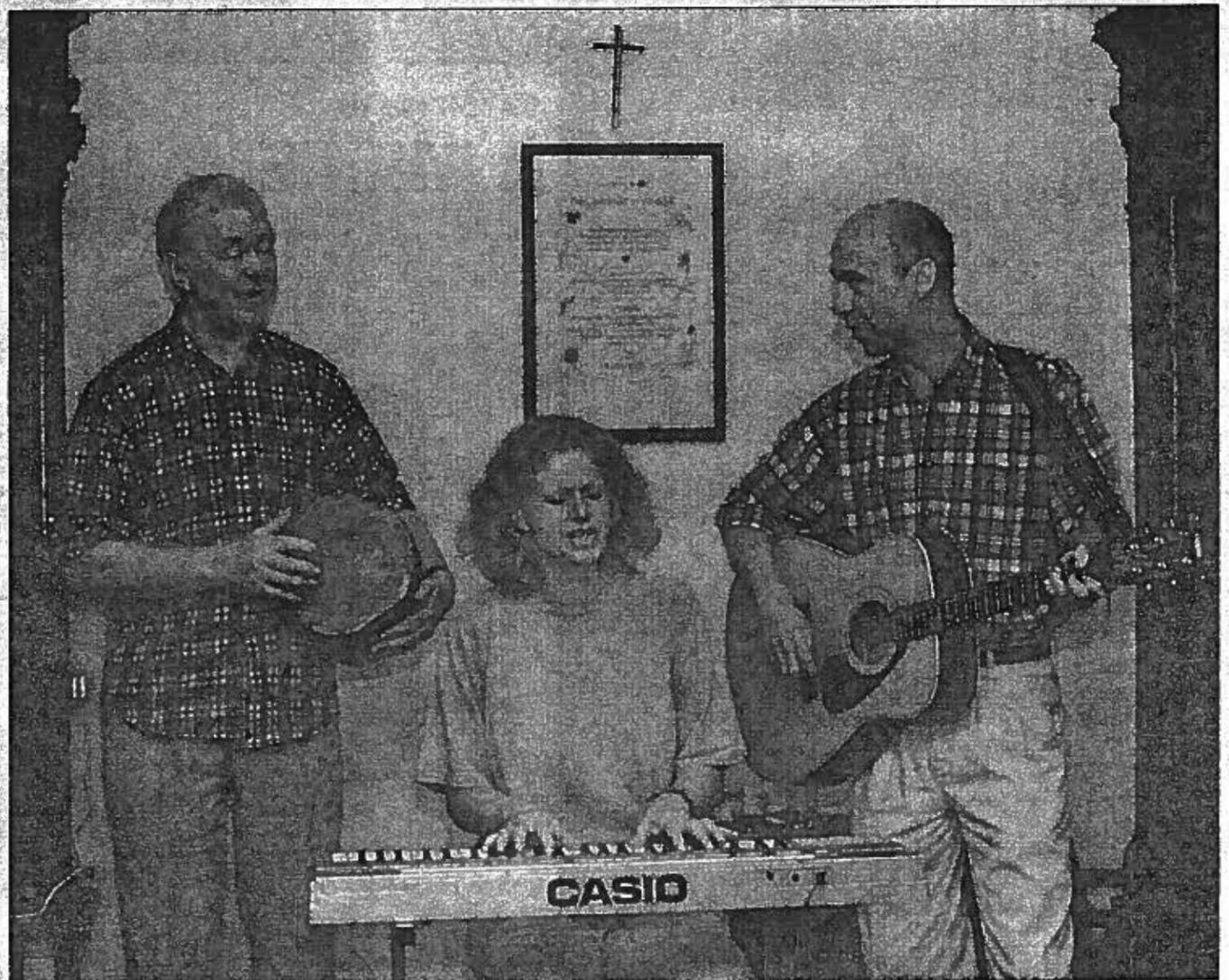


REACHING THE PEOPLE

# One day at a time



Some of the Mustard Seed team: (from left) Martin, Jane and David

**Alcoholics and drug addicts are finding new hope at a treatment centre in Wiltshire.**  
SIMON WATKINSON reports

**A** STAGGERING one in 25 people in Britain is dependent on alcohol - twice as many as are dependent on drugs. With 14 million working days lost through these dependencies, the cost to British industry through absenteeism and poor work performance is £2 billion a year. The huge benefits that the handful of treatment centres up and down the country have on society as a whole are therefore immeasurable.

