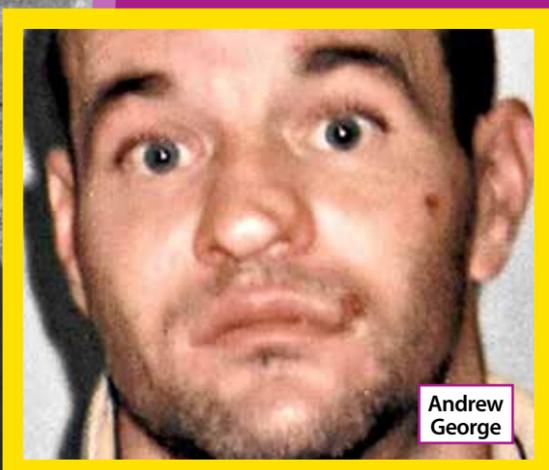


Hilda was my mentor

**Forty-two years after the abduction of his elderly aunt, Robert is still searching for the truth...**



Hilda with me



Andrew George

# WHO KILLED HILDA?

I nodded along as my aunt Hilda showed me some of her interesting research papers.

'See, there's so much evidence to show how nuclear power plants damage the environment,' she said.

She always talked so passionately about politics and her work as an environmental and anti-nuclear campaigner.

'It's important to think outside the box,' she'd tell me, and I soaked it all in.

Hilda had become a mentor to me after my mother died.

I was only 19 and although I started travelling for my work as a Royal Navy officer, I'd visit Hilda whenever I was on a break.

She couldn't replace my mother, but I appreciated her education, support and guidance.

Before she retired, Hilda had taken on her father's business and become known as one of the best rose growers in the world.

And she was so intelligent that from the age of 65 she dedicated

the rest of her life to being an anti-nuclear campaigner.

After 20 years, I decided to leave the navy and become a roof thatcher. By now I was married and wanted a quieter life.

Hilda and I regularly caught up over the phone.

But in October 1983, she sent me a troubling letter, along with a document.

*Just in case anything happens to me, this is a copy of the latest draft of my paper,* it read.

She'd mentioned that she was preparing a paper on the problems with radioactive waste management for a nuclear power plant inquiry.

Then on 24 March 1984, a family member called to say Hilda was missing.

But where would a 78-year-old lady have disappeared to? Immediately, something felt off.

Thinking back to her letter, I had a bad feeling it was to do

with her anti-nuclear work.

*Someone wants to keep her quiet,* I thought.

That afternoon, I got a call from the police.

'We've found Hilda's body,' said the officer.

My blood ran cold.

I found out she actually went missing three days earlier, and no one had thought to tell me.

There appeared to have been an attempted burglary at her home, before she was abducted and killed.

After losing my mother, losing Hilda was another horrific blow.

I went with my brother-in-law to identify her body. That image became seared into my mind.

After an autopsy, her cause of death was ruled as hypothermia.

But she'd suffered many injuries, including broken bones, bruising on her face and multiple stab wounds. I felt sick

that someone could harm an old lady.

To honour her memory, I cleaned up the draft of her paper and submitted it to the nuclear power plant inquiry on her behalf.

*Even in death, I'll make sure she isn't silenced,* I thought.

It took five months for Hilda's body to be released and she was cremated.

Still, no one had been arrested for her murder.

The police were treating it as a

burglary gone wrong.

But many details didn't add up.

After Hilda was reported missing, the police didn't look for her for three days.

When they finally searched her house they found a side door was left unlocked, and the wires to the landline had been ripped out.

Witnesses had seen a large middle-aged man driving her car the day she was abducted, with

a woman slumped in the passenger seat. They couldn't see her face because it had been covered with a hat.

Later that day, her car was reported crashed on a grass verge.

Hilda's body was found nearby in a copse – a small group of trees.

Police believed she'd been there for the whole three days she was missing.

But the landowner claimed he regularly walked around his land to count the trees and he never saw her.

My suspicion was that

whoever took her had held her hostage first and interrogated her.

Police put out an appeal for information.

A peace activist named Laurens Otter came forward to reveal a call Hilda had made to him.

On the morning she was abducted, she'd told him she suspected her phone was tapped and that she was being followed.

According to Laurens, she'd sounded worried and scared.

She'd requested he pick up

some papers from her that evening and asked him,

'Where do you get papers published that the government doesn't want published?'

Then another theory was developed.

Some thought that intruders had gone into Hilda's home looking for documents relating to the sinking of the *Belgrano* ship during the 1982 Falklands War.

Because I was a key intelligence officer in the command team running the war, people suspected she might have access to government secrets about the sinking.

Over the following months and years I continued to ask the police for updates and answers, but they seemed no closer to finding out who killed Hilda.

The stress of it all contributed to my marriage breaking down.

Eight years after Hilda's death, I met Dr Kate Dewes at a UN conference in Geneva.

We were both passionate about anti-nuclear campaigning, just like aunt Hilda, and Kate was completing her PHD on the subject.

I was impressed by her intelligence and we began working together.

We got married in 1997 and I

police began a cold case review and used new technology to analyse DNA found in Hilda's house and on her clothing.

Soon, I got a call from a detective.

'We've made an arrest,' he said.

'Really? Who?' I asked.

'A man called Andrew George. The DNA in Hilda's house links back to him,' he said.

But when I found out more about Andrew George, it didn't make sense.

At the time of Hilda's murder, he was just 16, and lived at a

local foster home.

He couldn't even drive, he didn't match the

description of the driver and his DNA wasn't found in Hilda's car.

'They've got the wrong man,' I said to Kate.

Andrew was charged with Hilda's abduction and murder but pled not guilty.

Kate and I attended the trial. When asked how his DNA came to be in Hilda's house, Andrew claimed he'd gone to

burgle it.

Every day of the trial that passed, Kate and I became more convinced he wasn't Hilda's killer.

Despite that, Andrew George, then 37, was found guilty and sentenced to life in prison with a minimum of 15 years at Stafford

Crown Court.

We believed it was an injustice and we were outraged.

Andrew appealed his sentence but it was rejected.

'We need to investigate this ourselves,' I said to Kate.

'I think so too,' she replied.

So we gathered as much information as we could.

We discovered evidence that wasn't brought up in the trial, including DNA found on Hilda's clothes and under her fingernails that wasn't Andrew's.

Then we found there was no mention on her death certificate about broken bones in Hilda's neck, indicating possible strangulation.

*Maybe that was how she died,* I wondered.

We also spoke to eye witnesses who saw strange men lurking around Hilda's home in the days leading up to her abduction, as well as a white van parked in her driveway the day she was taken.

With all the anti-nuclear campaigning work she did, Hilda had become known as a troublemaker because she was critiquing government policies.

My theory is that she was killed to prevent her publishing information that would embarrass the government.

We've met with Andrew a few times and we believe he was framed as part of a cover up.

He's been in jail for nearly 21 years and has had three parole reviews that were all denied.

MP Tam Dalyell even went public to say he believed the British Intelligence agencies like MI5 were behind Hilda's murder.

But after 42 years, we still don't know the whole truth.

Kate and I have written a book about the case called *A Thorn in Their Side*, based on our extensive research.

I'm not going to give up fighting for justice for my aunt.

**Commander Robert Green, 81, Christchurch, New Zealand**

● For more information about the case go to [hildamurrell.org](http://hildamurrell.org)

When that's life! Crime Scene contacted British Intelligence to put forward the claim that MI5 were connected to Hilda's murder, we were told, 'It remains the government's position these allegations are totally without foundation.'



She was abducted from her home



Kate and me

By Sarah Vahabou. Pictures West Merca Police/Matthew Hill