

THE *Satin*
MAN

Uncovering the mystery of the
missing Beaumont children

Alan Whiticker
with Stuart Mullins



First published in 2013
this revised edition in 2015 by
New Holland Publishers
London • Sydney • Auckland

The Chandlery Unit 009 50 Westminster Bridge Road London SE1 7QY United Kingdom
1/66 Gibbes Street Chatswood NSW 2067 Australia
5/39 Woodside Ave Northcote, Auckland 0627 New Zealand

www.newhollandpublishers.com

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A catalogue record of this book is available at the British Library and at the National Library
of Australia.

ISBN: 9781742573083

10 9 8 7 6 5

Managing director: Fiona Schultz
Publisher: Fiona Schultz
Project editor: Kate Sherington
Designer: Keisha Galbraith, Kimberley Pearce
Production director: Olga Dementiev
Printer: Toppan Leefung Printing Limited

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Authors' Note

For legal and privacy reasons, the names of the people being investigated in this book, among other recognisable details, have been changed. Although 'Hank Harrison' is dead, identifying him would be unfair to his family and draw unwanted attention to places of interest before the police have a chance to investigate. Members of the 'Harrison' family, family friends and work associates have not been identified by their real names.

The most important thing to note is that we, the authors, as well as private investigator Bill Hayes and former detective Mostyn Matters, are identified in this book, and stand by the events and quotes recorded herein.

Introduction

One particular incident brought home to me the obsessive legacy of the disappearance of Jane, Arnna and Grant Beaumont from Glenelg Beach in 1966. In February 2006, I had just arrived home in Western Sydney from the Adelaide Writers Festival, speaking about my book on the unsolved case. It must have been 100 degrees on the old Fahrenheit scale, so I'd hit the shower to freshen up. I'd no sooner grabbed a towel when there was an insistent knocking at the front door. My wife and kids had stepped out to the shops, so I was forced to rush to the door, dripping wet.

Standing before me was a tall man about 60 years of age. His utility vehicle was parked out the front of my house and he was pacing up and down my porch. 'Are you the guy who wrote a book on the Beaumonts?' the man asked. He appeared agitated and a little wild-eyed. Somewhat cautiously, I admitted I was, and

asked if I could help him.

‘I’ve come about the children,’ he said.

I closed the door behind me and stepped out onto the porch.

‘What about the Beaumont children?’ I asked.

The man said he had read a review of the book in the local newspaper. ‘I know where they are,’ he said.

I asked the man to tell me his story, as he continued to walk up and down my porch. ‘I grew up next to Grant Beaumont in Western Australia,’ the man said.

Having spent the previous year writing a book about the case, I knew that the Beaumont family had spent all their lives in Adelaide, and the likelihood that the missing children had grown to adulthood under assumed names somewhere interstate was little more than an urban legend. But this stranger in front of me had gone to a lot of trouble to look me up in the phonebook, and track down where I lived, so I didn’t want to upset him while he was on my doorstep.

I was as polite as possible. ‘You’ve heard about DNA testing?’ I said, trying not to sound like a smartarse. ‘This would be cleared up in a matter of days. Did you go to the police with your information?’

The man said he had told the police, but that they didn’t believe him. ‘What does that tell you, then?’ I asked. ‘The police don’t believe the children are alive, but if they were, they would be easy to identify through tax file numbers and census records, let alone DNA tests.’

The man appeared to calm down, but what he said next absolutely set my head spinning. ‘When I read about your book in the newspaper,’ he said, ‘I knew you were talking to me and I had to find you.’

I was hoping my family would not arrive home before I had a

chance to usher this man off my porch. My years as a schoolteacher had trained me to be calm and rational in the face of an irate parent – skills I had sometimes failed to utilise – and I didn't want to appear angry now. 'How could I have been talking directly to you?' I asked. 'It was a book review, nothing more. I wrote a book about the missing Beaumont children. Read it if you want some answers. If you have any new information, go back to the police. I am not an investigator, I'm just a writer. I need to go back inside and get dressed. Goodbye.'

The man appeared to be placated and left quietly. But this encounter, for me, was an immediate lesson that some people, for whatever reasons, were profoundly affected by this case, to the point where they integrated their own hurts and traumas into the story of the missing children.

I had opened a door into another world. What the hell had I got myself into?

In 2005, a publisher asked me to write a book about the disappearance of the three Beaumont children from Adelaide's Glenelg Beach on Australia Day, 1966. A chapter I had written for my bestselling book *12 Crimes That Shocked the Nation* had been serialised in *Madison* magazine, and this publisher wanted to know if I could extend the piece into a full-length book.

