

The Telegraph UK article – Apartment was not made crime scene for two months

August 8, 2008

The two-bedroom flat in Praia da Luz was crucial to the investigation with forensic teams dusting the shutters and specialists taking DNA samples from the furniture.

It lay empty for a month after three-year-old Madeleine's disappearance, but was then available to tourists throughout the summer, raising fears of contamination.

Apartment 5A in the Ocean Club resort was eventually cordoned off in August after sniffer dogs from the UK - trained to detect corpses and human remains - were brought in.

Their reaction prompted investigators to take further samples from the flat which were sent to the Forensic Science Service (FSS) in Birmingham for analysis.

The findings, which appeared to suggest that traces of Madeleine's DNA were in the apartment and the hire car rented 25 days after she disappeared, played a large factor in making the McCanns suspects last September.

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Although the couple, from Rothley in Leicestershire, have been cleared and the investigation closed, the apartment which played such a large part the case still lies empty.

The blunder was revealed in the extensive 30,000 page police dossier into the investigation.

Details of all those who stayed in 5A after the McCanns were disclosed in an internal document written by Chief Inspector Vitor Matos to Goncalo Amaral, who was then leading the investigation.

It showed that the McCanns booked the flat from April 28 for a week, but moved out on the morning after Madeleine vanished on May 3 last year.

They moved to neighbouring 4G with their other children, twins Sean and Amelie, and stayed there until July 3, when they moved to a villa in Praia da Luz.

On June 12, a couple from Liverpool who were friends of the owner, retired teacher Ruth McCann - who is no relation to Kate and Gerry McCann - stayed in 5A for a week.

A family of four from Falkirk in Scotland stayed from June 28 to July 12, followed by a couple from New Barnet in Hertfordshire.

On July 19, a family of three from Leicester stayed for a week.

The apartment became a focal point for the world's media who descended on the small Algarve town to cover Madeleine's disappearance.

During the search for the little girl, Portuguese police wanted to bug Mr and Mrs McCann to eavesdrop on their conversation, according to the police file.

They wanted to place two bugs in the house and one in the couple's car but a judge refused the formal request, saying that the couple's witness statement would be enough.

The case files also showed the frustration felt by the officers sifting through the thousands of potential sightings of Madeleine that could not be substantiated.

DC John Hughes, from Leicestershire Police, the force co-ordinating the British end of the investigation, looked into a spate of reports of children resembling the missing girl seen in Malta.

In an e-mail dated June 26 last year he wrote: "Most replies we get back from other countries don't take us far as many can't be verified or discounted, and I feel these will be the same."

The investigation was shelved on July 21 and the McCanns were cleared of their suspect status after all leads went cold.

The McCann family spokesman Clarence Mitchell said: "I think this particular revelation speaks for itself.

"We have always said that there were wholly explicable reasons for any material that was found.

"Kate and Gerry are as innocent today as they were on May 3 and if this number of people were in the apartment before the searches then I think people will draw their own conclusions about the strength of any material that was recovered."

Source: telegraph.co.uk/news/newstoppers/madeleinemccann/2523523/Madeleine-McCann-Apartment-was-not-made-crime-scene-for-two-months.html