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Harlow man convicted of rape 14 years ago following family DNA link



Monday, June 11, 2012



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A Harlow man is today started an eight and a half year prison sentence after being convicted of raping a teenage girl as she walked through woodlands in the town 14 years ago.

Jon Molt, 34, of Rushes Mead, was convicted through "Familial DNA" screening during a cold-case review of the attack, which took place in Ten Metre Wood in December 1997.



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Jon Molt, convicted of raping 15 year old girl in Harlow in 1997



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Jon Molt, convicted of raping 15 year old girl in Harlow in 1997

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This involved following up voluntary DNA screening of 100 local men which took place in 1998 - which found that DNA taken from a victim, although not matching any of the men, was highly likely to belong to a relative of one of them.

DNA belonging to that man's two sons was then screened, leading to the arrest of Molt at his home in January this year.

He appeared at Chelmsford Crown Court today, having been remanded in custody at Chelmsford Magistrates' Court in January, and was found guilty of rape.

It is the first time that the familial DNA screening technique has led to a conviction for the newly formed Kent and Essex Serious Crime Directorate.

Senior Investigating Officer, DCI Rob Vinson, said: "Jon Molt believed for over 14 years that he had got away with this brutal and shocking attack on a young girl who had just left a school carol concert. He hadn't and he will now be going to prison for a long time. This prosecution sends a clear message to those who commit such crimes that they should spend their days expecting a knock on the door, no matter how long ago their offence.

"What is most important of course is that we have been able to tell this young girl, now a woman, exactly who had attacked her and for her to see justice done.

"Our thanks go to her, for her support and determination in watching her attacker face the consequences of his crime; to the forensic scientists and to the detectives who were so determined to bring this man to justice.

"The use of new DNA techniques and the national DNA database were key to unlocking this case and we will continue to use any opportunities we can to bring hope to those still waiting for similar answers and bring fear to those responsible for those crimes.

"Essex Police will continue to support all victims of such crimes, encouraging them to come forward and have faith that they will be listened to and that appropriate care and support will be there for them when they need it."

This case is the first time familial DNA has been used by the Kent & Essex Serious Crime Directorate to track down an offender.

The victim, who cannot be identified for legal reasons, was 15 at the time and is now married and living in London.

She said she supported the use of a national database for DNA to help police track offenders: "It is difficult to describe the sense of relief that I feel now that this man has been caught.

"Fourteen years is a long time and I was beginning to believe that he would never be caught.

"I am extremely grateful that Essex Police continued to investigate the crime and I would like to thank them not only on my behalf, but for any future victims of this man who will now never have to go through the ordeal that I have had to endure.

"Essex Police were helped markedly in their enquiries by having the resources to use familial DNA fingerprinting and I strongly support the arguments for the use of this technique and for the maintenance of the DNA database.

"I understand the counter-arguments that such a database may infringe civil liberties, but I would respond that if we, and our families, have nothing to hide then we should not feel threatened by the storage of this information.

"In random attacks, such as the one I suffered, there may be no other way of catching the perpetrator.

"In this country, rape is under-reported and the chances of a successful prosecution are low; let's not make it more difficult for the police by denying them a technique that can make a huge difference. "Once again, I would like to thank the forensic scientists and Essex Police for their hard work on this case, the judge and jury for their careful consideration of the case, and my family for their continued support."

Investigating officer Ds Jo Williams highlighted the fact that stranger attacks of this nature are very rare and wants to reassure the community that unsolved cases are never closed.

She said: "We would encourage victims of such crimes to come forward.

"Specially-trained officers are available to support them.

"Forensic collection and analysis is better than at any time in the past and improving all the time.

"We utilise advances in forensic science along with the national DNA Database to make every effort to identify and capture those responsible.

"Offences of this nature are statistically rare and 'stranger' attacks rarer still; nonetheless we treat each and every case as a serious crime investigation, using specialist resources.

"With forensic science advances in recent years the smallest amount of evidence can now be used to identify the offender; in some instances samples virtually invisible to the eye.

"Cases that do not immediately lead to the identification and arrest of an offender are regularly reviewed to ensure any new techniques are applied.

"The Cold Case Investigation Team ensures that no unresolved case is ignored and the hunt will continue. Perpetrators should be looking over their shoulder."

Jon Molt was ordered to serve a minimum of two thirds of his prison sentence before spending final third on licence, and will be on the Sex Offenders' Register for life.

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