

ACTIVITY: Swimming

CASE: GSAF 1912.01.26

DATE: Friday January 26, 1912

LOCATION: The accident took place at the mouth of the Lane Cove River near Fig Tree, Sydney, New South Wales, Australia.

NAME: James Edward Morgan

DESCRIPTION: He was a 21-year-old male, a resident of Spring Street, Waverley.

BACKGROUND

MOON PHASE: First Quarter, January 27, 1912

TIME: 15h00

NARRATIVE: Morgan was swimming with two friends when he cried out 'Help! A shark has got me'. The shark was seen dragging the struggling man through the water.

INJURY: Fatal. The police report stated that there was a large irregular wound extending from a few inches above the left knee up on to the abdomen and across to the right groin.

SPECIES INVOLVED: On January 29, 1912, a 2.8-metre whaler shark was captured and put on public exhibition. Fees were collected and the proceeds were donated to Morgan's widowed mother. Some time later, the shark's stomach was opened and was found to contain human remains which were subsequently identified as those of Morgan.

SOURCES: Evening Post, January 27, 1912, page 7; Gilbert P. Whitley (1940), page 260, ref: Argus (Melbourne) January 27, 28, 29 & 30, 1912; The Sydney Mail, January 31, 1912, page 24; Otautau Standard and Wallace County Chronicle, February 13, 1912, page 2; Victor M. Coppleson (1962), page 245; Alan Sharpe, pages 87-88



State Library of Tasmania

Lane Cove from below the bridge

SEIZED BY A SHARK.

YOUTH FEARFULLY MANGLED.

By Telegraph.—Press Association.—Copyright, SYDNEY, 26th January.

A youth named Morgan met a terrible death while bathing at the mouth of the river at Lane Cove to-day.

He was seized by a shark and dragged under water.

Two companions succeeded in beating the monster off, but Morgan was so fearfully mangled that he died almost immediately.

(Received January 29, 8.45 a.m.)

LANE COVE TRAGEDY.

SYDNEY, This Day.

A big shark caught at Lane Cove in the vicinity where the youth Morgan was killed was exhibited, and the proceeds (nearly £30) were handed to Morgan's mother.

MAN-EATING SHARK.

The examination made of the contents of the large shark which was captured near Fig Tree, in the Lane Cove River, has made it certain that this was the shark which on Friday mangled and killed the young man Morgan. There were found in the stomach pieces of human flesh, which a medical man at once pronounced to be portions which had been torn from the lower part of the unfortunate man's body.

The Mercury (Hobart, Tasmania) Saturday February 3, 1912, page 3

"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. ...

"J.E.M.M., a male aged 22 years, at 3pm on January 26, 1912, went for a swim in Lane Cove River, Port Jackson. Five minutes later he cried out "Help me, a shark!" He was brought ashore and died at once. The police report stated that there was a large irregular wound extending from a few inches above the left knee up on to the abdomen and across to the right groin."

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

—Bather Seized by a Shark.—

James Morgan, a young man who was on holiday with his fiancée, was seized and killed by a man-eating shark near Penrose street wharf, Sydney, on the 26th ult. Morgan, after donning a bathing costume, dived off the wharf, and began swimming in the direction of a sandy beach on the other side of the river. His fiancée and a party of two ladies and two gentlemen were startled by hearing an agonising cry of "Shark! A shark has got me by the leg." The two gentlemen partially divested themselves of their clothing, and, with commendable bravery, swam to his rescue, but before reaching him they saw the shark turn on its back several times, and at each turn make a snap at its unfortunate victim. The water was greatly disturbed by the fight that Morgan evidently made, but the contest was unequal, and he soon disappeared, only a crimson tinge remaining as evidence of the terrible tragedy. The rescuers, nevertheless, pluckily dived and succeeded in securing the body, which they conveyed to the shore. Only a glimmer of life was noticed, and on laying the still form on the bank Morgan gasped out "Give us your hand, mate," and expired.

*Otautau Standard and Wallace County Chronicle,
February 13, 1912, page 2*



View of Fig Tree Bridge under construction, Lane Cove River, New South Wales. ca. 1874-1875