

**Cesagen Public Lecture**  
**Genetic Fingerprinting: past, present and future**  
**Professor Sir Alec Jeffreys, FRS**  
**Organised by Dr Ruth McNally**

This was the 6<sup>th</sup> in Cesagen's public lecture series and its 3<sup>rd</sup> in Lancaster.

The lecture was by Professor Sir Alec Jeffreys FRS from the University of Leicester, the inventor of DNA fingerprinting. The evening was organised and chaired by Dr Ruth McNally, co-author of *Truth Machine*, an award-winning book on DNA fingerprinting.

Sir Alec's fascinating lecture spanned the entire history of genetic fingerprinting, from its pre-molecular genetics beginnings in the early 20<sup>th</sup> century right up to future scenarios involving real-time crime scene analysis. Drawing on cases that included those in which his own expertise had been called upon, he described the use of DNA fingerprints and profiles in paternity and immigration cases, to identify the remains of Josef Mengele and the victims of 09/11 and other disasters, to confirm the identity of the bodies of Osama Bin Laden and Saddam Hussein, as well as in the conviction of criminals and the exoneration and freeing of innocent people.

It was Sir Alec's research that made the establishment of the UK National DNA Database possible. Not only the first, the NDNAD is by far the largest forensic DNA database in the world, containing 6 million profiles, which equates to nearly 10 per cent of the UK population with a significant bias towards young black males. At the lecture, Sir Alec criticised its continued inclusion of the DNA profiles of thousands of innocent people.

The lecture was attended by over 170 people, and included those working in the genetics industry, the legal sector, pathology, and crime scene investigation, students of forensic science, and those whose lives had been touched by DNA profiling, those interested in human rights issues, and those just interested in science.

Feedback on the lecture confirmed its success, with many comments on how interesting and informative it had been, and at the reception afterwards, Sir Alec was surrounded by a crowd who just wanted to know more.