

# Stories of Fish Swallowing Man

**Dr Harry Rimmer, D.D., Sc.D.**, tells of personally meeting a sailor who fell overboard from a trawler in the **English Channel** and was swallowed by a gigantic *Rhincodon whale shark*. The entire trawler fleet set out to hunt the shark down and, 48 hours after the accident, the shark was sighted and slain with a one-pound deck gun. The carcass was too heavy for the ship's winches to handle, so the crew towed it to shore, intending to give their friend a Christian burial.

When the shark was opened, the man was found unconscious but alive. He was rushed to hospital, where he was found to be suffering from shock alone, and was later discharged. He was on exhibit in a London museum at a shilling admission, and was advertised as 'The Jonah of the Twentieth Century'.

## **James Bartley – Star of the East**

"A sailor swallowed by a whale," proclaimed the tract that fell out of *Winona Echoes*, (1891) an old volume on my shelf. The tract recounted the following remarkable story:

*The whaling ship **Star of the East** was in the vicinity of the Falkland Islands, searching for whales, which were very scarce. One morning the lookout sighted a whale about three miles away on the starboard quarter. Two boats were manned. In a short time one of the boats was near enough to enable the harpooner to send a spear into the whale, which proved to be an exceedingly large one . . . . The whale ... beat about with its tail in the maddest fashion. The boats attempted to get beyond the reach of the animal, which was apparently in its death agonies, and one of them succeeded, but the other was less fortunate. The whale struck it with his nose and upset it. The men were thrown into the water, and before the crew of the other boat could pick them up, one man drowned and James Bartley had disappeared. When the whale became quiet from exhaustion the waters were searched for Bartley, but [he] could not be found; and, under the impression that he had been struck by the whale's tail and sunk to the bottom, the survivors rowed back to the ship. The whale was dead, and in a few hours the great body was lying by the ship's side, and the men were busy with axes and spades cutting through the flesh to secure the fat. They worked all day and part of the night. They resumed operations the next forenoon, and were soon down to the stomach .... The workmen were startled while laboring to clear it ... to discover something doubled up in it that gave spasmodic signs of life. The vast pouch was ... cut open, and inside was found the missing sailor, doubled up and unconscious. He was laid out on the deck and treated to a bath of sea water, which soon revived him ....*

*During the brief sojourn in the whale's belly, Bartley's skin, where it was exposed to the action of the gastric juices, underwent a striking change. His face and hands were bleached to a deadly whiteness, and the skin was wrinkled giving the man the appearance of having been parboiled ....*

*The whaling captains say that they never remember a parallel case to this before. They say that it frequently happens that men are swallowed by whales who become infuriated by pain of the harpoon and attack the boats, but they have never known a man to go through the ordeal that Bartley did and come out alive.*



**The records of the British Admiralty testify that James Bartley, an apprentice seaman on a whaler, was swallowed by a whale in February, 1891, some two hundred miles east of the Falkland Islands in the South Atlantic. He survived the ordeal and this is his amazing tale.**

It was his first whaling voyage and he was aboard the whaling ship **Star of the East**. The lookout spotted a huge sperm whale half a mile off the port bow and gave the cry 'There she blows!' The ship's sails were slackened and soon her small boats were lowered. A deadly race began between the **Star of the East** and the immense whale.

Young James Bartley was in the first longboat to reach the side of the prey. They crept up from the rear, so near that the harpooner leaned over and rammed his weapon deep into the whale's vitals. As the stricken beast sought to free itself of the harpoon, Bartley and the other oarsmen rowed frantically to get out of reach of the massive flukes, the two-pronged tail which threshed the water to foam in the whale's agony.

The whale sounded and eight hundred feet of heavy line streaked out of the line tub before he ended his dive. Then an ominous slacking in the line signaled the monster was going to surface. But where?

The oarsmen readied themselves to pull for their lives. Without warning there was a splintering crash which sent the longboat spinning into the air. The whale thrashed about wildly, snapping at the men and the wreckage with its huge jaws as the water turned to a bloody froth before he sounded again.

Another longboat picked up the survivors of this encounter, but two men were missing - one of them the young apprentice, James Bartley.

The wind now deserted the **Star of the East** and for hours she lay becalmed, wallowing in a light swell.

Shortly before sunset, the now dead whale floated to the surface a few hundred yards from the ship. In a longboat, the crew hastily fastened a line to the whale and the winch brought it to the ship's side. The hot weather climate made it imperative that the whale be cut up at once. Having no means of raising it to the deck, the men took their flensing spades and peeled off the blubber as they slipped and slid along the immense back of this giant mammal.

