

LGC Forensics News

Key evidence identified in first double jeopardy conviction

LGC Forensics is pleased to have worked with Thames Valley Police (TVP) on the re-investigation into the August 1995 murder of Vikki Thompson and to have identified evidence which led to the conviction of her killer, Mark Weston.

Since the general prohibition against double jeopardy was abolished in England and Wales by the Criminal Justice Act 2003, Mark Weston's conviction under this ruling was the first such guilty verdict in which DNA played a key part.

Part 10 of the Criminal Justice Act 2003 reforms the laws relating to double jeopardy, by permitting retrials in respect of a number of very serious offences, where new and compelling evidence has come to light. Previously, the law did not permit a person who has been acquitted or convicted of an offence to be retried for that same offence.

The original investigation into the death of Vikki Thompson took place during 1995 and 1996 after which the main suspect of that time was acquitted in November 1996.

In August 2006, after the case was re-opened by TVP, LGC Forensics was asked to become involved in the murder re-investigation. Within a forensic strategy jointly agreed with TVP, LGC Forensics examined a large number of items in a staged process between 2006 and 2009.

Mark Weston's boots were submitted to LGC Forensics for analysis in early January 2008 and, within two months, it was confirmed that blood had been found which could have come from Vikki Thompson. There were still a large number of items to be examined subsequent to this and detailed investigations were undertaken to fully explore the evidence and to establish how the bloodstaining could have been deposited on the boots. Crucial to the investigation was evidence given by the LGC Forensics scientist that the minute stains of Vikki Thompson's blood found on the boots could only have been deposited when wet, i.e. as a result of a drop of blood travelling through the air and landing on the boot.

At the end of 2009, TVP had gathered enough evidence to enable officers to make a successful application to court, so quashing the acquittal and ordering Mark Weston to be retried for the murder of Vikki Thompson. This application was made based on the small stain of blood found by LGC Forensics and our evidence was that there was only a one-in-a-billion chance that someone other than Vikki Thompson would have the same DNA profile as the bloodstain on the boot.

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LGC Forensics unstitched [Mark Weston's boot](#) to undertake blood stain analysis

Steve Allen, Managing Director of LGC Forensics, said: *"We always value the opportunity to contribute to important investigations such as this one, where the thorough and painstaking work of our forensic scientists yields results that otherwise could have been missed."*

LGC Forensics has developed an unrivalled reputation for re-investigations as well as for high quality analytical science across the full spectrum of forensic casework. In difficult cases, such as this one, this owes much to the LGC Forensics' unique approach to investigation strategy and in depth search methods.

Examples of other cases which LGC Forensics has helped solve include Damilola Taylor, Rachel Nickell and Colette Aram, which was BBC Crimewatch's first-ever murder case appeal.

Everything but a knight in shining armour

LGC Forensics held a customer event on Thursday 24 March 2011 at the Royal Armouries Museum in Leeds, giving over 40 police and commercial customers the opportunity to meet LGC Forensics staff and to learn more about the services we provide.

David Richardson, LGC Group, Chief Executive, hosted the event and introduced the evening's guest speaker, Graeme Rimer, Academic Director of the Royal Armouries Museum, who gave an extremely interesting presentation on historical weapons in modern crime. The evening commenced with guests being greeted in the Tournament Gallery, where they witnessed a medieval sword fight.

Representatives from all of LGC Forensics' business units showcased our expertise and innovative techniques at several display stands within the venue. Units represented included Digital & Document Forensics, animal DNA, specialist services including high sensitivity DNA profiling and ecology, forensic research and development as well as the Cold Case Review Team.

During the evening, guests were given the opportunity to tour the National Firearms Centre which holds one of the world's largest reference collections - more than 20,000 examples of firearms and ammunition - which is not open to the general public.

We certainly hope our guests enjoyed the event as much as we did!



The [Tournament Gallery](#) at the Royal Armouries Museum

Your feedback please!

LGC Forensics welcomes any and all customer feedback. Customers are able to provide feedback to either their account managers, or directly to any LGC Forensics member of staff they are dealing with. Appropriate communication channels are in place to ensure that all comments are received and dealt with in a timely and appropriate manner.

We are very happy to say that a high number of customers do provide not only very positive feedback about our work, but also provide constructive and helpful insight into where they think we can improve our offerings – something we are very keen to hear.

Each edition of LGC Forensics News will highlight a few examples of recent customer feedback stories. Here are just two examples:

1. *“Just wanted to thank you for such a carefully prepared, thorough report. I didn’t*

give you a lot of time to deal with such a mass of samples in what is a complicated case but we are very happy with the result. Thank you for the obvious amount of work and time you put into it.”

