

**ACTIVITY:** Swimming

**CASE:** GSAF 1958.01.09 / SA-122

**DATE:** Thursday January 9, 1958

**LOCATION:** The attack occurred at Scottburgh, 55 kilometres southwest of Durban on the KwaZulu-Natal coast of South Africa.

*30°16,7'S, 30°45,7'E*

**NAME:** Derryck Garth Prinsloo

**DESCRIPTION:** The swimmer, a 42-year-old male, was clad in a maroon bathing suit. He was a farmer from the Theunissen District of the Orange Free State.

### BACKGROUND

**WEATHER:** The weather was cold and wet. The Durban meteorological station recorded temperatures from 24° to 29°C and 1,5 millimetres of rain. At 08h30 there was 2/8 cloud cover and a nine-knot northeasterly breeze.

**MOON PHASE:** Full Moon, January 5, 1958

**SEA CONDITIONS:** Discolored river water laden with cane debris flowed into the sea adjacent to the bathing area and was churned by the rough surf. The incident took place three hours after mean high tide and two days before neap tides.

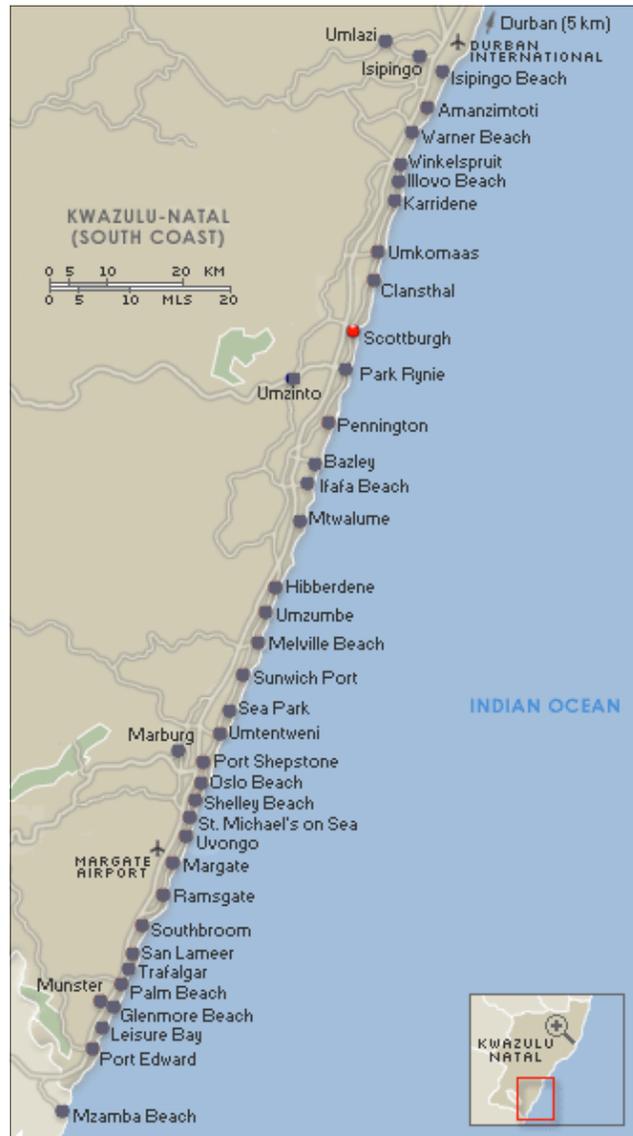
**ENVIRONMENT:** In the late 1950s Scottburgh was a small resort fringed by a coastal forest. Peter Liddle, a professional life-saver at Scottburgh, said that during the previous fortnight a sandshark and a hammerhead shark, both about 45 kilograms, were taken 180 metres from the rocks by fishermen. After this incident, Mr M. Kisser, the contractor who serviced the Durban shark nets, laid a net or nets at Scottburgh, but his net captures are not known.

**DISTANCE FROM SHORE:** 10 to 20 metres

**DEPTH:** 0,6 metres

**TIME:** 07h30

**NARRATIVE:** Many people were on the beach including Prinsloo's wife and ten-year-old daughter, Erna, but only 20 bathers were in the sea. Some bathers were about 20 metres from the beach but Prinsloo was closer inshore. He had just remarked to Mrs J.A.C. Nieman and Mr Prinsloo's 16-year-old son, Jacques, "This is what I like about the waves here; they are so beautifully even."

