

ACTIVITY: Swimming
CASE: [GSAF 1939.12.14](#)
DATE: Thursday December 14, 1939
LOCATION: Rubbish Dump Creek,
Mackay, Queensland, Australia.
21°09'S, 149°13'E

NAME: Frank Gurran
DESCRIPTION: He was a 20-year-old male, a railway employee.

BACKGROUND

MOON PHASE: New Moon, December 11, 1939

DISTANCE FROM SHORE: "A few yards"

DEPTH OF WATER AT INCIDENT SITE:
12 feet

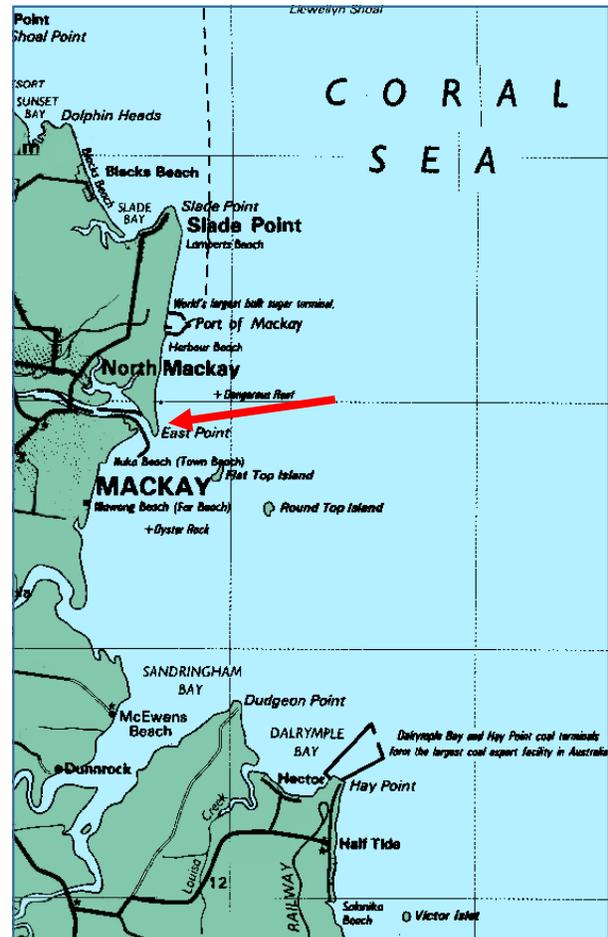
TIME: 12h15

NARRATIVE: He was swimming alone when his right leg was seized by a shark. He kicked himself free, injuring his left foot. He reached the bank without assistance and was helped ashore.

INJURY: Fatal. His right leg and left foot were injured. He was given blood transfusions at Mackay Hospital, and his leg was amputated, but he died post-operatively.

SPECIES INVOLVED: A shark, 2.6 metres [8'6"] in length was caught at the incident site two hours after Gurran was bitten. The shark was landed after it was hit on the head with an axe and 14 shots were fired into it.

SOURCES: The Sydney Morning Herald, Friday December 15, 1939, page 11; The Argus (Melbourne, Victoria), December 15, 1939, page 1; G.P. Whitley, Victor M.Coppleson (1958), page238; Daily Mercury (Mackay), December 29, 1961 edition.



SHARK ATTACK.

YOUTH SERIOUSLY INJURED.

Leg May be Amputated.

BRISBANE, Thursday.

With flesh torn from both legs, Frank Gurran, 20, a railway fireman, beat off a shark which had attacked him while he was swimming in Rubbish Dump Creek, at Mackay, to-day.

His right leg will probably be amputated.

While the attack was taking place, a companion watched from the bank, under the impression that Gurran was "skylarking" in the water.

The shark—a grey nurse type, 8 feet 6 inches long—was caught on a hand line within two hours of the attack, but was not killed until 14 shots from a pea rifle had been fired into it, and it had been hit on the head with an axe.

