



Cambridge Society for the Application of Research

Churchill College  
Storey's Way  
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[www.csar.org.uk](http://www.csar.org.uk)

## "It wasn't me Guv, – honest!"

Ethical questions relating to the police use of DNA evidence

**Professor Sir Bob Hepple QC FBA LL.D. (*honoris causa*)**

Late Chairman of the Nuffield Council on Bioethics; former Master of Clare College, Cambridge; barrister, and a United Nations judge

7.30 p.m., Monday 12<sup>th</sup> May, 2008

The Wolfson Lecture Theatre, Churchill College, Storey's Way, Cambridge

### **About the topic:**

#### **Professor Sir Bob Hepple writes:**

"Fingerprinting and DNA profiling are increasingly valuable tools in the fight against crime.

However, in the UK, which has the largest forensic DNA database in the world, per head of population, there is debate about whether current police powers to take, use and retain bioinformation are justified

I shall focus on issues such as the reliability of the underlying science, how to reduce the risks of mistaken identification and wrongful conviction, how to balance police powers with individual rights to liberty and privacy, whether the police should be able to retain samples of those who are not charged or convicted and whether there should be a population-wide database, when is it ethically acceptable to use the DNA database for familial searching, inferring ethnicity and for non-operational research purposes."

### **About the Speaker:**

Professor Sir Bob Hepple QC FBA was Chairman of the Nuffield Council on Bioethics from 2003-2007. He chaired the Council's working group on the Ethics of Research into Genetics and Human Behaviour (2000-2002), and its investigation into the Forensic Use of Bioinformation (2006-2007). Professor Hepple was a member of the Expert Scientific Group on Phase 1 Clinical Trials set up by the Secretary of State for Health in 2006 after the Northwick Park incident. He has been a member of the Core Committee of the Cambridge University Government Policy Programme since its inception.

He is currently a Judge of the UN Administrative Tribunal, and a Barrister at Blackstone Chambers specialising in mediation. He was Master of Clare College from 1993-2003, and Professor of Law in the University of Cambridge from 1995-2001. He was appointed Queen's Counsel (*honoris causa*) and a Bencher of Gray's Inn in 1996, and was elected as a Fellow of the British Academy in 2003. He was knighted in the New Year Honours 2004 'for services to legal studies.'

## The Organising Secretary adds....

I discovered Sir Bob Hepple on a Radio 4 Today programme, noted that he was a Cambridge man, and made another note to ask him to give us a talk on DNA profiling. I have also in the bag, as it were, an expert from the Home Office on the scientific side of the issue – but Sir Bob will deal with the legal and ethical aspects (which in many ways is the most interesting). Hopefully, we can therefore look forward to a lecture on the **science** of DNA profiling in the 2008-9 lecture season

I do apologise for us not being able to use our normal venue for coffee last week; the college does take its 'quiet period' very seriously, and we have encountered this problem once before, as members will remember. Our president (who better?) has fixed matters by talking to the college authorities, so we should be as normal for Sir Bob Hepple's visit

**Coffee may, therefore, be available** somewhere in the college. I suggest you start your search in the foyer outside the lecture theatre, from ~7pm onwards

Don't forget, those who were lucky enough to get places, that the CSAR Summer Visit will be to the Maths Department on Wednesday night, starting at 5.30pm; Elizabeth has all the details (01223 525681). The trip is now full, but there are occasional cancellations

Best Regards

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