

**ACTIVITY:** Swimming

**CASE:** **GSF 1916.12.08.a & b**

**DATE:** Friday December 8, 1916

**LOCATION:** The incident took place at Seven Shillings Beach, Rose Bay, Middle Harbor, Sydney, New South Wales, Australia.

33°47'S, 151°E

**NAMES:** Mr. and Mrs. Walter German. Mr. German was 41-years-old.

**DESCRIPTIONS:** They were recent immigrants from England and lived on Buckhurst Avenue, Point Piper.

Both were keen swimmers and each morning they went for a dip before Mr. German went off to work as a motor mechanic.



#### **BACKGROUND**

**MOON PHASE:** Full Moon, December 9, 1916

**DISTANCE FROM SHORE:** The Initial strike on Mrs. German took place 10 metres from shore, Mr. German was bitten when he was just a metre from shore.

**TIME:** 08h58

**NARRATIVE:** Mrs. German screamed as she was nipped on the leg by a shark. Her husband swam out to her and together they were heading to shore. They had almost reached the shore when the shark attacked Mr. German.

**INJURY:** Mrs. German's leg was lacerated. Mr. German's injuries were fatal. Dr. Sheldon reported that there was a large opening into the front of the chest about one foot in length and eight inches in width cleanly cutting out almost the whole of the sternum. The right forearm was taken off just below the elbow. There were other injuries to the legs. By the time his wife and Mrs. Evans pulled him from the water he was dead.

**SPECIES INVOLVED:** Not identified

**SOURCES:** Western Argus (Kalgoorlie, Western Australia), Tuesday December 12, 1916, page 22; Otautau Standard and Wallace County Chronicle, January 30, 1917, page 2; Gilbert P. Whitley, ref. Dr. Cleland, 1924; Victor M. Copleston (1962), page 79; Alan. Sharpe, page 71

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

## BATHER KILLED BY A SHARK

The Sydney City Coroner held an inquiry last week into the death of Walter Cromwell German, who died from injuries received after an attack by a shark in Middle Harbor. Elsie Maud German, widow of the deceased, said that her husband was teaching her to swim near Torquay Point, Willoughby. At the time the shark attacked him she was out of the water. He called out "Help, help," and, rushing to him, she put her arms about him and tried to pull him away from the shark. She cried out for help, and Mrs Evans came to her assistance. In the meantime witness beat the shark on the head with her fists, but it would not let go. Her husband had no fear of sharks, and had often told her that there was nothing to be frightened of if they splashed. So terrible were her husband's injuries that when she and Mrs Evans carried him to the beach she could see his heart beating. Dr Stratford Sheldon said that German's injuries consisted of a wound in the chest about a foot long and about eight inches wide. His right arm was gone just below the elbow, and there were injuries on his legs and thighs. The Coroner found that German died from injuries received through being bitten by a shark.

*Otautau Standard and Wallace County Chronicle,  
January 30, 1917, page 2*

"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. . .

"W.C.G., aged 41 years, about 9am on December 8, 1916, was bathing (an every morning custom) with his wife in Middle Harbour, when he was attacked by a shark. His wife and another woman pulled him out of the water, but he was then dead. Dr. Sheldon reported that there was a large opening into the front of the chest about 1 ft. long and 8 inches wide cleanly cutting out almost the whole of the sternum. The right forearm was taken off just below the elbow. There were other injuries to the legs."

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

## **BATHING FATALITY**

Sydney, Dec. 8.

Walter Cromwell German, a motor engineer, 41 years of age, was attacked by a shark when bathing in Middle Harbour near Torquay Point, to-day.

Mrs. German had accompanied her husband into the water, when she suddenly heard a scream and saw her husband dragged under the water by a large shark. Pluckily she swam to the rescue, and the shark made off.

Mrs. German dragged her husband to the shore, but he was dead, the right forearm having been bitten, the chest torn open, exposing the heart and lungs, and the right leg bitten through to the bone. Owing to shock Mrs. German became delirious.

*Western Argus (Kalgoorlie, Western Australia)  
Tuesday December 12, 1916, page 22*