

**ACTIVITY:** Treading water

**CASE:** GSAF 1943.12.13 / SA-072

**DATE:** Monday December 13, 1943

**LOCATION:** The incident took place in the Indian Ocean at Inyoni Rocks, Amanzimtoti, a holiday resort 26 kilometres southwest of Durban, KwaZulu-Natal, South Africa.

30°03'S, 30°53,4'E

**NAME:** James Crawford Matthews

**DESCRIPTION:** The swimmer, a 17-year-old male, was about 1,73 metres tall, sandy-haired and tanned. Friends described him as "slim, with a runner's build", and said he wore a maroon or black swim costume. He had been in hospital with a fever a short time before the attack and was a member of the Amanzimtoti Surf Life-saving Club.

### BACKGROUND

**WEATHER:** Heavy rain had fallen for days before the attack. The day was windless and hot (in Durban the temperature ranged from 18° to 24°C and 10,1 millimetres of rain fell). Durban meteorological station recorded that the sky was completely overcast throughout the day, but according to press reports it was sunny at Amanzimtoti.

**MOON PHASE:** Full Moon, December 11, 1943

**SEA CONDITIONS:** The water was very dirty but there was little, if any current and the sea was glassy. A deep channel was present and Matthews was in this channel when he was attacked.

**ENVIRONMENT:** No unusual fish or bird activity was recorded and no dolphins were seen.

**DISTANCE FROM SHORE:** 85 metres

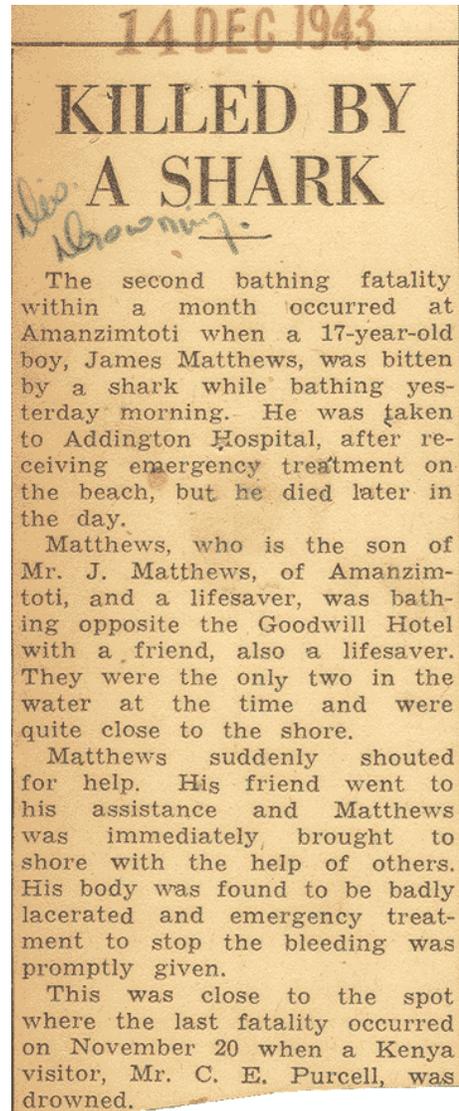
**DEPTH:** Reports vary: "chest-deep" to "deep water"

**TIME:** 11h30

**NARRATIVE:** Five boys, including James Matthews, had been body-surfing but two of the boys rode a wave to shore. James Matthews was opposite the Goodwill Hotel, facing seaward waiting for a wave. Ginger Dyer was on his left, Raymond Kahn was to his right. The shark approached Matthews from behind and bit him. Matthews shouted for help and floated on his back as his companions, who were also members of the Amanzimtoti Surf Life-saving Club, came to his aid and took him ashore.

**INJURY:** Fatal. The lower abdomen, buttock and right thigh sustained extensive lacerations. An arc of tooth impressions was visible in the thigh. It was believed that the injuries were the result of a single bite by a shark.

**FIRST AID:** When Matthews reached the beach life-savers attempted to control blood loss.



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He was taken by private car to Addington Hospital. Raymond Kahn remembers that Matthews was sitting up during the ride to the hospital.

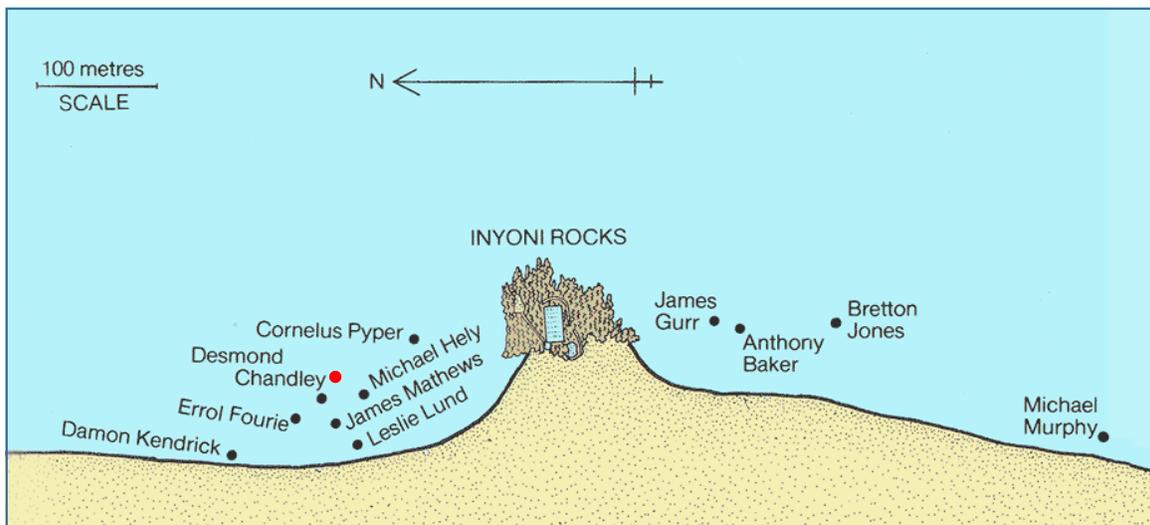
**TREATMENT:** Unknown. Matthews died shortly after he reached the hospital. On March 9, 1944 Mr G. T. Byron held an inquest at the Magistrate's Court in Durban; the verdict was, "accidental death due to extensive lacerated wound on right thigh and buttock, probably caused by shark whilst sea bathing."

**SPECIES INVOLVED:** Not identified. Measurements of the injury indicated that the width of the shark's jaw was about 20 centimetres.

**SOURCES:** Interview with Raymond Kahn at the Amanzimtoti Surf Lifesaving Clubhouse by Marie Levine on October 16, 1986; Natal Mercury, December 14, 1943, January 21 and March 10, 1944.



**CASE INVESTIGATOR:** Marie Levine



Map of Inyoni Rocks showing locations of this and other 10 other incidents. (From Wallett)