Clouds House, an imposing 19th century mansion in East Knoyle, Wiltshire, is one such residential centre for the treatment of alcohol and drug dependency. Set up by Peter and Margaret Ann McCann in 1983, it is now a 38-bed unit

which is one of the largest in the country and is also a registered Mental Nursing Home. Set in luxuriant, rolling woodland gardens not far from a spot with panoramic views across the Blackmore Vale, Clouds' idyllic environment must seem like heaven, and a huge culture shock, to those who come down from the inner cities.

Patients come from all over the UK and the world for a six-week stint of treatment which involves group therapy, peer and self-assessment and adoption of the abstinence-based programme, which incorporates some of the basic philosophy of Alcoholics and Narcotics Anonymous. Most stay the course and leave in the first

stage of their recovery, which is a 'one day at a time' process.

One bitter winter's night a few months ago at Clouds, Billy, a once wealthy plumber from London who'd squandered his wealth and a secure family life on alcohol, sat on an uncomfortable pew with six other noisy companions in the basement chapel for 'Mustard Seed'.

Mustard Seed's aim is to emphasise the spiritual aspect of the treatment programme. A small group of Christian vocalists and musicians, led by Martin Shallcross, have joined together from surrounding villages for this very lively hour every Friday evening, since May 1984.

Billy and his pals were as rowdy as a rugby team and found the experience of letting off steam by playing instruments and singing

the odd hymn, and songs set to popular tunes, a welcome novelty.

However, as the evening became a little more serious and Martin stressed the importance of relying on a 'Higher Power' for a robust recovery, some of Billy's pals made a hurried exit. But the ashen-faced Billy now listened intently.

**Mustard Seed has really helped me to look to the future with hope**

The vibrancy of Mustard Seed (there are often 25 or 30 people crowded into the tiny chapel) certainly helps to relieve the tensions and feelings of grief, guilt, shame and anger which inevitably build up during a week of intensive treatment. It is also a great social leveller: the mix of people gathered from all walks of life, ranging in age from 19 to 75, can be quite amazing.

Quite often, high profile professional people can be found sitting next to ordinary folk, who may be housewives or unemployed labourers, on uncomfortable pews.

During the hour, in which 20 songs may be sung, patients often discover a natural high without being drunk or stoned. Sometimes they discover a spirituality which will strengthen their resolve to cope with life knowing that they will always be only one drink or 'fix' away from wrecking a frighteningly fragile recovery.

Funding has always been a problem and this has not been helped by continual recessionary cutbacks. However, Clouds, the charity running Clouds House, only charges those who can afford to pay the £973-a-week fee and the rest (about two-thirds) are funded by Social Services' departments and health authorities.

Clouds has a good success rate. The independent researcher of a two-and-a-half-year study commissioned by Clouds, which was

published two years ago, described his findings as "uncommonly promising".

Ways are always being investigated to house the treatment programme at Clouds so as to ensure that residents have the best opportunity of completing it. As the yearly intake at Clouds is limited and costly, Clouds is currently looking to develop cheaper, non-residential treatment and family services' programmes in the major towns and cities.

Six weeks after Billy's first Mustard Seed, it was his last and his chance to tell other peers what it had meant to him:

"I heard about Mustard Seed before I came to Clouds and decided that I'd definitely stay away because my street cred would definitely plummet if anyone back home got wind that I was sitting in a chapel on a Friday night.

"But some of my peers managed to drag me down here on my first Friday night, in a hell of a mess, and once here I just couldn't believe how many smiling faces there were.

"Are these people completely raving? I asked myself. But the more I came down, the more I could see the reality of it all.

"Mustard Seed has really helped me to look to the future with hope. Before I came down here, I was utterly selfish and hadn't been near a church for 25 years.

"Coming down here has shown me that there is something up there in the sky which has given me the will to rebuild my life ...

"So thank you, Clouds ... Thank you, Mustard Seed ..."

For more information contact Peter Pugh (manager), Clouds House, East Knoyle, Salisbury, Wilts

Simon Watkinson is a freelance journalist specialising in disability issues

WORDSEARCH

## The Lord is righteous

HIDDEN in the grid below are key words from Psalm 145:17-21 (NIV). Just draw a line through them as you find them. Words may be forwards, backwards, horizontal, vertical or diagonal, but always in a straight line. Some letters are used more than once.

Words to find are in CAPITALS.

The LORD is RIGHTEOUS in ALL HIS WAYS and LOVING TOWARDS all he has MADE. The LORD is NEAR to all who CALL on him, to all who CALL on him in TRUTH. He FULFILLS the DESIRES of THOSE WHO FEAR him; he HEARS THEIR CRY and SAVES THEM. The LORD WATCHES OVER all who LOVE him, but all the WICKED he will DESTROY. My MOUTH will SPEAK in PRAISE of the LORD. LET EVERY CREATURE PRAISE his HOLY NAME FOR EVER and EVER.

Ann Routley

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