



ACTIVITY: Swimming

CASE: [GSAF 1935.03.09](#)

DATE: Saturday March 9, 1935

LOCATION: Maroubra Beach, New South Wales, Australia.

33°57'S, 151°E

NAME: Ernest MacDonald

DESCRIPTION: He was a 27-year-old male, and he was wearing red swim trunks.

BACKGROUND

WEATHER: It was a sultry day and the air temperature was 70°F, by 15h00 it was 76°F.

MOON PHASE: New Moon, March 5, 1935

SEA CONDITIONS: The water temperature 74°F.

ENVIRONMENT: In the morning sharks had been sighted cruising north of the harbour between Newport and Mona Vale.

DISTANCE FROM SHORE: 30 yards

DEPTH: Four feet

TIME: 12h30

NARRATIVE: Bathers heard MacDonald shout and saw him beating the shark with his hands. He was pulled from the water by a 14-year-old non-swimmer, William Wright, who dashed into the water to rescue him. "I grabbed him by the arm," Wright said. "Then the shark came at me. It missed me and got MacDonald by the other arm. Its teeth brushed by my fingers. It swept by us and returned almost immediately with incredible speed." Members of the Maroubra Surf Club dashed into the water to assist. "I splashed and shouted as hard as I could, but it still kept following us," said Wright, "even when we were in only a few feet of water it pursued us."

INJURY: Fatal. MacDonald's left thigh, buttock and left forearm were bitten and his finger was severed (defense wound). He was unconscious by the time he was brought to shore and died within a few minutes.

SPECIES INVOLVED: The shark, thought to be a four-metre white shark, was seen cruising in the shallows for 15 minutes after the attack.

SOURCES: The Canberra Times, Monday March 11, 1935, page 1 and Wednesday March 20, 1935, page 4
 Victor M. Coppleson (1958), pages 65, 233 & 234.



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SHARK AGAIN

Man Killed at Maroubra

FOURTH FATALITY OF SEASON

SYDNEY, Sunday.

The fourth shark fatality in Sydney this season occurred at Maroubra yesterday, when Ernest McDonald, 27, a machinist, was ferociously attacked and mauled. He died as he was being carried to the ambulance.

McDonald was surfing in four feet of water—between the first and second line of breakers—when the monster attacked him.

Although an aeroplane had dropped an "all clear" streamer over the beach just a few minutes previously, the first warning surfers had of the shark's proximity was the victim's agonised cry for help.

McDonald's thigh was badly mangled when he was first seized, and then his hands and arms were mauled when the monster ferociously returned to the attack.

The hero of the incident was William Wright, 17, who caught hold of McDonald as the shark was making the second attack.

Wright was soon joined by Frank Woolley and Ian Scott, and the victim was assisted from the surf. Tourniquets were applied in an attempt to stop the bleeding, but were unavailing. McDonald lapsed into unconsciousness almost immediately, and died as he was being carried up the beach to the Eastern Suburbs ambulance.

McDonald was not identified for several hours, and his widow, who is left with a baby four years old, came to the beach wondering why her husband had not returned home. Not until the victim was described to her did she realise what had happened.

SHARK FATALITY

Coroner Commends Heroism

TRIBUTE TO YOUTH'S BEHAVIOUR

SYDNEY, Tuesday.

In recording a verdict of accidental death at the inquest on Earnest James MacDonald, victim of a shark attack at Maroubra on March 9, the Coroner warmly praised William Wright, Frank Woolley, and two other men, Nickson and Curry, who went to MacDonald's assistance.

"These occurrences, unfortunately, are becoming very numerous on our beaches, but in the midst of grief and sadness they always seem to bring out some trace of the character of our Australian manhood, which everybody admires," said the Coroner. "It is very difficult to imagine more striking heroism than that displayed by Wright."

Wright, who is 16 years of age, relating how he went to MacDonald's assistance, said he could not swim, but managed to paddle along. The shark's head came out of the water, and snapped MacDonald's arm about an inch from the witness's hand. He let the arm go, and started to beat the water to frighten the shark.