



Adelaide University's Professor Derek Abbott and US Forensic DNA specialist Colleen Fitzpatrick want to end the decades-old Somerton Man mystery. Picture: Tom Huntley.

National

# Scientist at centre of DNA break-throughs in cold case appeals for Government to exhume the body Somerton Man to finally “give him name”

Craig Cook, Exclusive, The Advertiser  
October 1, 2016 10:00pm

- [Has part of mysterious Somerton Man code been cracked?](#)
- [New twist in Somerton Man mystery as fresh claims emerge](#)

THE world-renowned scientist at the centre of remarkable new DNA break-throughs in the cold case of one of Australia’s greatest mysteries has delivered a passionate appeal for the South Australian Government to exhume the body of the Somerton Man to “finally give him a name”.

Somerton Man – buried at West Terrace cemetery – has puzzled police and researchers ever since his fully clothed body was found propped up against a wall on December 1, 1948.

From the very start of the extensive police and coroner’s investigation there was a strong suggestion the man, who was in his mid-40s, was an American.

World-renowned American forensic genealogist Colleen Fitzpatrick this week presented evidence to a conference in the US that DNA testing – from a presumed relative of the dead man – virtually confirmed Somerton Man was from the east coast of the US.

Her research, matched against worldwide genealogy DNA databases, reveals links to a large group of relatives in the state of Virginia.



📷 A photographic reconstruction of the man found dead on Somerton Beach in December, 1948.

There are also strong indications of Native American ancestry and, astonishingly, genes linked to the extended family of American Founding Father, and the principal author of the Declaration of Independence, Thomas Jefferson.

“All this puts Mr X’s (Somerton Man) ancestry, with some authority, in America,” Ms Fitzpatrick told the *Sunday Mail* exclusively from the US, just hours after delivering her

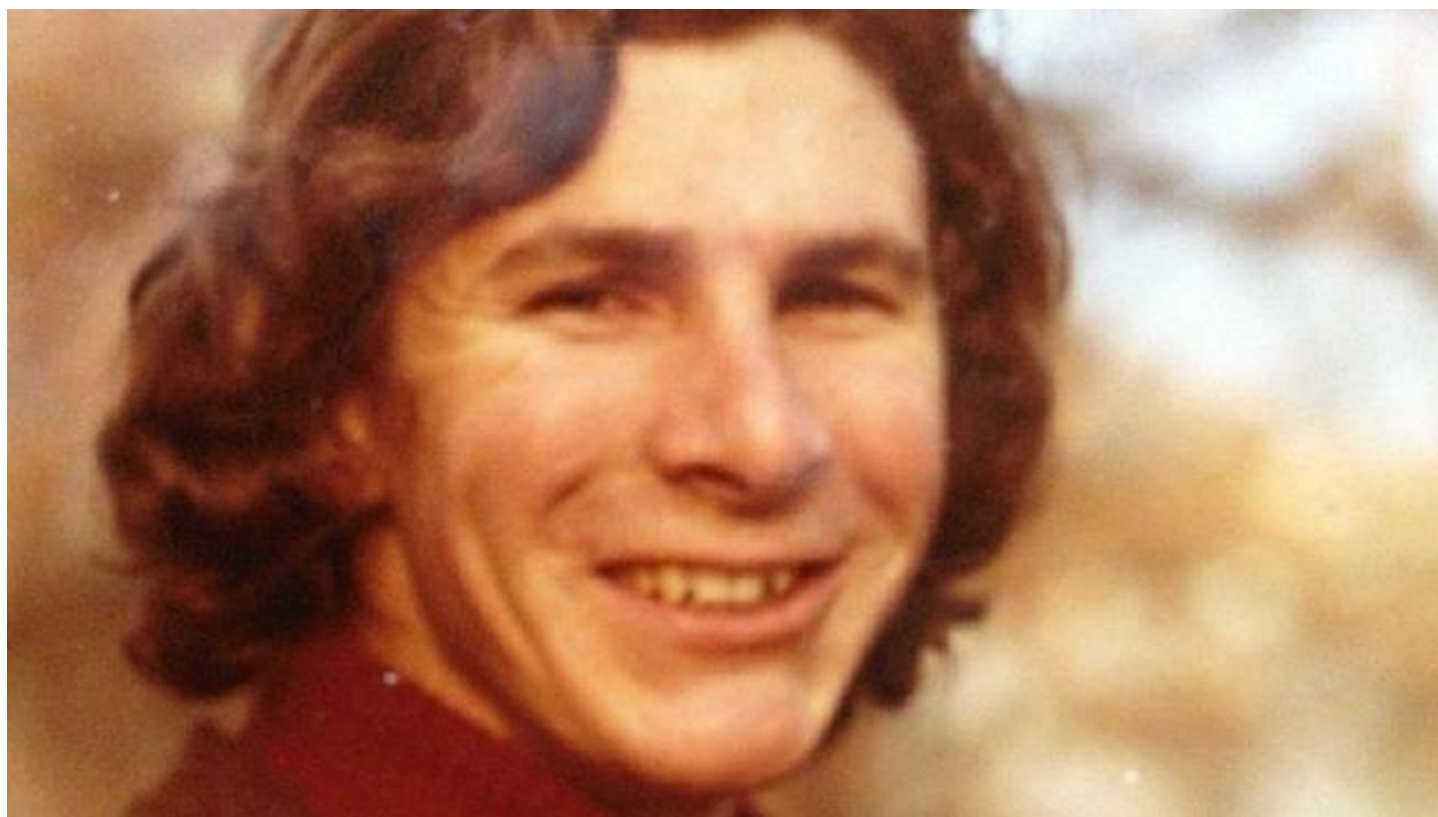
paper at the International Symposium on Human Identification in Minneapolis.

