



**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

**July 1, 2025**

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**To speak with a member from the Sheffield Hallam University team who worked on this case, please contact Emma Griffiths via email: [e.griffiths@shu.ac.uk](mailto:e.griffiths@shu.ac.uk).**

**British Citizen Cold Case Resolved with Help from Across the Pond**

*This is the first UK citizen to be identified with investigative genetic genealogy, thanks to U.S. college team*

MAHWAH, NJ– An unidentified British man who died in Arizona in 2013 has been given his name back, thanks to students and staff in the [Ramapo College Investigative Genetic Genealogy \(IGG\) Center](#). The man, now confirmed to be Michael Sidney Hill, is the first United Kingdom citizen identified using investigative genetic genealogy.

A friend Hill visited in the Phoenix area provided a name and date of birth to the authorities. This information alone could not be used to confirm Hill's identity. Traditional means of identification employed by [Maricopa County Office of the Medical Examiner](#) (MCOME) also did not yield a positive result. There was no identification on his person, and he had no siblings, children, or close relatives to contact and provide a positive identification. The case remained cold.

Then in May of 2024, MCOME enlisted the help of the Ramapo IGG Center. A group of students who completed the college's [IGG Certificate Program](#) and are on faculty and staff at [Sheffield Hallam University](#) in the UK worked with the IGG Center team on this case.

On May 14, 2024, a blood card for the decedent was sent by MCOME to [Genologue](#) where DNA extraction and whole genome sequencing were performed. On July 1, 2024, [Parabon Nanolabs](#) performed bioinformatics and generated a genotype file.

With the genotype from the labs, the students were able to demonstrate that distant genetic relatives found in the database [GEDmatch](#) were genetically related to Hill. This finding was not strong enough for MCOME to confirm Hill's identity, however.

To further solidify the findings, the team consulted with [His Majesty's Passport Office](#), [British Consulate General in Los Angeles](#), [UK Driver and Vehicle Licensing Agency](#), [U.S. Department of State](#), [U.S. Customs and Border Protection](#), and the [U.S. Department of Homeland Security](#). Although some offices were able to verify Hill's existence and history of traveling to the U.S.,



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they were not able to find a photograph, fingerprints, or documentation that supported Hill's identity.

Additional exploration performed by the IGG team, MCOME, Matthew Waterfield of [Silverwell Research](#), and Megan Pasika, led to finding two of Hill's first cousins once removed. The cousins agreed to provide DNA samples in May of 2025, which helped MCOME confirm Hill's identity on June 24, 2025.

IGG combines DNA analysis with traditional genealogy research. Single nucleotide polymorphism (SNP) testing, which uses hundreds of thousands or millions of markers, was employed to help identify distant relatives. This differs from short tandem repeat (STR) testing, made famous in the O.J. Simpson trial, which uses only tens or dozens of markers to help identify close relatives such as a parent or child, neither of which were living or Hill had.

"This case demonstrates the power of our modern advanced DNA testing abilities which can identify even distant relatives, offering resolution in cases of unidentified people that would have previously been impossible to solve," said Cairenn Binder, director of the IGG Certificate Program.

Until now, the IGG technology has been largely used only in the United States, Canada, and Australia. David Gurney, director of the Ramapo College IGG Center, has been collaborating with SHU faculty and staff, including Sital Dhillon, director of the [Helena Kennedy Centre for International Justice](#) at SHU.

"Members of Sheffield Hallam University in the UK, trained by Ramapo, helped give Michael his name back," said Gurney. "The Ramapo IGG Center is proud to be partnering with professors, staff, and students at SHU to prepare a cohort of UK IGG practitioners to take on the many cases in the UK that have been waiting for answers."

Dr. Craig Paterson, from Sheffield Hallam University, said, "It is a privilege to see the team solve this case and to restore Michael's name and identity. This case proves that IGG can be used in the UK to identify distant relatives and generate leads in cases that have remained unsolved using other investigative techniques. There are lots more unsolved cases in the UK where IGG



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can be used and we will continue to work with our partners and students to ensure that as many cases as possible benefit from this expertise."

To learn more about Ramapo College and the IGG Center, please visit [ramapo.edu](https://ramapo.edu).

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## ABOUT RAMAPO COLLEGE

Ramapo College of New Jersey is the state's premier public liberal arts college and is committed to academic excellence through interdisciplinary and experiential learning, and international and intercultural understanding. The comprehensive college is situated among the beautiful Ramapo Mountains, is within commuting distance to New York City, was named one of the 50 Most Beautiful College Campuses in America by *Condé Nast Traveler*, and boasts the best on-campus housing in New Jersey per Niche.com. Established in 1969, Ramapo College offers bachelor's degrees in the arts, business, data science, humanities, social sciences and the sciences, as well as in professional studies, which include business, education, nursing and social work. In addition, the College offers courses leading to teacher certification at the elementary and secondary levels, and offers graduate programs leading to master's degrees in Accounting, Applied Mathematics, Business Administration, Contemporary Instructional Design, Computer Science, Creative Music Technology, Data Science, Educational Leadership, Nursing, Social Work and Special Education, as well as a Doctor of Nursing Practice.

## About Sheffield Hallam University

Sheffield Hallam University's vision is to become the world's leading applied university, transforming lives and creating opportunities for people from all backgrounds.

With more than 32,000 students, it is one of the UK's largest universities and a leading provider of health education and teacher training. Sheffield Hallam also educates more students from underrepresented backgrounds than any other UK university.

The application of knowledge is at the heart of everything the University does, from students' learning and experience to business partnerships and innovative research addressing real world



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Challenges. As a university proudly of its place, Sheffield Hallam is committed to Sheffield and South Yorkshire.

In recognition of its leadership both internationally and in promoting the region, the University recently received two awards at the Times Higher Education Awards (2023) – for International Collaboration of the Year and Marketing/Communications Team of the Year.

Sheffield Hallam's award-winning approach has also seen it awarded Gold in the Teaching Excellence Framework, and named the north's best apprenticeship provider (2024) and University of the Year (2022) at the Educate North Awards.