evidence that he and the deceased went for a swim in Iron Cove Bay, near the Bridge. After the lapse of half an hour witness came out, leaving Terrill in. Almost immediately after he (witness) had stepped out of the water he heard a scream, and turning round he saw deceased struggling in the water with upraised hands. Witness at once sang out "Swim in," to which came a despairing cry from young Terrill, "I can't." With the assistance of two other boys, Frederick Hoyle and Rowland Little, witness then pushed off in a boat and pulled deceased out of the water. The lad was then quite dead. The shark was about 10 feet long, and Terrill was not more than 7 yards off the shore when he was attacked by the monster.

A verdict of accidental death was returned.

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*Northern Star, Saturday December 14, 1895, page 4*

## **KILLED BY A SHARK.**

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### **THE BALMAIN FATALITY.**

Yesterday morning Mr. J. C. Woore, J.P., City Coroner, held an inquiry into the circumstances of the death of Thomas John Edward Terrill, aged 14 years, who died from the effects of being bitten by a shark the previous day. The Coroner and witnesses having viewed the body at the deceased's residence at 23 Callan-street, West Balmain, the inquiry was conducted at the Bridge Hotel, Weston-street.

Thomas Terrill, a gas stoker at the Australian Gas Company's Works, stated that deceased was his son and was a native of Queensland. He was a good swimmer. Deceased was repeatedly warned by witness not to swim in the open harbour.

Dr. Rennie, Government Pathologist, made an examination of the body, and stated that the lower portion of the abdomen and the upper portion of both thighs had been torn away and greatly lacerated. The injuries were such as would be inflicted by the tooth of a shark. There were also larger lacerations on the back of deceased. Death must have occurred a few minutes after receiving them. The cause of death was shock to the system and hemorrhage from the injuries described.

Charles Ward, aged 15 years, and the principal witness, residing with his parents at 38 Moodie-street, Balmain, stated that he was employed at Messrs. Poole and Holmes's, soap manufacturers. Deceased was a friend of his, and on Sunday morning he accompanied deceased to the foot of Byrnes-street, Iron Cove Bay, for the purpose of bathing. Witness was in the water for about a quarter of an hour and swam in to land, leaving his companion in the water. Witness heard young Terrill give a terrible scream, and in reply to witness for him to swim out deceased said he could not. Witness saw a large shark attacking his companion, who was then only a short distance from the shore, and the depth of water was about 6ft. Witness was terrified at the sight, and endeavoured to launch a boat close at hand, but found it impossible to get it off the skids. He then went and obtained the assistance of Hoyle and Little, who took deceased into the boat. Deceased was then quite dead. Young Terrill only lived a few moments after his being attacked by the shark, and subsequently Constable Brett conveyed the body to his father's residence.

In reply to the Coroner, witness said he saw the shark attack the boy from underneath and bite him.

Constable Brett stated that about 12.30 on Sunday he was on duty at the corner of Darling and Weston streets, when a lad came up to him and said, "I believe young Terrill has been bitten by a shark." He proceeded to the foot of Byrnes-street and saw deceased in a pulling boat quite naked and dead and bleeding very much. Boys had frequently been warned not to bathe in this spot, and at times the Balmain police were sent down owing to the numerous complaints from the residents.

The Coroner found that deceased met his death at the foot of Byrnes-street, Iron Cove Bay, West Balmain, from the effects of injuries accidentally received whilst bathing on Sunday, 8th December, through being attacked by a shark.

**SOURCE:** The Sydney Morning Herald, Tuesday December 10, 1895, page 3 (See original newspaper article on the next page).

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