

1930 : Brighton, Adelaide, South Australia



ACTIVITY: Swimming

CASE: [GSAF 1926.03.18](#)

DATE: Thursday March 18, 1926

LOCATION: The attack took place near West Beach, Brighton, Adelaide, South Australia, Australia.

34°55'S, 138°25'E

NAME: Primrose Whyte

DESCRIPTION: She was a well-known swimming instructress and lifesaver.

BACKGROUND

MOON PHASE: New Moon, March 14, 1926. First Quarter, March 21, 1926

SEA CONDITIONS: The water was calm.

ENVIRONMENT: The incident took place about 25 metres from a jetty.

TIME: 15h45

NARRATIVE: Prior to giving swimming lessons to a number of youths who were assembled on the pier, she went for a swim alone. Soon afterwards, she screamed and disappeared beneath the surface. She was rescued by two men in a boat.

INJURY: Fatal. According to Dr J. W. Yeatman "The whole of the front and outer two-thirds of the right thigh and the whole of the right buttock were torn away leaving the bone exposed front and back. The tissues all round the wound were lacerated and uneven. The ends of the arteries were not visible so they must have retracted or been torn off higher up," according to Copleson.

FIRST AID: She was wrapped in a blanket and rushed to Bindarr Private Hospital on Jetty Road, but was dead on arrival. According to Coppleson, she died in the boat within four minutes of being taken from the water.

SPECIES INVOLVED: One witness said the shark was a “shovel-nose” type or “ground” species of shark, 12 feet in length. Others described it as a seven-gill shark. The shark remained in the area until sunset. Efforts to shoot the shark with a rifle or catch it were unsuccessful.

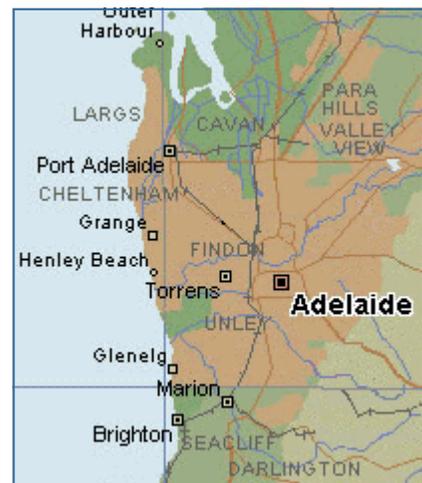
SOURCES: Northern Territory Times and Gazette, Friday March 19, 1926, page 5
Victor M. Coppleson.S1.(1933)
Victor M. Coppleson (1958), pages 107 & 240
Alan Sharpe, pages 119-120

CASE INVESTIGATORS: Phil Kemp and Richard Weeks, Global Shark Accident File

On September 16, 2006, Phil Kemp wrote: “I spoke with a local marine biologist about the sevengill shark and the shovelnose shark, thought to have been involved with the above-mentioned case. The shovelnose shark is only found west of Kangaroo Island in South Australia. Adelaide is too far east. So we ruled that species out and we did a bit more digging on the Broadnose sevengill shark, *Notorynchus cepedianus*, and we are both confident that we can rule out that species as well for two reasons. 1) It is potentially dangerous only if provoked. 2) Its colour – grey or brown above with scattered black and white spots, creamy white underneath – doesn’t match the eyewitnesses description. And we are not convinced that it is capable of inflicting the type of injuries sustained by Primrose Whyte. Neither bull sharks nor tiger sharks inhabit South Australian waters.”

“Maybe it was a 3.7m white shark. If looking to the north at 3:45 p.m. in the afternoon in March, you will be looking in to the direction of the sun, and its grey top may have looked black. I am not yet 100% convinced it was a white shark but so far we have not come across another species of shark that grows to 3.7m in length, inhabits SA waters, and is capable of inflicted the wounds sustained by Primrose Whyte. At this stage the white shark is our prime suspect, but only 75 to 85% certain at this stage.”

“It is also possible all the blood in the water and boat may have attracted a sevengill shark to the area. It may have been the shark they were trying to shoot with the rifle, and witnesses mistakenly assumed it was the culprit.”
“Primrose Whyte was buried at St Jude's church at Brighton, and there is a memorial fountain at the jetty where she was attacked.”





The plaque at the base of the fountain reads:
MEMORIAL FOUNTAIN
This drinking fountain was erected in 1926,
in memory of Mrs. Primrose Whyte,
a notable swimming teacher,
who was killed in a shark attack
in March of 1926





2006: Memorial fountain, and the jetty where Primrose Whyte was fatally attacked by a shark on March 17, 1926.

