

Handing out a stress cure...

ILKESTON is an unusual town of variations. One of its most unusual features is the wealth of complementary medicine and therapies available.

For many years Ilkeston was one of the few towns in the country to be served by an Anthroposophical and homeopathic doctor working on the NHS. Dr Gladstone, who had a practice on East Street, is fondly remembered by his patients as an excellent GP prepared to use both ordinary and alternative medicine as he saw fit.

Sixteen years ago, Ilkeston was one of the first smaller towns to have a wholefood shop (situated on Market Street) and since then the town has constantly had a health food shop — firstly Paul Crowther's and then Sunflower on the Market Place.

Perhaps the most evident sign of natural health in the area is Weleda, on Heanor Road. With its gardens and manufacturing facilities, it attracts visitors from across the country to its open days.

In a bid to understand more about complementary medicine in the area, the Advertiser this week launches a series of articles by therapists practising locally.

This week remedial masseur Mick Bailey writes about his work.

MASSAGE is the oldest form of healing for which we have written records — the earliest reports date back to 3000 BC in China, where monks taught and used massage widely.

In the West, we find massage having prominence among the Romans and Greeks. It was said that Julius Caesar refused to start the day without a massage.



Remedial masseur Mick Bailey writes...

The coming of Christianity forced many forms of healing underground and often the healers found themselves persecuted as witches.

Mark Twain's Mysterious Stranger talks of Gottfried's grandmother "who cured headaches by kneading the neck and head with her fingers, as she said — but really by the Devil's help as everyone knows". She was burnt at the stake.

It was a long time before massage was rehabilitated in the West, and it is to a Swede, Heinrich Ling, that we must offer our thanks. In the 19th century he recognised the benefits of massage and was responsible for formulating the basis for the modern practice. But massage is a constantly evolving therapy and influences from all over the world have expanded the art.

Massage today is receiving

more interest within the medical profession and particularly in cancer care. Experiments among women who had recently undergone mastectomies proved that massage is more effective than rest in improving levels of concentration and reducing levels of fatigue.

The people that I generally see in my practice in Ilkeston fall into several groups: those suffering from back pain and strain, people suffering from the discomfort of hardening and stiffening conditions, sports injuries and, most predominantly, stress. It's the most common condition of the latter part of the 20th century.

Stress gathers in the soft tissues of the body and causes our muscles to harden. In stress situations the body supplies those organs needed for either running away or fighting with nutrients at

the expense of other parts of the body. This seems to particularly affect the neck and shoulders. As the blood supply to these areas decreases, the waste products of cellular activity are not carried away, causing a build-up within the muscle which results in it hardening and shortening — this causes an increased level of irritation which increases the stress level.

For some people this almost becomes an addiction — as though, without this constant feeling of stress, they feel they are not functioning at their optimum level. But, of course, this eventually leads to real physical stress on the body and we can see an increase in heart attacks and ulcers among this group.

Massage helps by washing the area with oxygenated blood and by stimulating the lymphatic system to carry away toxic residues trapped in the muscles.

This, alongside the general sense of well-being which massage induces, allows the recipient to escape from the spiral of stress without resorting to any form of drug therapy which will only cover up the symptoms allowing them to take their toll on the body later.

As well as one-to-one work, I am also involved with teaching introductory workshops in massage. I believe we can all develop the ability to help each other through the aches and strains of everyday life.

I am particularly interested in working with special interest groups, carers, nurses and specialised groups — such as those looking to come off tranquillisers.

● For further information about the clinic or workshops, contact me on 0602 306302.