



Sister of Khmer Rouge murder victim John Dewhirst hopes for UN trial
Coreena Ford
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Khmer Rouge murder victim John Dewhirst's sister has revealed how she hopes good can come from his killer's trial.

John was the only Briton among 17,000 to die after being captured during the communist Khmer Rouge's rule over Cambodia in the 1970s.

Now, 31 years after his death, his murderer, Kaing Guek Eav, known as Comrade Duch, is being tried by a UN-backed tribunal on genocide charges.

He has already confessed to John's murder and invited victims of the regime to visit him.

But John's sister Hilary Holland, 53, a solicitor from Brampton, Cumbria, has refused to attend and says she has not even been able to bring herself to utter John's name in more than 30 years.

An aspiring novelist, John left home after finishing his A-levels to explore and bought a one-way ticket to Tokyo, where he got a teaching post and a part-time job on a newspaper.

He quit in 1978, aged 26, after deciding to join pals on travels around the Gulf of Thailand in their boat The Foxy Lady.

But when they drifted into Cambodian waters, a Khmer Rouge military launch swooped.

Stuart Glass was shot dead instantly and the other two were taken to the S21 torture centre – a former school – where, after enduring a catalogue of horrors, they were forced to sign confessions they were CIA agents.

John's note even said his father, who died before his capture, was a CIA agent whose cover was as head of Benton Road Secondary in Newcastle.

Hilary said: "I have experienced death and grief. This is different. It's everlasting.

"I can accept death completely. It's what happened to my brother that I can't accept.

“The fact that torture was so extreme, lasting not half a day, but months, makes it an inhuman act. It takes the humanity of the person.

“The person my brother had been was taken away during that torture. For a human being to do that to another human being, that’s not a human act.

“What happened in Cambodia isn’t generally known to today’s generations. It should be a part of history lessons. People should remember what happened there.

“I don’t know how my brother died. I have heard reports of people bleeding to death and having their heads smashed from behind beside mass graves. I don’t know if knowing what really happened can make me feel any worse. If I feel like this after 31 years, a whole country must feel the same.”