

The disquieting events of January 1966, when the three Beaumont children disappeared without trace from Glenelg beach, have puzzled many investigators and engendered a miasma of mythology and speculation. This book was written to mark the fortieth anniversary of the disappearance.

The facts are few, so Whiticker has brought everything conceivable into the book to pad it out. There is the history and geography of Adelaide, full of astonishing errors – Elizabeth is a western suburb, Adelaide is on the Fleurieu Peninsula; and every other major crime involving the young is brought in to prove that ‘Adelaide remains the city of lost children.’ Susan Mitchell’s highly debatable claim about Adelaide’s ‘denial’ of its darkest secrets in her book on the Snowtown murders is quoted as a matter of fact.

*Searching for the Beaumont Children* is replete with exhausted clichés. To say that Jim and Nancy Beaumont faced ‘every parent’s worst nightmare’, and that when the children disappeared ‘the country lost its innocence’, is to reduce the real pathos and tragedy of the situation to mere formula. More is conveyed by the photo of Jim and Nancy Beaumont on the beach after their children disappeared than all Whiticker’s attempts at colour and sensation.