My immediate answer was no, although I was very interested in the social and cultural effect that the case had on Australia. I had grown up during that era of the late 1960s and 1970s, when the disappearance of the Beaumont children changed everything. It was the end of innocence. Parents kept a closer eye on their children and the unknown fate of three kids, taken from a crowded beach, became the cautionary tale that I, like thousands of others,

heard during childhood summers at the beach: 'Don't go out of sight. Remember what happened to the Beaumont children!' No book had thus far been devoted solely to the case, despite the efforts of many writers to capture the definitive story.

What I knew then about the events of that long-ago summer's day didn't encourage me that there was a book in it. This was an unsolved crime without a crime scene, forensic evidence or even a suspect. There was so much myth and misunderstanding about the case that it had taken on a life of its own in the Australian consciousness, with many theories about what had happened to the children competing against each other in the public domain. I also knew from firsthand experience that South Australian Police (SAPOL) might be unlikely to cooperate with anyone writing a book about one of their unsolved crimes; my previous approaches to SAPOL had been met with a wall of silence, and this case, I was sure, would be no different.

Finally, I wondered what a book on this case would really achieve. Many of the witnesses, the police who worked on the original investigation, and the journalists who covered the events were dead, and any attempt to write a sensational account of the crime would only add to the hurt and heartbreak of the parents, Grant and Nancy Beaumont.

The more I thought about the project, however, the more I warmed to the idea. The one thing I didn't want to do, and I was ultimately criticised for this when the book was published, was to promote my own theory about what I thought had happened to the children. I didn't see that as my job – the world did not need another theory about the unknown fate of the Beaumonts. I said to the publisher that if I were to write the book, it would be a chance to look at the impact the crime had on Australia as a nation and to finally put to bed many of the myths and misunderstandings

about the case.

The publishers wanted to publish a book in time to mark the 40th anniversary of the crime, the following January. They already had a cover in mind – a dreamy beach scene with the unfocused images of three children playing near the water – and I worried about appearing opportunistic (another criticism I had to deal with when the book was eventually released).

By April 2005, I'd decided to go ahead and do it. But I needed a sounding board, someone who would steer me in the right direction during the research and writing phase of the project. I first met Stuart Mullins when we were teenagers, playing cricket for Richmond in Western Sydney. Stuart was the son of an RAAF officer who had been relocated to Sydney from Adelaide in the early 1970s. We attended teachers' college together and became firm friends over the years, despite the decades he subsequently spent overseas, travelling and working. In 2005, he was running a highly successful recruitment agency on the Gold Coast when I told him I had been asked to write a book on the Beaumonts.

Stuart reminded me that he grew up in Adelaide and had been living in Secombe Gardens, near Glenelg, when the children disappeared in 1966. He offered to come on board as a research assistant, driver and confidante during the writing process, and his support proved immeasurable. He even offered to write the introduction to the book, drawing on many of his childhood memories, which gave the case a poignant context.

I could tell that Stuart had been deeply affected by the plight of the Beaumont family; it reminded me of the impact the case must have had on the greater Adelaide community, let alone the rest of the nation. While I endeavoured to maintain a measured writer's distance from the subject, Stuart was much closer to the heart of the story, and became inexorably entwined in our subsequent

seven-year investigation, which resulted in the writing of this new book.

My initial concerns about lack of support from SAPOL proved correct. We met with Peter Woite, Head of Major Crime at the time, and Detective Inspector Brian Swan, who was in charge of the unsolved case. They declined to let us look at original case files and warned us not to approach Mr and Mrs Beaumont to interview them. Perhaps they were worried that we were foot-in-the-door tabloid hounds, but it had always been our intention to write an historical and factual account of the case, based on the original police investigation – we weren't going to mine the grief of the Beaumonts for the sake of some sensational book. But SAPOL told us there was more than enough material on the public record to write a book about the case without their assistance.

At the *Adelaide Advertiser*, Stuart and I were provided with access to newspaper clippings, which at least allowed us to lay down a pathway through the myriad stories – ranging from the factual to complete beat-ups – that had stalled and misdirected the case over the decades. The family of former SAPOL detective Stan Swaine, who became obsessed with the case and spent the final years of his life looking for a new angle in order to solve it, have been supportive of our research, as well as frank. His former wife and daughters told us the case had alienated him from them, and ultimately destroyed his life.

