

SHARK DEATH

Newcastle's Second

ATTACK AT BAR BEACH

Member of Surf Club Victim

Bar Beach lost its unblemished record of freedom from shark attacks on Saturday afternoon when one of the members of the Cook's Hill Surf Club was killed 150 yards out, directly in front of the pavilion.

The victim was the Sports Secretary of the club, John Welsh, 32, of Denison-street, Hamilton, a single man who was supporting a widowed mother. So savagely was he mauled by the shark that when his body was recovered a few minutes later it was almost bloodless.

Two other club members had narrow escapes from attack.

It was the second shark fatality in Newcastle this season. The first victim was a boy, who was attacked while swimming in Throsby Creek.

The tragedy sent a thrill of horror through the district. There were no swimmers in the surf at Bar Beach yesterday, for it is known that sharks frequent the scene of an attack for several days. Owing to the rough seas, no attempt could be made yesterday to catch the shark.

It is usually at dusk or on dull days that attacks are made by sharks in the surf and conditions at Bar Beach on Saturday afternoon might have been termed "real shark weather."

Welsh was attacked about 3.20 p.m. while he and two others, Herbert Street, of Cook's Hill, the City Council's life-saver at the beach, and Norman Atkins, a well-known champion swimmer, were in the water 150 yards out, directly in front of the pavilion.

Just before 3 o'clock a number of other club members and Robert Newbiggin, the junior champion swimmer, were well out in the water, but one by one they returned to the beach, until only Welsh, Street and Atkins remained.

Shark Charged Savagely

While these three were swimming about in water between 12ft. and 15ft. deep, it is believed that the shark was directly beneath them. Probably the flash of Welsh's legs as he swam closer to the other two attracted the shark's attention. It charged so savagely that Welsh was knocked upwards and then the shark leapt out of the water as it turned to dive at its torn and bleeding victim.

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VICTIM.

It was some time before anyone on the beach realised the significance of what had happened. The two other men in the water had a narrow escape. Atkins declared afterwards that he felt the sudden swirl of the water as the shark charged past him to attack Welsh.

When Atkins struck out for the beach, Street, who had his back to Welsh, turned in time to see the tail and half the body of the shark protruding from the water. There was no sign of Welsh. Street then swam towards the reef, about 75 yards from the shore.

Meanwhile Atkins had reached the beach and raised the alarm. Noel Smith donned the rescue belt and swam out to join Street on the reef, where the water was waist high. He was restrained from going out to search for Welsh.

Victim's Body Recovered

The shark was not seen again, but Welsh was sighted about three minutes after the attack, floating face downwards in shallow water. Street, who had remained on the reef, and Hans Freimuth, another member of the Cook's Hill Club, rescued him. He appeared to be already dead.

Welsh himself had one of the keys of the casualty room, and the captain of the club, W. Steere, had to burst open the door to get a stretcher and blankets on which to place the victim. Welsh had been so savagely mauled that he was almost bloodless.

Newcastle Ambulance took Welsh's body to the General Hospital and then to the City Morgue.

Saw Welsh Attacked

Norman Atkins was very upset by his experience. He said he saw the shark seize Welsh by the legs, turn him over and then dive straight down into the deep water.

Atkins himself had a narrow escape from attack. He said that he felt the swirl of the water about him as the shark charged his companion.

"It was an experience that I never wish to have again," declared Herbert Street, who was actually off duty when the attack occurred. He said he saw Atkins begin to swim towards the shore. Without realising the reason for Atkins's move, he turned just in time to see the shark leap from the water. He followed Atkins towards the beach, but when he reached the reef, about 75 yards from the shore, he turned to see where Welsh was. There was no sign of him or of the shark. With the water swirling about his waist, he waited there in the hope that Welsh would appear.

Street added that Noel Smith swam out with a belt and line and wanted to search for Welsh, but he restrained him. Smith then took off the belt and swam back to the beach.

"A couple of minutes later," added Street, "I saw the body of Welsh floating face downwards in water about two feet deep, 25 yards south of where I was standing. Hans Freimuth joined me, and we recovered the body. We could see that Welsh was dead. The flesh had been torn from his buttocks and there were also bites on one ankle and his right elbow. He must have been bitten at least four times.

"Jack Welsh was a very popular member of the club, and his death is a great loss to us all," concluded Street.

Carnival was Postponed

Had the surf not been rough, the victim and other members of the club would have been at a surf carnival on Dixon Park Beach, just south of the Bar Beach. Unfavourable conditions had caused the postponement of the carnival.

People on the beach declared that it would have been foolish of Atkins and Street to have stayed in the vicinity after Welsh was attacked.

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It is believed that the shark responsible for the attack was one which had been seen cruising around the rocks near Susan Gilmore Beach, which is about 200 yards north of Bar Beach. This particular shark ventured so close to the rocks that children threw stones at it.

For many years Bar Beach has had the reputation of being the safest beach on the coast. No previous shark fatality has been recorded there. On April 4, 1928, Mr. Arthur Edward Lane, 28, of Janet-street, Merewether, was fatally attacked while swimming about 200 yards south of the Bar Beach. Associated with the tragedy was a brave act by Miss Lucy Donaldson, of Brisbane, who was visiting friends at Newcastle. About 5.30 p.m. Lane entered the water and was attacked a few minutes later. He was assisted from the water by Miss Donaldson, but died on the way to hospital.

The victim of the attack, John Welsh, of Denison-street, Hamilton, was elected

Sports Secretary of the Cook's Hill Surf Club at the last annual meeting. His father died about two years ago, and since then John Welsh had been his mother's main support. It is believed that a brother lives in South Australia. Welsh was at one time a member of the North Narrabeen Surf Club, but he left Australia to take a position at Samarai, Papua. Three years ago he returned to Australia and at the time of his death he was a departmental manager at O'Brien's drapery store at West Maitland.

The funeral will take place at 2.30 p.m. to-day.

Fund Opened

Cook's Hill Surf Club has opened a subscription list to pay the funeral expenses and erect a suitable kerbstones. The club has donated £2/2/, and the Social Committee £2/2/. Other donations, mainly from members of the club, have made the total £28/18/. Donations may be sent to Mr. S. Baker, 60 Berner-street, Merewether.