

I grew up without a father; I don't want my son to grow up without his!

After his father's suicide when he was just 18 months old, Chris grew up in children's homes and started taking drugs such as LSD with the older kids when he was just nine. He also committed quite a lot of theft and shop-lifting, sometimes for money for drugs but also for the buzz – "a way of fixing my feelings. And I believed that society owed me..."

He proceeded to use drugs continuously, other than for four to five years when he was in a relationship and became a father but, with unresolved issues, he started using again. "It was the most terrible choice I ever made; I lost my son and the partner I loved. That devastated me and my drug use spiralled out of control even more."

I begged to be sent to rehab

"For seven years, I begged probation service to send me to rehab. But they couldn't offer me more than six weeks' treatment, which wasn't enough. Stopping drugs is easy, staying off is hard; there is so much more than just quitting. In the end, I broke into a shed just to get arrested so that I could be referred to rehab. When I was in prison, Fee and Chris came to visit me and gave me a brochure and I sat in my cell and sketched the building from the photo; I knew I wanted to go there."

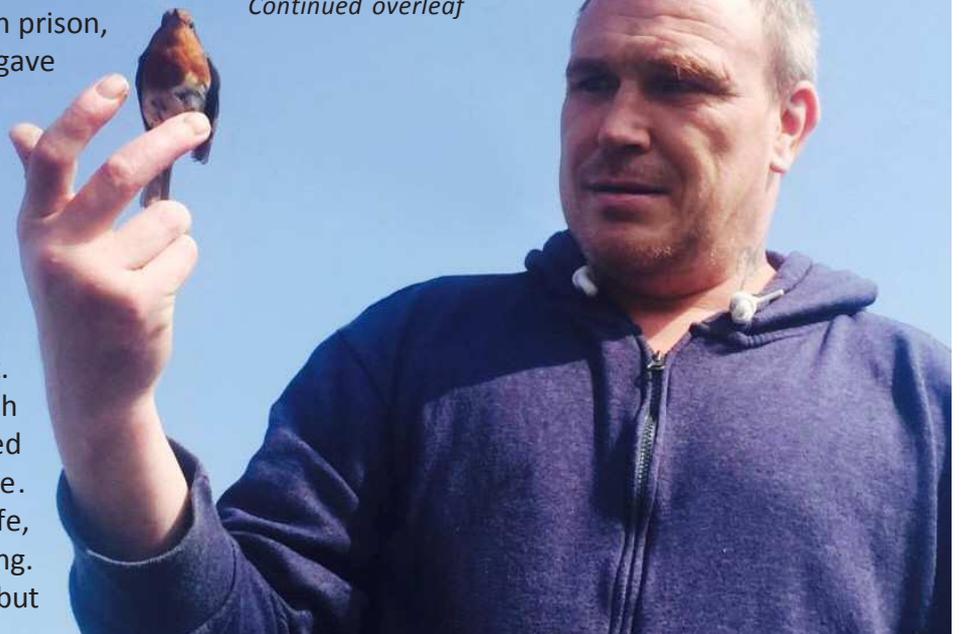
"When I got to Yeldall in 2016 I had very low self-esteem and didn't believe I could do it or deserved it. But then my mum got ill with dementia and she said she wanted me to have control of her life. I couldn't even control my own life, so to be trusted like that was amazing. Now, she has dementia quite badly, but

she knows I'm doing well and that makes me feel good. I also wanted to show my brothers and sisters that it can be done. A couple of them had got into drugs and crime because I was doing it. Now I want to be a positive influence, not a negative one."

Before I came here, I hated religion

"Before I came to Yeldall, I hated religion, but here things started falling into place, especially with the wildlife and nature around. The most amazing thing was when we were on the Yeldall holiday in Wales and there was this robin on the ground. I thought it was injured so I picked it up but it just perched peacefully on my hand for a while before it flew away. It was like some sort of sign. It became harder not to believe in God than it was to believe there is something. I believe in life after death and I know my dad is watching over me. I don't go to church, because I don't really like too many people, but I go the homegroup run by Shaun (ex-resident) and Linda, and I really feel I belong there."

Continued overleaf



Chris' story continues...

"When my ex took my son away, I hated it, but she did the right thing for him and, if she hadn't, I wouldn't be here now. I now have to prove myself to her before I can have contact with him again and I respect her for wanting to be sure I'm trustworthy before letting me back into his life. I grew up without a father, and I don't want my son to grow up without his."

Now living in one of Yeldall's move-on houses, Chris adds: "I'm not sorted; I'm a work in progress. There would have been nothing worse for me than doing the main programme, doing the Lodge and then just going back home. That would be madness. Now, in our house and with the other move-on houses too, there's a sense of community with the guys, we support each other and we're there for each other."

"I'm very active and I hate being bored. I fill my time with cycle rides and voluntary work. But I can sit with myself better now and be more present in the here and now thanks to my counsellor, Justin, and the mindfulness techniques that he taught me. I love helping people, I always have done. In the past that even got me put in prison, but now I care about myself too and I have a future to look forward to."