In my book, I discussed a number of suspects and their potential involvement in the Beaumont case, but did not name a chief suspect – because there wasn't one. SAPOL had not been able to name a suspect in forty years of investigation, and there was not enough evidence to 'nominate' one of four persons of interest circulating in the media at the time – Bevan Spencer Von Einem, Derek Percy, Arthur Brown and James Ryan O'Neill (born Leigh

Anthony Bridgart), a former Victorian man jailed in Tasmania for the murder of two boys in the 1970s. I wasn't convinced that any of these suspects had anything to do with the disappearance of the Beaumont children.

When I spoke about the *Searching for the Beaumont Children* at the Adelaide Writer's Festival in 2006, I was very conscious of the fact that many people in the audience had lived through the trauma and suspicion of the original investigation, and I didn't want to lecture them about how important the case had been in Australian culture. During the Q&A at the end of my 45-minute talk, I was asked a rambling question by a person who identified himself as 'John Howard'. He was upset about the characterisation in my book of the late Stan Swaine, despite the fact that it had been drawn from interviews with the Swaine family, who were sitting in the front row in support of me, having finally been given the chance to tell their story. It was clear to me that some people still felt strongly about the case, many years after the fact.

The following night I addressed an audience at Marion Library. A group of mainly elderly men and women listened politely to my overview of the case, but I was thrown by a question from the floor at the end of the night. A woman politely asked, 'What chance is there that the children are still here in Glenelg?' There hadn't been a thorough house-to-house search at the time, she said, and because many people still resided in family homes built a hundred years ago, it was possible that this might be the reason the children's remains were not found. I had made that exact point in the book – that the children could have been lured to a house no too far from where they disappeared – but was surprised a member of the public, and one who lived so close to Glenelg, had held the same view for so many years.

I also appeared on several radio stations around the country to

promote the book. After one hour-long interview, the interviewer shook my hand and, off air, said matter-of-factly, 'I know who is responsible for taking the children. He was the father of a friend of mine and he's lived with this secret all his life.' I had heard this so many times over the previous six months that I hardly batted an eyelid. The reason I wrote the book in the first place was to dismiss rogue theories about the case, yet here was a journalist ignoring everything I'd just explained about the case, hanging on to his own theory. 'Perhaps you should write a book,' I said facetiously.

Invited to appear on the Bert Newton Morning Show on Channel 10, I was sitting in the green room before the interview when crime journalist Andrew Rule came up to introduce himself. I had read a lot of Andrew's articles over the years, and we'd shared the same publisher several years back, so we had something in common. I was concerned Andrew had been invited on to the show as a counterpoint, to pick apart what I had written on live TV, but he was very gracious and said I had written a solid account of the investigation, which stated plainly that Mr and Mrs Beaumont were not involved in their children's disappearance, that Dutch clairvoyant Gerard Croiset was a fake, and that it was impossible that Jane, Arnna and Grant Beaumont were alive.

One criticism of the book was that it was too parochial in writing about the 'Adelaide context' of the crimes – the fact that the city was the first non-convict colony to be established in Australia; that Adelaide, even today, has a particularly unique social class system; and that the city has produced many bizarre crimes, including the Beaumont children's disappearance, the Adelaide Oval abductions, the Truro Murders, the Family Murders and the Snowtown Murders. In my view, I was trying to explore the social and cultural forces at play, which not only made possible

the disappearance of three children from a crowded beach, but worked against the case being solved.

Many people contacted me, as well as my friend and researcher, Stuart, after the publication of *Searching for the Beaumont Children*. On every occasion, we listened politely to their various stories – tales of abusive parents, paedophile rings and government conspiracies. Some of the people we spoke to were private investigators, others lawyers and former detectives, but most were amateur sleuths with a theory to push. I would always tell the person on the other end of the telephone the same thing I'd told the wild-eyed stranger on my front porch – take any information you have to the police.

'I am not an investigator,' I'd say calmly, 'I'm just a writer.'

Then, in June 2006, I received a phone call from a woman in Queensland. She told me her name was Amanda and that she had been married to a man who was a teenager in Glenelg when the Beaumont children disappeared. As a child, her ex-husband had been abused by his father, and he'd always believed his father was involved with the disappearance.

'What makes you say that?' I asked, resisting the temptation to hang up on her.

'Because my ex-father-in-law's house was close to where the children were last seen playing, and within walking distance of Wenzel's Cakes,' she said.

My ears pricked.