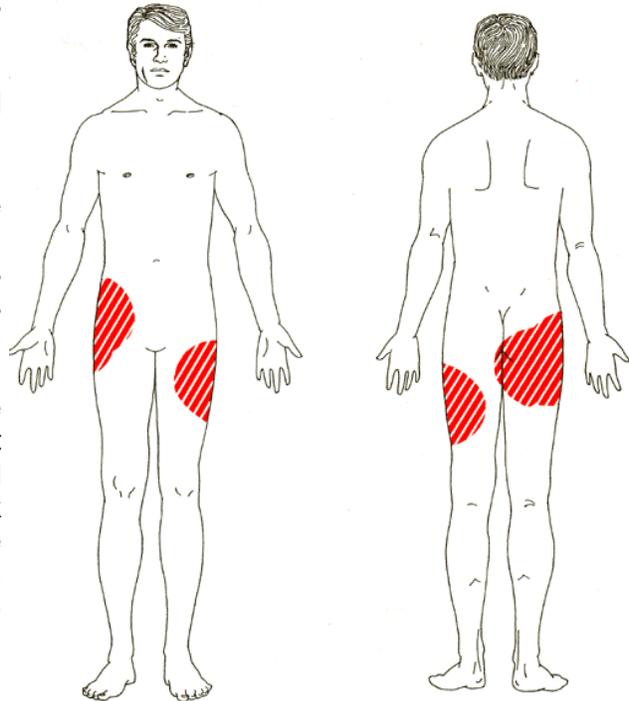


Suddenly, without warning, the shark hurled itself at Prinsloo, striking with such force that the man was flung out of the water. The initial bite removed flesh from his right buttock. Prinsloo fell on his side as the shark wheeled and bit him again. In the second bite the shark removed a large portion of Prinsloo's left thigh. In the third assault it tore another portion from his buttocks and right thigh. "We saw the flashing black tail of the shark churning the water as it attacked with a circular sweep," said Mrs Nieman, "It did not attack him and leave him but went on attacking him mercilessly." The shark began the assault in less than a metre of water and, at times, "its belly was on the sand," said a witness, Brigadier J.T. Durrant, "and when it left off, [Prinsloo] was only 4,5 metres from shore."

Life-savers rushed into the water, caught hold of Prinsloo and carried him to shore.

**INJURY:** Prinsloo was mauled below the waist: his buttocks and groin were bitten and he suffered gross injuries to both thighs. His femoral artery was cut and his left leg was nearly severed.

**FIRST AID:** Prinsloo was still alive when the stretcher was brought from the life-savers' hut to the water's edge. A tourniquet was applied to his left thigh and towels were used to pack his wounds. He was unconscious when he was bundled into a private station wagon owned by Brigadier Durrant and rushed to Renishaw Hospital a few kilometres away. Prinsloo was dead on arrival at the hospital.



**SPECIES INVOLVED:** Liddle believed the shark was a 90-kilogram dusky shark, *Carcharhinus obscurus*, about 1,8 to three metres in length, but a number of factors suggest that the attacker was a tiger shark, *Galeocerdo cuvier*. Tiger sharks frequent turbid debris-laden water and species distribution statistics of the Natal Sharks Board indicate Scottburgh has the second highest incidence of tiger sharks along the KwaZulu-Natal coast with catches peaking in November and December, although their numbers decline throughout January. The determined attack in shallow water is also consistent with the behavior of a tiger shark. However, there is compelling evidence that the incident involved a white shark, *Carcharodon carcharias*. On 22 January 1958 the press reported that a dusky shark and two white sharks were found in the nets at Amanzimtoti, 29 kilometres north of Scottburgh. The gut of one, a 127-kilogram [280-pound] white shark that had been dead about five days, contained remnants of a maroon bathing costume thought to be Prinsloo's. Chemical analysis revealed traces of human blood on the bathing costume.

**COMMENT:** The Natal Angling Board of Control, which administered 52 angling clubs on the north and south coast, proposed a ban on inshore whaling which would forbid slaughter of whales within 16 kilometres of the KwaZulu-Natal coast. "Whales are killed close inshore and sometimes chased right on to the rocks," said Ted Holgate, veteran fisherman and

spokesman for the Triangular Casting and Angling Association, "their blood spoor lures sharks in large numbers and the regular use of inshore routes by the whaling vessels must obviously make sharks regard the area as a permanent hunting ground." The anglers also proposed whalers be required to sail directly to their base at Durban instead of following the coastline. No one listened.

Instead, barriers and the now-infamous shark nets began to be installed at beaches along the Natal coast, measures supported by the tourist industry who advertised they offered 'protected' beaches.

**SOURCES:** Daily News (Durban), January 9, 13 & 21, and August 8, 1958; Natal Mercury, January 10, 13, 21 & 30, 1958; South Coast Herald, January 17, 1958.

**CASE INVESTIGATOR:** Marie Levine

⑧ Saw Fatal Attack  
Shark Acc t.



