

ACTIVITY: Surfing

CASE: [GSAF 2005.11.25.b](#)

DATE: Friday November 25, 2005

LOCATION: The incident took place at Flinders on the Mornington Peninsula, Victoria, Australia.

148°E, 40°09'S

NAME: Tom Burke

DESCRIPTION: He is an 18-year-old male from Mornington, Melbourne. He is an apprentice carpenter.

BACKGROUND:

WEATHER: The air temperature was 16.3°C, dew point 12.9°C, humidity 80% and the wind was from the ENE at 16 kt/hr.

MOON PHASE: Last Quarter, November 14, 2005

SEA CONDITIONS: One metre surf.

ENVIRONMENT: Life Saving Victoria's Chris Stevens says the Western Port area is a shark breeding ground, but swimmers and surfers should not be unduly alarmed. "It is a known area for sharks, but for shark-attacks, we don't have records that say that they are common in that area," he said.

DISTANCE FROM SHORE: 50 metres

TIME: 18h15 local time (GMT +11 hours because Victoria is on Daylight Saving Time).

NARRATIVE: Tom Burke was surfing with friends and lying on his board, waiting for a wave. "I just started feeling really weird, then I saw a big black thing come up." The shark nudged him off his board. "I got pulled off the board but I didn't go underneath the water," said the surfer who fought back when he realized what was happening. "This thing just came up and grabbed my leg and sort of ripped me off my board and then I don't know – I just sort of got back up and sort of saw it again and just punched it real hard," he said. "I punched it as hard as I could, then I started kicking it. I didn't really have a clue what was going on. It was surreal."

His mate, Simon Chambers, was surfing nearby and initially thought it was a joke. "He lost his balance and fell off his board and said 'something is biting me' – we laughed it off," Chambers said. "But then there was a big splash and the board went flying." Nearby surfers came to their aid, helping Burke back to shore.

INJURY: A photo taken on a mobile phone camera shows two large bite marks on the

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Tom Burke.

Picture: Matt Bouwmeester

medial aspect of the left leg. Acting Sergeant Jim Martin says his injuries are not life threatening. "There's two teeth marks, each one about four to five inches long," he said.

TREATMENT: His friends drove him to Rosebud Hospital. "There were seven bite marks on my leg so that's got to get a few stitches in it and then it should be all right," said Burke. The injuries were repaired with 16 sutures.

SPECIES: According to the surfer and witnesses, the shark was about 1.8 metres in length. Although the surfers believed the shark was a bronze whaler, Melbourne Aquarium aquarist David Donnelly said it may involved a young white shark.

SOURCES: Sydney Morning Herald, November 26 & 26, 2005,
<http://www.smh.com.au/news/National/Surfer-attacked-by-shark-off-Vic-coast/2005/11/25/1132703381026.html>.

CASE INVESTIGATOR: Terry Peake, Shark Research Institute



Photo: Angela Wylie

*Laughing about the incident afterwards:
Tom Burke with mate Simon Chambers.*