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## Adelaide Police Probe Bone in 1973 Abduction Case

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– Categories: Crime



South Australian authorities are investigating a potential breakthrough in one of the country's longest-running missing persons cases. A bone fragment discovered on a rural property near Yatina may be linked to the 1973 disappearance of two young girls from Adelaide Oval, although no direct connection has been confirmed.

Joanne Ratcliffe, aged 11, and Kirste Gordon, aged 4, disappeared while attending an Australian Rules football match in Adelaide on August 25, 1973. Despite decades of

investigations, their whereabouts remain unknown, and the case continues to hold national significance.

The recent development follows a private search conducted by independent investigators on land formerly owned by Stanley Arthur Hart in South Australia's mid-north. Hart, who died in 1999, has previously been named by some parties as a person of interest, although South Australia Police have not charged him and have stated there is insufficient evidence to formally link him to the case.

The bone fragment was discovered during a surface search of the property and submitted to a forensic anatomist. According to reports, one expert expressed approximately 90 percent confidence that the fragment could be part of a small human pelvis, based on anatomical characteristics. However, a second expert reportedly assessed the fragment and concluded it did not appear to be human. These conflicting assessments underscore the need for comprehensive forensic analysis, which is now underway.

A private investigator also claimed the fragment contains embedded glass, although this detail has not been independently confirmed by police or forensic authorities.

South Australia Police's Major Crime Investigation Branch has taken possession of the fragment and confirmed that further testing will be conducted to determine whether the bone is of human origin. If confirmed as human remains, police have stated that further steps will be taken to assess whether there is any connection to the 1973 abductions.

A police spokesperson said, "Should the bone be identified as human remains, further investigations will be undertaken to determine whether it relates to the disappearance."

The property in Yatina is located approximately 220 kilometers north of Adelaide. Parts of the property had been searched by police in previous investigations, but the area where the bone was found had not been excavated during those earlier efforts.

The disappearance of Ratcliffe and Gordon remains one of Australia's most tragic unsolved crimes. Witnesses at the time reported seeing the girls in the company of an unidentified man shortly before they vanished. Over the years, numerous persons of interest have been examined, but no charges have ever been filed.

Authorities have not provided a timeline for the completion of forensic testing. They continue to urge the public to come forward with any credible information that may help solve the

case. While the discovery has renewed hope, investigators caution that many steps remain before any conclusions can be drawn.