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## Press Releases

### Advances in DNA help to jail serial sex offender

The first cross border cold case that was investigated using familial searching has resulted in a success today.

Serial sex offender James Ben Davies was today sentenced to four and a half years in prison after pleading guilty to a string of sexual assaults in 1998 and 2000.

A combination of familial searching, a new technique developed by the Forensic Science Service, and investigations by all three police forces led to the identification of the offender.

Thirty-two-year-old Davies pleaded guilty before Corby Magistrates on August 19 and was sentenced on September 19.

The first sexual assault took place in Farnborough, Hampshire on February 20, 1998 at 8.45pm. A 20-year-old woman was walking along Southwood Road when she was pushed to the floor and was subjected to the assault.

Then on August 14, 1998 at 3.20pm a 32-year-old woman was sexually assaulted as she walked her dog on wasteground in Eaton Socon in Cambridgeshire.

The third sexual assault took place at 2pm on January 12, 2000 in Bozeat, Northamptonshire. A 40-year-old woman was walking her dog when a man jogged towards her, pushed her into a hedgerow and subjected her to serious sexual assault.

All three offences were linked through DNA but at the time an offender could not be identified.

More recently the Association of Chief Police Officers (ACPO) agreed to fund a familial search on the three profiles obtained from the crime scenes.

Familial searching aims at providing intelligence to investigations where a full DNA profile has been obtained from a crime scene but does not match with any profiles held on the NDNAD.

It is based on the fact that DNA profiles of those who are related to each other are more likely to contain similarities than those of two unrelated individuals. Familial searches provide two lines of enquiry: the identity of individuals who could be a parent or child of the offender or the offender's siblings.

After receiving intelligence generated by the familial search Northamptonshire police prioritised individuals for further intelligence research and, along with officers from Hampshire, Cambridgeshire and Surrey, carried out a number of intelligence led inquiries, leading to the arrest of Davies at his Surrey home on August 17.

Richard Pinchin, head of the Forensic Intelligence Bureau at the FSS, which was responsible for developing familial searching said: "This is a real breakthrough in the investigation of serial offenders who operate in different locations. The FSS provided the springboard which the combined police investigation carried forward to today's conviction."

DCI Tom Manson at Northamptonshire Police said: "The sentencing of James Ben Davies today marks the end of an extensive and thorough investigation involving three police forces.

"The successful conclusion of this case is thanks to developments in forensic science surrounding DNA, together with detailed intelligence-led police inquiries.

"The case is the first of its kind involving familial DNA on a cross-border investigation involving a number of police forces and should send out a stark message to offenders that you will be caught."

Ends

Notes to editor:

- More information about familial searching and other advances in DNA can be found by visiting [www.forensic.gov.uk](http://www.forensic.gov.uk)
- The FSS is an executive agency of the Home Office
- The FSS provides a national service primarily to the 43 police forces in England and Wales, the Crown Prosecution Service, HM Customs and Excise, HM Coroners as well as the Ministry of Defence Police and British Transport Police.
- The FSS operates from seven laboratories across the country – Birmingham (2), Chepstow, Chorley, Huntingdon, London and Wetherby. It employs more than 2,500 staff.
- In 2004/5, the FSS dealt with 130,000 cases, attended 1,800 crime scenes, and appeared as expert witnesses in court 2,500 times.
- There are currently around 3 million DNA profiles on the National DNA Database

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