



# AUSTRALIA COLD CASE: THE SOMERTON MAN



**FOUND NOVEMBER 30, 1948.**

**NAME: UNKNOWN. OCCUPATION: UNKNOWN. CAUSE OF DEATH: UNKNOWN.**

**POSSESSIONS: A SCRAP OF PAPER WITH TWO WORDS IN PERSIAN, TORN FROM A RARE FIRST EDITION BOOK.**

**WELCOME TO THE WORLD'S MOST PERPLEXING COLD CASE.**

## **Facts:**

He was found lying against a seawall, facing the Somerton Beach.

He had no wounds or signs of struggle.

All of his clothing labels were cut off.

Numerous items were found in his pockets, but his wallet was missing and he had no identification on him.

Police later found a piece of rolled-up paper with the words "Tamam Shud," meaning "it is finished," deep in a small pocket within the dead man's trouser pocket.

This piece of paper was torn from an extremely rare copy of the Persian book *The Rubaiyat of Omar Khayyam* - a book of poetry focusing on living life to the fullest and not having regrets when life ends.

## **Your Task:**

Explain who is connected, what happened, and why people did what they did.

**\*\*Make sure you have evidence for your claim!**

Things to keep in mind:

- People lie.

- It is easy to forget names, dates, times, etc. even when people are trying to be honest.

- The line between coincidence and evidence is blurry.

## Exhibit A: The Somerton Man

**Section A1: Description:** The Somerton Man was found resting against a seawall on the beach, facing the ocean. There were no signs of recent injuries or signs of struggle.



He was 5'11" (180 cm).

He had grey eyes.

His hair was a mousy ginger color, graying on sides, receding in the front.

Estimated between 40 and 50 years old.

He weighed between 165-175 pounds.

Missing 18 teeth, including his 2 lateral incisors, which were most likely never grown in due to a genetic defect (See Exhibit E).

Small scars on his left wrist, forearm, and elbow.

Hands and feet were clean, callous-free, indicating no manual labor.

Items in his possession: used bus ticket, unused rail ticket, personal items, scrap of paper containing Persian writing (See Exhibit B).

## Section A2: Police and Autopsy Reports

### Police Report

1. I beg to report that on the morning of the 1st of December, 1948, a man's body was found lying on the beach at Somerton, South Australia. There were no marks of violence on the body and it appeared to be a case of suicide. A post mortem was held on the

### Report on Autopsy

2. Dr. Dwyer who made the postmortem examination [said] the immediate cause of death was heart failure, but was unable to find anything that would have caused heart failure.

Three medical witnesses are of opinion on the postmortem findings that death was not natural. The words \*Tamam Shud support this conclusion.

on analysis no common poison was found.

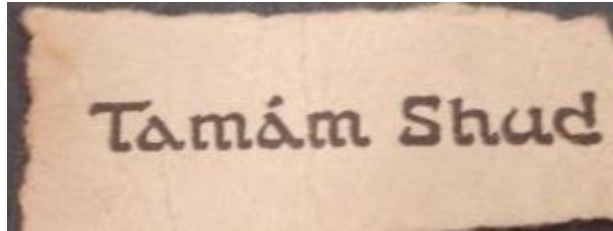
There was no indication of Violence, and I am compelled to the finding that death resulted from poison. But what poison?

\* Tamam Shud: See Exhibit B

## Exhibit B: Items Relating to the Case

### Section B1: Unusual Item Found on Body

This scrap of paper was found in a small pocket within the Somerton Man's pants pocket.



Tamam Shud is Persian. It translates to "it is finished."

The piece of paper was torn from the book *The Rubaiyat of Omar Khayyam*. This edition is extremely rare.

### Section B2: Copy of *The Rubaiyat of Omar Khayyam*

After a public announcement that police were looking for the rare edition of *The Rubaiyat of Omar Khayyam*, a man came forward with it in his possession.

The man who found the copy wished to remain anonymous.

The anonymous man found the copy in the back seat of his unlocked car on November 30, the same night as the Somerton Man's death.

A ripped section on the last page matched with the scrap of paper found in the Somerton Man's pocket, confirming it was from that particular copy.

### Section B3: Handwriting in *The Rubaiyat of Omar Khayyam*

There were two handwritten notes added to the book, possibly written by the Somerton Man.