“All the other evidence around this story is important but DNA solves cases and that’s why we need Somerton Man’s direct DNA – so please Mr Attorney-General (John Rau), can you do this (exhume him) now to finally give him a name?”

Ms Fitzpatrick, a former nuclear physicist turned forensic genealogist, who helped identify a baby who died in the *Titanic* sinking, would like to talk one-on-one with Mr Rau.

“I would sit down across from him (Mr Rau) and explain about other cases we have worked on where we have had remarkable results with DNA finding people who have lost family members,” she said “This is not just about a mystery that is fascinating people worldwide, it’s about real people who are looking to know what happened to a loved relative.”

Central to the enduring mystery is that Somerton Man had with him the phone number of a woman, Jo Thomson, who lived less than five minutes from Somerton beach. At the time Ms Thomson was unmarried and had a one-year-old son named Robin.



📷 Former Australian Ballet dancer Robin Thomson, who many think is the mystery man’s son.

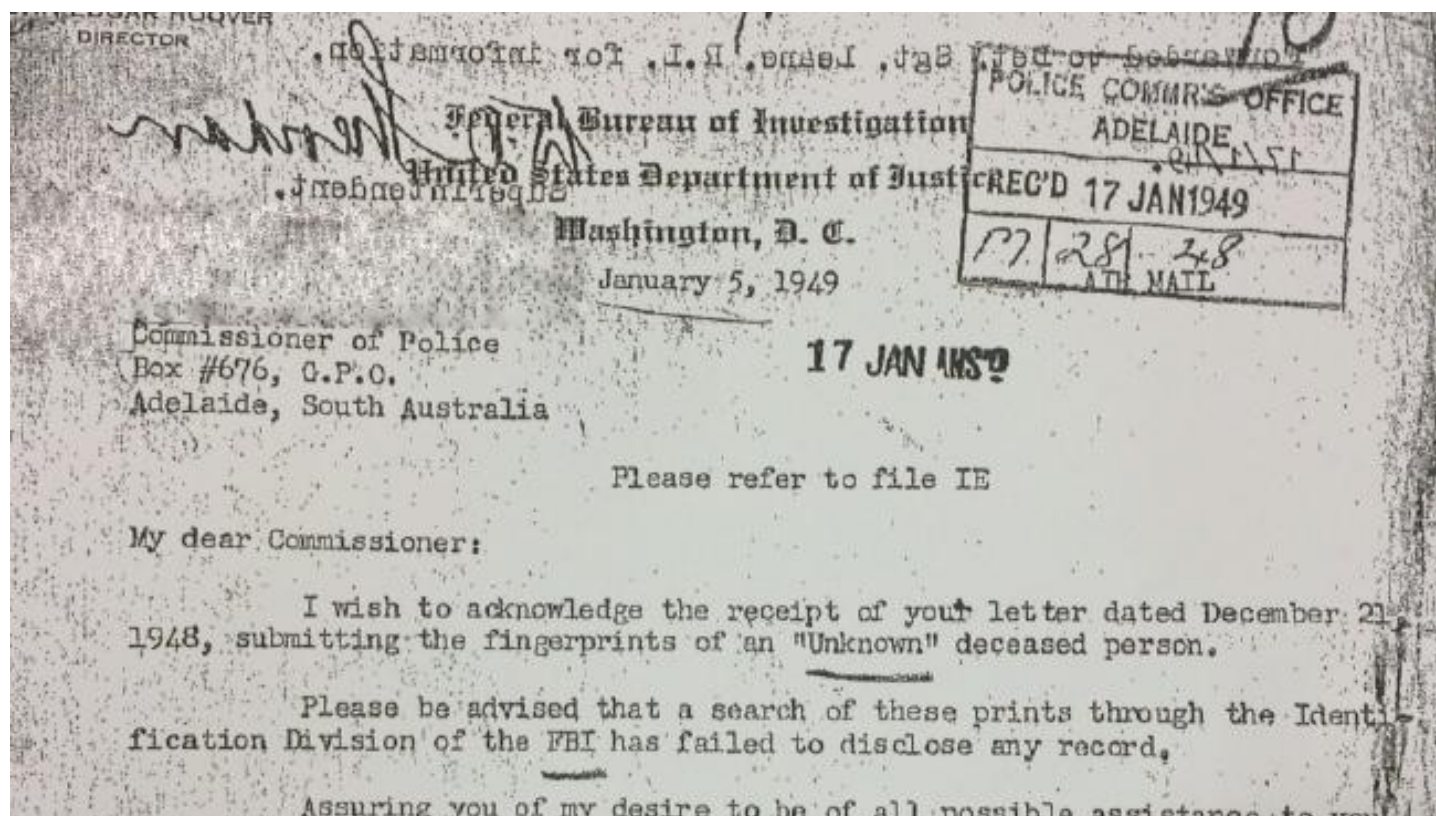
Robin Thomson – a former Australian Ballet dancer who died in 2009 and was cremated, leaving no DNA – had a remarkable series of physical similarities to Somerton Man that led investigators to conclude there is a 99 per cent probability the two were related.

They include the highly unusual genetic dental feature of having two canine teeth adjacent to the middle two teeth, and strongly developed calves.



Ms Fitzpatrick took DNA from Robin's daughter, Rachel, and her mother, Roma Egan, and in a procedure known as "phasing", extracted DNA with an inherited 25 per cent link to the Somerton Man, that she could test.

Adding to the theory that Somerton Man was American, Adelaide-based Professor Derek Abbott, who has been working with Ms Fitzpatrick, this week released to the *Sunday Mail* a photocopy of a letter from the FBI.



📷 The letter signed by FBI Director J. Edgar Hoover in 1949 and sent to SA Police as part of the Somerton Man investigation

Signed by the Bureau's legendary leader J. Edgar Hoover, the previously unpublished letter is part of a six-year battle under Freedom of Information legislation to have documents released by SA Police.

"Even though the FBI found no records of the man on its fingerprint database, the fact there are no other documents or reports from any other police jurisdictions around the world suggest police here were set on him being American," Prof. Abbott said.

In October, 2011, Mr Rau refused an exhumation because the motive did not transcend "public curiosity or broad scientific interest".

He confirmed his stance in a letter to Mr Abbott sent this year.

Originally published as [Exhume Somerton Man and end mystery: DNA expert](#)