

ACTIVITY: Free diving
CASE: GSAF 1920.01.24.R.a
DATE: Reported January 24, 1920
LOCATION: Arlington Reef, Torres Strait, Australia.

NAME: Unknown
DESCRIPTION: He was a Japanese male.

NARRATIVE: "One of his mates was diving near by (they were working without the dress, 'swimdiving,' they term it), and when he came to the surface the shark was just making off."

INJURY: Fatal. "The bite took in one hip and buttock, and teeth-marks appeared in a crescent shape about the umbilical region."

SPECIES: Not identified. "The width of its tail was stated in evidence to be four feet six inches."

SOURCE: The Argus (Melbourne, Victoria), Saturday January 24, 1920, page 4

GSAF 1920.01.24.R.b

GSAF 1913.01.00

SHARKS.

The fleet has returned for 10 days, and mattresses, blankets, rugs, and clothing hang from the spars and rigging. The Japanese diver lives at one end of the boat, and the crew at the other. The complement of a lugger is divided into three classes—the Japanese diver or divers, the tender, who is responsible for the working of the air-pumps and the ship, and the crew of four or five. The diver is practically the captain, but the tender is responsible for the working of the vessel. When out upon the pearling grounds, the diver is below walking along the bottom of the sea. Little fish come and take a peep at him and scurry away, and occasionally a shark, attracted by the shining glass of the helmet, also pays him a visit. But the diver treats them with contempt. If the shark happens to be a big one, he distends the rubber wrist-piece of his dress, and shoots out a stream of air-bubbles, and the shark hurriedly departs. But sometimes the shark gets his own back. A Japanese was taken off the Arlington Reef, and so severely bitten that he died. The bite took in one hip and buttock, and teeth-marks appeared in a crescent shape about the umbilical region. A tremendous bite! One of his mates was diving near by (they were working without the dress, "swimdiving," they term it), and when he came to the surface the shark was just making off.

The width of its tail was stated in evidence to be four feet six inches. Another chap was bitten, his foot being badly torn and lacerated. In reply to the remark that it must have been a fairly big shark, he said, "Oh, no, boss, very small one, only about fathom and a half" (9ft.). A more interesting case is that of "Treacle," a Torres Strait island "boy." The story reads like an extract from Baron Munchausen. "Treacle" dived head first into the mouth of a large shark, and both live to tell the tale. This "boy" had 32 stitches put into his head and neck at the Thursday Island Hospital, and the marks of the teeth are visible in a diagonal line half-way across one side of his chest and back. It is not known whether the shark also required medical attention, but "Treacle" had only got away by having sufficient presence of mind to gouge the eyes of the monster with his fingers.