

Mother's fight is rewarded at last

ERICA Duggan has spent the past seven years entrenched in evidence she sadly admits a mother should never have to see.

Ever since her 22-year-old son Jeremiah was found dead on a German motorway, she has relentlessly campaigned for an investigation into his death.

Police dismissed it as suicide, presuming he threw himself into the rush of oncoming traffic and was hit by two cars.

Every day, Ms Duggan recalls the frantic and scared phone call in the middle of the night from her son - a student at Paris's prestigious Sorbonne university - telling her that he was in "big trouble" before the line was cut off.

She has had to question whether she did enough phoning 999 that night to be told hours later that her child was dead.

Worse still, the lack of interest from the authorities means it has been Ms Duggan who has had to pour over photographs and evidence from the scene - repeatedly staring at her son's bloodied and broken corpse searching for clues. "I feel terribly betrayed by my own country, my own justice system," she says. "Everything I've done has come up against such obstacles."

But last Thursday, Ms Duggan found that people were finally starting to listen. After a long legal battle, the Attorney General Baroness Scotland admitted her department was wrong in denying Ms Duggan permission to make a court bid for a new inquest.

It is a huge first step for the reinvestigation of Jeremiah's death and his mother's campaign, run from a paper-stacked attic in his old home in Golders Green.

The quest for truth centres on the outcome of the first inquest.

At Hornsey coroner's court in 2003, Dr William Doleman ruled out that Jeremiah had committed suicide and said he died in a "state of terror".

Such a decision could have prompted further police investigation - such as what Jeremiah had been doing that night and who he was with - details not researched by German police.

But a Freedom of Information request by Ms Duggan discovered it was Dr Doleman who told Met Police there was no need for further fact-finding - something that has never been explained to Jeremiah's family.

Since then, Ms Duggan has fought for a second inquest in the hope of finding out what caused the state of terror in her son, who just days before was chatting happily to his girlfriend and wishing his father a happy birthday.

Fresh forensic investigation, commissioned by the family, has even suggested that Jeremiah could have died elsewhere with his body placed on the road to indicate suicide.

The pathologist in the first case also said that his severe head injuries were compatible with having been beaten.

Until now, Ms Duggan's campaign has been refused, making the Attorney General's letter such a welcome surprise.

For seven years, Erica Duggan has refused to accept the German police verdict that her son Jeremiah committed suicide on an autobahn. Now the Attorney General has admitted her department was wrong to deny the Golders Green resident leave to bid for a second inquest. **Katie Davies** reports.

Admitting "administrative failings" had not allowed the appeal to be considered in full, it ends: "I hope this new application will be the start of a process that will allow you to have confidence in knowing what happened to your son."

"We still have a long way to go," Ms Duggan says - although having met her repeatedly over her long campaign this is the most hopeful she has ever looked.

"The Met will support an investigation if we get a fresh inquest and that would be the beginning of everything."

In January 2003, Jeremiah

moved to Paris to continue his academic career. There, like many young people his age, he was moved to act by the decision to go to war in Iraq and signed himself up for a conference in Germany.

The conference was publicised through Nouvelle Solidarite - a newspaper sold by a group of young political campaigners.

Ms Duggan doesn't know if Jeremiah knew that the paper was run by the LaRouche Youth Movement and that the conference at its Schiller Institute in Wiesbaden was to espouse the views of American radical Lyndon LaRouche.

But if he did, he certainly didn't know the history of the group in which Ms Duggan has since become steeped.

He wouldn't have known Mr LaRouche's history - an obscure sometime American presidential candidate, who in 1988 said he wanted Aids sufferers quarantined, and on the morning of 9/11 said it was an inside job orchestrated by vice-president Dick Cheney.

Jewish Mr Duggan would also have been unaware of the studies linking the group to anti-semitism or seen online magazines written by members claiming that the



HOPE: Erica Duggan, left, at her Golders Green home, with the letter from the Attorney General.

Picture by Nigel Sutton

Holocaust was an exaggeration and only 1.5 million Jews had died instead of six million.

He wouldn't have known that several families would later be contacting his mother to tell her how the organisation had turned their children against them.

As one former member told the Ham&High in 2007: "My family and friends couldn't recognise me. It is dangerous because it is a cult."

Ms Duggan, who is being supported by Jeremiah's father and ex-husband Hugo, says that, whatever the outcome in Jeremiah's

case, helping those families is now part of her mission too.

"They are still recruiting outside universities across Europe and there is some suggestion they are now in the UK," she says.

Previously the Schiller Institute has sent out letters against calls for a second inquest, claiming it would only prolong the "exhaustive process" of examining Jeremiah's death and backing the German police's conclusion of suicide. They have repeatedly refused to be interviewed by the Ham&High for the past seven years.

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