'And one more thing,' she added, 'my ex-husband knows where his father buried the children.'

Chapter 1

26 January 1966

It was late January and Grant ‘Jimmy’ Beaumont didn’t want to go back to work. The forty-year-old war veteran had given up his taxi run to try his hand as a salesman for the Lincot Linen Company, and in the week before the Australia Day long weekend in 1966, he was due to visit clients in the Adelaide Hills on an overnight trip. He had enjoyed his holiday over Christmas and New Year, spending his days playing with his three young children – Jane, Arnna and Grant – at the Somerton Park home he shared with his wife, Nancy. On hot summer days, he would take the kids down to Glenelg Beach, where they would play in the calm waters at the side of the then-disused jetty, and sit in the shade on Colley Reserve.

His kids could not get the beach out of their system. They talked their father into dropping them off at Glenelg Beach on his

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way to work on Tuesday 25 January. The children would catch the bus home from Moseley Street, as they had done countless times before with their parents. Jane, the eldest at age 9, was a competent swimmer, but the younger two – Arna, 7, and Grant, 4, could not swim. This was Australia in the 1960s, though, a safe place for children, especially on a crowded beach. ‘Don’t go in deep water. Don’t talk to any strangers,’ Grant Beaumont told them, after agreeing to take them to the beach. Once he’d dropped them off, he watched them for at least half an hour, from a place where they couldn’t see him. They were playing with other children and he left feeling confident they’d be okay.

The next day, Wednesday 26 January – Australia Day – was not a public holiday in 1966. At that time, the holiday was always celebrated on the following weekend. Just as they do now, many Australians took advantage of this traditional ‘long weekend’ by going on trips to the beach or the bush. The temperature was expected to reach the century mark that day (nearly 38 degrees Celsius), and Glenelg would be packed with locals taking advantage of the beach, as well as thousands of tourists visiting the city, which was hosting the fourth Ashes cricket Test.

As soon as the three Beaumont children woke that Wednesday morning, they wanted to go to the beach again. With school recommencing the following week, they were keen to make the most of the final days of their holidays. Filled with confidence after their adventure the previous day, the children asked their mother if they could ride their bikes to Broadway, at the top of Jetty Road, and then walk down to the beach. Mrs Beaumont didn’t like that idea. Instead, she said the children could take the bus from Diagonal Road–Harding Road bus stop, as long as they were home at midday, before it got too hot. Nancy Beaumont suffered in the heat, and would not go with them that day.

After breakfast, the children got ready to catch the 10.00am bus to Glenelg. Jane wore pink one-piece bathers, pale green shorts and tartan canvas sandals with white soles. She was old enough to dress herself; her mother could not recall if she wore a ribbon or tortoiseshell hair band. Arnna wore one-piece red and white striped bathers, tan shorts and tan sandals, with a bright orange hair band. Grant, the youngest, wore only green and white bathers under green cotton shorts and red leather sandals. Mrs Beaumont later explained her son did not wear a singlet or shirt to the beach because it was hot, and the little ones 'wouldn't be bothered' with too many clothes. Anyway, she reasoned, they would be home in a couple of hours. Jane also carried a blue 'airways type' shoulder bag, with three towels inside.

Nancy gave her eldest daughter eight shillings and sixpence – about 85 cents, or \$10.00 in today's money – for their bus fare and to buy some lunch. As Jane placed the money into a small, white clip-purse, Mrs Beaumont told them to buy a pastie from the bakery with the change, and bring it home for her. Lastly, Jane took a paperback, *Little Women*, to read on the bus.

Shortly before 10.00am, Nancy Beaumont stood at her front gate, at the corner of Harding and Petersen Streets, waving goodbye to her children as they walked the hundred yards to the bus stop on Diagonal Road. The bus driver later remembered the children getting on the bus, but could not recall where they hopped off. It is assumed the children got off the bus at the Jetty Road–Moseley Street stop, outside the shop called Wenzel's Cakes, and walked down to the beach from there, because a number of eyewitnesses saw them there between 10.15am and midday.

Mr Tom Patterson, the local postman, saw the children 'holding hands and laughing' in Jetty Road. 'It's the postie,' little Grant called out as they waved to him. At the time, Patterson could not recall

whether he'd seen the children at the beginning of his rounds, at 10.15am, or at the end, at 2.55pm, but this was later established in investigations by police, who checked Mr Patterson's shift for the day, and determined the sighting had definitely been in the morning.

