



ACTIVITY: Bathing

CASE: [GSAF 1906.01.28](#)

DATE: Sunday January 28, 1906

LOCATION: The attack took place at Como in the George's River, New South Wales, Australia

NAME: William Joseph Dobson

DESCRIPTION: He was a 33-year-old male, an ironmonger from Petersham.

BACKGROUND

MOON PHASE: New Moon, January 25, 1906

ENVIRONMENT: The George's River is tidal at Como; it is 10 to 12 miles up river from the sea.

TIME: 14h10

NARRATIVE: He was alone in the water when he was bitten by a shark. He managed to reach the shallows unaided and was carried to shore by his mates.

INJURY: Fatal. Dr Arthur Palmer provided Dr. Victor Coppleson with the following: "The police report showed that the right forearm was missing and there was a large deep wound on the inside of the right elbow. The abdomen showed teeth-

The cable news briefly announced last Monday week that a man who was bathing in St. George's River, New South Wales, on the previous day, had been torn to pieces by a shark. Late files show that William Joseph Dobson, aged 33 years, an ironmonger, picnicked with several companions, and Dobson afterwards went into the river for a swim, two of his friends remaining on the bank, when he suddenly called for help, and his companions were horrified to find that he had been tackled by a large shark. Through water crimson with blood Dobson fought his way towards the bank. Hoping to save him, his friends rushed into the water, and caught hold of him, but even then the shark would not be baulked of its prey, and kept on attacking its victim until he was hauled out of the water. Dobson was terribly mutilated. His right arm had disappeared, and he was torn from head to foot, while a large piece had been bitten clean out of his side. He did not live more than a few minutes.

Feilding Star, February 7, 1906

marks and the soft parts were torn off from the ribs to the head on the right side. The left leg was broken at the ankle where there was a large wound. The right foot was also badly bitten."

SPECIES: Bull shark involvement suspected, but not confirmed.

SOURCES: The Advertiser (Adelaide), Monday January 29, 1906, page 7; Feilding Star, February 7, 1906, page 2; Northern Territory Times and Gazette Friday March 2, 1906, page 3; Jack Green, page 31; Coppleson Archives, 1223/13. Item 1 Miscellaneous/Letters relating to publications

CASE INVESTIGATOR: Richard D. Weeks, Global Shark Accident File

BITTEN BY A SHARK. A BATHER HORRIBLY MUTILATED.

Sydney. January 28.

A single young man, William Joseph Dobson, ironmonger, living at Petersham, met with a frightful end at Como this afternoon after a desperate encounter with a shark. He was spending the day at George's River with a brother and a couple of companions. They had landed, and William Dobson decided to take a dip. The others were lying on the bank and were suddenly startled by loud cries for help. Running to the water's edge they were horrified at finding young Dobson engaged in a fearful struggle with a large shark. The unfortunate man was endeavoring to regain the bank, but the monster was pressing him closely, and the blood-stained water told his mates that he was being badly mutilated. The shark was plainly visible as it threw itself out of the water several times in violent efforts to get possession of the bather. Dobson fought bravely; and at one attack lost a hand. He just managed to reach shallow water when his companions, who at the first alarm rushed out to his assistance, seized him and dragged him ashore. A shocking spectacle then met their gaze. The unfortunate man had been bitten on several parts of the body, large pieces of flesh being torn out. Both feet were almost severed, while a gaping wound in the stomach laid bare the entrails. He did not linger long after reaching the shore, and the wonder is that with such frightful injuries he was able to battle with the monster as long as he did.

The Advertiser (Adelaide), Monday January 29, 1906

"Dr Arthur Palmer has kindly supplied me with an epitome of cases of shark bite which have come under his notice on the post mortem table in Sydney. Dr Palmer states that their experience in Sydney was that sharks rarely attack a dead human body. On January 28, 1906, W.J.D. aged 33 was bathing in George's River at 2.10pm and was seen to be attacked by a shark as he shouted for help. The police report showed that the right forearm was missing and there was a large deep wound on the inside of the right elbow. The abdomen showed teeth-marks and the soft parts were torn off from the ribs to the head on the right side. The left leg was broken at the ankle where there was a large wound. The right foot was also badly bitten."

SOURCE: Copleson Archives, 1223/13 Item 1 Miscellaneous/Letters relating to publications.

William Joseph Dobson, who was stated in a recent telegram to have been killed by a shark whilst bathing near Sydney, was spending the day up the George River with two companions. He had undressed and gone into the river alone for a dip, when his companions suddenly heard him crying for help. They found Dobson engaged in a fearful struggle with a large shark, which could be plainly seen as it threw itself out of the water several times in its rushes at its victim. The water was all stained with blood, and it could be seen that Dobson had lost one hand. Despite this and other horrible injuries he made a brave fight and actually succeeded in baffling the monster until he reached shallow water, where he was immediately seized by his mates and carried ashore, where the poor fellow died within a few minutes. The monster had bitten and torn away large pieces from several parts of Dobson's body; both feet were almost severed and one hand was gone, and in addition there was a large gaping wound in the stomach which laid bare the entrails. It would be difficult to conceive of death under more horrible circumstances than these. Dobson was an ironmonger living at Petersham, and unmarried.

*Northern Territory Times and Gazette
March 2, 1906*