Late that night, working by lantern-light, the tired crewmen removed the stomach of the whale and slowly winched it to the deck for flensing. They were startled to notice movement inside the large sack, movement that looked like something living and breathing. The captain called the ship's doctor who made an incision in the tough flesh. And out slid the doubled up missing sailor, James Bartley, as if he were suffering from severe stomach cramps. He was alive, but unconscious.

The doctor ordered Bartley drenched with sea water, a treatment which restored his consciousness but not his reason, for he babbled incoherently.

Confined to a cabin for several weeks and bound so he could not injure himself in his wild flounderings, Bartley gradually regained his senses. Within a month he was able to relate what had happened to him in his terrifying experience.

Bartley said that as he was cast into the water from the long boat he saw a tremendous mouth open over him and he screamed as he was engulfed by it. He then felt sharp stabbing pains as he was swept across the teeth and then slid feet first down a slimy tube that carried him to the whale's stomach. He could breath, but the hot, fetid odor soon rendered him unconscious and the last thing he remembers was kicking as hard as he could at the soft, yielding stomach. Finally, he lapsed into unconsciousness until he again came to his senses almost a month later.

As a result of his fifteen hours inside the whale's stomach, Bartley lost all the hair on his body and was blind for the rest of his life. His skin was bleached to an unnatural whiteness that gave the appearance of being bloodless, although he was healthy.

James Bartley never made another trip to the sea and settled down to shore life as a cobbler in his native city of Gloucester, England. He died eighteen years after his remarkable survival and terrifying adventure.

On his tombstone in the churchyard at Gloucester is a brief account of his experience at sea and a footnote, which says: James Bartley -1870-1909 - A Modern Jonah.



From: TRUE TALES OF TERROR ON THE HIGH SEAS

<http://www.ycaol.com/swallowed.htm>

[http://www.coolantarctica.com/Antarctica%20fact%20file/wildlife/whales/sperm\\_whale\\_tales.htm](http://www.coolantarctica.com/Antarctica%20fact%20file/wildlife/whales/sperm_whale_tales.htm)

## OTHER JONAH-LIKE ACCOUNTS?

There is an oft-quoted story concerning a certain **James Bartley**, when he was a harpooner on the whale-ship *Star of the East*, in 1891, under the command of Captain Killam, near the Falkland Islands. In the course of a whale hunt, Bartley fell into the sea and disappeared. The whale was killed and the next day, when the sailors cut it open, they were amazed to find Bartley still alive in the whale's stomach. He was revived and in time recovered from his experience. The report says, 'During his sojourn in the whale's stomach Bartley's skin, where exposed to the action of the gastric juice, underwent a striking change. His face, neck, and hands were bleached to a deadly whiteness, and took on the appearance of parchment. Bartley affirms that he would probably have lived inside his house of flesh until he starved, for he lost his senses through fright and not from lack of air.'<sup>2</sup>

This story is said to have first appeared in October 1892, in the English newspaper *Great Yarmouth Mercury*. It was then reprinted in other papers, and was included by Sir Francis Fox in his book, *Sixty-three Years of Engineering, Scientific and Social Work*, published in 1924.

It has been counter-claimed by sceptics that in 1906 an Anglican clergyman named Canon Williams wrote to Captain Killam to verify the story, but received a letter from the captain's wife, dated November 24, 1906, saying: 'There is not one word of truth in the whole story. I was with my husband all the years he was in the "Star of the East". There was never a man lost overboard while my husband was in her. The sailor has told a great sea yarn.'<sup>3</sup>

From the above contradictory reports it would appear that someone has been economical with the truth in regard to this matter. What is not nearly so clear is just who!

## A Modern Day Jonah, from "Natural History" 1947

after P. Budker 1959 - "Whales and Whaling"

"I was greatly interested in the letter appearing in your April publication (above) concerning the incredible incident of the unfortunate seaman, Jas. Bartley, who was swallowed by a sperm-whale and lived to tell the tale. My interest is in a sense personal because of my small part in a similar though not so fortunate accident. Incidentally, I am inclined to agree with Dr. Murphy's remarks concerning the dubiousness of the tale quoted.

It was in February or March 1893 or 1894 when, as a young surgeon, I was attached to the sealing fleet out of St. John's, Newfoundland, as much for the adventure as for my "sealer's share" of the trip. We sailed on the schooner *Toulinguet*, one of a considerable fleet of wooden ships bent on a winter's take of seal pups.

One of the lads in another ship had the misfortune, in full view of his comrades, to become isolated from the others on an ice pan, from which he fell into the icy waters in the proximity of a huge sperm-whale. The whale was apparently as lost and out of season in those Arctic waters as he was confused and angered by the sudden appearance of a fleet of ships and men.

