

ACTIVITY: Spearfishing

CASE: GSAF 1961.04.16.a

DATE: Sunday April 16, 1961

LOCATION: The incident took place at Otford, New South Wales, Australia.

34°15'S, 151°08'E

NAME: Douglas John Spooner

DESCRIPTION: He was a 21-year-old male from Glenfarne Street, Bexley.

BACKGROUND

MOON PHASE: New Moon, April 15, 1961

SEA CONDITIONS: The water temperature was 63°F.

DEPTH OF WATER: "Shallow"

NARRATIVE: Spooner speared the shark with a gas gun and was pulling it onto a rocky headland when it grabbed his foot. A friend, Trevor Ashton, 21, of Queen Victoria Street, Bexley, attacked the shark with a knife, forcing it to release its hold.



Spoooner said, "I had speared [the shark] 20 minutes before in about 20 feet of water. He must have been attracted by the blood from the fish we had speared. He seemed pretty sick when I got him to the rocks. We had him in a few inches of water when a big wave broke over us, giving him enough water to swim again. Next second he grabbed my foot. I didn't think wobbegongs would attack humans. This one held on like a vice for at least three minutes before Trevor killed him."

INJURY: The spearfisherman's foot was lacerated.

FIRST AID: Other spearfishermen tied a tourniquet around Spooner's leg and carried him to a car. An ambulance from Sutherland met the car and took him to the hospital.

TREATMENT: Spooner was treated at Sutherland Hospital where his wounds were repaired with 20 stitches. He was discharged after casualty ward treatment the same evening.

SPECIES INVOLVED: The incident involved a 1.8-metre [six-foot] wobbegong shark, *Orectolobus barbatulus*.

NOTE: *This is a provoked incident*

SOURCE: The Age, Monday April 17, 1961, page 3; Gilbert P. Whitley, citing Sydney Morning Herald, April 17, 1961

Fisherman Mauled by Shark

SYDNEY, Sunday. — A six-foot Wobbegong shark, fighting for its life, today attacked and mauled a spear fisherman at Otford, about 30 miles from Sydney, on the south coast.

The injured man, Douglas John Spooner, 21, of Bexley, a Sydney suburb, had 20 stitches inserted in a foot wound.

The shark, which he had speared with a gas-powered spear gun, grabbed him in shallow water as he was pulling it in on to a rocky headland.

His friend, Trevor Ashton, 21, of Bexley, attacked the shark with a knife, forcing it to let go.

“Like a Vice”

John said: “I did not think Wobbegongs would attack humans. This one held on like a vice for at least three minutes before Trevor killed him.

“I had speared him 20 minutes before in about 20 feet of water. He must have been attracted by the blood from fish we had speared.

“He seemed pretty sick when I got him to the rocks.

“We had him in a few inches of water when a big wave broke over us, giving him enough water to swim again.

“The next second he grabbed my foot.”