Mystery remains on the ‘unknown man’

By John Ferguson

The famous Somerton body on the beach remains a mystery almost 39 years after it was discovered.

The man's identity has not been established although many theories have been advanced.

Baffled newspapers advanced conflicting theories including the possibility he was a Russian spy, a dancer, or a sailor who lost in love and took his life.

The body was found sprawled on Somerton Beach on December 1, 1948.

Former SA Police chief superintendent, Len Brown, remembers the case vividly.

As a young detective he was assigned to what he thought would be a simple case of death by natural causes.

A normal day at the office turned into an unsuccessful two-year search for the man's name and cause of death.

The man's body was first noticed, lumped against a concrete wall, by several people strolling on the beach on November 30.

It was assumed he was asleep.

It wasn't until the next day when a horse-trainer checked his condition that it was realized he was dead.

The corpse was taken to the City Mortuary where the details were listed: About 45, strongly built, tanned, grey hair, central European, hazel eyes and manicured hands.

A thorough search revealed no identification on the body, but the clothes contained a railway ticket to Henley Beach and a bus ticket to Glenelg.

Medical experts were unable to uncover the cause of death.

Mr Brown is convinced the man poisoned himself.

Many people claimed they knew the man.

One person was convinced he was the famous Russian soldier, Marshal Voroshilov.

But weekly police pointed out Voroshilov was 75-years-old and alive in Moscow.

The mystery man
A theory he could have been a dancer was based on his athletic body.

But this was discounted when police checked theatres, dancing schools and ballet companies in Australia and overseas.

Six weeks later, at Adelaide railway station, they discovered a suitcase with the man's dressing gown, slips, underpants, singlets, shirts, sports coat and trousers.

Two names - T. Keane and T. Keen - were attached to some items. But again this did not lead to the man's identity.

Then four months after the body's discovery, Mr Brown and his team found, in a trouser pocket, two printed words - Tashan Shud.

The words are from The Rubaiyat of Omar Khayyam and mean The End.

The discovery led to a number of theories, the strongest being the man committed suicide after a failed relationship.

A woman's telephone number was found in the man's property.

When traced, the woman denied knowing the man.

Mr Brown said: "She had good reason to keep quiet because she had just been married."

"We hope she would break the silence and put an end to the mystery."

Mr Brown, who retired nine years ago, regrets the mystery has not been solved.

The corpse's headstone, the only nameless one in the West Terrace Cemetery, is a stark reminder of the man's tragic death.

It reads: "Here lies the unknown man who was found at Somerton Beach 1st December 1948."

The grave of the unknown man

Poverty: 44 p.c. children

By Diane Beer

FORTY-FOUR per cent of all people living in poverty are children, according to figures released by the SA Council of Social Services.

SACOSS executive director, Ms Helen Spurling, said the analysis of poverty in SA called for positive policies to help people in the State.

With the SA unemployment rate at 10.6 per cent, and consistently at or above the national average since 1976, strong measures were needed to support the poor.

"We are not trying to beat up 'doom and gloom', but positive approaches to social problems are needed," Ms Spurling said when releasing a 23-page strategy to combat poverty.

SACOSS, the umbrella group for State social welfare organisations, has called on the SA Government for a commitment to "top up" Federal housing cuts.

The report outlines the statistical extent of poverty in SA, explains the impact of that poverty, and appeals for strategy to attack problems ranging from family breakdowns, domestic violence and crime.

Poverty is a major contributing factor in some crimes, according to the SACOSS report.

The report says Legal Aid applications have risen to record levels.