**MR. Peter Liddle**, Scottburgh's 20-year-old professional lifesaver was watching about 20 early-morning bathers when a lazy grey shark attacked Mr. D. G. Prinsloo, of Theunissen, O.F.S., at about 7.30 a.m. yesterday. The shark swam past several bathers, including Mr. Prinsloo's 16-year-old son, Jacques, but was not seen by anyone until making a series of killing attacks in knee-deep water.

1,000 AT FUNERAL  
OF SHARK VICTIM

THEUNISSEN, January 12.— More than 1,000 people attended the funeral in Theunissen on Saturday, of Mr. Derek Garth Prinsloo, a local farmer who was fatally attacked by a shark on the Scottburgh beach last Wednesday.

The big Dutch Reformed Church was full to overflowing. Farmers from all parts of the district and from neighbouring districts attended the funeral.— (Sapa.)

13 JAN 1958

*Stop Press*



*X marks the spot where Derryck Prinsloo was bitten by the shark*



*The arrow points to the spot where Derryck Prinsloo was bitten by the shark.*

# Attacks Now Total Five

"Natal Mercury" Reporter

**T**HE tragic death of 42-year-old Mr. Derryck Prinsloo, taken by a killer-shark off Scottburgh early yesterday morning, brings the number of sharp attacks during the past month to five, and the death roll to three.

In an unprecedented reign of terror which has virtually put an end to sea-bathing along the South Coast and sent thousands of visitors streaming to net-protected beaches, the marauding sharks have cast a shadow of death over Southern Africa's premier holiday playground.

The first of the five attacks happened only 23 days ago on December 18—when 16-year-old Robert Wherley lost a leg while bathing in discoloured water at Karridene. This was the first recorded shark attack in Natal waters since 1954.

The first fatality occurred only 48 hours afterwards.

## SCHOOLBOY KILLED

A giant shark, believed to be the vicious ragged-tooth type, cruised through the breakers off Uvongo Beach and killed a 14-year-old Johannesburg schoolboy, Allan Green, who was bathing less than 30 yards offshore. A large crowd looked on horrified as they saw the boy go under the water in a spreading circle of blood while the shark's tail lashed the water into foam. The attack occurred at four o'clock in the afternoon.

The third attack and the second death in that week of horror happened at Margate—only four miles away.

Vernon James Berry (23) died on the way to hospital after being savagely mutilated by a 10-foot shark while bathing in waist-deep water at 4.23 p.m. on December 23.

## PULLED OUT

He was pulled out of the water by two friends but died shortly afterwards.

At almost the same spot a week later, another Rhodesian, 14-year-old Julia Painting, lost her left arm and was savagely mutilated by a four-foot ragged-tooth shark. She was bathing in fairly clear waist-deep water on the fringe of a large crowd shortly before one o'clock in the afternoon.

Then came yesterday's attack—the fifth in little more than three weeks and the third fatality.

## NEXT ATTACK

And now Natal—and Southern Africa—is waiting in fear of the next attack.

Bathers keep close inshore, watching the breakers for the long grey shadow which has taken such a dreadful toll of life in the past month, the authorities make frantic plans to combat the menace, and all the while the killer-sharks are cruising off our shores waiting for the next victim.

*Natal Mercury, January 10, 1958*

Steel Nets  
For Warner  
Beach

From Our Own Correspondent

KINGSBURGH, Wednesday.

At an open meeting of the Kingsburgh Town Council tonight it was resolved to allow the Upper South Coast chamber of Commerce, Kingsburgh section, permission to erect a steel shark net with concrete pylons as an experiment at Warner Beach.

It is the intention of the Kingsburgh section of the Chamber of Commerce to erect 400ft. of steel shark netting at Warner Beach, the work to be completed before Easter. The whole cost will be borne by the Upper South Coast Chamber of Commerce, Kingsburgh section.

The Mayor, Mr. Max Nurse, emphasised that the acceptance of the offer of the Chamber in no way countermanded his determination to have action taken by competent national authority on recommendations to be submitted by a meeting of representatives from the combined coastal holiday resorts.

£202 For Shark  
Victim's Wife

SCOTTBURGH, Monday.—Mr. Roy Glenn, president of the Schttburgh Chamber of Commerce, said tonight that his organisation had raised £202 which would be sent to the widow of Mr. D. G. Prinsloo, the Free State farmer who was killed by a shark at Scottburgh on January 9.

Mr. Glen added that, to ensure complete safety for bathers, the Scottburgh Chamber of Commerce had started another fund to provide a total enclosure and also a tidal pool. By to-day this fund had realised £500 and work on the total enclosure had already begun and was expected to be completed within the next three or four days.—(Sapa.)