

Unfinished Stories: From Genocide to Hope - Mick Yates

Book publication in Phnom Penh, Cambodia. November 2019

Exhibition at Bath Royal Literary & Scientific Institution, UK. December 5th-19th 2019

The Khmer Rouge Genocide of 1975-1979 killed between 1.7 and 2.2 million people – a quarter of the Cambodian population. There are Killing Fields everywhere, yet the suffering is still often hidden from view.

Unfinished Stories about the personal, untold stories of people who suffered appallingly during that reign of terror.

Yet it is also a story of hope, as these unassuming heroes went on to dedicate their lives to children's education.



'The Village Chief was sorry for the young children; he said that they were all probably going to die'

Mick & Ingrid Yates first visited Cambodia in 1994 with their young family. On a sunny day at Angkor Wat, with few tourists about, they heard the distant rumble of shellfire. The guns prompted their desire to better understand the country and started their love for its people. After the 1998 death of Pol Pot, and the beginning of national reconciliation, Mick & Ingrid founded a primary school programme. This was in collaboration with Save the Children and the Ministry of Education, and it included working with ex-Khmer Rouge.

Keo Sarath and Beng Simeth, survivors of the Genocide, were responsible for managing the school program. Both had dedicated their lives to education. Their true-life stories of those awful times have never been published before.

The Khmer Rouge had executed Sarath's father, and as a teenager, like everyone else, he was forced to work in a camp separated from his mother, Am Yon. One of the stories is about when, after weeks of deliberation, Sarath ran away from the camp overnight, through the jungle, to see if she was still alive. Scared, evading mines, wolves and soldiers, he was finally united with her.

With 120 pages, Mick's book is illustrated with both archival and new photographs, to tell the powerful, intensely personal stories from the terrifying events of Khmer Rouge times. The book includes a short history of Cambodia, for readers not familiar with what happened and to give context for the stories. There is also an illustrated history of the school program, bringing things up to date.

The exhibition, to be held at Bath Royal Literary & Scientific Institution, December 5th-19th 2019, will feature a series of largescale photographs especially taken by Mick Yates. Each is accompanied by a single personal quote from one of the stories. The images are metaphorical, intended to ask questions about what happened during the Genocide, and to help draw the lessons for today.

The exhibition will show a short history of Cambodia and conclude with a photo-documentary of the school programme. Video will be included, and materials will be available for visitors to take away.

It is hoped that Sarath will be able to be in the UK at the same time, and a series of talks are planned.