

Getting to the point

Maggie Hartford meets an acupuncture specialist with a passion for healing

Globetrotting Lucy Jupp has a passion for animals, but after years living in exotic places, she has now settled in Oxfordshire, where she is working her magic on people instead of horses.

After leaving school her love of animals led her to work at an equine therapy centre. Impressed by the way sick horses were helped by acupuncture, she decided to qualify as a practitioner.

Her first job was working with retired racehorses at Horsehay Farm, Middle Barton, coaxing them to take up showjumping.

She said: "I loved horses and it is a great place. They do a lot of alternative therapy, and I saw how effective acupuncture could be for helping horses with spinal problems. They use essential oils and chiropractic as well — it's a very interesting place.

"I saw someone putting needles into a horse which had a sore back and you could tell by the way it was moving that it felt better. It was very impressive.

"It's not like a person where you have to rely on what they say — when a horse feels much better, you can see it directly."

She decided to become an acupuncturist but, realising that it would take ten years to qualify as a vet, then as an acupuncturist, to treat animals, she opted for a three-year acupuncture degree course at Lincoln University.

"I would have loved to work with animals as well as people, but it wasn't possible," she said.

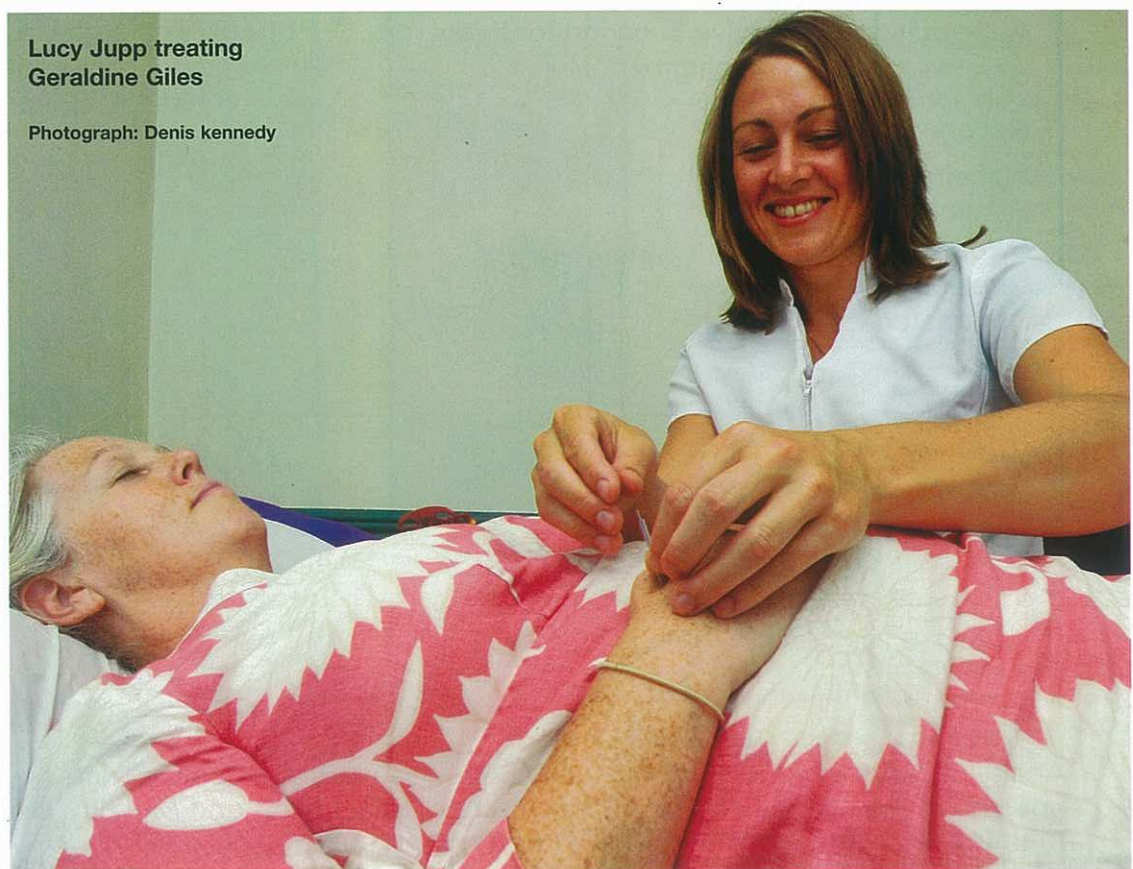
After her degree, she spent three months in China, an experience she describes as 'whirlwind'.

She worked in three different hospitals in Beijing, where many general hospitals have an acupuncture department, a Chinese herbal department and a tuina (Chinese remedial massage) department, alongside western medical departments such as accident and emergency.

She said: "I arrived and was immediately 'culture shocked'. Life is so different out there — the hustle and bustle of millions of people was the first thing that really struck me, especially when I was trying to cross the road.

Road crossings were a bit of a 'life and death' moment, you could never quite be sure if you would make it or not among the cyclists, cars and motorbikes.

"The clinics were even more different. I had become accustomed to an acupuncture clinic being a quiet place where patients come to receive one on one treatment in a



Lucy Jupp treating Geraldine Giles

Photograph: Denis Kennedy

relaxing, calm environment.

"The clinics in China were madness. With about eight beds in a small room and nothing separating them, patients received their treatment about one foot away from each other. However, the advantage of doing it this way is that acupuncture treatment is cheap and so affordable for almost everyone.

"The range of problems that were treated in the hospitals with acupuncture was huge. The ones that really interested me were facial paralysis, skin diseases, stroke patients and all the children who came in for treatment."

She saw a two-year-old child whose difficult birth had left him almost totally paralysed from his shoulder downwards.

"After two years of having acupuncture treatment, he had an almost full recovery. Watching him have acupuncture and then sit there eating a yoghurt while the needles were left in place, looking very brave, was one of the highlights of the trip," said Ms Jupp.

With a certificate in Clinical Practice of Acupuncture from the China Academy of Chinese Medical Sciences under her belt, she gained further experience in Guatemala and Honduras, where she set up an acupuncture clinic for expatriates, using the profits to help fund a charity project for children.

She said: "I lived on an island where people had a long wait before they could see a doctor, and they were reluctant to go to a hospital, because of the medical situation there.

I was able to build up experience of a wide range of problems."

On returning to live in her home village of Islip, she set up a clinic at Daylesford, a high-class farm shop in the Cotswolds run by Lady Bamford, wife of the JCB businessman Lord Bamford. But she discovered that it was the wrong place for acupuncture.

"It's a day spa rather than a therapy centre — more about relaxation than treatment," she said.

Now she works from the Wellbeing Clinic in Headington and Wheatley Complementary Therapy Clinic.

She said: "It's much harder to get started in England than abroad. People mainly hear about you through word of mouth, so it's very slow to begin with."

She has ended up taking a particular interest in fertility and emotional problems.

"It's surprising how many women have problems conceiving," she said.

Ms Jupp feels as passionate as ever about what she does.

"Acupuncture never ceases to amaze me with its capacity to not only heal people, but to change their world. Helping people get better is the most rewarding thing I've ever done, and acupuncture is the most effective therapy that I've ever come across."

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