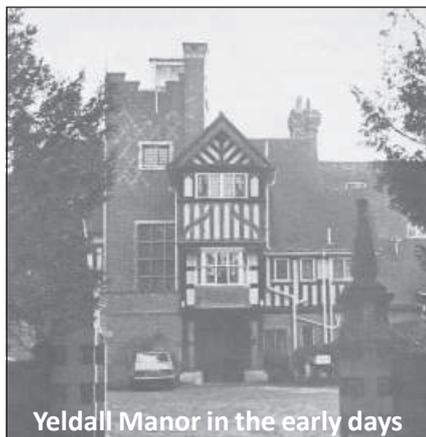


A vision like a neon sign

As we continue to mark forty years of ministry, we were contacted by Ian Vokes, who was Treasurer of the small charity supporting founders Bill and Joanie Yoder when they started looking for a base for their growing ministry with drug addicts.

He recalls: "I can hardly believe it was over 40 years ago that Bill Yoder and I went to see the estate agents in Windsor to make the first approach regarding the purchase of Yeldall Manor. We were received by a somewhat superior gentleman who inquired as to our backing for finance. Bill's reply to this was, "Should our backer give His Blessing to the project, finance won't be a problem!"

"When the time came to put in an offer, the agent advised it should be in the region of £70k – a massive amount of money in those days. We met and prayed and discussed it and decided to make an offer of £72k the following morning."



"That night I found it difficult to sleep. However, I finally dropped off. When I woke in the morning I had a vision of something like a neon sign with the figures £75,000 shining before my eyes."

"I leapt out of bed and called Bill, and all the committee members, and told them that I thought we ought up the offer to £75k. They all agreed because, as they said, we might as well rely on the Lord to give us £75k as £72k."

"Later we heard that the other party had offered £74k. And the rest, as they say, is history..."

Hard work bears fruit

“Why did I ever agree to do this?” Atarah asked herself as the bell signalled the end of tea-break on a rainy Thursday morning and it was time to put her boots back on and go back to weeding the allotment.

As a counsellor, Atarah’s working day is normally spent indoors, but “the residents thought I didn’t understand what work on the land entailed and how difficult it was. After a lot of ribbing, I eventually agreed that I’d do a day on the Estate if they raised £100 for the Bursary Fund.”

To Atarah’s surprise, the amount was quickly exceeded and she was committed! A forecast of rain was not good news, however! Nevertheless, the residents have to work come rain or shine, and one of the important lessons is perseverance. “As we pulled out weeds and put down compost so that plants could grow, we knew that our work would bear fruit – literally – even if not immediately. What a metaphor for so much of what goes on here!”



“What did I learn? I learned about compost! I learned the slowest route back to the boot room and how to kill as much time as possible before starting work! I learned about the job of our work supervisors and how they take account of residents’ different physical and emotional needs. I was also reminded that the work programme isn’t just about work; it’s about relationships and character.”

“What I enjoyed most was the interaction with the residents. We had really deep conversations about relationships, spirituality, everything. The guys asked questions about my past and I shared my testimony with a couple of them as we dug out weeds. Something about having a common task to do made communication easier than in the counselling room.”



“I couldn’t have done a day on the Estate on my own but I felt part of a team. There was genuine fellowship out there and it was good to see the guys talking and encouraging each other.”

“It was nice to be in the open air and physically tired. I was so hungry and exhausted by the end of it, but it was a healthy tired having done something worthwhile.”

We are seeking interns to take a gap-year living and working alongside our residents, encouraging them as they work on the grounds.

Accommodation provided on-site (men only), together with all meals and living allowance. Contact roman@yeldall.org.uk (0118 940 4411) for more information.

Support Yeldall in 2018

Celebrations:

A time of rousing praise and worship with news and testimony from those living and working at Yeldall Manor.
Friday 23rd February, 7.30pm
Friday 11th May, 7.30pm
Friday 21st September, 7.30pm
Friday 7th December, 7.30pm

Prayer Meetings:

A chance to share and pray with some of the residents.
8pm on the first working Monday of each month

Ride for Recovery:

Sponsored cycle. See top right.
Saturday 9th June

Open Day:

Fun, fellowship and food for all the family. Games and stalls followed by Celebration service in the marquee and strawberry tea.
Saturday 7th July, from 1pm

Ride for Recovery 2018

Join us for a sponsored cycle ride (10, 40 or 60 miles) on **Saturday 9th June** to raise money for the **Good Samaritan Bursary Fund**.

Take part in an enjoyable morning's cycling whilst raising funds for a great cause and riding alongside some of the men who benefit from it.

Please book your place now, maybe join us for training rides and meet some fellow cyclists. Contact:
suehedger@yeldall.org.uk.



Donate as you shop on-line

Whether you're buying last-minute Christmas presents or booking next year's holiday, if you're buying on-line, clicking on Give as You Live can raise extra money for Yeldall at no cost to you. Applies to many on-line retailers from supermarkets and chain stores to travel agents.

www.giveasyoulive.com/join/yeldall

Could you go AbstiLent?

Would you give up alcohol, chocolate or cakes and biscuits for Lent to stand in solidarity and support of our residents as they quit their own life-dominating habits?

14th February to 31st March 2018. To sign up, please contact

suehedger@yeldall.org.uk.



Yeldall 40th anniversary teeshirts



£13 each including p&p

M, L, XL

Purple and gold

Order using the response form enclosed or send a cheque with your order to the address below.

Congratulations

to Steph and Phil Dent on the birth of Nathanael - our latest addition to the Yeldall family!



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