

**MEDIA CONFERENCE: SCOTTISH PARLIAMENT  
TUESDAY 28 JUNE 2005 AT 1 PM – ROOM TG20/21  
(Note: Access only by the main entrance to the Parliament)**

**STRICTLY EMBARGOED TILL: 1 PM TUESDAY 28 JUNE  
ATTENTION: NEWS EDITORS, POLITICAL CORRESPONDENTS**

## **Scottish Fingerprint Service staff break ranks and call for “independent enquiry” into McKie case.**

- **Conclusive proof offered by Scottish Experts that “*This print was not made by Shirley McKie*”**
- **Call for suspension of Scottish Fingerprint Chief**

**THREE staff members of the Scottish Fingerprint Service** (employed by Grampian Police in Aberdeen and who between them have 54 years of fingerprinting experience) , have mounted an astonishing public challenge to their management and to their beleaguered colleagues in the Scottish Criminal Record Office by undertaking – in their own time – a complete reanalysis of the fingerprint evidence from the Shirley McKie case which comprehensively proves that the fingerprints identified as Shirley’s by the SCRO in 1997 were not and could not have been hers.

They have now distributed their official report, outlining their findings, and have sent copies to the Lord Advocate as well as their own bosses including the Chief Constable of Grampian Police.

This is the first complete analysis by Scottish experts using the original court material. Following Shirley’s High Court acquittal in 1999 on a charge of perjury, the SCRO and Scottish Fingerprint Service have refused to release the court productions, citing instructions from the Justice Minister and the Lord Advocate.

However the Grampian experts obtained a copy of the original fingerprints by accident (they were found in a drawer belonging to a colleague who had retired) and having done so asked Shirley’s permission to mount a new study. The American expert, Pat Wertheim, provided a set of Shirley’s prints from the court evidence for comparison.

Their conclusion is unanimous and completely clear.

**‘WE ARE SATISFIED BEYOND REASONABLE DOUBT THAT THE MARK DISCLOSED ON THE CRIME SCENE PHOTOGRAPH WAS NOT MADE BY THE LEFT THUMB OF SHIRLEY MCKIE’**

This conclusion totally supports the views of the international experts brought in by the Her Majesty’s Chief Inspector of Constabulary in 2000 and hundreds of experts from across the world who have condemned the SCRO identifications.

However the Scottish experts go further and make a number of additional points which will rock the SCRO and the Justice Department.

They call, first of all, for an independent enquiry into the case, to be undertaken by experts from outwith the UK, claiming that only when the results of this enquiry are known and accepted can the Scottish Fingerprint Service “*move on and become the “world class supplier of fingerprint identification and verification service*” that its mission statement claims it wishes to be.

Secondly they accuse the Head of the newly created Scottish Fingerprint Service, Ewan Innes – who was brought in to establish new standards after a highly critical report on the SCRO from the Her Majesty’s Chief Inspector of Constabulary - of privately distributing a wildly inaccurate letter from an English solicitor which was grossly critical of Shirley, her father, those working on her behalf and of the Lord Advocate and which alleges ‘*some form of alliance between the Crown Office and the McKies*’, against the SCRO. They were present at a recent meeting in Aberdeen at which Mr Innes handed out copies of it.

The experts – John McGregor, a former Acting Head of the Grampian Bureau, John Dingwall and Gary Dempster – are forbidden by their contracts of employment from speaking to the press. However the report makes clear that concerned by the letter and Mr Innes’ actions and by the ongoing refusal of their colleagues in the SCRO, which is now part of the Scottish Fingerprint Service, to recognise the problems being caused by the McKie case, they were moved ‘*as Fingerprint Experts, who take professional pride in the integrity of the Science of Fingerprints...to ...carry out our own unbiased comparisons.*’

In the report they also state that : *We have been faced with a huge personal dilemma as a result of our findings, but we do realise we are unable to remain silent on what is matter of extreme importance to the future of our profession in Scotland, and indeed to the future of the Fingerprint Service worldwide. We are all experienced Fingerprint Officers, and take personal pride in the work we carry out in the Identification of individuals by means of fingerprints. We believe integrity and openness are absolutely paramount to the future of any Scottish Fingerprint Service.*’

The Grampian experts are also fully aware of the only other occasion that members of the Scottish Fingerprint Service broke ranks to criticise what had been done by the SCRO. In 2000 14 experts from Lothian and Borders Police wrote to the then Minister for Justice Jim Wallace and the Lord Advocate referring to the Shirley McKie fingerprint identification by the **Scottish Criminal Records Office (SCRO)** saying that : ‘*At best the apparent ‘misidentification’ is a display of gross incompetence by not one but several experts within that bureau. At worst it bears all the hallmarks of a conspiracy of a nature unparalleled in the history of fingerprints.*’

These experts were subsequently disciplined for their comments. The SCRO experts have never admitted their mistake and they now make up the majority of those working in the Scottish Fingerprint Service.

Commenting on these new developments Shirley McKie said: “*After the horrendous way the experts from Lothian and Borders were treated I never thought that any Scottish experts would be brave enough to put their jobs and livelihoods on the line for me. I cannot thank them enough and hope that the Scottish media will not allow them to be pilloried for speaking out and telling the truth.*”

Shirley's father Iain McKie added: *“This report points to something rotten at the heart of the new Scottish Fingerprint Service. The actions of its head Mr Ewan Innes in openly supporting SCRO and circulating a letter containing defamatory statements , lies and innuendo must be investigated as a matter of urgency and he should be suspended immediately. In addition the Minister for Justice Cathy Jamieson and Lord Advocate Colin Boyd must urgently seek to bring this debacle to an end and ensure that the Scottish public can be confident about the integrity and honesty of the organisation collecting and holding fingerprints. This is particularly important given plans to include fingerprints on identity cards and the proposals to retain the prints of people who have been arrested but are innocent of any crime*

Writer and broadcaster Michael Russell who has championed Shirley's cause for several years added: *John McGregor, John Dingwall and Gary Dempster are taking a considerable risk in standing up to be counted. They should be applauded for that but in reality they are simply confirming what everyone , except the so-called experts in SCRO , know to be true and beyond contradiction. These prints are not, were not, and could not be Shirley's. However the Scottish Executive seems to lack the wit and compassion to bring this matter to an end now, by a clear statement of responsibility and the swift conclusion of a settlement with Shirley. The inescapable conclusion is that there is not a shred of integrity or openness within the Justice system nor within the Executive. That only exists amongst the experts in Grampian. None the less I hope that these new , and stunning revelations will finally galvanise the Minister and the Lord Advocate into action , so that can bring an end to Shirley's eight years of torment. Only then – as the Grampian experts clearly say – can the new Scottish Fingerprint Service move forward on any type of firm foundation.*

**FURTHER INFORMATION FROM:**

**Iain McKie – 01292 880279 / 0773 1488004**

**Michael Russell – 01369 820319 / 07990 572087**

**Rob Davidson – Scottish Parliament - 0131 348 5728**

**NOTE TO NEWS AND PICTURE EDITORS; Shirley McKie, Iain McKie, Michael Russell, civil rights lawyer John Scott and MSP's Alasdair Morgan, Fergus Ewing and Alex Neil will be at the media conference and available for interview. Copies of the report, signed by the Grampian Experts, will be made available.**