1. A phone number and the name "Jestyn" (See Section C1)
2. A series of capitalized letters (meaning unknown)

See Exhibit B Cont.

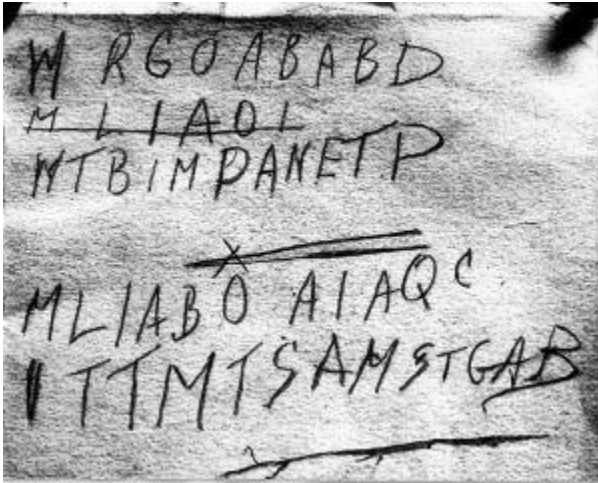
## Exhibit B (Cont.): Items Relating to the Case

### Section B3 (Cont.) Handwriting in *The Rubaiyat of Omar Khayyam*

1. A phone number

This belonged to a woman named Jestyn (See Exhibit C).

2. A series of letters (thought to be code or cipher)



### Section B4: Found Suitcase

This suitcase was found at the Adelaide Railway Station, left there on Nov. 30. It is believed that it belonged to the Somerton Man.

#### Contents:

- Shirts, all tags removed, except one labelled "Kean"
- Laundry bag with the name "Keane"
- **One stencil brush**
- **One piece of light board**
- **One small screwdriver**
- One pair of scissors in a sheath
- One knife in a sheath
- **An unspecified number of pencils**
- Eight lg. envelopes, one sm. envelope
- One glass dish
- One broken pair of scissors
- Personal Items (razor, pajamas, etc.)

Some investigators believe **these items** may be a clue to possible criminal activity.

(See section C2)



## **Exhibit C: Persons of Interest**

### **Section C1: Jestyn**

The name Jestyn was handwritten in the copy of *The Rubaiyat of Omar Khayyam* along with a phone number.

This woman was identified only as Jestyn for many decades, as the police agreed to keep her true identity a secret from the public.

She worked as a nurse.

In a later police report, she was referred to as Jessica Thomson. Other sources identify her as Jessica Harkness, Theresa Powell, or Jessica Johnson.

The phone number listed in *the Rubaiyat* was to a house where she claimed she lived with her husband, Prosper Thomson (See Section C2), though really they did not marry until two years later.

When interviewed, she said she had never met the Somerton Man, but when shown a cast of his face, she “was taken aback, to the point it appeared as if she might faint. She looked away and would not look at it again.”

She admitted to giving a separate copy of *The Rubaiyat* to Alfred Boxall (See Section C3) over drinks at the Clifton Gardens Hotel in Sydney in August 1947, the year before the Somerton Man’s death.

She claimed a mystery man came to her home looking for her earlier that year.

### **Section C2: Prosper Thomson**

Though he lived with “Jestyn,” he was not her husband as she claimed. He was divorcing his current wife, and did not marry Jestyn until 1950.

He was a car salesman and was brought to court more than once for forging car documents, such as altering titles or re-stenciling license plates (See Exhibit B Section B4).

### **Section C3: Alfred Boxall**

Alfred Boxall was a member of the Australian Army.

He was promoted from lance corporal to lieutenant in 3 months (promotions like this usually take years to achieve).

He supposedly worked as an intelligence officer.

He met with Jestyn for drinks at the Clifton Gardens Hotel in August 1947, where she gave him a copy of *The Rubaiyat* (See section D2).

## **Exhibit D: Related Cases**

### **Section D1: The Mangnoson Case**

Keith Mangnoson claimed he knew the Somerton Man, identifying him as Carl Thompson, a former co-worker.

In June 1949, Mangnoson was found unconscious on the coast about 12 miles from Somerton.

