

ACTIVITY: Shipwreck
CASE: GSAF 1973.09.29 / SA-223
DATE: Saturday September 29, 1973
LOCATION: The incident took place in the Indian Ocean at Mission Rocks, 16km north of the St Lucia Estuary, on the northern coast of KwaZulu-Natal, South Africa.



Mission Rocks

NAME: Unknown
DESCRIPTION: A crewman.

BACKGROUND

MOON PHASE: New Moon, September 26, 1973

NARRATIVE: During the early hours of the morning the 25-ton 14,5-metre fishing vessel *Alan S* developed engine trouble. As the boat drifted towards the rocky shore Captain Vernon Keller shot off flares and broadcast a May-Day. When his craft went aground at Mission Rocks, Captain Keller swam to the beach with a rope in his mouth, rigged a lifeline and managed to bring all but one of his crew to shore. As the last man was pulled towards the beach, he disappeared beneath the waves and the line went slack.

INJURY: Fatal. His body washed ashore 30 kilometres north of Mission Rocks. A large amount of muscle tissue had been removed from his thigh by a shark.

SOURCES: Natal Mercury, October 5, 1973; Durban Daily News, October 5, 1973

CASE INVESTIGATOR: Marie Levine

*Body found on shore
sea call
may be wreck victim*

Daily News Reporter

THE PARTLY decomposed and shark-bitten body of an African man, believed to be that of the seaman who drowned on Saturday when the Durban fishing trawler *Alan S* ran aground in Mission Rocks in Zululand, was found 30km north of the reef today.

The body was found, face down on the beach, by fishermen staying at the Cape Vidal camping site. The body was 14km north of the camping site.

Sharks had attacked the man's thigh and buttock. A Daily News reporter who came across the dead man shortly after the fishermen made their find said that the body was definitely that of an African.

Although police called to the remote spot have not identified the person, they believe he is the victim of the weekend's sea drama.

Nine men made their way safely to shore by means of a rope when the *Alan S* struck the reef and was broken up within an hour. The African crewman, however, was forced from the lifesaving rope when he was struck by a wave.

Body on beach had shark bite

See also A

Mercury Reporter

-5 OCT 1971

EMPANGENI — Zululand police suspect that a body washed up near Cape Vidal yesterday is that of a missing seaman, who disappeared during a rescue operation off St. Lucia last weekend when a fishing vessel ran aground and sank.

The body, which was not badly decomposed, was identified as African. A huge chunk of his thigh was missing, apparently from a shark bite which is thought to have claimed the man's life as he was being pulled ashore by a lifeline early last Saturday morning, when the Durban-based fishing craft Alan S sank.

Five other crew members managed to reach the safety of the shore. The body was found on the oil-polluted shore near Cape Vidal by a party of visiting fishermen camping at the resort.

It had been washed ashore about 35km north of the spot where the Alan S sank in rough seas after developing engine trouble.

The boat drifted helplessly towards the rocky coastline as its captain, Mr. Vernon Keller, sent out flare signals and May-day calls for help.

When the vessel ran aground, Mr. Keller swam ashore with a rope in his mouth and managed to pull another White man, Mr. David Groenewald, and three African crewmen ashore.

As the fourth and last man was pulled towards the beach, he disappeared below the waves and the line went slack.