Somehow the poor fellow was swallowed by the whale, which then made for one of the smaller sealers. A lucky shot from a small cannon mounted on her stern mortally wounded the huge mammal and served to change his course, though he travelled a full three miles out to sea before his final death thrashing. The next day he was found belly-up by one of the long boats as it was searching for a seal: and although it was impossible under those conditions to bring him in, the men, by a valiant effort and many hours of hard labour were able to hack their way through his abdomen below the diaphragm and isolated his huge gas-filled "upper stomach" which apparently contained their comrade. This was severed with some difficulty at the cardia and in the first portion of the duodenum, They brought it to me for inspection and also for preservation of the man's body, as it was hoped he could be returned to his native Argentinia (Newfoundland) for burial.

At first I attempted the dissection with my scalpel, but quickly gave it up in favour of one of the sharpest galley-knives. The stomach was finally opened and gave off an overpowering stench. A fearsome sight met our eyes. The young man had apparently been badly crushed in the region of his chest, which may have been enough to kill him out-right. (In any event, an examination of his lungs revealed a general atelectasia with marked haemorrhage throughout.) The most striking findings were external, however: the whale's gastric mucosa had encased his body (particularly the exposed parts) like the foot of a large snail. His face, hands, and one of his legs, where a trouser leg had been pulled up or torn, were badly macerated and partially digested. It was my opinion that he had no consciousness of what happened to him. Curiously enough some lice on his head appeared to still be alive.

The appearance and odour were so bad that all save I were forced to turn away, and we were obliged to consign him to the briny deep - the last resting place of many a good sealer - rather than carry him back to his rocky homeland. I believe this tends to corroborate Dr. Murphy's remarks."

**Boston, Mass Egerton Y. Davis, Jr**

[http://www.coolantarctica.com/Antarctica%20fact%20file/wildlife/whales/sperm\\_whale\\_tales.htm](http://www.coolantarctica.com/Antarctica%20fact%20file/wildlife/whales/sperm_whale_tales.htm)

# Swallowed alive, man survives inside whale's stomach for three days

DECCAN CHRONICLE.

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According to the man he stayed inside the whale for three days and three nights. "The only thing that kept me alive where the raw fish I ate and the light from my waterproof watch," says the man.

A Spanish fisherman who drowned in the sea is back with a very interesting story. The man who disappeared for several days after he went overboard during bad storm has return to share his survival tale.

The 56-year-old fisherman Luigi Marquez claims that a whale swallowed him. According to Marquez he stayed there for three days and nights.



When Marquez didn't return home, the coastal guard tried to find him during but failed to locate him and he was considered dead.

"This great beast swallowed me the morning after the storm," he told local reporters.

"It is the most frightening thing I have ever lived. Everything was pitch black and I was shivering cold. The only thing that kept me alive were the raw fish I ate and the light from my waterproof watch, that is how I kept in touch with time. And the smell, I will never forget that horrible stench of putrid decomposition. I had to wash for three days before the odor went away," Luigi Marquez told reporters.

"This is truly a miracle! Saint Mary of Jesus has heard our prayers. "I prayed and I prayed and I never lost faith, and the Lord has brought me back my precious Luigi," told his wife, Penelope Marquez, to local reporters.

Though there are many speculations over what Marque is saying, but he claims that he was inside the whale for 72 hours before it flushed him out.

# "Biggest Fish Ever Found" Unearthed in U.K.

James Owen in England

for National Geographic News October 1, 2003

Fish tend to inspire exaggerated tales, as anglers know all too well. But paleontologists digging up a giant fossilized fish in England have plenty of bones to back their claim that this really was one heck of a whopper. First, however, they've got to piece all the evidence together.

Discovered by two paleontology students in clay pits near Peterborough, the fossil is the largest known fish ever recorded. Identified by experts from the universities of Portsmouth and Glasgow, *Leedsichthys problematicus* swam the world's oceans some 155 million years ago.

"It's by far the biggest and most complete *Leedsichthys* ever found, which makes it the biggest fish ever found," said Mike Barker, head of paleobiology at Portsmouth University.

Equipped with massive, teeth-lined gills, experts say the creature was probably one the first giant planktivores. A Jurassic version of the baleen whale or basking shark, it would have filtered out huge quantities of tiny shrimp and other marine organisms while cruising over what is now central England.

The Peterborough specimen's estimated length is 22 meters (72 feet)—almost twice as long as a whale shark, the largest fish swimming today. Those working on the fossil reckon the species may have reached sizes to rival the blue whale.

