

# Press Release Operation Rectangle

Wednesday 12 November 2008

The States of Jersey Police have today issued the following press statement in order to clarify matters relating to Haut de la Garenne and to provide an update in relation to the wider child abuse enquiry. In February this year, the States of Jersey Police commenced a search at Haut de la Garenne. This search resulted in the recovery of a considerable number of forensic finds.

In the weeks that followed, the enquiry was the centre of considerable media coverage and became a matter of serious public concern. Statements which were issued by the States of Jersey Police suggested that serious criminal offences had been perpetrated against children and also that there was a possibility that children may have been murdered, bodies had been disposed of and buried within the home.

The States of Jersey Police are now making a clear distinction between the forensic finds at Haut de La Garenne and the investigation into offences of Historic Child Abuse. It is emphasised however that the States of Jersey Police continue to investigate offences of abuse against children which occurred within the child care system in Jersey over several decades.

The States of Jersey Police wish to make it absolutely clear that central to the investigation, are the complainants and witnesses who have come forward and provide statements to the Enquiry Team. We are clear in our absolute commitment to the full and thorough investigation of the complaints which have been made with the aim of uncovering the truth and bringing anyone responsible for offending to justice.

It is also essential, however, to ensure that the facts are reported properly.

An assessment of the evidence available has revealed that the forensic recoveries do not indicate that there have been murders of children or other people at Haut de la Garenne. Nor is it believed that the evidence indicates that bodies have been destroyed, buried or hidden at Haut de la Garenne.

- Should any further evidence come to light, this will be assessed, and whatever action is necessary will be taken.

The Deputy Chief Officer, David Warcup, stated:

“It is unfortunate that we now believe that the information which was put into the public domain by the States of Jersey Police about certain ‘finds’ at Haut de la Garenne was inaccurate, and we regret this”.

With regard to the particular evidence which has been highlighted in the media, the States of Jersey Police are clear that these do not support suggestions that there have been murders at Haut de la Garenne. In particular:

### **A Piece of Child's Skull**

- An anthropologist made an initial identification as this item being a piece of child's skull.
- At 10:45 am the SIO made a decision to release information to the press about the find.
- At 2pm the same day a press conference disclosed this item as the finding of the potential remains of a child.
- This item was lying within earth that is now identified as being Victorian era.
- On the 31st March 2008 Dr Higham from the Oxford Radiocarbon Accelerator Unit stated he believed the item was not bone.
- The original anthropologist reviewed her initial identification and on 14th April 2008 had stated she no longer identified it as part of a skull.
- Dr Higham and Dr Jacobi (of the British Museum faunal specialist) concluded that the sample was not in fact bone, but was almost certainly wood. They went further stating it was more like a part of a seed casing like a small piece of coconut.
- The conclusions are therefore that the sample is a) Not bone and b) Not human.
- The States of Jersey Police satisfied that having liaised with the anthropologist and Dr Higham and other experts, that this item is not human and was found in a Victorian context.

### **Shackles' and 'Restraints':**

The item referred to as 'Shackles' was found in rubble on the ground floor of HDLG on 28th February. These are in fact rusty pieces of metal. There is no witness evidence or intelligence which indicates these should be described as shackles or that shackles resembling this description have been used during the commission of any offences.

The item called a 'restraint' was found amongst general debris in an under floor area. However, there is no evidence or intelligence indicating this is anything suspicious.

### **The Bath and blood stains:**

This bath in the under floor voids has no water supply and has not been used as a bath since the 1920's when a brick pillar was constructed within it. During the search a specialist search dog reacted to the bath and a presumptive test indicated positive for blood in a minute area of the bath. Following detailed forensic microscopic examination no blood has been found. There is nothing suspicious about the bath and no indication this bath has been used in the commission of any offences.

## **The Cellars**

These are floor voids. They are not cellars, and it is impossible for a grown person to stand up straight in the floor voids under Haut de la Garenne.

## **Teeth**

There are 65 teeth found in the floor voids and 1 elsewhere. They are milk teeth coming from at least 10 people - up to a maximum of 65 people. Around 45 of the teeth originate from children aged 9 to 12 yrs and 20 from the range 6 to 8 years. There is wear on some of the teeth; these teeth generally have the appearance of being shed naturally. It is possible for more tests to be done on the teeth to clarify age and other factors.

## **Bones**

170 pieces of bone which are mainly animal were found in the area of HDLG which was searched. Many more pieces of bone were found in the area of the grounds, all of which are animal.

- Of all that material, there are 3 fragments which are 'possibly' human; the biggest piece is 25 mm long.
- 2 fragments date 1470 to 1650 and the other 1650 to 1950
- These have not definitely been identified as human bone. Taking in all this information, this is an unexplained find if it is human, but not necessarily suspicious.

## **The Pits**

These were dug in the late 1970s and are unexplained, but nothing suspicious has been found in either of them. In summary:

- No people are reported missing
- There are no allegations of murder
- There are no suspects for murder
- There is no specific time period for murder.
- We are satisfied that there is no indication or evidence that there have been murders at HDLG.

The Deputy Chief Officer of the States of Jersey Police, David Warcup stated, "I continue to have every confidence in the detectives and investigators who are currently working on the historical abuse enquiry. They have worked extremely hard in their search for the truth and to bring offenders to justice."

“This investigation has clearly had an impact on the very committed men and women who work for the States of Jersey Police and I am grateful to them for their hard work, dedication and commitment during recent months in helping to ensure that the people of Jersey receive a good service from their local force.”

“I also wish to make comment concerning the relationship between Crown Officers working with the enquiry and the States of Jersey Police. Much has been reported which suggested that lawyers do not work directly with investigating officers.

The fact is that lawyers do work with investigators on serious and complex enquiries, I can absolutely reassure the public that the relationship between the police and lawyers is a positive one and I have seen absolutely no evidence whatsoever which would support any assertion that they should not have been directly involved in the enquiry. Indeed I would suggest that excluding lawyers has resulted in delays to the investigative process.”

The Historic Abuse enquiry will continue to be led by Detective Superintendent Mick Gradwell. Who stated.

“I would wish to emphasise that we are not questioning the fact that historically serious offences have been committed against children. There will however not be the number of court cases or prosecutions which were originally reported.”

“I have every confidence in the investigation team who are committed to bringing offenders to justice.”