

**ACTIVITY:** Swimming

**CASE:** GSAF 1949.01.23

**DATE:** Sunday January 23, 1949

**LOCATION:** Bar Beach, Newcastle, New South Wales, Australia.

32°57'S, 151°48'E

**NAME:** Ray Land

**DESCRIPTION:** He was a 20-year-old male, the Northern District surf swimming champion.

**BACKGROUND**

**MOON PHASE:** Third Quarter, January 22, 1949

**SEA CONDITIONS:** The water temperature was 70°F and the surf was rough.

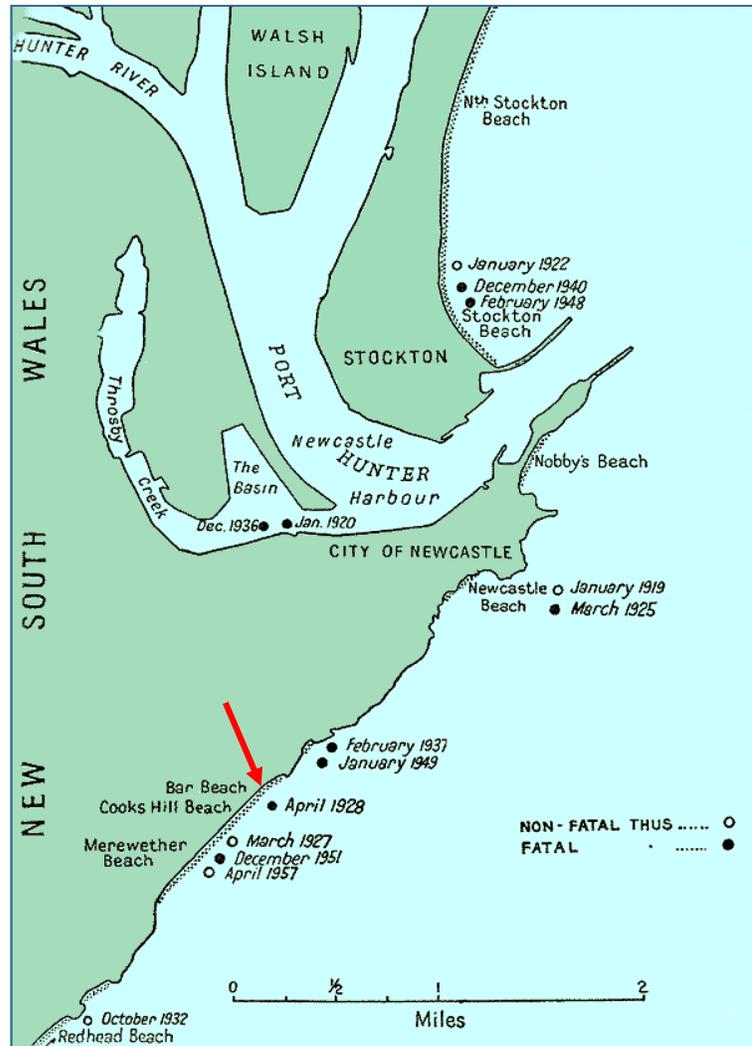
**ENVIRONMENT:** At Australian surf carnivals, rescue and resuscitation competitions are usually the main event. A swimmer from each team is selected to represent a bather in distress. He swims out to a line of buoys placed several hundred yards from the beach. Another member of the team dons a light canvas belt attached by a line to a reel and swims out to "rescue" him. Three other members of the team, with long rhythmic pulls on the line, draw the beltman and his "patient" to shore, while the "reelman" winds in the line. The "patient" is then laid on the beach and "resuscitated".

**DISTANCE FROM SHORE:** 130 yards

**DEPTH OF WATER:** Two metres

**TIME:** 15h00

**NARRATIVE:** Land was serving as beltman in a surf carnival. The buoys were 150 yards offshore and Barry McKie, Land's patient, was the second to reach the buoys. When he was 20 yards from McKie, Land waved his arms above his head, the signal for assistance. He signaled five times before anyone realized that his line had fouled on a rock and was holding him fast. McKie and R. Gazzard, No. 3 linesman for Newcastle Club, swam to Land's aid. They had almost reached him when a shark flashed through a wave. McKie turned on his back to avoid it and saw Land start to swim. "Next thing he shot out of the water," said McKie. "I thought he was struggling with the belt, then I saw the white body of the shark. It hit him [Land] on the leg and he disappeared." Land pummeled the shark with his fists and it released him.



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**INJURY:** Fatal.

**FIRST AID / TREATMENT:** Reg Trew of the Cook's Hill Surf Club brought Land to shore aboard a surf ski. He placed the injured lifesaver on the ski while he pushed it along in the water. (Some time later Trew was honored for his heroism with an award by the Surf Lifesaving Association.)

As Land was carried to the beach a call went over the loudspeaker for blood donors. He was taken by ambulance to Newcastle Hospital, followed by his parents and a truck with 12 club members, but died there 15 minutes after arrival.

**SPECIES INVOLVED:** The incident involved a 3.6 metre white shark, *Carcharodon carcharias*.

**SOURCES:** Canberra Times, Monday January 24, 1949, page 1; The Nebraska State Journal, Monday, January 24, 1949; Gilbert P. Whitley (1951), page 193; Victor M. Coppleson (1958), pages 77, 78 & 234; Sharpe, pages 84-85.

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**Shark Kills Lifeguard**  
SYDNEY, Australia. (AP). A shark killed Lifeguard Raymond Land, 20. Sunday at Newcastle, New South Wales.

## Young Man Killed By Shark Off Newcastle Beach

**NEWCASTLE, Sunday.**  
Raymond Land, 20, of Cooks' Hill, died in Newcastle District Hospital this afternoon after he had been frightfully mauled by a shark in a surf race at Bar Beach.

His mother and father saw the attack from the beach.

Clubmate, Reginald Trew, battled heroically through rough seas on a surf ski to go to Land's aid. He will be recommended to the Meritorious Awards Committee for his bravery.

Land was taking part in a belt race about 3 p.m. and about 120 yards from the shore his line became entangled in the rocks. He signalled for help and another swimmer heard his scream "Shark!"

Before aid could reach him, he had been attacked twice, and savagely mauled as he swung entangled in his snagged belt and line.

He fought the shark kicking at it and hitting at it with his hands.

Trew struggled out through rough seas, disregarding his own danger although he did not know where the shark was, and was thrown several times from his ski near the scene of the attack.

Land's left thigh had been nearly bitten through and fingers were missing from his hands.

He died shortly after admission to hospital.

The deceased was Northern District senior surf champion, recently became engaged.

To-night clubmates and fishermen set lines on the beach in an attempt to catch the 14-foot killer shark.

Newcastle was the scene of the last shark fatality in N.S.W., when at Stockton on February 14, 1948, a 12-foot shark killed a 16-years-old boy.