

ACTIVITY: Swimming
CASE: **GSAF 1937.05.15**
DATE: Saturday May 15, 1937
LOCATION: Ross River, Townsville, Queensland, Australia.
19°15'S, 146°50'E

NAME: William Tennant
DESCRIPTION: He was a 33-year-old male.

BACKGROUND

MOON PHASE: First Quarter, May 17, 1937
ENVIRONMENT: Cattle from North Queensland are prepared for export a few miles out of the city and offal is discharged into the river, attracting large numbers of sharks. Two days earlier a 600-pound shark was caught on a hand line just 100 yards from the site of the incident.

DISTANCE FROM SHORE: 10 yards

TIME: Night

NARRATIVE: William Tennant was refused permission to cross on the Ross Island River ferry; it was crowded and he would have to wait for the next trip. He decided to swim across the river instead. He was just 10 yards from the riverbank when he was attacked by a shark. Seeing his plight, the ferryman turned back to rescue him.

INJURY: Fatal. His left arm was severed at the elbow, his right arm was severely lacerated, and his right leg was severed at the knee. Tennant died before he reached the hospital.

SOURCES: The Canberra Times, Monday May 17, 1937, page 1; Victor M. Coppleson (1958), pages 90 & 238; Alan Sharpe, page 98.

CASE INVESTIGATOR: Richard D. Weeks, Global Shark Accident File



MAULED BY SHARK

TOWNSVILLE MAN'S DEATH

Terrible Injuries

BRISBANE, Sunday.

Frightfully mauled by a shark while attempting to swim the Ross River at Townsville last night, William Tennant, a young resident of the district, died while on his way to hospital.

Tennant's cries for help were heard by inmates of the hotel on the northern side of the river and, rushing out, they found him floating about ten yards from the bank in water tinged with crimson.

A ferry man dived to the assistance of the stricken man and brought him ashore. It was found that his left arm had been torn off at the elbow, and his right leg at the knee, while his right arm was also severely gashed.

An ambulance was called and Tennant was placed in it but he died from loss of blood and shock before the arrival at hospital.

Tennant was a well-known identity, having played for Queensland Colts in the Rugby League matches against New South Wales.

Last Thursday, a shark weighing 600 pounds was caught from the bank of the river about 100 yards from where the tragedy occurred.

Man mauled Attacked in creek at Townsville Arm and leg are torn off

BRISBANE, Saturday

A shocking shark tragedy occurred at Ross Creek, Townsville, to-night when William Tennant, a young man, of North Ward, Townsville, attempting to swim a creek, was taken by a shark 10 yards from the shore he was trying to reach.

Horribly mutilated, Tennant was rescued by a ferryman after his cries for help had been heard by inmates of a hotel on the north side of the creek.

Rushing out, they found Tennant in the swirling flood-flecked water 10 yards from the shore. *[NB; definitely printed as 'flood-flecked' ?printing error]*

When the ferryman rushed to the assistance of the stricken man he found Tennant's left arm had been torn off at the elbow and his right leg taken at the knee. His right arm, too, was badly gashed.

An ambulance was called, but Tennant died from loss of blood and shock on the way to hospital.

Tennant was a well-known sporting identity, having played for Queensland against the New South Wales Reps. in the league Colts team.

Last Thursday a 600-lb shark was caught with a hand line from the bank of Ross Creek about 100 yards from the spot where the tragedy occurred.

May 16, 1937