

ACTIVITY: Swimming

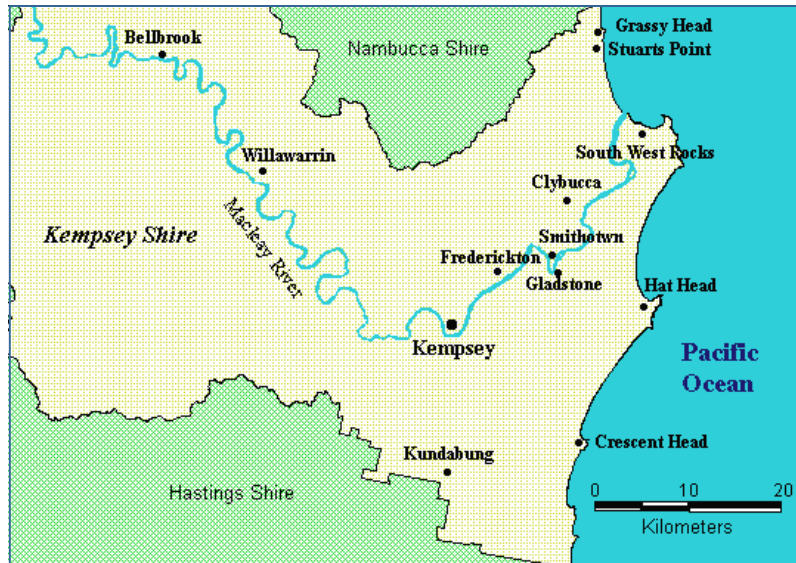
CASE: GSAF 1919.12.07

DATE: Sunday December 7, 1919

LOCATION: The incident took place at Pelican Island in the Macleay River, 14 miles below Kempsey, New South Wales, Australia.
30°57'S, 153°1'E

NAME: James Ridley

DESCRIPTION: He was a 47-year-old male from Lidcombe. He had been in poor health for some time and was visiting a relative while recuperating.



BACKGROUND

MOON PHASE: Full Moon, December 7, 1919

TIME: 05h30

NARRATIVE: Ridley was swimming alone when he was bitten by the shark which grabbed him by the calf of the left leg and twice by the foot. He fought the shark for some time and then managed to reach shore. He climbed up a steep embankment, where he remained for a half hour, calling for help. When discovered, he was in critical condition from haemorrhage and shock and he was immediately taken to the hospital.

INJURY: Fatal. "The flesh was torn from the bone and the leg dreadfully lacerated."

TREATMENT: His leg was surgically amputated at Kempsey District Hospital on Monday evening but he died Tuesday afternoon.

SPECIES INVOLVED: Unknown

SOURCES: The Sydney Morning Herald, Tuesday December 9, 1919, page 7; The Cumberland Argus and Fruitgrowers Advocate (Parramatta, NSW), Saturday December 13, 1919, page 6; Victor M. Coppleson, Shark Attack in Australian Waters, Medical Journal of Australia, April 15, 1933 (N20); Victor M. Coppleson (1958) Shark Attack, pages 85 & 229

Attacked by Shark.

Death of the Victim.

We regret to state that the attack by a shark on Mr. James R. H. Ridley, a well-known and highly esteemed resident of Lidcombe, reference to which was made in our mid-week issue, proved fatal.

It appears that he had been in bad health for some weeks and was ordered away by his medical adviser for complete rest. He went on a visit to a relative at Pelican Island, Macleay River, about 14 miles from Kempsey, and between 5 and 6 o'clock on Sunday morning he went for a dip in the briny not far from the house at which he was staying.

He had only taken two steps into the water when a shark grabbed him by the left leg and tore the calf away. It then attempted to seize him by the foot, but he succeeded in freeing himself and getting out of the water. With difficulty he climbed up the bank, but could go no further. He lay there and called, as well as he could, for help. Eventually, his cries were heard by his relatives and on seeing what had happened they bound up the wounds, procured a motor car, and conveyed him with all haste to the District Hospital at Kempsey. The doctors and nurses tried hard to save the limb, but it was found on Monday night that the only hope of saving his life was to take the leg off, and the operation was performed. He gradually sank, however, and died on Tuesday afternoon. He was conscious from the time he was attacked by the shark until within a few minutes of his death.

Deceased's daughter (Mrs. R. J. Cuneo) and son, Harold, who had that morning arrived from Lidcombe, were with him in his last moments. His other son, Arthur, and brother William, arrived at Kempsey on Wednesday morning.

The body was coffined and conveyed by rail to Strathfield, where it was received by Messrs. W. Metcalfe and Co., and taken to deceased's late residence, "Strathmore," John-street, Lidcombe.

The funeral, which was one of the largest ever held in the district, moved to the Church of England cemetery, Rookwood, on Thursday afternoon. There was a large muster of members of Carrington Lodge, G.U.O.O.F., Lidcombe, of which deceased had been secretary for 24 years. They and members of kindred societies walked behind the hearse. The pallbearers were Deputy Grand Master Bro. E. L. Kingsley, Grand Secretary Bro. G. H. Sands, Grand Trustees Bros. J. Jepson and John Moon, and Grand Directors Bros. J. A. White and W. H. Jones. The last rites of the church were performed at the graveside by the Rev. R. O. Todd, and the funeral service of the Order of Odd-fellows was read by D.G.M. Bro. E. L. Kingsley. Short addresses were also delivered on the merits of their late brother by Grand Secretary Sands and Bro. J. G. Moon, P.G.M., chairman of the Board of Trustees.

Deceased, who was 47 years of age, had been a resident of the district for over 30 years, and when quite a young man his services in all movements of a public character were constantly in requisition. His work for years in benevolent matters was highly appreciated. He saw his lodge (Carrington) grow from 20 or 30 members to upwards of 300. He was a book-binder by trade and occupied the position of foreman in the Mountain-street branch, Sydney, of the Government Printing Office, many employees of which were present at the graveside. He was Past District Master of the Sydney District of the G.U.O.O.F. and was Past Grand Master of the Society at the time of his death; also one of the Grand Trustees of the Order. He leaves two sons and one daughter, all married, and a daughter three years old. His wife predeceased him by about 2½ years, and his remains were laid to rest in the same grave.

The Cumberland Argus and Fruitgrowers Advocate, December 13, 1919

FIGHT WITH A SHARK.

KEMPSEY, Monday.

James Ridley, an employee of the Government Printing Office, residing at Lidcombe, who is spending his holidays with S. Judd, on Pelican Island, Macleay River, 14 miles below Kempsey, whilst having an early morning swim yesterday at 5.30 was attacked by a shark. He was grabbed by the calf of the leg, then twice by the foot. He fought with the monster for some time, and managed to reach the shore with the flesh torn from the bone. The limb was fearfully lacerated, the bone preventing the limb being taken off below the knee. On reaching the shore he had to climb up a steep embankment, where he remained for half an hour calling for help, the house being some distance away. When discovered he was in a critical state owing to hemorrhage and shock. He was at once conveyed to the Kempsey District Hospital, where he lies in a critical condition. He is a widower. His daughter and son arrived at the hospital this morning.

The Sydney Morning Herald, Tuesday December 9, 1919, page 7