A school friend of Jane's saw the three children at Glenelg Beach shortly after 11.00am. They were swimming in the shallows near the Glenelg jetty, then running up to Colley Reserve, directly behind the Holdfast Bay Sailing Club on Moseley Square. Colley Reserve was a quiet corner of the foreshore, between the sailing club and the row of sideshows, to the northeast of the beach. The children laid out their towels near two large trees and were running in and out of the sprinklers.

A 74-year-old Glenelg woman saw the children 'frolicking' with a tall, thin man at Colley Reserve. The elderly woman saw the man talk to the children and very soon they were playing with him. Arnna and Grant were jumping over him as he lay on the grass, while Jane was flicking him with her towel. They were still laughing and playing together when the woman left the area, shortly before noon.

The man was originally described as a 'sun-tanned surfie' or 'beachcomber', about 6 feet 1 in in height, and 30 to 40 years old, with 'blond' hair that was 'in need of cutting'. This description was later corrected by other witnesses. In a time when 25 percent of the population of Adelaide was composed of immigrants, it was noted that the man spoke with an Australian accent. The man had been lying face down on his towel on the grass area, watching the children as they washed the sand off under the sprinklers. He was wearing sky-blue bathers with a white stripe down each side and had placed his clothes on a white seat near the sailing club.

Around midday, an elderly couple, sitting nearby with their

teenage granddaughter, had a conversation with the man. The man was with the three children, on the grassy area behind them, when he approached and asked, 'Did any of you people see anyone with our clothes? We've had some money taken ...' The elderly couple were able to describe the children's clothing, including the shoulder bag Jane had been carrying, also confirmed by a middle-aged woman sitting nearby, who thought the man said, 'Have you seen anyone messing with our clothes? Our money has been pinched.' Later there was cause to wonder: Did someone really take their money, or did the man take Jane's purse so that he had a reason to offer them some money and a lift home?

The middle-aged woman watched the man as he helped the children put their shorts on over their bathers. She thought it was especially strange that he did this for the eldest girl, who appeared old enough to dress herself.

They had already missed the midday bus and now, according to the man seen with them, had no money to buy their lunches or get home. Having apparently won the confidence of the children, the man left them for a while and went to the changing sheds to get dressed. The children crossed the path that cut through Colley Reserve and stood near a seat, waiting for the man to return. They were still standing there when the elderly couple left the beach with their granddaughter at 12.15pm.

The last sighting of the three children was in Wenzel's Cakes on Moseley Street, where they were due to catch the bus home. A shop assistant later said the three children came in around midday and bought their lunches – pies and pasties, but also another lunch in a separate bag – with a £1 note. This information was not circulated in the press at the time and not officially confirmed by the police for another 12 months. The children had left home with only eight shillings and sixpence, so it appeared someone,

most likely the man they were seen playing with, had given them a considerable amount of money to buy their lunch.

Although it was later erroneously reported that the children were last seen in the company of the man at about 1.45pm, the shop assistant in Wenzel's Cakes who served the children did not corroborate this account, as she did not see a man with them.

After the children left the shop, no one saw them get into a car or walk home to Somerton Park, and the bus driver did not see them on his bus that afternoon. As the police later observed, it was as if they'd 'disappeared into thin air'.

With her children away at the beach that Wednesday morning, Nancy Beaumont rode her bike to the other side of Diagonal Road, to visit a girlfriend. She left for home just before midday in order to meet her children, who were due home. When they were not on the midday bus, she wasn't particularly worried. There was another bus at 2.00pm and she was sure her kids would be on it.

Later that afternoon, some friends dropped over to Nancy's house unexpectedly. They enjoyed a drink together and talked throughout the afternoon, but when the children didn't walk through the door at 2.00pm, Nancy started to worry. Her friends offered to go with her to look for them, but the children could be walking home via any number of routes – along Moseley Street, Partridge Street or Brighton Road – and if the adults were out looking, no one would be in when the children arrived home. They decided to wait until 3.00pm, but there was still no sign of them.

Nancy began to think the worst – that the children had been in some sort of an accident at the beach. Surely they would have heard something by now, her friends reassured her. Glenelg was a 'safe' swimming beach, and if one child was hurt, her other

children would have given the St John's Ambulance service their family details, and she would have been contacted. There was safety in numbers, Nancy told herself.

Grant Beaumont arrived home unexpectedly, shortly after 3.00pm; he usually came back from his overnight trips on Thursdays, but his clients in Snowtown had still been away on holidays. He knew his children would want to go to the beach, so he decided to come home a day early.

