



THE FINGERPRINT SOCIETY

QUAERITE ET INVENIETIS
FOUNDED 1974

A Brief History of The Fingerprint Society

Stephen Haylock FFS RFP
&
Martin Leadbetter FFS RFP BA (Hons)

The Fingerprint Society was founded in 1974 (being initially known as 'The National Society of Fingerprint Officers') by two fingerprint experts working for Hertfordshire Constabulary, Stephen Haylock and Martin Leadbetter, assisted by Nick Hall and David Brooker who were also with the same police force.

From its very inception there was found to be great enthusiasm for such an organisation and fingerprint experts throughout the United Kingdom were quick to show their support and join the Society.

A year later John Berry joined the workforce in Hertfordshire and quickly agreed to edit the Society's journal, 'Fingerprint Whorld'.

Throughout the early days of the Society the membership grew very rapidly and soon members from overseas began to join its ranks and it became clear that it would be necessary to change the name of the organisation. Thus, from 1975 onwards it has been known as 'The Fingerprint Society'.

One of the Society's leading lights, Detective Superintendent Lewis Minshall, was an early champion of the ideals and aspirations of The Fingerprint Society and coined its aims:

'To advance the study and application of fingerprint
evidence and to facilitate the co-operation among
persons interested in this field of personal identification'

It was about this time that the Society's motto, 'Quaerite et invenietis' ('Seek and ye shall find'), was adopted following a competition of the membership.

Very soon it was realised there was a need for an annual event to be held and the first Annual Conference of the Society took place at Blackpool in the north-west of England in 1976. A few years later in 1983 the first overseas conference of the Society was held in Washington DC, USA.

The Fingerprint Society now enjoys respect throughout the world and has members in every continent.

The Fingerprint Society is still and remains the only organisation in the world that is totally dedicated to the fingerprint discipline.

There are three levels of membership within the Society:

Fellow (FFS) which may be conferred upon all qualified fingerprint experts within the Society.

Member (MFS) which may be conferred upon full members whom, whilst not qualified as fingerprint experts, are working within the field of fingerprints and scene of crime examination.

Associate which may be conferred upon persons not eligible for membership of the Society but whom have an interest in the objects of the Society.

The Society functions in much the same way as most professional bodies in that, in addition to holding an annual conference and publishing a professional journal, it also promotes research and honours achievement in the field of fingerprints via two annual awards namely, The Lewis Minshall Award and The Henry Medal. The Society also has a code of professional practice.

The administration of the Society is conducted by elected officers and a committee which are appointed by the membership at each annual general meeting, which is combined in the annual conference.

During its thirty-year life the Society has conducted research into many aspects of fingerprint identification and analysis. The study of primate prints, fingerprints on archaeological artefacts, twins and fingerprints in medical disorders are just a few of the diverse areas that have been investigated.

The Society always welcomes new members, especially those new to the profession and it has always striven to keep membership subscriptions as low as possible in order not to deter new members from joining.

The Fingerprint Society is a non-profit making organisation and is non-racial, non-sectarian and always welcomes new members from any part of the world working in the fingerprint/forensic area within the police, government or military agencies.