

Tribute to doctor who pioneered police finger-printing 'Thanks for all you did for my country'

BY ADAM BLAKEMAN

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A RETIRED police officer from Japan has travelled to the former home of a fingerprinting pioneer to unveil a memorial in his memory.

Akira Mitsuzane, former chief of the identification division at Tokyo Metropolitan Police, arrived in rain-soaked James Street, Wolstanton on Saturday following a 6,000-mile journey.

He was visiting the former home of Dr Henry Faulds, who was the first man to realise the unique nature of fingerprints and how they might be used to catch criminals.

Dr Faulds, below left, who was born in Scotland, lived in the terrace property for 30 years in later life and was buried at the nearby St Margaret's Church following his death in 1930 aged 86.

Mr Mitsuzane's visit marked the 100th anniversary of the Japanese police officially adopting the fingerprinting system, ten years after it was introduced in the UK.

Dr Faulds is renowned among police officers in Japan for being a pioneer of fingerprint study, which has helped catch endless amounts of criminals. He also spent time working in the country as a medical missionary in the 1880s.

Mr Mitsuzane unveiled a bronze memorial of Dr Faulds's face, which will be placed on the front of his former home.

Speaking through an interpreter, Mr Mitsuzane said: "While in Japan, Dr Faulds made a variety of contributions, not only in the field of fingerprint identification but in other fields.

"In the field of medicine, he treated a total of 15,000 patients throughout his tenure at the Tsukiji Hospital.

"In the early stage of his career in Japan, he was involved in conducting autopsies, so he has gained a wide recognition in the history of anatomy.

"He also had a deep interest in education for the blind. Together with his associates, he helped establish the first special school for the visually and hearing impaired in Japan.

"I am honoured to be visiting his former home and I hope this memorial will be a fitting and lasting tribute."

A blue plaque, engraved with Dr Faulds's name and achievement, was put on the outside of the house by Newcastle Civic Society three years ago, to raise local awareness of his story.

Historian Mervyn Edwards, from Wolstanton, greeted Mr Mitsuzane at Saturday's visit, along with Newcastle Mayor Trevor Hambleton.

Mr Edwards said: "Dr Faulds's contribution to forensics has been overshadowed by that of other scientists, such as William Herschel, who were developing similar theories during the same period.

"But he was a key figure in this field and this view is echoed by Newcastle Civic Society,



VISIT: Akira Mitsuzane outside the former home of Dr Henry Faulds, with the bronze memorial of Dr Faulds's face. Inset top, the existing plaque on the house. Picture: Malcolm Hart

which commissioned a plaque a few years ago.

"Wolstanton is proud of its connection with Dr Faulds and we're delighted that our friends from Japan have crafted a fitting tribute to him."

Nicholas Kettle, who owns the house and rents it out, said he had no idea about the history of the property when he bought it five years ago.

The 44-year-old, who lives in Wolstanton, said: "The first I knew about it was when I read an article in *The Sentinel*.

"I was surprised, but when the civic society asked if they could put a plaque on the wall outside, I was more than happy for them to do so. A couple of years ago the

woman who lives in the house had some Japanese students knocking on the front door, asking her about the house's connection to Dr Faulds.

"I think it's great that Wolstanton has something like this to shout about.

"I'm planning to do the front of the property up and probably put the new tribute above the front door."

Dr Faulds has a forensic science lab at Keele University named after him. There is also a plaque in recognition of his work at Wolstanton company Castle Comfort Stairlifts.

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