

The Real Debate

In his 'Weekly Detail' on www.clpex.com **Kasey Wertheim** raises an issue of supreme importance to the profession of fingerprinting.

He reflects on what happens when a splinter is allowed to fester. The splinters in question are the unresolved disputes about the 'Shirley McKie' and 'Marion Ross' 'identifications claimed by SCRO and Peter Swann.

Kasey says, "*It is past time to remove this splinter from the latent print discipline.*" - But how ?

As I have observed in the past the real danger in this whole affair is that by failing to face the issues square on your profession stands to be split wide open by disputes like this.

It can be argued that the reluctance of the **Fingerprint Society** and the **IAI** to create more of a world-wide consensus among experts has allowed the splinter to fester to a stage where it now represents a serious threat to fingerprinting.

The danger is that you allow the smokescreen, currently being deployed to protect the reputation of the few, to obscure the fact that the overwhelming body of evidence - from Shirley's trial and the HMCI's independent enquiry to the statement by 171 world experts and the major police enquiry – points to SCRO and their supporters being wrong. That this smokescreen threatens your profession far more than Shirley is self evident.

As I have already stated the facts of the Shirley McKie and Marion Ross 'identifications cannot be changed and will be evaluated in the Court of Session next year. The problem for your profession is how to prevent your critics climbing on the bandwagon so conveniently offered them over the past two weeks.

Kasey observes, "*In reality, the heart of the issue is the concept of "sides" concerning a particular latent print comparison. There should be no "sides" regarding the identity versus the non-identity of any pair of impressions except for truth. When an element of mis-truth exists, as it must in any case of opposing conclusions, it becomes a splinter in the greater body of worldwide forensic science that must be dealt with.*"

My case is that the truth is there for everyone to see if they choose to see it. That others see it differently is fine by me but not I suspect for a forensic science already under pressure from so many quarters.

Kasey Wertheim is right - doing nothing is not an option. I will co-operate fully in any coherent action to remove these splinters be that by independent enquiry, debate or whatever. Do nothing and I fear you will give your critics yet more opportunity to attack fingerprinting as a forensic science and devalue a valuable crime detection and prevention resource.

Iain McKie
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