

ACTIVITY: Boating

CASE: [GSAF 1937.09.01](#)

DATE: Wednesday September 1, 1937

LOCATION: The incident took place off Port Righ, Carradale, Kintyre Peninsula, Argyll, Scotland.

NAMES: Captain Angus Brown, master of the Hay Line steamer, the *Dutchess*, was originally from Carradale and brought his wife and two young children (Jessica, age 10 and Neil, age six) to visit family during the summer holiday. His brothers, Robert and Archibald, were fishermen who made some extra money by hiring out boats to summer visitors. Donald MacDonald (age 14) was a local boy employed by Robert Brown to help out during the summer.

DESCRIPTION: The party was onboard the largest boat owned by the Brown brothers, the *Eagle*, a 15-foot planked dinghy that could be rowed or sailed.



BACKGROUND

WEATHER: The sky was overcast, but the sun broke through intermittently throughout the day.

MOON PHASE: New Moon, September 4, 1937

SEA CONDITIONS: There was a swell from the south, as is usual following a few days of stormy weather.

ENVIRONMENT: There were plenty of basking sharks about. Outside Port Righ in the sound sharks were “leaping out of the water nonstop”, according to witnesses.

DISTANCE FROM SHORE: The incident took place 100 to 200 yards off Point Balfadgen, the northern promontory.

DEPTH OF WATER AT INCIDENT SITE: Ten metres dropping to rapidly to 26 metres.

TIME: Late morning

NARRATIVE: Angus and Robert Brown took the children out for a sail in the *Eagle*: Angus, Jessica and Neil were sitting in the stern, Robert Brown was in the bow and Donald MacDonald was amidships with the oars. The sail was set and the *Eagle* was “going like a clipper” out of the bay when the main halliard snapped and the sail came down, forcing them to put back towards Port Righ. The two men were rowing when Donald MacDonald says, “the next thing I knew I was eight or 10 feet under the water with the others.”

Colin Oman (age nine) was lying on the grass outside of his house watching the *Eagle* and saw a big splash and then the boat was on its side. The men righted the boat and put Jessica and Neil in it, but it was capsized again and possibly a third time. Jessica and Donald clung to the boat and dragged Angus Brown partly onto it, but he died as they held him (possibly due to a heart attack rather than drowning).

The incident was seen from shore and several boats went out to assist, rescuing Donald and Jessica and recovering the bodies of Angus and Neil Brown. The body of Robert Brown was recovered several days later. When the *Eagle* was brought ashore, it was found that the housing for the base of the mast was broken and the hull was cracked. It was thought that the *Eagle* caught a glancing blow from a rapidly ascending basking shark which would account for the suddenness with which everyone was dumped into the water and the relative lack of damage to the boat's hull. It was also thought that while rowing the Brown brothers may have touched the fin of a basking shark, initiating a sudden escape behavior by the shark. It could also be that the *Eagle* was overturned by a breaching shark, and the shark, possibly injured and staying at the surface, clipped the *Eagle* once or twice with its tail.

SPECIES INVOLVED: The incident involved a basking shark.

SOURCES: The Times (London), September 2, 1937; The Canberra Times, Friday September 3, 1937, page 1; The Basking Shark in Scotland, by Denis Fairfax, pages 62-67

SHARK SINKS FISHING BOAT



LONDON, Wednesday.

A 30 feet shark, leaping from the water at Carradale Bay, Kintyre, holed a fishing boat and three of the five occupants were drowned.

The victims were Captain Angus Brown and his brother and son aged 10.

His daughter, aged 12, was found clinging to the side of the sinking boat and holding with one hand her father's body.

A local youth was also saved.



Captain Angus
Brown



Captain Brown's children: Neil & Jessica



Captain Brown's
brother, Robert



Donald MacDonald



Survivors Jessica Brown and Donald MacDonald were each presented with a watch by the Royal National Lifeboat Institution for their attempts to rescue the others. Jessica is shown here being presented with her watch by the mayor of Swansea.

All photographs courtesy Sylvia Paterson & Daily Record, Glasgow