

**ACTIVITY:** Struggling in the water

**CASE:** GSAF 1896.11.01

**DATE:** Monday November 1, 1896

**LOCATION:** The accident took place in the Indian Ocean at Esperance, Western Australia, Australia.

**NAME:** Louis

**DESCRIPTION:** He was a coloured man, the cook's assistant and one of the crew of the mail packet *Macgregor*.

**BACKGROUND**

**MOON PHASE:** Third Quarter, October 29, 1896

**SEA CONDITIONS:** The sea was choppy.

**NARRATIVE:** See press clippings.

**INJURY:** Fatal

**SOURCES:** The West Australian, Monday November 2, 1896, page 5; Star, November 3, 1896, page 2



*Esperance Bay*

**ACCIDENTS AND FATALITIES.**

**TORN AWAY BY A SHARK.**

[PER PRESS ASSOCIATION.]

**PERTH, Nov. 3**

A boat belonging to the s.s. M'Gregor capsized in Esperance Bay, and while the crew were struggling in the water a shark dragged the cook's assistant from the arms of the second officer, and the unfortunate fellow was not seen again.

**BOATING ACCIDENT AT ESPERANCE.  
A HORRIBLE EXPERIENCE.**

ESPERANCE, November 1. Another tragedy occurred at Esperance today, whereby the Esperance mail packet *Macgregor* has been deprived, temporarily, of a crew and is unable to leave the harbour. On Saturday morning the steamer tried to leave the jetty, but owing to an entanglement in the new portion a kedge anchor was put out and an attempt was thus made to get off. This, however, failed. The steamer was then announced to sail at 6 p.m., but did not get away. This Morning the vessel got under way between 11 and 12 o'clock. Five of the crew, with the second mate, put off in the Adelaide Steamship Co.'s hulk boat to get in the kedge anchor, leaving the steamer's boat alongside the hulk. The men in the boat were Edward Butler (second officer), Able Seamen McLean, Harding, Wilson, and White, and Louis, a coloured man, who was acting on the steamer as cook's assistant. The party succeeded in setting the kedge anchor up and were pulling to the ship when suddenly they were stopped by the weight of the anchor on one side of the boat sending her stern under water. There was a choppy sea at the time, and the boat swamped. The men were left floundering in the sea. Three of them succeeded in getting hold of the gunwale of the boat, while the others were helpless. None could swim except the second mate. The accident was observed from the jetty and several men who were there fishing jumped into a boat at the hulk, their names being Humphreys, Clarke, Eoyals, and G. Brown. They at once put off. The boat had only one rowlock, but rope ones were extemporised. This was the only boat available. On reaching the scene the three men at the boat were left, and the other three who were drifting away were rescued. The plucky conduct of the second mate evoked general admiration. He caught hold of the cook's assistant, and kept him afloat at great risk to himself until owing to the coloured man's sudden relaxation and cry he realised the fact that the unfortunate man had been seized by a shark, numbers of which have been seen here lately. Butler got into the boat, and fainted. The other man was then picked up, after which the rescuing party went to the men who were clinging to the boat. The cries of the men in danger of drowning were most agonising. Wilson was clinging to the end with the anchor, and was nearly all the time under water. As the boat reached him he threw up his hands, and was sinking, but was seized by the legs and dragged into the boat. The others were then picked up, and all speed made for the jetty. Those on board the steamer threw lifebuoys out, but were unable to launch a boat, as the crew were all in the water. A large number of passengers were on board, and the sight of the men struggling in the water created the utmost consternation. On the rescuing party reaching the jetty a huge crowd had assembled, and efforts were made by willing hands to revive the unconscious men, headed by the Mayor, who had dispatched a messenger for the doctor. Mr. Fienberg, of the Grace Darling Hotel, provided the necessary stimulants, and the three men soon revived. Two were taken to the hospital in a low condition, and fears are expressed for their recovery, they having been so long in the water. The second mate was conveyed to the Pier Hotel, where hot water bottles were utilised, and before long respiration was restored. Owing to the Sorts of Mrs. Opey, Miss Martin, and other assistants, Mr. Butler has now recovered, but for several hours he was delirious and had to be constantly watched. The steamer sailed up and down the harbour in the hope of finding the body of the missing man. It was estimated that the men were in the water 17 minutes. Sergeant McAtee and the police have been dragging all the afternoon, but with no success. The mail boat is not leaving until tomorrow owing to the condition of the members of the crew. In an interview the mate gave a vivid description of the exciting incident. He could swim, and was watching the others, when he was seized by the neck by the deceased man. He struggled and got him in the right position, and was waiting the arrival of the boat, when a sudden sensation as of the man being dragged away occurred. Once before the struggles of the drowning man caused both to go down, but he (Butler) snatched at an oar, and thus kept, on the surface. He could, he states, have kept afloat for 40 minutes. Butler regrets he could not save the man, and is positive he was taken by a shark. Another one of the party asserts that a shark swam twice round him. McLean, one of the party, was taken off in the afternoon, and in reaching the steps of the jetty he fell overboard, and with difficulty was recovered. The affair has created great excitement in town.

## BOATING ACCIDENT AT ESPERANCE.

### A HORRIBLE EXPERIENCE.

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could swim except the second mate. The accident was observed from the jetty and several men who were there fishing jumped into a boat at the hulk, their names being Humphreys, Clarke, Royals, and G. Brown. They at once put off. The boat had only one rowlock, but rope ones were extemporised. This was the only boat available. On reaching the scene the three men at the boat were left, and the other three who were drifting away were rescued.

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# WESTERN AUSTRALIA.

[BY TELEGRAPH.]  
(FROM OUR CORRESPONDENT.)

## CAPSIZE OF A BOAT.

### A MAN SEIZED BY A SHARK.

ESPERANCE, Monday.

A lamentable fatality occurred yesterday. A boat containing six men in charge of the second officer, Butler, of the Esperance mail packet steamer Macgregor, was getting in the kedge anchor prior to pulling to the steamer when the weight of the anchor caused the boat to swamp. The men were thrown into the water of the harbour, which is just now infested with sharks. Three men hung on to the boat, but the others drifted away. The second officer was the only man who could swim, and he seized the cook's assistant, a coloured man, and held him up and encouraged him to keep still. In the meantime a boat put off from the jetty with one rowlock, and as there was a nasty choppy sea the progress of the rescue party was slow. Before the boat reached them the coloured man was dragged from the arms of the second officer by a shark. As he disappeared Butler describes the sensation experienced by him as terrible. The boat picked up Butler, and he then became unconscious. The party picked up the others, and caught one man by the heels as he was sinking. On the jetty efforts at resuscitation were made. The men who failed to revive were taken to the hospital. The second officer was taken to the Pier Hotel, where he became delirious. The scene was witnessed from the deck of the Macgregor, on which there was a large number of passengers. This morning the men were on the road to recovery.

*Sydney Morning Herald, Tuesday November 3, 1896, page 5*