

1945 : First surfing beach at Caloundra,  
patrolled since 1933 by the Metropolitan Surf Life Saving Club



**ACTIVITY:** Treading water

**CASE:** [GSAF 1948.12.26](#)

**DATE:** Sunday December 26, 1948

**LOCATION:** The attack took place in the surfing area at King's Beach, Caloundra, Queensland, Australia.

*26°14'S, 153°10'E*

**NAME:** Eric Samuel Keys

**DESCRIPTION:** He was a 28-year-old tanned male from Ashgrove, a boilermaker. He was wearing dark blue Speedo swim trunks.

### **BACKGROUND**

**WEATHER:** It was a hot sunny day; the air temperature was about 90°F.

**MOON PHASE:** Third Quarter, December 23, 1948

**SEA CONDITIONS:** The sea was clear.

**DISTANCE FROM SHORE:** 160 yards

**DISTANCE FROM ROCKS:** 25 yards

**DEPTH OF WATER AT INCIDENT SITE:** 12 feet

**TIME:** 11h30

**NARRATIVE:** More than 200 surfers were in the water when the accident took place. Eric Keys was swimming out beyond where the waves were breaking. He was treading water, waiting to catch a big wave for a shoot into the beach. He shouted "Shark" and was seen to struggle, then he disappeared under the water and the water turned red. The shark was not

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seen by other lifesavers and was not seen to surface.

Keys' lifeless body was washed towards shore by a large wave where it was retrieved from five feet of water by a lifesaver.

**INJURY:** Fatal. The inside of the left thigh from abdomen to knee was removed, severing his femoral artery. His left hand was severed and his left arm was bitten. "Death appeared to have been instantaneous as though from haemorrhage and shock" according to Caloundra Police records.

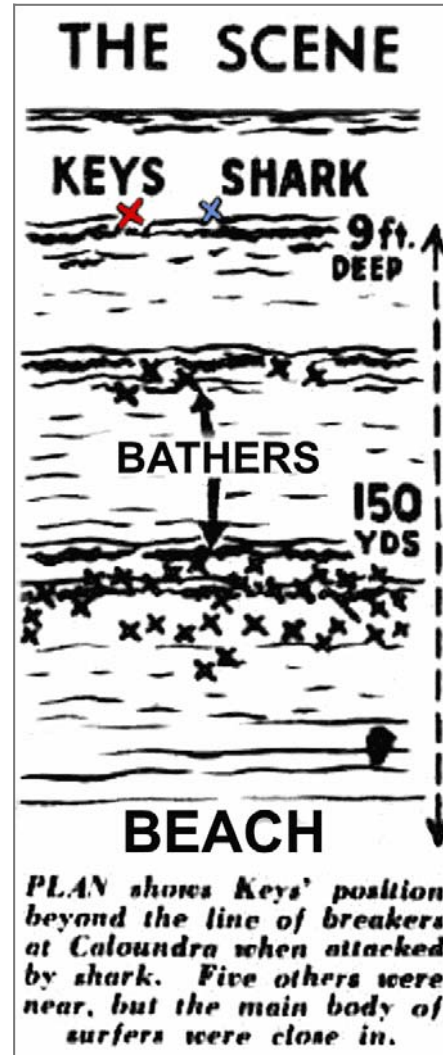
**SOURCES:** The Age, Monday December 27, 1948, page 1; Caloundra Police records; Gilbert P. Whitley (1951), page 193, records location as Coolangatta, Queensland, and cites Sydney Morning Herald, December 27, 1948; V. M. Coppleson (1958), page 239

**KEYS, Eric Samuel.**—In loving memory of my Husband, victim of shark tragedy Caloundra, 26th December, 1948. A better Husband never lived. Nor one so true and kind. His equal in this weary world We very seldom find. His heart was always in his home. He toiled and did his best. Until there came the sudden call, God called him Home to rest. Inserted by his loving Wife Iris.

**KEYS, Eric Samuel.**—Cherished memories of our Son and Brother, victim of shark tragedy Caloundra, 26th December, 1948. Everlasting love. Mother, Father, Brothers, and Sister.

**KEYS, Eric Samuel.**—In affectionate memory of my Son-in-law, victim of shark tragedy Caloundra, 26th December, 1948. Inserted by Nelisen Family.

*Courier-Mail, Monday December 26, 1949, page 10*



# Lifesaver Killed in Shark Attack

**BRISBANE, Sunday.**—Nine people have been drowned and a life saver fatally mauled by a shark in the last 48 hours at beaches near Brisbane.

One of the men drowned was Verdun John Prouse, of Thomas-street, East Brunswick, Melbourne.

Only three bodies have so far been recovered.

A man and a boy were drowned in a patrolled area near Tallebudgera beach today, less than half a mile from where four people were drowned in an unpatrolled area yesterday.

A life saver lost his life in an unsuccessful rescue bid, and two surfers were drowned 150 yards off Coolum beach at 11.30 this morning.

Ten minutes later at King's Beach, Caloundra, a shark fatally mauled a life saver in nine feet of water, about 150 yards from the shore.

Victims were:—

At Tallebudgera Beach Today: Robert Conners, 16 years, Camp Mountain, near Samford, and Noel William Daniels, 22 years, Corinda.

At Tallebudgera Beach Yesterday: William Barnes, 29 years, single, and Colin Barnes, 15 years, his brother, of Norman Park; Richard King, 30 years, married, of Morning-side; Eileen Bedington, 24 years, single, of Coorparoo.

At Coolum Beach Today: Richard Alfred Lugge, 26 years, single, life saver, of Yandina; Archibald Hugh Caldwell, 41 years, farmer, Buderim; Verdun John Prouse, 32 years, single, of East Brunswick, Melbourne.

At King's Beach, Caloundra:

Eric Samuel Keys, 28 years, married, life saver, of Ashgrove, Brisbane.

Keys was waiting for a shoot about 30 feet away from Geoffrey Goadby, of Indooroopilly, when he called out "shark" twice.

Goadby said Keys seemed to struggle and then disappeared just as he saw what looked like the tail of a shark.

Frederick Riddle, 29 years, of Redcliffe, saw Keys lying face down in about five feet of water.

"I dived and brought Keys to the surface," he said.

"When I turned him on his back I saw that his left arm had been practically torn off.

People on the beach saw a 30-ft. wide blood pool soon after they heard the shark alarm.

More than 200 surfers were in the water when Keys was attacked.