

Cactus Beach



ACTIVITY: Surfing

CASE: [GSAF 2000.09.24](#)

DATE: Sunday September 24, 2000

LOCATION: The attack took place at Cactus Beach, a well-known surfing beach, about 20 kilometres from the town of Penong in South Australia.

NAME: Cameron Smeaton Bayes

DESCRIPTION: The surfer was a 25-year-old male from Auckland, New Zealand, on honeymoon with his bride, Tina-Marie.

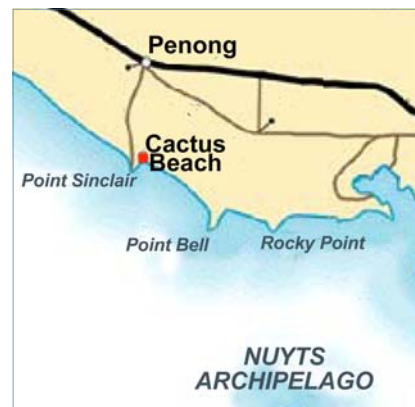
BACKGROUND

WEATHER: It was a misty morning. The sky was overcast, and there was no wind.

MOON PHASE: Waning Crescent, 18% of the Moon's visible disk was illuminated. New Moon on September 28, 2000.

SEA CONDITIONS: Locals described the sea condition as "eerie" – glassy, with a three- to four-foot swell.

ENVIRONMENT: Marine biologists and local tuna fishermen have been warning of overfishing of bluefin tuna in the white sharks' offshore feeding grounds. Salmon, *Arripis trutta trutta*, are running this time of year in this area. Both Ceduna (Cactus Beach) and Elliston (Anxious Bay) are prime salmon fishing areas. Both areas have commercial fishing and sport fishing activities, and have produced world record size white sharks. Alf Dean



fished these areas in the 1960s and Barnacle Bill & Barnacle Lil, large white sharks, cruised these shores. More recently, during a study of white sharks from the Neptune group conducted by Ian Gordon, a white shark was recaptured in this area with an archival tag attached, clear evidence that white sharks range to the area from the Neptunes on occasion.

DISTANCE FROM SHORE: 70 to 80 metres

DEPTH OF WATER AT INCIDENT SITE: Two metres

TIME: Between 07h30 and 08h00



Cameron Bayes and his wife, Tina, had been married only since February.

NARRATIVE: Cameron Bayes arrived at Cactus Beach the previous day. At 06h15 on Sunday, he went for an early morning surf alone while his wife slept. Port Lincoln student counselor Jeffrey Hunter was sitting on a platform on a sand hill at Cactus Beach between 07h15 and 07h30 that morning, watching the lone surfer. Hunter said there was no hint of the shark confusing the surfer with another type of prey. The shark circled in behind the surfer, who was looking out to sea, then charged him. He said the shark raced in circles around Bayes with such speed that it looked like several sharks, then it took him down. "I saw Bayes come to the surface, get his board and start paddling towards the shore. I saw his face ... he looked quite calm. But he only went about three metres before the shark attacked again ... then, suddenly, he was gone," said Hunter. "There were a few bits of board floating, and a pool of blood. The shark seemed to take him underwater and there was a bit more thrashing under the water. A couple of minutes later I saw the shark surface about 500 metres out. It thrashed again and released the main bit of the board. It rolled over and I could see the underside of the shark, it was clearly white, the top part of the shark was a dark grey. The main part of the board floated towards Caves." Mr Hunter's son Harry, then aged eleven, also witnessed the attack. He ran into the camping area and raised the alarm. Peter Ryan, Dallas Power and Bruce Martin also saw the shark thrashing, as did Trevor Prow who thought he saw the upper torso of a person in the shark's mouth. He added, "I have been a professional fisherman for thirteen years and know the shark was a white pointer about sixteen to eighteen feet long."

Bayes' disappearance was reported to the police by telephone at Ceduna who alerted Senior Constable Brenton Philips at Penong, about 25 kilometres away. Mr Philips promptly attended at Cactus Beach and obtained statements from the witnesses. He also took possession of three large pieces of Bayes' surfboard which had been collected by the witnesses. Senior Constable Philips organized a search by boat of the general area, although this was difficult in the area of the attack due to the two-metre swell.

Sergeant PA Heaft of Penong Police Station attended at Cactus Beach and coordinated the subsequent search efforts. Throughout that afternoon and for the following three days the area was searched thoroughly by four wheel drive, motor cycle and on foot, but no further items of significance were found.

INJURY: Fatal. The surfer's body was not recovered.

DAMAGE TO SURFBOARD: The fragments of surfboard were subsequently examined by Dr Helen James, Forensic Odontologist. Her conclusions were as follows: “The three pieces of surfboard labeled CB1, CB2 and CB3 are considered to belong to the same surfboard. The marks found on and adjacent to segment CB3 and the leg/wrist rope attached to piece CB2 are consistent with marks produced by the teeth of a shark. The indentations are triangular in shape, and the scrape marks are consistent with having been made by serrated teeth, which are both features of the teeth of the White Pointer or Great White shark. It is not possible to determine the size of the shark from these marks.”

SPECIES INVOLVED: The attack involved a white shark, *Carcharodon carcharias*, and according to witnesses, Jeffrey Hunter and Trevor Prow, the shark was four to five metres total length.

SOURCES: Newcastle Herald, September 27, 2000, page 17; Inquest taken on behalf of our Sovereign Lady the Queen at Adelaide in the State of South Australia, on the 2nd and 22nd days of February, 2001, before Wayne Cromwell Chivell, a Coroner for the said State, concerning the disappearance of Cameron Smeaton Bayes, late of 12 Juliette Place, Forrest Hill, Auckland, New Zealand.

CASE INVESTIGATORS: Philip Kemp, Terry Peake and Bob Myatt, Global Shark Accident File