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Series Editor: Professor Jeff Thompson

SCIENCE AND CRIMINAL DETECTION

John Broad

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*To Steve, Graham, Marianne,
Vivien, Sue and Rajai*

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*“Life is nothing but a
competition to be the criminal
rather than the victim.”*

Bertrand Russell

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Series Editor's preface

This book is one in a Series designed to illustrate and explore a range of ways in which scientific knowledge is generated, and techniques are developed and applied. The volumes in this Series will certainly satisfy the needs of students at 'A' level and in first-year higher-education courses, although there is no intention to bridge any apparent gap in the transfer from secondary to tertiary stages. Indeed, the notion that a scientific education is both continuous and continuing is implicit in the approach which the authors have taken.

Working from a base of 'common core' 'A'-level knowledge and principles, each book demonstrates how that knowledge and those principles can be extended in academic terms, and also how they are applied in a variety of contexts which give relevance to the study of the subject. The subject matter is developed both in depth (in intellectual terms) and in breadth (in relevance). A significant feature is the way in which each text makes explicit some aspect of the fundamental processes of science, or shows science, and scientists, 'in action'. In some cases this is made clear by highlighting the methods used by scientists in, for example, employing a systematic approach to the collection of information, or the setting up of an experiment. In other cases the treatment traces a series of related steps in the scientific process, such as investigation, hypothesising, evaluation and problem-solving. The fact that there are many dimensions to the creation of knowledge and to its application by scientists and technologists is the title and consistent theme of all the books in the Series.

The authors are all authorities in the fields in which they have written, and share a common interest in the enjoyment of their work in science. We feel sure that something of that satisfaction will be imparted to their readers in the continuing study of the subject.

Preface

This short work does not pretend to be a comprehensive survey of the entire field of forensic science. It is an attempt to outline the scientific procedures that provide some of the facts presented as evidence at a court of law. The selection of topics obviously reflects the interests and inclinations of the author.

Clarity of expression is important to the forensic scientist. He or she may be required to explain to a jury the principles and practice behind the methods on which his or her findings are based.

The main purpose of the book is to be informative and scientific while, at the same time, being interesting and maybe thought-provoking. The last chapter on 'Crime and the Citizen' is intended as a basis for discussion.

Not all forensic work is exhilarating. Some is distinctly tedious and time-consuming with little, or no, apparent reward for effort. Direct contact with those working 'in the field', however, gives — to the author at least — a sense of enthusiasm and dedication that is more than impressive. No doubt this is one of the characteristics that the ordinary man or woman associates with the boffin.

Apart from those sufficiently interested to browse, the target reading group is the 16 to 18 year olds, who may need information about the world 'out there'. This book is largely based on talks that the author has given to various groups in schools and colleges. Hopefully it will prove useful to the casual reader, the future jurist and the budding scientist.

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