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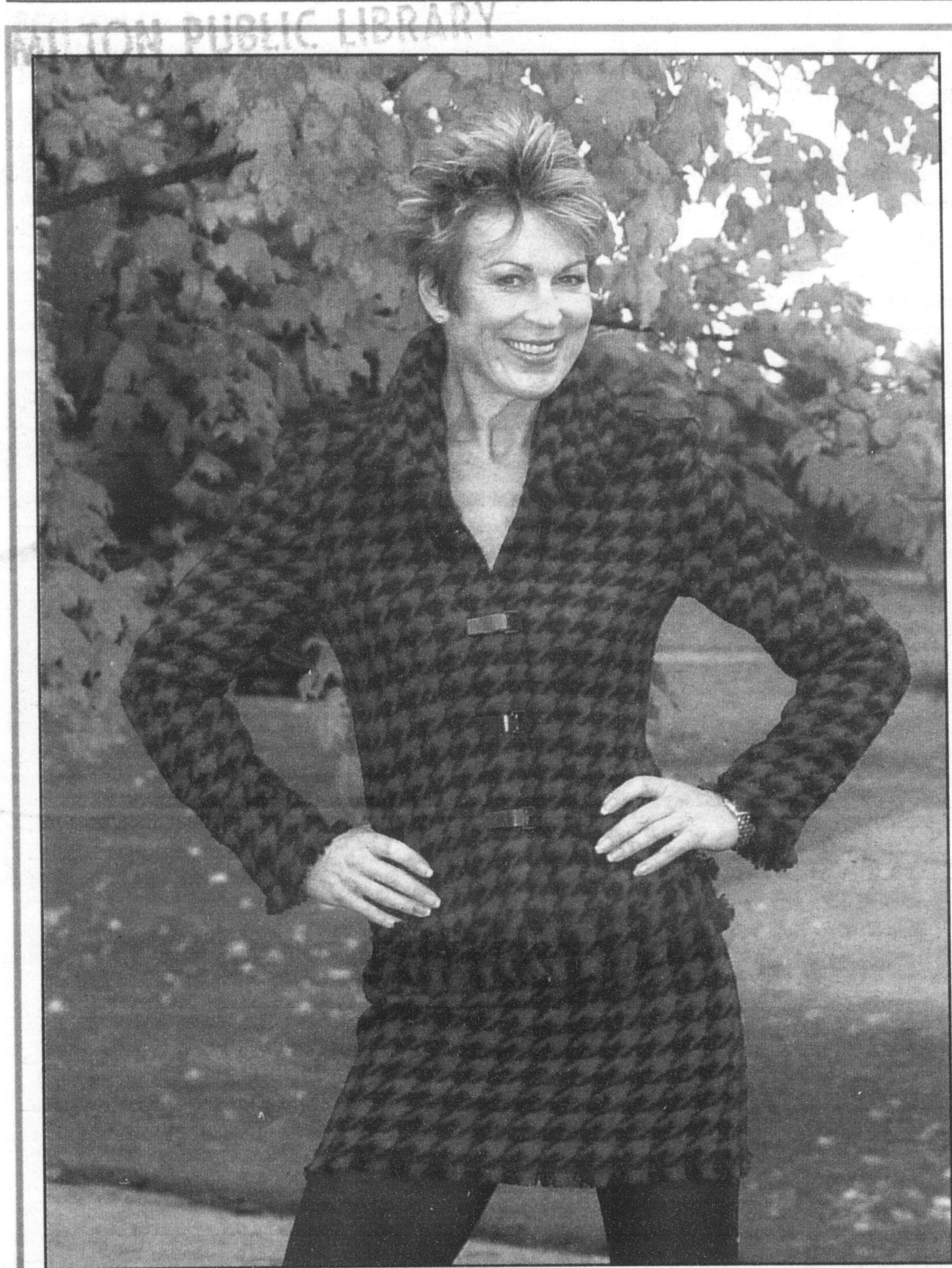


Photo by GRAHAM PAINE

✓ Fall colours

Penelope Mathieson models a blackie houndstooth skirt and jacket for fall and winter. It was part of the recent fundraising luncheon/fashion show put on by Studio 49 at Granite Ridge Golf Club in support of the Princess Margaret Breast Cancer Research Centre.

Police seek public's help in locating girls missing for a month

By **STEPHANIE THIESSEN**

The Champion

A distraught mother is pleading for the public's help after her daughter and two other girls, all 15 years old, went missing a month ago.

On September 21 Courtney Gale and Melissa Arsenault were reported missing and they haven't been heard from since. The girls are likely travelling together, police said, along with a third girl whose name hasn't been released.

"We don't know where they are. There's been no sightings — nothing. I don't want to think the worst, but I am," said Courtney's mom, Hamilton resident Sarah Cruickshanks.

She explained Courtney was staying with friends in Milton so she could attend Milton District High School — where she was last seen — rather than a Hamilton high school.

It would be completely out of character for her daughter to run away, she said, especially since Courtney was feeling homesick and was looking forward to phoning her mom the day she went missing. The call never came.

"She's not a kid who would leave everyone. A homesick kid doesn't run away and when they do, they run home," Ms Cruickshanks said from a Milton friend's home.

But Det. Sgt. Don Cousens said foul play isn't suspected and that the girls left on their own.

"There aren't suspicious circumstances leading us to believe it's foul play," he said.

He added two of the missing girls were known to police from previous disappearances.

Some leads suggest the girls are in the Toronto or Hamilton areas, Det. Sgt. Cousens said.

Any information adults or youths in the



Courtney Gale



Melissa Arsenault

• see PUBLIC on page 16

community can give police about the disappearances would be valued, he said.

Milton resident Sharon Stokes, who opened her home to Courtney two months ago, said the family is devastated with the girl's disappearance — particularly her daughter Sylvie, Courtney's best friend.

"The morning of the 21st, Courtney went to school for the day — it was a half day.

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