

# Police to dig up café cellar for suspected West victim

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Excavation work will begin at a café after police found “possible evidence” that a suspected teenage victim of serial killer Fred West may be buried there.

Gloucestershire police and a team of forensic archaeologists have been carrying out exploratory work at the Clean Plate café in Southgate Street, Gloucester, in connection with the disappearance of 15-year-old Mary Bastholm.

She was reported missing on January 6, 1968 and has never been found. West, who took his own life in prison in 1995 aged 53, was previously a suspect in her disappearance.

Police had received possible evidence from a TV production company to suggest that the body of the missing teenager might be buried at the café.

This included an image of what appeared to be blue material buried in one area of the cellar. Mary was wearing a blue coat when she went missing.

Last night forensic archaeologists confirmed that there were a number of “structural anomalies” in the cellar of the café that warranted further investi-

gation. Detective Chief Inspector John Turner said: “The analysis from our experts and the material provided by the production company means there is enough evidence to justify excavation work beginning.

“I’ve spoken to the family and was so impressed by their quiet dignity and gratitude for all the work we’ve done and will be doing. They understand it is possible we won’t find human remains but they also know that we will do everything we can to establish if Mary is buried at this location.”

He added: “In the meantime, I continue to ask for patience and understanding from all those affected by our ongoing presence at the café and thank everyone who has helped us in the last ten days.”

The family said they were happy that the force was “continuing the search for Mary” because it “gives us a chance to potentially put her at rest after all these years”.

They added: “We hope this is a chance to finally get closure for Mary.”

Mary’s disappearance came when Fred West, who often did jobs on the street where the café is located, was ab-

ducting girls in Gloucester. West is said to have confessed to killing Mary in conversation with his son, Stephen, but he never admitted it to police.

Mary’s body was not found during the 1994 excavation of the Wests’ home in Cromwell Street, Gloucester, known as the “House of Horrors”.

Leo Goatley, the Gloucester solicitor who acted for Rose West from 1992 to 2004, said last week he was “pleased there has been a new development” in the investigation.

Goatley, who wrote *Understanding Fred & Rose West*, said: “When I wrote my book, the case of Mary Bastholm occupied a lot of my time because I felt it was unresolved and if indeed there are remains at the Pop-In [the café’s previous name] it is a very clear and definite link to Fred and possibly Rose.

“It is my theory that Fred and Rose were involved in the disappearance and that Mary Bastholm was Rose West’s first victim.”

West committed at least 12 murders between 1967 and 1987 in Gloucestershire, the majority with his second wife, Rosemary West, who is serving a whole-life term for ten murders.