AN ADELAIDE nurse linked to the mysterious death of an unknown man at Somerton Beach 63 years ago has emerged as a person of interest in a similar death on a Sydney beach three years earlier.

Adelaide University researchers have revealed Sydney man Joseph Saul Haim Marshall, also known as George Marshall, was found dead on June 3, 1945, at Mosman beach, with a copy of the Persian love poetry book The Rubaiyat.

Three years later on December 1, 1948 a man's body was found at Somerton Beach, with a page torn from a copy of The Rubaiyat of Omar Khayyam scrunched up in his pocket and stamped with the words "Tamam Shud", meaning "It is finished".

The identity of the Somerton Beach man and the cause of his death still remain a mystery - leading to many theories including that he was a Cold War spy or the victim of a love affair gone wrong, creating one of the state's most enduring cold cases.

Adelaide University Professor Derek Abbott, who has been investigating the death for many years, believes the two cases could be connected - the link being a nurse known only as "Jestyn".

A phone number for the nurse was found written in the copy of The Rubaiyat from which the page found on the dead man was torn.

This book was found months later, discarded in a doctor's car.

Professor Abbott said it was known the nurse trained at Royal North Shore Hospital in Sydney before moving to Adelaide, and lived a short bus ride from where Mr Marshall was found in 1945.

He said the cases were "strikingly similar".

"It is quite a coincidence that we have two unique Omar Khayyam deaths in Australia, and yet Jestyn happens to live down the road from both cases that happened in different states," he said.

"Jestyn lived about a kilometre from where the dead body was found in Somerton.

"Marshall died about 2km away from a pub called the Clifton Garden's Hotel, which we know was often
frequented by Jestyn."

Professor Abbott said he believed it was highly likely Mr Marshall, 34, knew the nurse.

"We have no hard paper trail evidence linking Jestyn to Marshall, but the circumstantial evidence is mounting and we appeal to the public who might know of the events," he said.

Prof Abbott said he knew the full identity of the nurse - who died in 2007 - but would not reveal her name out of respect to surviving family members. He also said the deaths shared other similarities.

"The Somerton man had his head propped up against the esplanade retaining wall. Marshall had his head propped up on a rock," he said. "Both men were dressed smartly. Both men had no form of ID."

Retired Adelaide detective Gerry Feltus, who was involved in the Somerton Beach investigation, interviewed the nurse for his book, The Unknown Man.

He wrote that he had a "lengthy conversation" with the woman who, he noted, "continually diverted from the topic in question".

"I formed the opinion she was either very evasive or just did not wish to talk about it," he wrote.

Jestyn had admitted to police she had given the copy of the book to another man - not the victims - but denied any knowledge of the Somerton Beach man.

Mr Marshall died from a barbiturate overdose and the cause of the Somerton man's death was never found, but the coroner found that he had a pre-existing liver condition.

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