

## Forensic Investigation of a Shawl Linked to the “Jack the Ripper” Murders

The article “Forensic investigation of a shawl linked to the ‘Jack the Ripper’ murders” (2019) received international attention after appearing in the *Journal of Forensic Sciences (JFS)*. Shortly after its publication, however, concerns were raised about the validity and integrity of the research. Commentaries were submitted to the *JFS* critiquing the DNA methodology and the logic of the analysis, likening it to the errors typically seen in a wrongful conviction. Turi King, Department of Genetics and Genome Biology, University of Leicester, complained: “How did this ever get past review!?!... Unpublishable!” British geneticist Adam Rutherford warned, “This is terrible science and terrible history ... It doesn’t warrant discussion in the press, let alone in an academic journal” (Killgrove, 2019).

The publisher and editor of the *JFS* conducted an investigation regarding some of these complaints. The results (or lack thereof) were released in an Expression of Concern (August 2024). They apparently were unable to come to a determination because the authors, Louhelainen and Miller, claimed their research data were not available due to instrument failure and “other [unspecified] complications.”

While recognizing an expression of concern is a small, though belated step in the right direction, Rossmo, Phillips, and Walther Parson, Institute of Legal Medicine, Medical University of Innsbruck, argued the original article should now be retracted. They sent a message to the *JFS* editor, copied to the President and relevant officers of the American Academy of Forensic Sciences (the *JFS* is the official publication of the AAFS), and the Wiley Research Integrity Team (Wiley is the publisher of *JFS*). A summary of their reasons follow:

First, the original questions concerning the mtDNA analysis remain unaddressed. The article’s conclusions depend upon the strength of the connections between the shawl and the murder scene, the shawl and the victim Eddowes, and the shawl and the suspect Kosminski – all three of which are tenuous and improbable. Throughout the paper, the aura and language of science is used to mask problematic assumptions, spurious inferences, and flawed conclusions. It is also concerning how this publication was commercially exploited by Russell Edwards, the owner of the shawl in question. Edwards funded Louhelainen and Miller’s research, a fact not mentioned in any declaration of interest; this alone is grounds for retraction according to COPE (Committee on Publication Ethics) guidelines. Edwards is a Jack the Ripper tour operator, purveyor of Ripper coffee mugs, and the author of *Naming Jack the Ripper*. After his book was published, Edwards reportedly put the shawl up for auction at a reserve price of \$4.75 million.

The cover of his book advertises, “New crime scene evidence. A stunning forensic breakthrough. The killer revealed.” In reality, this is a giant forensic failure (Rossmo, 2025). It is also an embarrassment to the field as many popular media outlets now proclaim Jack the Ripper was Kosminski.

We believe our commentaries would be of interest to members of the JTRForums, particularly for those wondering if the Louhelainen and Miller analysis really established who Jack the Ripper was. Despite the many claims to the contrary, we believe his identity remains a mystery.

Phillips’ critique and Rossmo’s commentary can be found at the following links [available to forum members only]:

[Chris Phillips, concerns](#)

[Kim Rossmo, published commentary](#)

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Chris Phillips, Independent Researcher

### References

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Rossmo, D. K. (2025). *Geographic profiling* (2<sup>nd</sup> ed.). Routledge.