After 65 years, new picture could reveal Unknown Man's identity

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The body of an unidentified man was found on a beach at Somerton, South Australia, in 1948. All that was found on him was a scrap of paper torn from the Rubaiyat of Omar Khayyam. Source: News Limited
A NEW picture of a man found dead on an Adelaide beach in 1948 could help finally identify the mysterious man.

The case of the so-called Unknown Man has baffled detectives, amateur sleuths and code-breakers for 65 years.

His well-dressed body was found leaning against a seawall early one morning, with no identifying labels, a half-smoked cigarette and a tightly-rolled piece of paper in his pocket with the words "Taman Shud" - Persian for "the end".

The paper had been torn from a copy of Persian poetry book The Rubaiyat, which had been thrown into a nearby car with an indecipherable code of letters scrawled inside.

Adelaide University engineering Professor Derek Abbott has been investigating the case for almost 20 years, and believes an artistic impression he commissioned of the man may finally lead to an identification.

"All this time we've been publishing the autopsy photo, and it's actually hard to tell what something looks like from that," Prof Abbott said.

"This didn't hit me until I was looking on the internet and stumbled on Marilyn Monroe's autopsy photo.

"If somebody had just shown me that picture and not told me it was Marilyn Monroe I never would've thought it was her."

Prof Abbott said this new picture had taken into account the distortions you would expect after an autopsy, as well as external descriptions such as eye colour.

"There's some guess work involved in a facial reconstruction, like that which happens in crime when you do an identikit reconstruction," he said.

"But sometimes they get enough to actually catch the guy."

The case triggered theories of the man being a Cold War spy, and Coroner's findings indicated he may have been poisoned.

Repeated requests to South Australian Attorney-General John Rau to have the man's body exhumed for DNA examination have been denied, although there is a Change.org petition running, declaring that the significant public curiosity justified the exhumation.

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