

ACTIVITY: Diving

CASE: GSAF 1946.11.20

DATE: Wednesday November 20, 1946

LOCATION: The attack took place 40 miles off Thursday Island, Queensland, Australia. 10°35'S.

NAME: Esrona Johnson

DESCRIPTION: He was a 30-year-old male, a Torres Strait Islander.

BACKGROUND

MOON PHASE: Third Quarter, November 16, 1946. New Moon, November 24, 1946

NARRATIVE: He was diving from a pearling lugger, and was on the seabed when he was bitten by a shark.

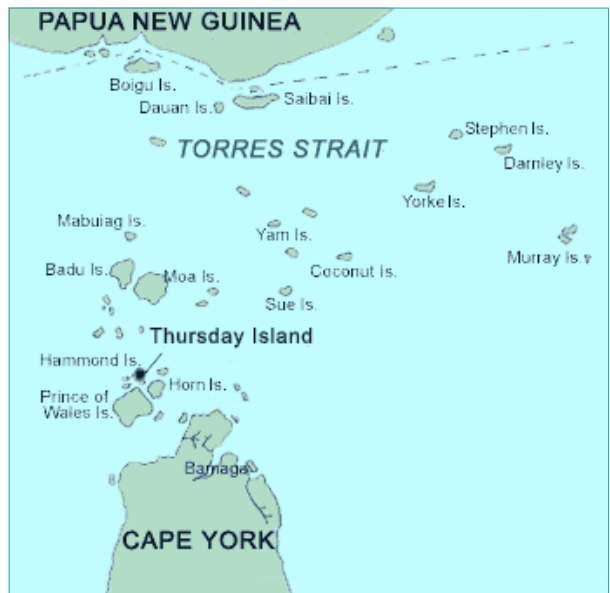
INJURY: Fatal. His right arm was severed by a shark.

SPECIES INVOLVED: Not identified

SOURCES: Cairns Post, November 23, 1946, page 5
Gilbert P. Whitley (1951), page 193
Victor M. Coppleson (1958), page 245



1948: A diver emerges from the sea at the side of a pearling vessel at Thursday Island..



Torres Strait Shark Tragedy.

Further information concerning the death of Esrom Johnson, a native diver, who was badly mauled by a shark on Wednesday and died before he could be brought to Thursday Island for treatment, show that the captain of the lugger Nancy, which is owned by a well-known Moresby family, all of whom are experienced and expert divers, had decided to call it a day, but the deceased, with another native, elected to make one more drift for shell. It was while the last drift was being made that the shark attacked Johnson, mauling him about the right arm and shoulder and inflicting fatal wounds. Every effort was made to save the boy's life, and he was transferred to Farpuhar Pty.'s power-driven lugger Charm, which immediately left for Thursday Island, but he passed away before reaching land. The tragedy occurred in the portion of the strait known as "Shark Passage," south of Mulgrave and Banks Islands, in the northernmost part of the strait, and which, as its name indicates, has a bad reputation as a rendezvous for the skin-diver's most dreaded enemy. The body was conveyed by launch to York Island, Esrom's tribal home, for burial on Thursday—Our Thursday Island correspondent.

Cairns Post, Saturday November 23, 1946, page 13