

CASE: [GSAF 1886.03.00](#)

DATE: March 1886

LOCATION: The incident took place in Watson's Bay, New South Wales, Australia.

NAME: James Barefoot

DESCRIPTION: He was a male.

NARRATIVE: Mr. Barefoot drowned when a boat from the *Austral* capsized at Watson's Bay. Several days later his body was found in a shark caught at Dobroyd Head.

SPECIES INVOLVED: Tiger shark

NOTE: G.P. Whitley adds, "Other human remains in sharks at Berry's Bay next day."

SOURCES: Evening Post (Wellington, New Zealand), April 7, 1886, page 2; Gilbert P. Whitley (1951), page 192, citing G.W. Wellesley, *in lit.*, 1941



MEN DEVoured BY SHARKS AT SYDNEY.

The following horrible narration is from the Sydney Town and Country Journal of 13th March :—

The fate of at least one of the unfortunate men who have been missing from the Austral since Sunday week, has been unquestionably settled by the results of a *post mortem* examination of one of the seven sharks caught in harbour on Sunday. The sharks were all fully developed, and two or three of them were giant-like specimens of their order. The sharks were on Monday afternoon exhibited to those who cared to inspect so unusual a haul of these terrors of the sea. When public curiosity began to wane, and the improvised showmen thought they had secured all the patronage their peculiar exhibit was likely to attract, they, with seamanlike curiosity, resolved to explore the capacious interiors of the monsters. One after another the sharks were opened, but with no results, until operations were begun on the largest shark: their searches were then rewarded with a horrible discovery. As soon as an entry had been made into the largest shark a piece of clothing was discovered, and on this been brought to the light of day it was found to be the leg of a pair of trousers. The next thing discovered was a pair of braces. The discoveries were enough to chill any one's blood with the horrible anticipation of what a silent tale of repulsive horrors these things disclosed. But the find was not complete. Continuing the search Mr. Benj. Barnett came upon the foot of

a man. The monster had made a clean bite just above the instep, and from portion to the toes the foot was complete. It was in a perfect state of preservation. The only thing which was in any way abnormal was a slight discolouration of the skin. In the other shark a quantity of undigested human skin, bones, and a penny piece were found.

These discoveries at once brought up the memory of the three men who had been missed from the Austral. Communication was made with the authorities of the vessel. Mr. Pentecost, the third officer, was sent to make the painful examination, and after a close and careful inspection of the foot, the leg of the trousers, and the braces, he failed to recognise the identity of either of the men in the boat, but he had not the slightest doubt that the leg of the trousers belonged to a man named James Barefoot, one of the men missing from the Austral.

There can be little doubt that Barefoot is not the only man who has fallen a victim to the appetite of these terrors of the harbour. The bones and the flesh found in the second shark seem to have been portions of some one's body which the shark had failed to digest. Had it not been that the shark in the interior of which the remains of poor Barefoot were found had taken such ravenous bites, the fate of this unfortunate fellow would probably have for ever remained a sealed mystery. The matter was reported to the Coroner, but he declined to hold an inquest on a foot which no one could identify.