Nancy told him the children had not returned home from their morning at the beach. Maybe there had been an accident, she worried. Grant calmed his wife and immediately drove down to Glenelg, but the heat had drawn thousands of people to the beach. Mr Beaumont later remarked that there were so many people, he might not have seen his children, even if they had been there.

Grant rushed home again, hoping he had somehow missed his kids walking home, but there was still no sign of them. Nancy came with him when he went out searching for them a second time. They went up and down the coast, from Glenelg to Somerton. It was not until just before 6.00pm – almost six hours after the children were last seen – that Mr and Mrs Beaumont contacted police. Only then did the thought that someone could have taken their children enter their minds.

The Glenelg police station was situated in Moseley Square, not 100 metres from where the children had been playing at Colley Reserve. Two officers were on duty that day, one of whom was Detective Constable Mostyn Matters. The Beaumonts were 'visibly upset' when they spoke to Matters at the front desk at Glenelg CIB, he later recalled. Matters took a full description of what the children had been wearing, details of their ages and heights, and then rang the head office in Adelaide, while the worried parents waited at the station.

The heat that day was relentless. When the Beaumonts arrived home just before sunset, it was still almost 38 degrees. Grant immediately went out by himself to look for the children again, while Nancy waited at home, hoping against hope that the children would appear. There was eventually a knock on the door, but it was uniformed police, who asked her to tell them exactly what had happened. The police also searched the house thoroughly, standard procedure in a missing children's case, to rule out whether the children had returned home and were hiding from their parents, afraid they might be in trouble for being late. The children had never done anything like that before, Nancy said, but the police asked her to trust them. They were experienced at searching for missing children, they told her.

As night descended, the reality of what might have happened started to sink in. The children were never out at night, Mr and Mrs Beaumont said. The younger children were frightened of the dark. There could only be one reason the kids didn't come home, they realised – somebody was stopping them.

News of three children gone missing from Glenelg Beach interrupted radio and television programming at about 10.00pm that night. Friends and neighbours arrived at the Beaumont house and offered to help in the search. Some among the search party knew the Beaumonts personally. Others had heard the news on the radio and wanted to help in some way. Nancy was in a state of shock by then; she 'looked through people' when she spoke to them.

While his wife was comforted by neighbours and friends, Grant Beaumont went on looking for the children throughout the night. The streets were dark and Mr Beaumont couldn't imagine his young kids wandering around at night by themselves. The worried father rode in police patrol cars with amplifiers blaring:

‘Have you seen three small children?’ He walked along the beach at Seacliff, Brighton and Somerton, right along to Glenelg, but it was such a hot night that thousands of people were still on the beach at midnight.

Grant Beaumont did not sleep that night, and in fact would not for several nights to come. The police took him home just before sunrise, but he got into his own car and continued searching alone. As morning dawned with no trace of her children, Nancy Beaumont was in such an anxious state that a doctor had to be called. Dr Cowling, a local GP who had treated the Beaumont children for coughs and colds, sedated Mrs Beaumont for much of the next fortnight as the investigation swung into full gear. Mr Beaumont vowed he wouldn’t go to bed until he found his children, until the family doctor prescribed sleep for the exhausted father.

The first night, the Police Emergency Operations Group was called into the search. Five boats from the Sea Rescue Squadron headed out from Patawalonga Boat Haven, sweeping searchlights across the water and onto Glenelg Beach. At 5.00am, the police launch *William Fisk* set out and searched the shoreline from Glenelg to Aldinga in the north, and back to Henley Beach. Police checked hollows and caves in seaside cliffs for any evidence of a cave-in, while others searched stormwater drains that opened into the sea. Members of the Police Aqualung Squad searched the Patawalonga Boat Haven, immediately south of where the children were last seen playing, but murky water hampered their efforts.

Police from city and suburban patrols joined the search the following morning, looking in backyards and checking sheds. Police cadets were called in to comb the sandhills behind the Glenelg Treatment Works, all the way up to the West Beach Caravan Park. A telephone was installed at the Beaumont’s home

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so police could contact the family directly and keep them in touch with the investigation.

The day after the children went missing, an increasingly emotional Grant Beaumont spoke to Adelaide media in the front yard of his home, to make a public appeal for the return of his children. 'Somebody must be holding them against their will. They would otherwise have come home by now,' he said.

Some wondered if this could be true. Perhaps if there had only been one child missing – but who would think, in a million years, that someone would kidnap three children?