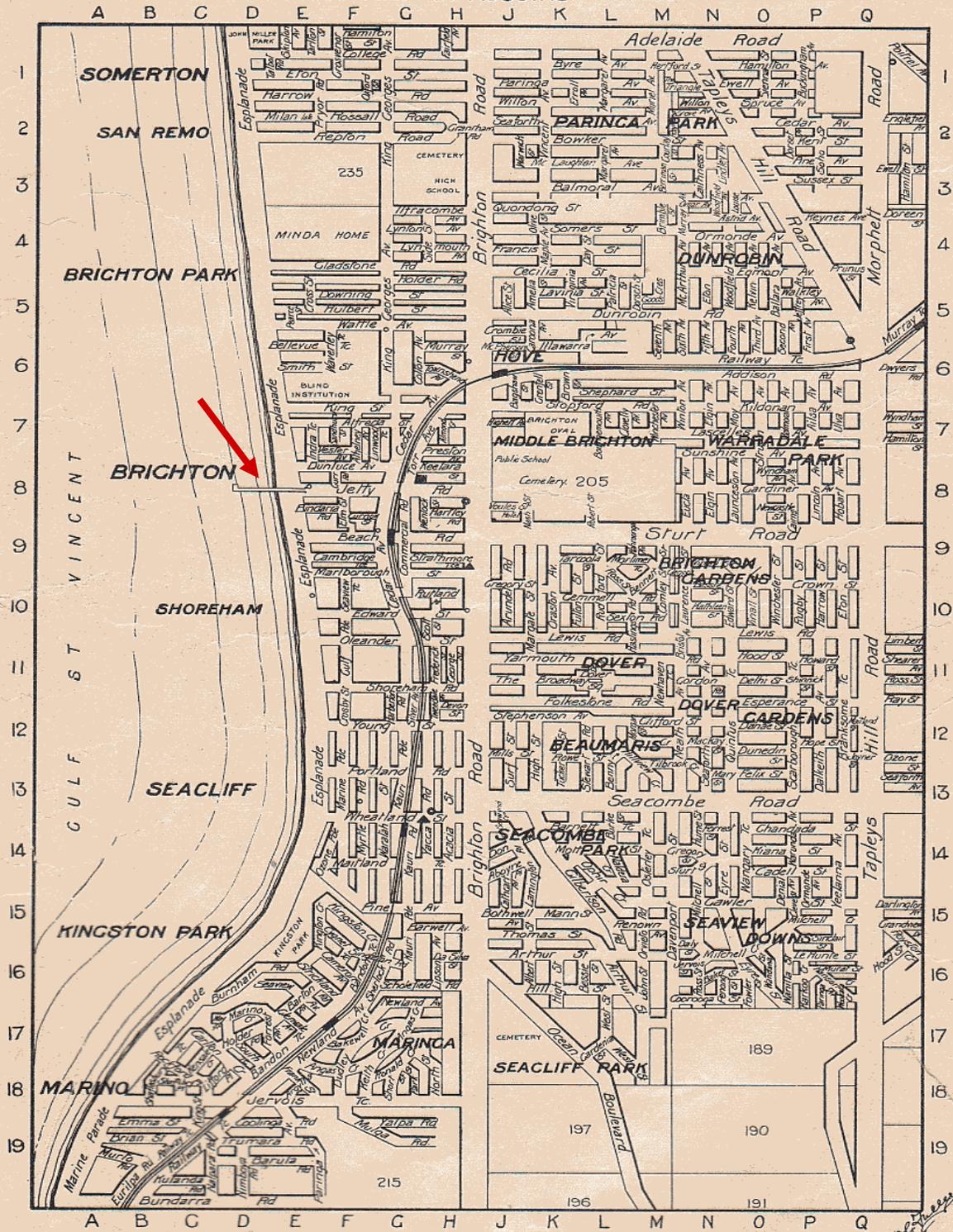
All photographs by Phil Kemp,
Global Shark Accident File



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MAP 21

MAP 17. ADJOINS



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Dr J. W. Yeatman has kindly supplied the following information as to the injuries she (Mrs. W.) received. She arrived at the hospital, the attack have taken place some 10 minutes before. It appears that she was treading water close to the jetty and suddenly called out repeatedly "Shark! Shark!" and the sea round became red. She did not struggle much until the rescuers in the boat were close to her, when she threw herself towards them. This action probably tore loose the tissues held in the shark's jaws and he swam away. The time of getting her into the boat would be about two minutes and in reaching the shore another two minutes. There was much blood in the boat but none on the blanket in which she was wrapped on landing so death must have occurred while in the boat. The whole of the front and outer two-thirds of the right thigh and the whole of the right buttock were torn away leaving the bone exposed front and back. The tissues all round the wound were lacerated and uneven. The ends of the arteries were not visible so they must have retracted or been torn off higher up.

SOURCE: Coppleson Archives [Ref notes page 21] page 77

General Telegrams.

Torn by a Shark

Death of Lady Bather.

Adelgide, Friday

While bathing at Brighton, yesterday afternoon, Mrs. Kathleen Whyte, wife of a squatter residing near Port Augusta, was seized by a shark, about 100 feet from the jetty. Her cries brought assistance from a man in a boat and she was rescued, but she was terribly mutilated and died almost immediately. The deceased lady was a daughter of the late Rev. A. McCully, B.A.