Named after Alfred Leeds, an English farmer who first discovered *Leedsichthys problematicus* in the late 1800s, "*problematicus*" reflects difficulties paleontologists had in classifying the species, eventually linking it to an extinct group of bony fishes called pachycormids which had sickle-shaped pectoral fins and forked tails.

## Problem Fish

*Leedsichthys* is proving equally problematical for today's fossil experts. The Peterborough site contains a tangled mass of thousands of fractured bones, making the task of excavation akin to tackling a gargantuan, mud-caked jigsaw puzzle.

"It's far more complicated than digging up a large reptile or a dinosaur," said dig leader Jeff Liston, vertebrate researcher at Glasgow University's Hunterian Museum in Scotland. "Its bones are exceptionally thin, and are crushed by the weight of clay over millions of years. Another problem is that many fish from this family had only limited calcification of their skeleton, so many parts simply do not preserve."

He added: "There's still a stupendous quantity of bones we're trying to get out. The previous biggest specimen, called Big Meg, filled about 20 museum drawers. We've already got almost 120 drawers of material."

In fact, Liston says he felt relieved when his team discovered the fish's tail section was missing, having been quarried out during clay extraction work in the late 1980s. "The last time someone tried to excavate the tail of this animal it came out in just under 10,000 fragments," he said.

Liston and his team estimated the fish's age by examining other fossils and the sediment containing its remains. Tests showed this comprised eight to 10 percent organic material, such as algae and plankton.

This may provide a clue to the sudden extinction of *Leedsichthys*. Researchers have puzzled over the fact the fish isn't known before the Mid Jurassic period, while no remains have been found later than the early Late Jurassic. One theory is that the fish's evolution was closely linked with a sudden rise in sea levels which engulfed much of Europe. As these plankton-rich seas started to recede, so the fortunes of *Leedsichthys* also began to ebb.

### **Extinction Theories**

"Nobody's sure quite why it became extinct," said Barker. "But the collapse of the marine ecosystem due to environmental changes must be a leading contender."

Liston puts forward another possibility, linking its demise with the emergence of a brash new breed of bony fishes called teleosts. This group makes up around 95 percent of bony fish living today, including everything from tuna and cod and to halibut and salmon.

Liston believes teleosts would have had a crucial competitive edge over pachycormids due to their reproductive strategy. While *Leedsichthys* relied on relatively small numbers of well-developed young to perpetuate the species, the newcomers produced huge quantities of small eggs.

"Teleosts start to radiate and diversify at this time," he added. "So imagine a numbers race taking place, where teleosts suddenly become far more successful because there are far more of them, then you can see the pachycormids are going to get edged out."

Once all the remains are removed from the dig site, Liston says it will take many months and even years to piece them back together, with further funding needed to complete the work.

But eventually the world's biggest known fish will be in a fit state to show the public. Provided, of course, they can find somewhere big enough to display it.



## WHAT ABOUT THE 3 DAYS AND 3 NIGHTS?

The ancient Hebrews idiomatically counted a part of a day as a whole day,<sup>5</sup> so that 'three days and three nights' could have been as short as 38 hours. This explains how Jesus could say that the time He would be in the tomb (from late Friday afternoon to early Sunday morning) was similar to the 'three days and three nights' of Jonah's experience ([Matthew 12:40](#)). It is interesting to note that in Mark 8:31 Jesus is recorded as saying, 'The Son of Man will rise again after three days', while in Matthew 16:21 He says, 'He will be raised again on the third day.' Jesus thus used the two time frames interchangeably, and there is no error or contradiction concerning the time Jesus was in the tomb compared with the time Jonah was in the fish, as sceptics have claimed.<sup>6</sup>

One of the many remarkable parts of this story is why Jonah waited so long before he prayed to God out of the fish's belly ([Jonah 2:1](#)). Perhaps he fainted and God revived him on the third day,

[http://www.daveandangel.com/CRN/Jonah\\_Great\\_Fish.html](http://www.daveandangel.com/CRN/Jonah_Great_Fish.html)

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"A photo of a Great White swallowing a whole 2.10 Meters Dusky Shark. The Dusky Shark was hanging at the stern during a fishing competition. This is ... photographic proof that a Great White shark can swallow a man whole."

"One of the largest specimens was caught off Montauk, Long Island, New York, in 1964; it was 5.34 m [over 17.5 feet] long ... White sharks swallow unchewed creatures and objects half their size ..."

Note that a Great White shark that was over 17 feet long could swallow whole a creature (say, an adult person) that was 6 feet tall.