Ken Foot, Barrister, London Borough of Barnet

2. In the case where asylum seeker, Amina Muse was claiming benefits in another name totalling £250,000, LGC Forensics compared handwriting within the claim forms between those in Muse’s real name and those in the allegedly false name. The findings provided very strong support for the proposition that the same person had completed forms in the two names. On 25 November 2010 an LGC Forensics handwriting specialist was called to give evidence after which Muse was subsequently found guilty and sentenced to four-and-a-half years in prison. LGC Forensics received the following positive feedback from the case officer:

“Just to let you know that Amina Muse was sent to prison for four years and six months. I want to thank you for all your work in this case. It is the first time in all the cases you have done for me that I have seen your work challenged and I was very impressed along with Mr Evans our barrister with the way that you explained the evidence, especially the charts you presented to the jury. I could see the jury using your comparisons for other documents that they were given after your evidence! I know that your evidence was crucial in securing our conviction. In summing up the judge made reference to your certainty as an expert that Muse was completing the claim forms in both identities. Once again thanks for all your help.”

**Steve Thompson,
Department for Work and Pensions
Investigator**

Demonstrating what we are made of...

Between September 2010 and February 2011 LGC Forensics held a series of Awareness Days held at our Runcorn laboratory. The Awareness Days were an opportunity for North West Forces, some of which were new to LGC Forensics as part of the NWSWW Contract, to meet LGC Forensic Staff, to learn more about the range of services on offer, have the opportunity to view the automated PACE

process and to understand any new techniques or best practices when exhibiting or approaching a scene.

Several LGC Forensics teams were on-hand to showcase their services using presentations and interactive case studies, giving attendees a chance to learn about what we do and how it relates to their work. Attendees could meet with representatives from Biology, Mark and Traces, Gun Shot Residue, Firearms and Digital and Document Forensics.

Feedback for the days was very positive with the majority of the attendees finding the presentation relevant and informative and attending the days beneficial to their role.

If you would further information on our series of awareness days please contact your Account Manager on

+44 (0)844 2641 999.

Team Focus – Sexual Offences



Lynne Hingley



Nikki Peake



Pauline Stevens



Rebecca Mayfield



Sarah Kalargeros



Stephanie Sherwood

Since January 2008, LGC Forensics has offered the services of Sexual Offences Forensic Advisors (SOFA) who focus their efforts on the provision of information and guidance relating to the investigation and assessment of sexual offence cases.

Enhanced Sexual Offences Services available from LGC Forensics include:

- 24/7 advice and support including pre-submission advice to help streamline submissions to ensure best evidence
- Bespoke training courses tailored to meet the needs of different police personnel including First Response Officers, Crime Scene Investigators, Crime Investigators, Specially Trained Officers, Sexual Offence Liaison Officers (SOLOs), Independent Sexual Violence Advisers

(ISVAs), Police Force Rape Champions and Domestic Violence Officers, Forensic Physicians, Forensic Nurses, General Physicians and Health Care Professionals

- Advice and consultation regarding the set up and design of police medical examination facilities and sexual assault referral centres
- Providing on-going DNA environmental monitoring of police medical examination facilities and including sexual assault referral centres
- Preliminary forensic assessment of historical cases as potential candidates for cold case reviews.

LGC Forensics' SOFAs attend relevant conferences to share their knowledge and experience, but are

also responsible for reviewing forensic casework to establish best practise. This, in turn, feeds into LGC Forensics' research and development (R&D) programme, where key areas of research have been identified, based on the team's shared casework experience.

Members of LGC Forensics' Sexual Offences team sit on various National Level Committees and meet with other forensic service providers, forensic medical examiners and representatives of ACPO to share knowledge and establish best practise for all forces across the country. One example of this collaboration includes the Faculty of Forensic and Legal Medicine Forensic Science Committee where the team have assisted in the writing of guidelines used in the collection of forensic samples from individuals involved in sexual crime investigations.

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Part of the team's remit is to evaluate whether new technological developments can assist our work. Various R&D projects are underway to help identify improvements to current forensic equipment, procedures and techniques, specific to our field of work. LGC Forensics' commitment to forensic R&D is a very important part of our role and a commitment we are very proud of.

LGC Forensics' Sexual Offences team has also developed its own internal sexual offences database which will be brought in line with the newly-installed Casework and Laboratory Information Management System. The aim of this database is to capture information for use by our forensics scientists during the interpretation of sexual assault cases.

The team currently comprises six highly-experienced forensic scientists which include a SOFA at each main site (Culham, Risley, Tamworth and Teddington) plus the National Manager based in Culham. All of the team are highly experienced casework scientists, who have been dealing with the complexities of sexual offence investigations for at least ten years.

For more information on the work of our Sexual Offences team, please get in touch by calling **+44 (0)844 2641 999.**

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