Gurran and a friend, Arthur Wallace, entered the water at noon. After a few minutes in the water, Wallace climbed on to the bank. Almost immediately he heard Gurran's cries for help, but did not at first realize what had happened.

The shark seized Gurran's right leg, but Gurran, struggling violently, kicked it off with his left foot.

SHARK RETURNS TO ATTACK.

The shark returned to the attack, ripping the left foot.

Gurran, a strong swimmer, was in 12 feet of water, and some yards from the bank. Though weak from loss of blood, and suffering severely from shock, he managed to swim to the bank.

Wallace helped him ashore, where he collapsed.

Gurran showed great fortitude throughout and jokingly told the ambulance men, "I have been trying to get leave to go home for Christmas. At any rate, I will be off for Christmas now." His parents live at Maxwellton, north-west Queensland.

The Sydney Morning Herald,
Friday December 15, 1939, page 11

Fatal shark attack at Caneland

LEO Mulherin can remember when part of the Caneland Central site was a creek: in fact he witnessed a fatal shark attack at the popular swimming spot when he was 10.

“Half the town learnt to swim in Dump Creek,” Mr Mulherin said. “We used to go down and drag for prawns with our father. He didn’t have a permanent job and he used to sell them (the prawns) around the place.

“The creek was only about 30m wide, so he’d swim across in the deep part and we’d stay in the shallow part.”

Mr Mulherin, his brother Pat and their cousin Dezzy witnessed the shark attack that killed Frank Gurrán, a 20-year-old railway worker, while fishing at the creek on December 18, 1939.

“We dragged out three or four, or it might have been four or five, little sharks. My father said the mother shark would come back as soon as the tide started to make. He said, ‘whatever you do, don’t go swimming there today’.”

Mr Mulherin said Mr Gurrán, who arrived in a rowing boat, was attacked by the shark when he dived in to the water.

“As soon as he surfaced he yelled out ‘shark!’. We thought he was mucking around, but... we saw all this blood.”

The boys ran for help, however, Mr Gurrán died three days later.

SOURCE: Daily Mercury, May 5, 2010, <http://www.dailymercury.com.au/story/2010/05/05/fatal-shark-attack-on-caneland-site/>

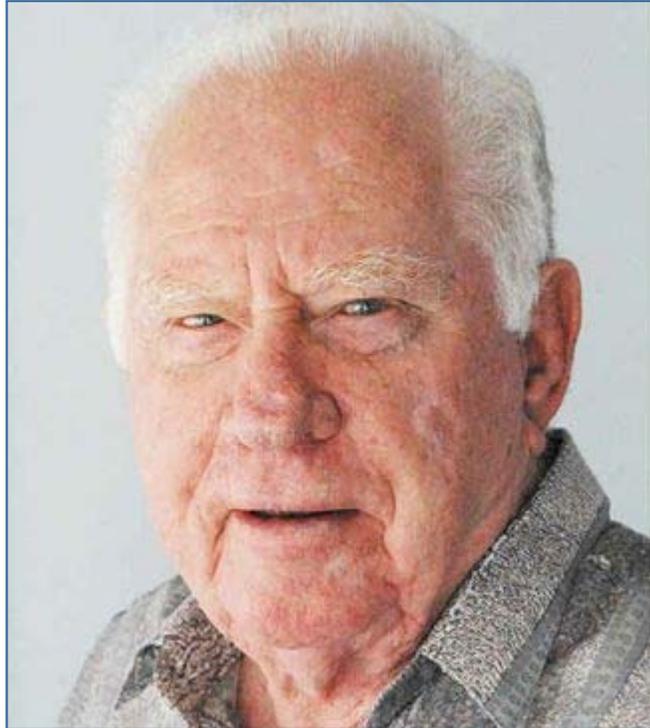


Photo : Tony Martin

Leo Mulherin remembers watching a shark attack a man in Dump Creek.