

ACTIVITY: Swimming

CASE: GSAF 1937.02.13

DATE: Saturday February 13, 1937

LOCATION: Bar Beach, Newcastle,
New South Wales, Australia.
32°57'S, 151°E

NAME: John Welsh

DESCRIPTION: He was a 32-year-old male, sports secretary of the Cook's Hill Surf Club.

BACKGROUND

WEATHER: The sky was overcast.

MOON PHASE: New Moon,
February 11, 1937

SEA CONDITIONS: The sea was rough, and it was low tide. The sea surface temperature was 69°F.

ENVIRONMENT: A large shark had been seen at beach 200 yards away. A dog was taken on November 15, 1936 in the same area.

DISTANCE FROM SHORE: 150 yards

DEPTH OF WATER: 18 feet

TIME: 15h20

NARRATIVE: About 12 people were bathing, some seawards and on each side of Welsh. He was swimming in broken water far beyond the reef with two others. Onlookers saw the shark leap six feet out of the water and drag him beneath the surface. A companion was also grazed by the shark.

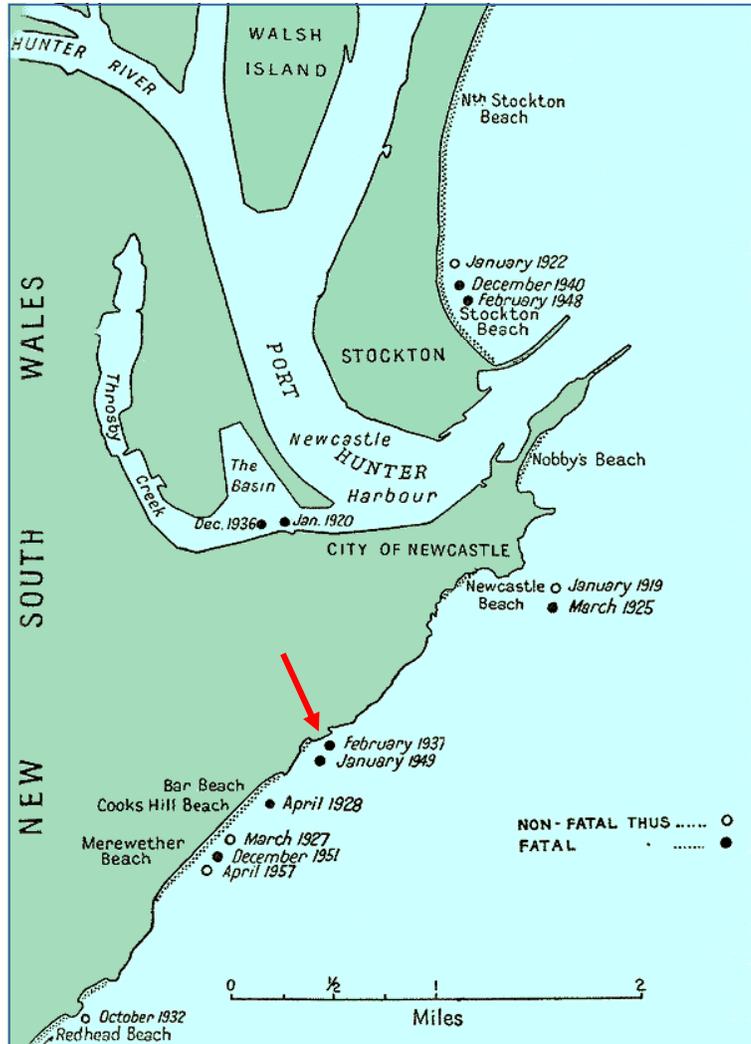
INJURY: Fatal. It was thought that the shark bit him twice. There were deep wounds on his buttocks, ankle and right elbow. His lifeless body washed ashore five minutes after the attack.

SPECIES INVOLVED: The incident involved a white shark, *Carcharodon carcharias*. The shark was sighted before, after and during the attack and while the alarm sounded.

NOTE: John Welsh had the keys to lifesavers club casualty rooms; lifesavers had to smash open the door to get at the medical supplies. Welsh had supported his widowed mother and the Cooks Hill Club opened a subscription to pay for his funeral expenses.

SOURCES: The Canberra Times, Monday February 15, 1937, page 1; The Age, February 15, 1937; Victor M. Coppleson (1958), pages 77 & 234; Sharpe, page 84.

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SHARK TRAGEDY

MAN MUTILATED IN SURF

Dead Body Recovered

NEWCASTLE, Saturday.

Attacked by a huge shark while swimming in the surf at Cook's Hill to-day, Jack Welsh, 32, of Hamilton, sports secretary of the local surf club, was dreadfully mutilated, both his legs being almost severed.

Welsh disappeared after the attack, and, while a search was being started, his body was noticed floating near the shore. He was then dead.

Two other swimmers were near Welsh at the time of the attack. They heard Welsh cry out and saw the unfortunate man with his head under the water and his legs thrashing the surface. He was evidently trying to avoid the monster, which jumped half-way out of the water and tore at his legs. Welsh then disappeared.

Welsh's two companions, realising that it was hopeless to remain and search for him, made for the shore, where Noel Smith, a member of the life saving club, was preparing to go out with a belt. They prevailed upon him not to do so, pointing out the impossibility and danger of finding Welsh's body and were just preparing to climb the pavilion to search from there when the body was seen about 25 yards away.

It was revealed afterwards that the Australian champion swimmer, Bob Newbiggen, had been, in company with Welsh, waiting for a "shoot" and had caught a wave which took him back to shore just a minute or two previously.