

Inquest asked to declare wife dead

18/2/2009

By Bret Christian

Missing DalGLISH woman Susan Margaret Christie is likely to be declared murdered after an inquest this week, held at the request of her husband, Rory Christie.

Rory and Susan are still legally married, but Susan (42) has not been seen since she talked with a neighbour outside their Currie Street flats on November 15, 2001.

A finding of murder by an inquest will enable a death certificate to be issued and for Mr Christie to make decisions about his life, should he want to re-marry.

He returned to his native Canada after being acquitted of Susan's murder after two sensational trials and a successful appeal.

Friends say he has since begun in a long-term relationship with a Canadian woman and works making fine furniture - a trade he learned from a bank robber during his four years in Casuarina prison.

He had previously worked as an accountant.

Rory Christie was separated from the mercurial Susan, with whom he had a son, when she mysteriously disappeared some time after 10.30pm on November 15, 2001.

She was reported missing four days later by her first husband, Ian Ure.

It emerged at Rory's trial that Susan had a string of boyfriends and casual relationships.

This week the case officer, Superintendent Scott Higgins told coroner Alisdair Hope that there is no doubt she has died, but the circumstances of her death remain a mystery.

He said the case was not now being actively investigated and no-one was likely to be charged. All avenues of inquiry had been exhausted.

Mr Hope said that beyond reasonable doubt on the basis of the evidence, Mrs Christie was dead.

He said the death was unlawful homicide by a person or persons unknown.

Rory Christie was charged with her murder and convicted at his first trial, largely on the basis of extensive indications of blood all over a Zegna tie he had drycleaned the day after Susan was last seen.

But he was granted a re-trial by the Court of Appeal, and this 2005 trial was halted by Justice John McKechnie who instructed the jury to acquit Mr Christie.

He said there was no evidence that Mr Christie had the opportunity to dispose of his wife's body, a core part of the prosecution case.

By this time the state prosecutor had abandoned her contention that the tie had been covered in blood.

Instead there were tiny flecks of Mrs Christie's blood on the tie, stains that Mr Christie explained as being transferred from a blood nose suffered by Mrs Christie at their son's fifth birthday party.

At the second trial Justice McKechnie also threw out of court a bizarre police experiment that tried to establish that Rory Christie had dragged his wife's body into her bedroom after murdering her.

One officer lay on his stomach at the police station with Texta pens between his fingers while another officer dragged him along the floor.

The forensic officers said that the pen marked replicated marks found on Susan Christie's carpet.

But the judge at the second trial ruled the experiment inadmissible.

A defence blood expert contended that the "drag marks" were made by a wheeled appliance, probably Mrs Christie's vacuum cleaner.

The defence said there was no evidence that Mrs Christie was killed in her flat.

Mr Hope reserved his formal finding.