

ACTIVITY: Swimming

CASE: GSAF 1943.03.21 / SA-070

DATE: Sunday March 21, 1943

LOCATION: The attack took place in the Indian Ocean at North Beach, Durban, opposite the Miniature Railway, in KwaZulu-Natal, South Africa.

29°51,1'S, 31°02,4'E

NAME: Eric Ridley

DESCRIPTION: A 31-year-old male, he was described as having a short stature and wearing black swimming trunks. He was a Petty Officer of the British Royal Navy and stationed in Durban.

BACKGROUND

WEATHER: Durban meteorological station recorded temperatures of 19° to 27°C, no rain and at 15h00 there was 1/8 cloud cover and a gentle eight-knot northeasterly onshore breeze.

MOON PHASE: Full Moon, March 22, 1943

SEA CONDITIONS: The surf was large, the current was strong, the water was murky, and a channel was present.

DISTANCE FROM SHORE: Between 75 and 100 metres

DEPTH: Three metres

TIME: 16h10

NARRATIVE: Many bathers were in the water when Eric Ridley and a friend, Mr C.M. Kahn, went for a swim. Suddenly Ridley shouted for Kahn but Kahn was in difficulty himself and reached shore only after a struggle. For 20 minutes the life-savers repeatedly tried to get a life-line to Ridley but the heavy surf battered them against the iron stanchions that extended into the sea. Finally a life-saver succeeded in reaching Ridley and took him half-way to shore where they were joined by a former life-saver, C.D. Maher, and together the two men brought the unconscious man to the beach.

INJURY: Fatal. There was a deep laceration on his thigh and both his calves were mauled.

FIRST AID: Artificial resuscitation was administered to Ridley and he was taken to Addington Hospital in Durban.

TREATMENT: Ridley died en route to the hospital. Doctors at the hospital thought that his wounds may have been caused by iron stanchions in the water, but the life-savers believed they were inflicted by a shark. The inquest report dated March 23, 1943 states that death was caused by drowning.

SPECIES INVOLVED: Not identified