Soon after, Mangnoson's wife was confronted by a man who hid his face and told her to "stay away from the police or else." She believed it was due to her husband trying to identify the Somerton Man.

A local businessman and the mayor both received threatening phone calls warning them to stay away from the Mangnoson case. Police viewed these calls as pranks.

### **Section D2: Marshall Case**

In 1945, Joseph Marshall was found dead in Ashton Park with a copy of the *Rubaiyat of Omar Khayyam* open on his chest.

This copy of the *Rubaiyat* was labeled as the 7th edition. The publishing house only printed five editions; a 7<sup>th</sup> edition was never printed for the public.

Ashton Park is next to the Clifton Gardens Hotel (See Exhibit C).

His death was ruled a suicide by poisoning.

In 1945, an inquiry was opened to look into his death. A woman named Gwenneth Graham came forward to testify. She was found dead 13 days later.

## **Exhibit E: Ongoing Investigations**

In November 2013, a woman name Kate Thomson asked for the Somerton Man's body to be exhumed.

Kate Thomson is the daughter of "Jessica Thomson" or "Jestyn."

Kate claimed that her mother "told the police that she didn't know who [the Somerton Man] was . . . but she did (know who he was) and she told me that it is a mystery that was only known to a level higher than the police force."

She states that her mother was a communist sympathizer and spoke Russian (HINT: Research more on what was happening in Russia in 1948).

Kate also suspects that her brother, who was born in 1947, is the son of her mother and the Somerton Man. Her brother is missing both of his incisors due to a genetic condition (See exhibit A).

## Exhibit F: Map



### Places numbered left to right, bottom to top

1. Somerton Beach: where the body was found (See Section A1)
2. Home of “Jessica Thomson” and Prosper Thomson (See Section C1, C2)
3. Jetty St.: where *The Rubaiyat* was found in a man’s unlocked car (See Section B2).
4. *The Adelaide Railway Station*: where the Somerton Man bought his unused train ticket (See Section A1).
5. Sydney, where Jestyn had drinks with Alfred Boxall. Also where Joseph Marshall was found dead (see Section C2, C3, and D2).

\*Distance between Sydney and Somerton: approx. 720 miles



## Exhibit G: Timeline of Events

- **1941-42:** Australia makes trade and political agreements with the United States as allies.
- **1943:** former Australian prime minister pushes to make the Communist Party illegal.
- **June 3, 1945:** Joseph Marshall is found dead in Ashton Park, Sydney. A copy of the *Rubaiyat* was found open next to his body. His death was ruled a suicide.
- **August 15, 1945:** Gwenneth Graham comes to testify in the Joseph Marshall investigation.
- **August 28, 1945:** Gwenneth Graham found dead; her death was ruled a suicide.
- **March 12, 1947:** United States President Truman outlines the threat of the USSR (Russian Republic) and communism.
- **August 1947:** Jessica Thomson (Jestyn) gives Alfred Boxall a copy of the *Rubaiyat* at the Clifton Gardens Hotel, Sydney.
- **November 30, 1948:** Somerton Man is found dead on the beach.
- **January 14, 1949:** Adelaide Railway Station finds Somerton Man's suitcase.
- **June 6, 1949:**
  - Keith Mangnoson found unconscious 12 miles away from Somerton
  - The piece of paper saying "Tamám Shud" is found in small pocket in Somerton Man's trousers.
- **July 22, 1949:** After seeing The Somerton Man connected to the *Rubaiyat* on the news, an anonymous man hands in the book which he found Nov. 30, 1948 in his unlocked car. This means he gave the evidence to police 8 months after finding it.
- **July 26, 1949:** An unlisted phone number discovered in the Somerton Man's copy of the *Rubaiyat* is traced to "Jestyn." She is shown a cast of the Somerton Man's face, but says she doesn't know him.
- **May 1950:** Jestyn marries Prosper Thomson; when questioned in 1949, she lied, stating they were married that year.
- **1950s:** The Somerton Man's copy of the *Rubaiyat* is lost by police or court officials.
- **1986:** Somerton Man's suitcase/contents are destroyed as they are "no longer required."
- **November 2013:** "Jestyn's" daughter asks for the Somerton Man's body to be exhumed, believing the Somerton Man is her brother's father. Her request is denied.