

ACTIVITY: Body surfing
CASE: **GSAF 1955.03.09**
DATE: Wednesday March 9, 1955
LOCATION: The accident took place at Wamberal, New South Wales, Australia.



NAME: Noel Langford
DESCRIPTION: He was a 22-year-old male, 6'2" tall, a strong swimmer and a member of the Wamberal Surf Club.

BACKGROUND

WEATHER: There had been a recent rain.

MOON PHASE: Full Moon, March 9, 1955

ENVIRONMENT: The accident took place directly opposite the channel which had been cut to allow the floodwaters of Wamberal Lake to escape. Mrs. Sylvia McInerney, who lived near the beach for four years, said that since the lake had been opened, swimming had been dangerous and people often saw sharks. Constable Beattie said a professional fisherman from Terrigal, Mr. Bill Johnson, claimed the coast was teeming with sharks, some of them 10 to 30 feet in length.

DISTANCE FROM SHORE: 50 yards

TIME: 18h00

NARRATIVE: "The attack was so swift," writes Coppleson, "that Miss Jan Faithorne (who was 4.5 metres from Langford), saw only a smudge of blood where he had been swimming."

Ern Cross, a 15-year-old, was on the beach and saw what happened. "They were about to get a shoot when Noel dived under a wave and the shark got him. I saw him dragged through a wave, then I saw him disappear through another wave."

Sixty people, including members of the Wamberal Surf Club, attempted to find his body. With car headlights lighting up the sea, a variety of craft scoured the water until dawn without success.

An attempt was made to catch the shark. A baited drum was anchored, but next morning the drum, dented and scratched with large toothmarks, washed up on the sand.

INJURY: Fatal. His body was not recovered, but four days later his badly torn swimming costume washed up about a mile south of the spot where he disappeared.

SOURCES: The Argus, Thursday March 10, 1955, page 1; Victor M. Coppleson (1958), pages 84, 85 & 236; Coppleson Archives, 1223/11, Item 3; Alan Sharpe, pages 82 & 83.

CASE INVESTIGATOR: Richard D. Weeks, GSAF

Another N.S.W. shark tragedy

Sydney, Wed.

Surf boats and fishing craft tonight were searching off Wamberal beach for the body of a 23-year-old man who was taken by a huge shark this afternoon.

The sea around the beach has been floodlit tonight by cars.

The dead man was Noel Lansford, of Free Selection rd., Matcham, near Gosford.

Just before dark Lansford and a girl were swimming outside the breakers when the girl was temporarily separated from him by a wave.

A few moments later she heard a terrific scream and saw a big pool of blood in the water.

She screamed for help and swam towards the beach to raise the alarm.

Lifesavers manned a boat and searched the area where Lansford was attacked, but could not find him.

The Argus, Thursday March 10, 1955