

# Friends tried to save woman in downward spiral of drink

A community rescue operation swung into action in Shenton Park when Susan Christie phoned an old friend to say she was in serious trouble.

She was drunk, broke, destitute and had just been evicted from her home in Keightley Road, Shenton Park.

The person she phoned was Kelli Bud-

rikis (39), whom Mrs Christie had met in 1995 when she was living in Harvey Road and their children were together at Shenton Park kindergarten.

They had become friends, and Mrs Budrikis liked the woman she described in court as witty, funny, caring and loving when sober.

But by February 2001, Mrs Christie's life had taken a downward spiral because of her heavy drinking.

The English woman, who had graduated with a bachelor of science degree, had lost two marriages, and the children from each were living with their fathers.

When drinking, she would become flirtatious, touchy and promiscuous, according to crown prosecutor Troy Sweeney.

Mrs Christie met men at the Wembley Hotel and apparently had several simultaneous relationships, according to evidence before the

court.

One man Dennis Austin, who worked for Subiaco council, told the court she had become violent towards him in the street outside her home in Keightley Road.

She had grabbed him by the throat and he elbowed her to break her grip.

He denied that he had broken her sternum (breast bone) or that she required hospital treatment.

He said she drank two bottles of wine a day, preferring "white Gundry, unwooded".

He also said she was witty, charming and intelligent when sober.

"When she was drunk she became very arrogant, violent, abusive, aggressive and belittling to people - she thought she was better than them," he said.

Mrs Budrikis said Mrs Christie had separated from Rory Christie when the couple were living in Evans Street, Shenton Park.

By 2001, Mrs Budrikis was living in Darlington. When she received Susan's distress call she drove straight to Keightley Road.

"I found her in chaos," she said.

"The house was not set up, it was in disarray, and there were boxes everywhere.



Kelli Budrikis rallied friends to help Mrs Christie.

"She looked pretty terrible.

"A group of us got together and packed up her things. During the packing process she

was drunk.

"She was being evicted, she had nowhere to go and had

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Council worker Dennis Austin told the court he split from Susan Christie two weeks before she died.

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## Clairvoyant called in

A clairvoyant had been called into the search for Susan Christie, friends had searched her unit and items had been removed before police declared her home a crime scene, the Supreme Court was told this week.

Mrs Christie's first husband, Ian Ure, said his mother had suggested the clairvoyant.

He had entered the unit using the owner's key on the advice of police, after he had reported Mrs Christie missing at the Subiaco police station.

He and Mrs Christie's friend, Kelli Budrikis, gave evidence they had come and gone from the unit, checking each room, looking in

cupboards, drawers and suitcases, picking up and moving items of underwear, and emptying out the contents of Mrs Christie's handbag.

A police officer from the missing persons branch had been present when Ms Budrikis searched the unit.

Mr Ure said he took a spare key from the table and entered the flat several times.

He had removed Mrs Christie's watch, glasses, and some items of her clothing to take to the clairvoyant.

He had also taken some items belonging to his son.

Both witnesses said the flat had appeared normal, with no sign of a struggle. It was a little untidy, but Mrs Christie was not a tidy person.

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