

Express UK article – Did Maddie Disappear Vanish in Maze of Tunnels

The tunnels, dating back to Roman times, have never been thoroughly searched, despite repeated requests.

Documents in Portuguese police files, published today for the first time, suggest a vital line of inquiry was ignored and have led to fresh calls for a proper investigation into the tunnels.

A British woman wrote to UK detectives saying: “There are six to eight tunnels under Praia da Luz that the PJ [Portuguese police] have not searched. There is a tunnel under the church, there are tunnels under Estrela da Luz apartments. These have not been searched.

“The archaeologist involved with these tunnels was arrested as an abuser in the Casa Pia case but later released [this was a notorious child abuse scandal centring on orphanages in Lisbon].

“Does this not send alarm bells ringing? Something not right in Portugal. Why are the PJ not searching these tunnels and the church?”

Asked to send more details to Detective Constable John Hughes of Leicestershire Police, she told him the Ocean Club resort in Praia da Luz, where the McCanns stayed, was built around Roman ruins that were part of a small fishing settlement in the third to fifth centuries.

There is also a Roman burial site and ruins include an aqueduct, wells, fish salting tanks, the remains of a Roman bathhouse and at least eight tunnels.

The woman, who declined to be named, told the Sunday Express last night: “I raised these issues a while ago because I thought they were relevant and I know the British detectives passed the information on to the Portuguese detectives but I never discovered what happened.

“As a matter of urgency there must be a proper and thorough examination of all these tunnels. It is possible the abductor may have left clues.”

Her call comes as two private investigators working for Kate and Gerry McCann say they are -convinced that someone living in or near Praia da Luz, where Madeleine vanished on May 3, 2007, knows what happened to her.

Retired Detective Inspector Dave Edgar, who leads the McCanns’ search team, said: “There is someone local, who lives locally, who has the answer to this, and not, you know, much further than 10, 15 kilometres away from Praia da Luz.

“So you don’t start an investigation in Morocco or Spain or France, or even Lisbon. ”

Mr Edgar and former Detective Sergeant Arthur Cowley say one key statement appears to corroborate the account the McCanns' friend Jane Tanner gave to police of a man she saw carrying a small girl near the McCanns' apartment on May 3 at around 9.10pm.

Shortly afterwards on the same night, another family also saw a man carrying a small blonde child nearby. Their descriptions of the pair were very similar to Jane Tanner's.

The McCanns' team has also found a number of statements from tourists who noticed a suspicious-looking man hanging around near the McCanns' apartment at the Ocean Club complex.

Mr Edgar told a Channel 4 documentary featuring a reconstruction of the fateful night: "In my experience, random just doesn't happen. Someone just doesn't go in, a passer-by, and pick up a child and take it, these things are planned.

"So someone will have been in the vicinity of apartment 5a [the McCanns' apartment], the Ocean Club, they may even have been -watching the apartment for a week or more."

In the Channel 4 programme, the McCanns talk about the impact of the abduction of their daughter shortly before her fourth birthday.

"We are a family and we are a happy family but we're not a complete -family," says Gerry.

"There's still a scar, a deep, deep scar that's kind of knitted at the minute but you still think it might break."

Kate adds: "I think we're far from normality. She's alive, she's out there, she's findable...she might look -different, she could be speaking a -different language, she might have her hair different, she might have -different interests but you know she's still our daughter."

The McCanns hope there will be a significant response to the publication of an image of how Madeleine may look now.

Private detectives and telephone hotline staff are primed to receive fresh leads from a picture unveiled on -Friday by US chat show host Oprah Winfrey.

It has been computer--enhanced to show Madeleine at the age of six (her sixth birthday is on May 12).

The picture is featured on posters being distributed globally and the couple believe it could be "crucial".

In a statement the McCanns said: "It is two long years since Madeleine was taken. It is two years since we were a happy family of five.

“The pain and anxiety does not lessen but our determination to find our beautiful daughter remains steadfast.

“We are no longer looking for a four-year-old little girl – but a six-year-old one. This is crucial.

“We are hoping that the new, age-progressed image of Madeleine aged six, produced by the National Centre for Missing and Exploited Children in Washington, will help people to see what Madeleine may look like today.”

Cutting Edge: Madeleine Was Here will be shown on Channel 4 this Thursday at 9pm.

Source: express.co.uk/news/uk/98630/Maddie-Did-she-vanish-in-maze-of-tunnels