Fifty Years of Forensic Science
A commentary

Edited by

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Centre for Forensic Science, University of Strathclyde,
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Preface

The Forensic Science Society held its inaugural meeting on the 31st October 1959 and the first volume of the Journal of the Forensic Science Society, later Science and Justice, was published the following year in 1960. The Journal, as it’s known within the Society, has been published continuously ever since making it one of the longest established journals of its type in the World.

What makes the Society’s journal truly different from its peers, is that each issue contains an editorial piece. This provides an invaluable and often fascinating commentary of the development of our profession, of our science and the articulation of our place within the judicial system. Over the past 50 years, forensic science has changed enormously, however it may be of interest for readers to note that many of the current perspectives and debates have been considered, sometimes at great length, by our predecessors many years ago. The influence of television programmes on forensic science education, for example, was first mentioned in an editorial in 1968, the development of a professional body for forensic scientists was first discussed in 1965 and the introduction of a forensic science watchdog examining professional standards was discussed as far back as 1973.

The existence of the editorials has provided the opportunity to produce this text. They have been divided into a number of broad categories and presented in chronological order within each section. The choice of how to categorise the editorials has been mine and hopefully I have done a good job which reflects the different topics well. In a few cases I have also chosen to include correspondence produced in response to the editorials to give a broader and developed perspective of the debate which was provoked. The authors of the editorials are sometimes anonymous (as was the policy of the Journal for many years), but were always respected members of the profession. Many of the pieces were penned by my learned and respected previous editors, Stuart Kind, Russell Stockdale, Roger Davis, Bill Tilstone, Brian Caddy and Robert Forrest. They have provided insightful and often very entertaining commentary in their writing and have made some marvellous choices for invited authors. It is a humbling experience to be considered within the same company.

This has been a fascinating and enjoyable project to work on. I’m delighted to be able to work with Wiley-Blackwell Publishers who listened to what began as one of my crazy ideas, and resulted in the production of this text to celebrate the Golden anniversary of the Forensic Science Society. Each section has a short commentary apart from the first two sections (the professional aspects of forensic science and the development of science and technology in the field) which are both introduced by Brian Caddy’s initial comments.

I would like to thank my fellow contributors to the commentaries, Claude Roux, Max Houck, Brian Caddy as well as Sue Black, Robert Forrest, Jim Fraser, Katy Savage and Gillian Urquhart for useful and helpful discussions. I hope you, the reader, find the contents stimulating and enjoyable.

Niamh Nic Daeid,
Glasgow 2009