

ACTIVITY: Swimming

CASE: GSAF 1958.12.23 / SA-127

DATE: Tuesday December 23, 1958

LOCATION: The accident took place at Melkbaai, 139 kilometres from Table Bay, in the Western Cape Province, South Africa.
34°06'S, 18°33'E



Melkbaai

NAME: Barry Geldenhuys

DESCRIPTION: He was a 14-year-old Caucasian male.

BACKGROUND

MOON PHASE: Full Moon, December 26, 1958

TIME: Afternoon

NARRATIVE: Barry Geldenhuys, his sister Mariath, and Johan le Roux spent the morning swimming off the beach. About 11h00 Mariath returned home, but Barry and Johan remained in the water. Barry seemed to be moving farther offshore than Johan and “took no notice when he shouted to him to come back”.

Later Johan went home, assuming that Barry would return home on his own, but he was never seen alive again. When the boy was reported missing, the police said “It is difficult to believe that Barry could have got into difficulties in the water. Bathing at Melkbaai is almost 100 percent safe. We are searching the beach and town for him.”

INJURY: Fatal. Local historian Gordon Wilson reported that “Barry was seen to be taken by a large shark”. Barry's body was never recovered but on January 4, 1959 a human foot washed ashore at Swartklip, 16 kilometres from the Strand, and was sent to the government pathologist in Cape Town. Police presumed that the foot was Barry's, “No one else has been reported missing in this area”, and resumed their investigation.

SOURCES: Daily News, January 16, 1959; Cape Argus, January 16, 1959; Gordon Wilson, Shark Attacks in False Bay. *Simons Town Historical Society Bulletin*, Volume XIII, Number 3.

CASE INVESTIGATOR: Marie Levine

Strand shark attacks gives police idea on missing schoolboy

16 JAN 1959

The Argus Special Representative

THE STRAND, Friday.

A SHARK ATTACK on Fanie Schreuder, an 18-year-old Bellville schoolboy, at Melkbaai beach yesterday afternoon, has set the police and fishermen of The Strand thinking that a shark might also have attacked Barry Geldenhuys (14), who disappeared suddenly while swimming in the same spot on December 23.

A human foot was found at Swartklip, 10 miles from The Strand, on January 4, and a policeman at The Strand said to-day that it was presumed that the foot was Barry's.

No one else has been reported missing in this area, he said. The foot has been sent to the Government Pathologist at Cape Town and we are continuing investigations.

The attack on Fanie Schreuder took place in shallow water about 4.15 p.m. in front of the public conveniences at the intersection of Beach Road and Burnard Road, about a mile from The Strand Pavilion.

FIVE-INCH GASH

Fanie received a five-inch long gash on his thigh and both wrists were bitten.

Apart from his bandages, he showed little signs of his escape from death when I saw him at the Hottentots Holland Hospital to-day.

He said: 'I had come in a cabin cruiser with some friends from the Pavilion to Melkbaai. We anchored about 200 yards offshore and swam around for about a half-hour.

I think. My only thought was that I must get away from the creature as quickly as possible.

Hundreds of sharks have been seen by fishermen off The Strand and Gordon's Bay in recent weeks but the fishermen are astonished that a shark approached so close to the shore.

The temperature of the water at Melkbaai was between 66 and 68 degrees Fahrenheit yesterday afternoon. Sharks have rarely been known to become aggressive in waters colder than 70 degrees.

FIRST ATTACK

This is the first shark attack to be reported at Melkbaai. It is the first time a bather has been attacked by a shark in waters near Cape Town since 1946.

Only one fatal attack is on record — in 1942 Mr. W. J. Bergh was taken by a shark off Clifton. A man was badly mauled off Swartklip in 1944.

Less than half an hour after the attack yesterday many people returned to swim in the surf at Melkbaai.

To-day there were only a sprinkling of bathers in the area but the cool weather was probably responsible for this.

YOUTH'S OWN J 6 JAN 1959 STORY OF SHARK ATTACK

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He said: 'I had come in a cabin cruiser with some friends from the Pavilion to Melkbaai. We anchored about 200 yards offshore and swam around for about a half-hour.

'I swam to the shore and back twice and was returning to the boat when I was attacked.

'I was floating on my back about 60 yards from the beach when I felt something strike my leg. I

stood up in the water. It was about waist deep. I saw a shark — it was a blue-pointer and about 6ft. or 7ft. long — circling away from me a few yards off.

TEETH SANK IN

'As I made for the shore it came at me. I felt its teeth sink into my leg above the knee. It was a firm grip, but I felt no pain. I remember shouting: "Help! Shark!"

There were lots of people swimming near by. All I can remember is seeing a woman on an inflated tube dashing for the beach as fast as she could go.

'I kicked out with my feet but the shark held on. I grabbed it by its jaws and succeeded in freeing my leg. I was bitten on my wrists. As the shark moved off I hit it hard on the nose and made for the shore.

'A man grabbed me by the arm and helped me to the beach. I was conscious all the time. When I lay on the beach surrounded by lots of people I felt the pain coming on.

NOT SCARED

'I was not really scared when the shark came at me. I was surprised and had no time to think. My only thought was that I must get away from the creature as quickly as possible.

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